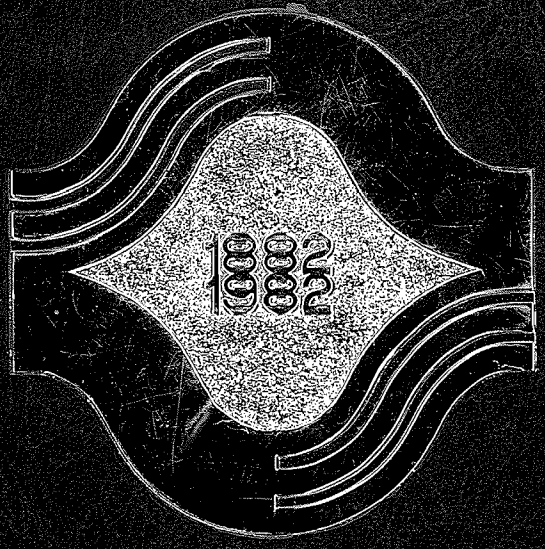

SELKIRK

"THE FIRST HUNDRED YEARS"

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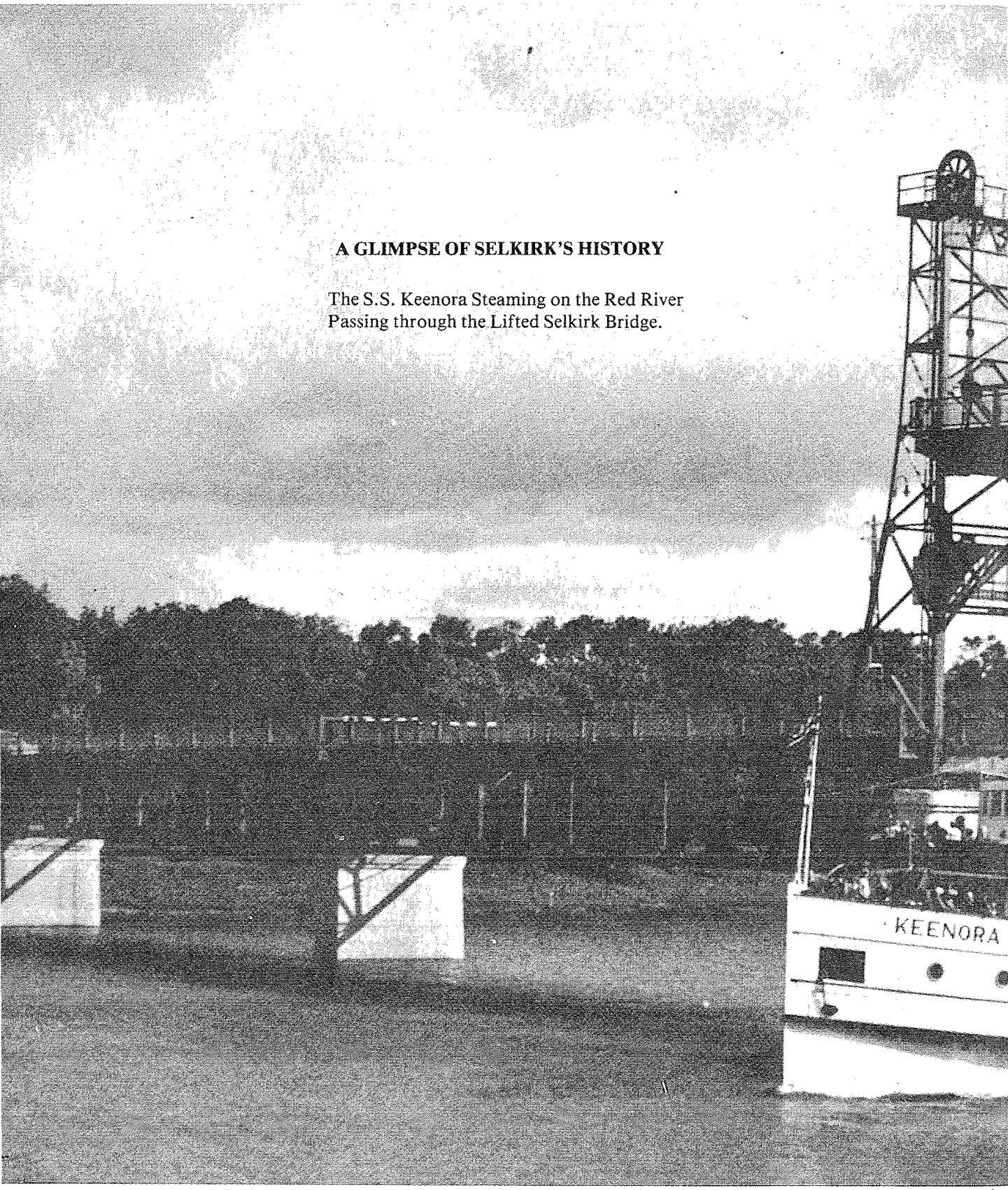
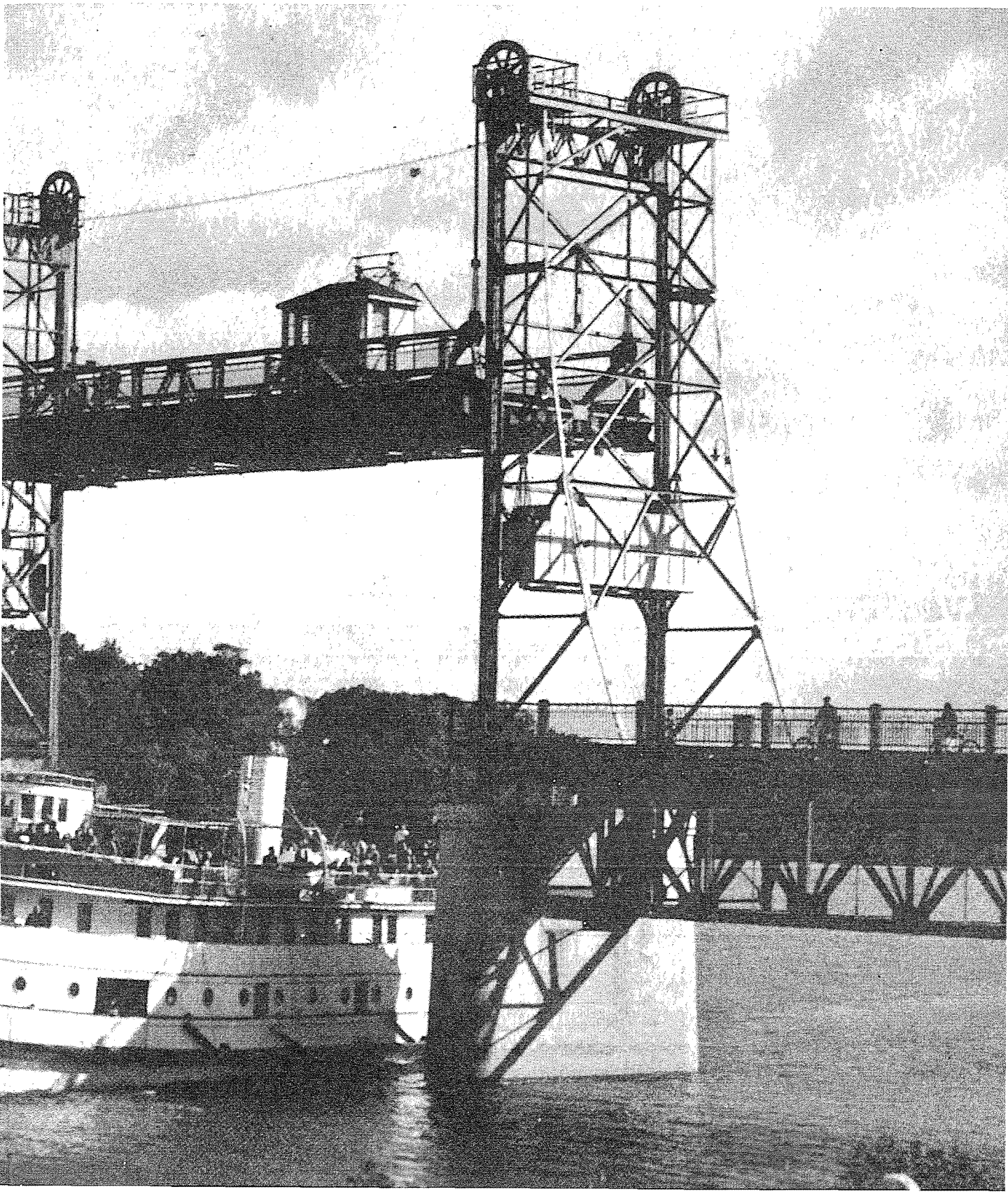


A GLIMPSE OF SELKIRK'S HISTORY

The S.S. Keenora Steaming on the Red River
Passing through the Lifted Selkirk Bridge.



SELKIRK

The First Hundred Years

by Barry Potyondi

Printed by
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Winnipeg

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DEDICATED TO THE PEOPLE OF SELKIRK

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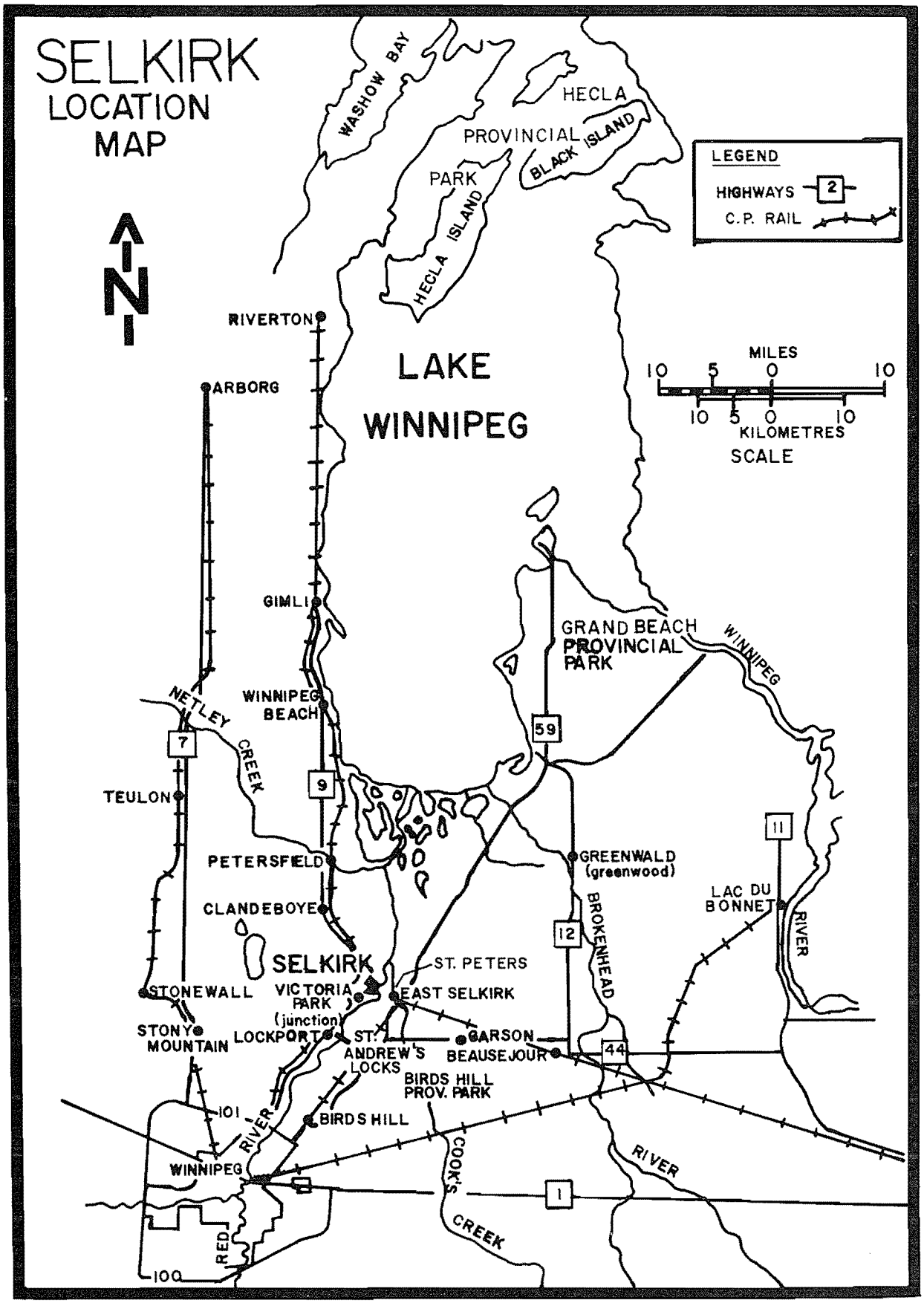
PREFACE

IN 1895, when Selkirk was still a young, false-fronted, clapboard community of just 1,700 residents, local newspaperman R. W. Stewart boldly proclaimed that the town and its district already abounded "in legendary lore sufficient to furnish a novelist or the quasi-historian with food for reflection for a life time." His statement was one of calculated exaggeration, published in a bombastic promotional supplement to the weekly *Record*, and yet he was nearly correct. The story of Selkirk, like that of all small communities, is complex and captivating. Much of the tale has been lost, but even more has been preserved in the documents, photographs, and recollections of another generation.

This brief history, which took a year rather than a lifetime to prepare, is often unable to do more than glance fleetingly at events that occupied the attention of the townspeople for months on end. Such is the surfeit of historical information that confronts every local historian who cares to seek it out. Selectivity becomes a genuine challenge when one tries to reconstruct, within so few pages, the main changes in a century or more of experience. I can only hope that this scaffold of a book stirs memories of Selkirk and similar prairie towns in some of its readers, tells them a few stories they have not heard before, and encourages them to set straight the record where I have erred.

The greatest gift that the author of a commissioned work can receive from his patrons is the freedom to pursue those lines of research and thought that he considers most important, and in this I have been most fortunate in working with the Selkirk Centennial Committee. All of the Committee members, and Steven L. Banera in particular, freely contributed their valuable time, energies, and specialized knowledge of the community to ensure the success of the project. I will always be grateful for their co-operation and understanding.

Many others assisted with the writing of this history. The staffs of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, the Legislative Library of Manitoba, and the Public Archives of Canada were congenial as always and did much to expedite the research in primary documents, as did those of the Western Canada Pictorial Index and the University of Manitoba Archives in photograph selection. I was fortunate to receive, throughout the duration of the project, the assistance of Randy Rostecki, who generously offered early maps of Selkirk from his private collection, his own research notes on the railway controversy of the 1870s, and his valuable advice on many related topics. Wendy Owen and Gerhard Ens, who acted as my research assistants for several months, have earned my gratitude for their enthusiastic involvement in the project and my respect for their abilities as historians. I owe a special thanks to Dorothy Garbutt, who graciously permitted me to examine and to use, without restriction, the invaluable personal papers of her grandfather, James Colcleugh, without which Selkirk's first decade would still be an unfathomable mystery. Finally, I would be remiss if I did not thank my wife, Terry Homik, to whom my gratitude is unending.



Selkirk Location Map

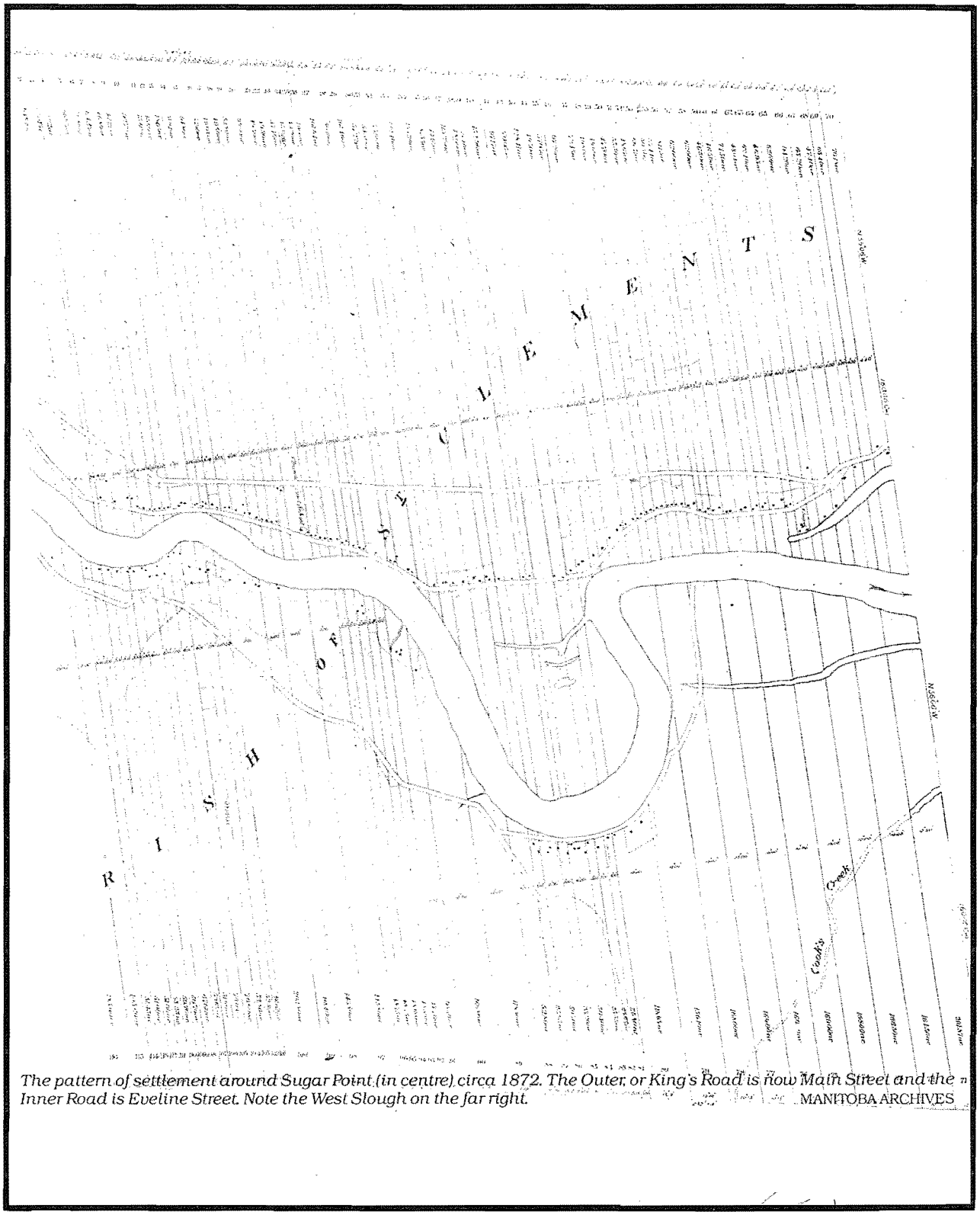
GARY PURPUR

CHAPTER ONE

THE POLITICS OF RAILWAY BUILDING, 1875-1883

IN THE SPRING OF 1875, before the last blocks of ice on the banks of the Red River had melted away, nine men piloted a York boat upstream toward the Indian Settlement. They slipped past the stone mission church that had stood at St. Peter's since 1853, past a string of white-washed Indian houses, and past a deep inlet fringed with canoes and still harbouring a Hudson's Bay Company steamboat, until at last they reached a heavily wooded spot just before the river bent sharply around the great thumb of land known as Sugar Point. There they landed and seven of them, axes and gear in hand, clambered out of the boat and up the steep bank to find the trail that ran along the river. With difficulty their companions shoved the heavy boat back into the channel and crossed slowly to the other side, where they put in near what soon would be the foot of Clandeboye Avenue in the town of Selkirk.[1] These men, and the woodcutters whom they had left to clear brush on the opposite bank, were in the employ of John Wright Sifton, a contractor for the Canadian Pacific Railway, and they had come to establish a telegraph office at this settlement on the Red, where a bridge was to be built to carry the transcontinental line out of the forests of the Shield and onto the open prairies.

Having moored the boat, they climbed over the ice to the top of the bank and immediately began their search for a suitable office building. Few trees blocked their view of the Inner Road (later Eveline Street) that hugged the bank and they could see a long line of small log houses, some shingled but most merely thatched, on the far side. Each house, with its little yard marked off by wooden poles, was set on a narrow lot fenced with barbed wire to keep stray cattle out of the crops that were sown there each spring.[2] These were half-breed and Indian homes, and they were clearly too small to accommodate a telegraph office. Farther down the road, at the very tip of the Red River Settlement granted to Lord Selkirk more than a half century before, stood another stone church and an Indian school in the parish usually called Mapleton. Hoping to find a larger building there, they started down the Inner Road. They came to a substantial house, apparently deserted, that had once belonged to Chief Factor Christie of the Hudson's Bay Company. It seemed ideal, but they could find no one to lease it to them. They continued on to a small trading post owned by George Black. He had no authority to rent the house, but he did offer them the use of the back of his store until they were able to make other arrange-



The pattern of settlement around Sugar Point (in centre) circa 1872. The Outer, or King's Road is now Main Street and the Inner Road is Eveline Street. Note the West Slough on the far right. MANITOBA ARCHIVES

ments. At once they ran a wire into the store from the line that had been strung during the previous fall. With the brass key connected, they tapped out the first C.P.R. telegraph message in Manitoba:

> To J. W. Sifton, Winnipeg: Our congratulations upon opening of the first office of the C.P.R. Telegraph at Mapleton today. Signed, James Colcleugh.[3]

This brief message heralded great changes, for it meant that the railway was indeed coming to the Settlement and that the little village would turn overnight into a bustling metropolis. Since 1871 the Dominion government had been committed to the construction of a transcontinental railway that would link east to west, ease the transport of people and goods, and unite a nation divided by distance. Sandford Fleming, "a mountain of a man in a stovepipe hat, his vast beard trimmed in the shape of an executioner's axe,"[4] became chief engineer and quickly sent surveying parties across the country to find a satisfactory route for the mainline. When James Colcleugh arrived at the Settlement, the mainline west of Lake Superior was still supposed to start at Fort William, take a northwesterly course to the Red River, where it would cross in the vicinity of the Indian Settlement, proceed north between lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba, cross the Narrows, and run on to distant Edmonton.

Business logic decreed that railways had to pass through the most populous communities, thereby increasing both passenger and freight traffic, and Winnipeg, with its 2000 inhabitants, was the largest town in the west. Yet to an engineer like Fleming, geography proved a stronger attraction than profit. He saw many advantages in the Selkirk townsite. As he wrote,

> Wherever the railway forms a convenient connection with the deep water of the river, that point will practically become the head of navigation of Lake Winnipeg. In course of time a busy town will spring up and the land of the town site will assume a value it never before possessed. To the north of Sugar Point, in the locality designated Selkirk, a block of more than 1,000 acres remains ungranted and under the control of the Government – this is probably the only block of land along the whole course of the Red River which has not passed into private hands or into the possession of the Hudson Bay Co.
>
> This large block of land abuts the river, where a bridge may be constructed with least apprehension as to the safety of the structure in time of flood, and where its erection could, under no circumstances, involve questions of damages. Near the river there is a natural deep water inlet, which can easily be reached by a short branch from the main line of the railway; along this inlet, and between it and the river, the land is admirably suited for a capacious piling ground, vessels lying in the inlet are in no way exposed to damage from floods, in proof of which it may be mentioned that the Hudson Bay Co. have used it as a place of shelter for years past.[5]

For these reasons, Fleming's crew had surveyed the Settlement during the summer and autumn of 1874, and laid out three possible river crossings. One was near George Black's trading post and the others were about a mile and a half farther north. This done, they would have normally retired from the field for the winter, but the government wanted a telegraph line built along the mainline as soon as possible and they remained during the bitter winter months to mark a route between the Settlement and Fort Livingstone on the Swan River.

While Fleming's surveyors were hacking a path through the bush to Livingstone, John Wright Sifton and his partners were politicking at Ottawa for the contract to build the telegraph line west of Fort William. Sifton was from Petrolia, Ontario, which happened to be in Prime Minister Alexander Mackenzie's riding of Lambton. He had been a farmer until nearly 30, went into railway contracting, and then became a private banker on the strength of his profits. As a successful businessman, he had little trouble gaining election to the

James Colcleugh in 1876 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

position of reeve of his municipality and then to the Lambton County Council. More importantly, he was a Reformer (Liberal) in politics and had actively supported the Prime Minister's bids for office in Lambton. Together with David Glass, a Tory turncoat and noted criminal lawyer who delighted in murder cases, and Michael Fleming, manager of the Montreal Telegraph Company in Sarnia, Sifton bid nearly $100,000 for the contract.[6] This was a grossly inflated tender, much higher than the others submitted to the government, but Mackenzie did not forget his political allies. Sifton, Glass and Company received the contract.

James Colcleugh, whom Sifton appointed superintendent of the telegraph operation, may have owed his position to political connections, too. In the coming years he would work tirelessly to elect Sifton to the House of Commons, and certainly it could not be said that there was much in his background to suit him for the duties with which he was now entrusted. Born at Dundas, Canada West, in 1841, Colcleugh was barely out of short pants when he was apprenticed to a druggist in the village of Ayr.[7] At 20, he moved to Buffalo, New York, to become a druggist's assistant. After the American Civil War he returned to Canada West to establish his own drugstore, which he ran continuously between 1866 and 1875, except for a brief interlude when he went to the front to battle the Fenian invaders, radical Irish patriots who hoped to strike a blow at England by attacking Canada through the United States. Then, in 1875, Colcleugh suddenly sold the business to his brother and headed west to run Sifton's telegraph venture. By virtue of his early arrival, Colcleugh was to become one of Selkirk's leading citizens, sharing in its rapid rise and missing its equally rapid downfall by the slimmest of margins.

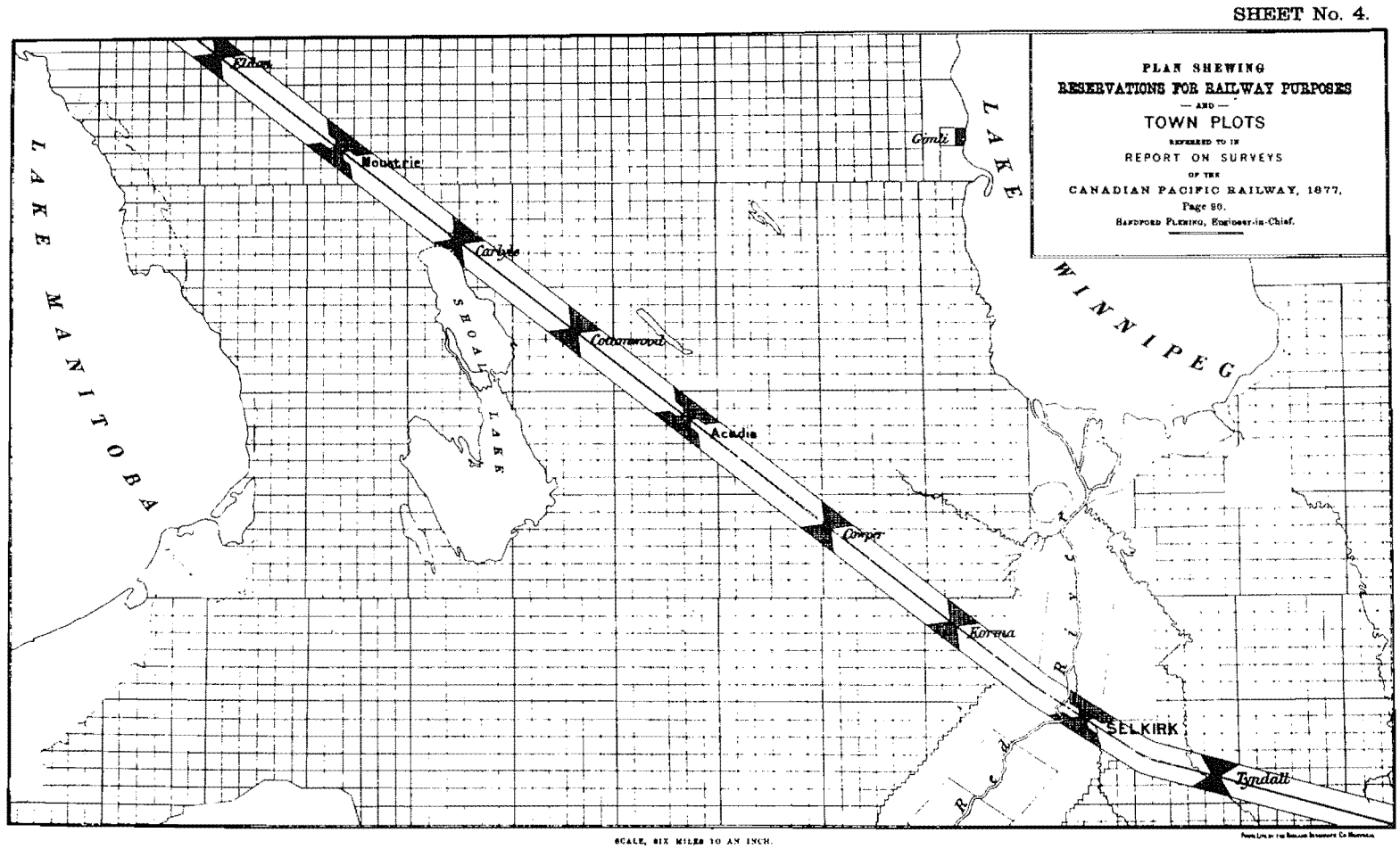
The Settlement was still a raw place when he arrived. It was, in fact, the centre of an Indian reservation where the descendants of

the legendary Chief Peguis lived. Peguis's son, Henry Prince, was their chief. In the late summer of 1871 Prince, along with several other band chiefs, had met the representatives of the Dominion government at the Stone Fort (Lower Fort Garry) to sign the articles of Treaty One. In exchange for their promises of obedience to the Crown and abandonment of all land claims, the Indians of Prince's band were to receive, among other gifts, "so much of land on both sides of the Red River, beginning at the south line of St. Peter's Parish, as will furnish one hundred and sixty acres for each family of five."[8] St. Clement's Parish had not yet been surveyed by the government between St. Andrew's and St. Peter's, and consequently the southern boundary of the new reservation began just south of Sugar Point. As such, it included all of the planned town of Selkirk. This is why Sandford Fleming was able to say that none of the land around his proposed river crossing was in private hands.

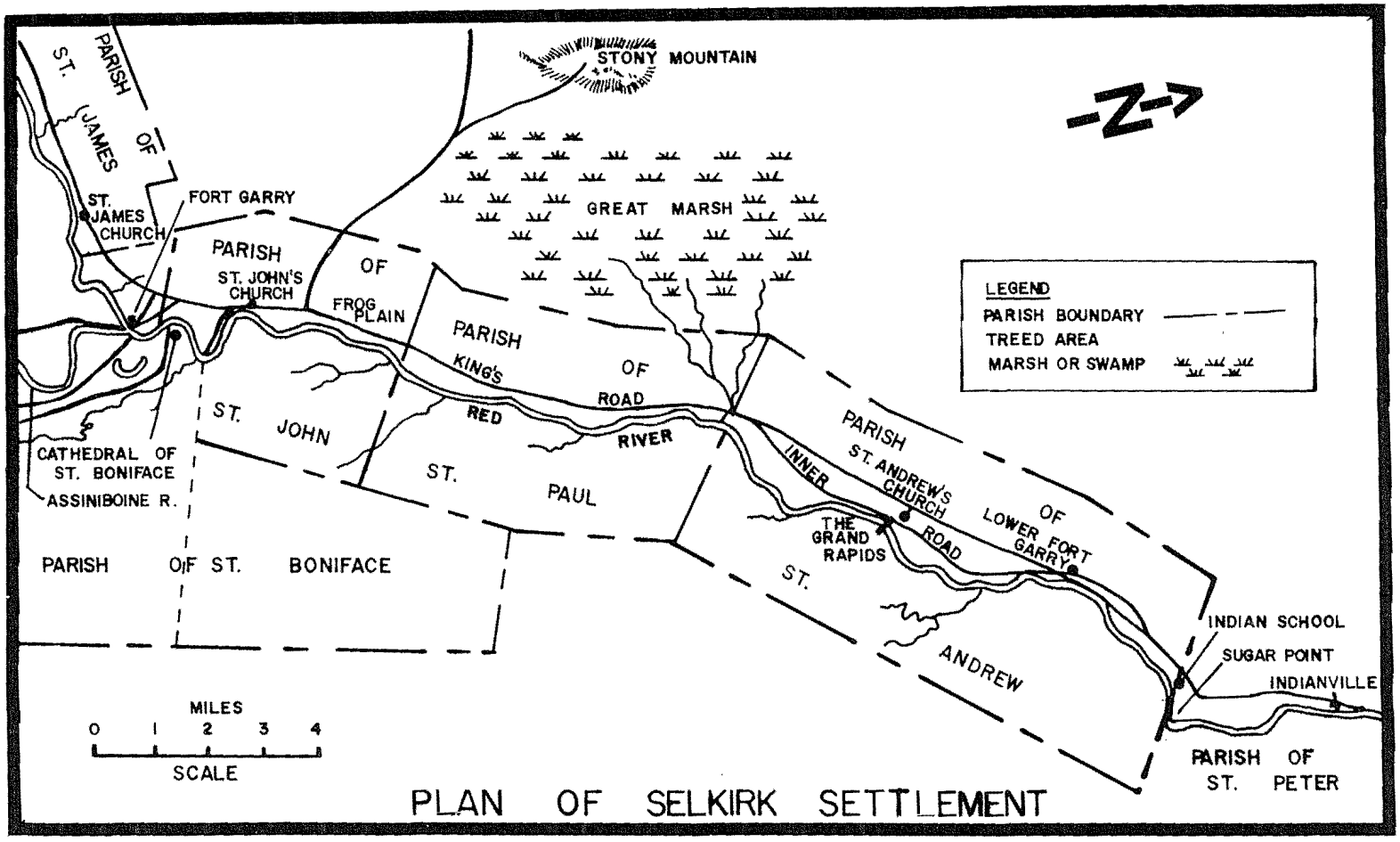
More than 1000 people lived between Sugar Point and the Netley Marsh, mostly half-breeds and Indians. Less than 50 were whites. These were settled people with a 40-year tradition of agriculture. The clergymen of the Church of England had lived among them since the 1830s and had taught them to farm on their narrow river lots. With crude implements they sowed acres of barley and potatoes each spring. Those closest to Sugar Point seemed to take best to farming, but lately even they had not had much success because of the grasshopper plagues that ravaged their fields every few years. Still, most families had a small herd of cattle, some pigs and a few chickens to help get them through the winter months. When the Dominion Lands surveyors came through the parish in the winter of 1872, and paused at some of the farm houses for tea, they could not help but notice the chicken coops kept in one corner of the kitchen to keep both birds and eggs from freezing.[9] While this surely saved the poultry, it did little for the aroma of the kitchen.

Despite recurrent grasshopper infestations, the summer seasons were the best. After the crops were planted, the men of the Settlement were able to hunt and fish to help fill the larder. Some found work on the Hudson's Bay Company boats that plied Lake Winnipeg and its tributaries, while others cut hay and wood on the east side of the Red for sale to white settlers closer to Winnipeg.[10] But while this nearness to Winnipeg was good for business, it did little to improve life on the reservation. Illicit liquor was in good supply and led to a distressing number of public brawls, arguments and thefts, and to an occasional murder. The growth of Selkirk would only worsen these problems.

The Church of England clergy, stationed at St. Andrew's, St. Clement's and St. Peter's, tried hard to maintain order on the reservation and to instill Christian virtues in the local Indians and half-breeds. After 40 years of work they could claim to have been quite successful in the southern part of the parish of St. Peter's, which was home to many English-speaking half-breeds and some former Hudson's Bay Company servants. But farther north, toward Indianville and beyond, the people were mainly Indians, less settled, and too far from the church to feel its full influence. For years these two groups had been called the Christians and the heathens.[11] Their different outlooks led to a minor civil war on the reservation in the 1870s, with the northern 'heathens' loudly complaining about the election of Henry Prince as chief. They wrote letter after letter to the Indian Commissioner to point out Prince's shortcomings. They accused him of keeping treaty money for his own use, of selling band potatoes without permission and of buying furniture for his house with the proceeds, of selling axes to Winnipeg saloon-keepers, and of being drunk most of the time.[12] Prince denied every accusation except the last, and his incorrigible nature finally prompted the northern band members to petition for a reservation apart



Sandford Fleming's 1877 survey of the mainline of the Canadian Pacific Railway through Selkirk. Note the incorrect placement of the town on the east side of the Red River. UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA ARCHIVES



Red River Settlement in 1859. Little had changed by the time of James Colcleugh's arrival at Sugar Point in 1875.
NARRATIVE OF THE CANADIAN RED RIVER EXPLORING EXPEDITION OF 1857 AND OF THE ASSINIBOINE AND SASKATCHEWAN EXPLORING EXPEDITION OF 1858

from St. Peter's. But no one in the government paid much attention to their attempt at secession and gradually the demand faded away.

These band troubles caused grave concern among local missionaries, but not nearly as much as the troubles within their own Church. By 1870 there were two ministers making the rounds in St. Peter's, James Settee and Henry Cochrane. Being an Indian, Settee took charge of the northern half of the reservation, while Cochrane, a half-breed, ministered to the southern part. Liquor problems preoccupied the clergymen at St. Peter's and elsewhere in the 1870s and none more so than Henry Cochrane, who was often drunk himself. By drinking and fornicating his way around the parish, he earned a suspension from the Church, but he was popular among his parishioners and they managed to have him reinstated. In an attempt to rehabilitate him, his superiors sent him to The Pas, but this only made him more difficult. Soon his wife was accusing him of drinking hard, of sleeping with her two sisters, and of beating her with his fists and a horsewhip.[13] Fed up with both his Church and his wife, Cochrane resigned and returned to St. Peter's to continue his carousing.

When not trying to rescue Cochrane from temptation, the local clergy spent much of their time worrying about the effects that the railway would have on the Settlement. Some were already evident. As Fleming had predicted, the value of land around the proposed crossing was increasing rapidly in anticipation of the commercial activity that would occur as soon as the mainline came through from the east. Wealthy men from Winnipeg and elsewhere began to buy land near the crossing for resale after the price had risen substantially. This was mostly land farmed by local Indians and half-breeds, although some belonged to clergy of the Church of England.[14] There were no clear titles in the possession of the occupiers of the land, as the government had not yet allocated lands to the natives, but the speculators were hoping to gain title soon. If they succeeded, and held on to the property until its value had doubled, tripled, or risen even more, they stood to make fantastic profits without lifting a finger. The Indians and half-breeds, on the other hand, would be landless and devastated.

By 1876 the Selkirk townsite was largely in the hands of three speculators, John Christian Schultz, Samuel L. Bedson, and A. G. B. Bannatyne.[15] Other speculators were numerous, but none seem to have had holdings on the same scale as this trio. Schultz, "a red-blonde giant, powerful of body and crafty of eye and mind,"[16] was a doctor by profession and a businessman and politician by preference. He had been one of the chief agitators for union between Manitoba and Canada in 1869 and had been imprisoned by Louis Riel for his convictions. Once the Metis resistance was over, Schultz turned increasingly to land investment, and his Selkirk property became but a tiny fraction of an empire of acreage stretching across Manitoba and beyond. S. L. Bedson was best known as warden of the Stony Mountain Penitentiary and owner of the largest captive buffalo herd in the country. Like Schultz, Bedson was a Conservative faithful. Bannatyne, on the other hand, was a Liberal, an aging Scot who had started out with the Hudson's Bay Company and ended up as one of the most successful of all Red River merchants. All three men had been purchasing land near the crossing for several years,[17] but none was more powerful than Schultz, who owned the centre of the townsite.

The speculation of these prominent men was not secret, and it inspired confidence in many others with less capital but no less thirst for profit. By the autumn of 1875 the Indian Settlement had begun to take on the appearance of a booming town. A resident described Selkirk to the editor of the *Manitoba Free Press* in late September:

About two months ago first surveys [of the townsite] were completed, building began immediately and has gone on since with considerable rapidity. The railway contractors occupy one of the buildings previously existing, and with the exception of a large depot across the river have erected no new buildings. A hotel was established in the house of one of the settlers, but within the last fortnight a large new building erected by Mr. A. H. Vaughan, has been opened as a hotel by Messrs. McKinnon & West. A large business is done by the proprietors. The other hotel is conducted by Messrs. Ogilvie & Brown, and is constantly crowded. In addition to these hotels there are two boarding houses, one conducted by Mrs. Platt, and the other by Mr. John Scarry, both of whom occupy new buildings. Mr. Sanderson from Winnipeg, is erecting a large building, which he intends to open as a flat-boat store. Mr. P. R. Young, of North St. Andrews, is erecting a store on the main street, and it is said, contemplates removing from his present store, or, at any rate making this his headquarters. Mr. Frank Whitman has the honor of having erected the first building in the future city, and conducts a grocery and provision business in it. To this he has lately, with a partner, opened a butchers' shop, and sells beef at a price so low as to make a resident of your city wonder that 24 miles should make such a difference. Mr. Peter McColman has erected a frame building, in which he means to open a general store. A boot and shoe shop is open on the property adjoining the house occupied by the contractors, on which also is the office of Mr. Wood, agent for the purchase and sale of real estate. Mr. Vaughan's surveying offices are situated farther north on the same street. Further back on the uncleared part of the city, Messrs. Wellman & Gardner have commenced brickmaking, and the first kiln, I believe, has been burnt already. Nearer the river are two buildings erected by Dr. Schultz, one of which is finished and occupied, and the other is approaching completion. Going down the river we find a ferry established and trips made every few minutes to accommodate the traffic caused by the railway and settlers. A little further down is the wharf of Messrs. A. McArthur & Co. where a schooner arrives about every week with a load of lumber, which is piled in a yard running back from the river, and on the rear of which an office has just been completed. Behind this lot, and on the main street, Mr. Colcleugh has erected a building to be occupied as a store.[18]

John Christian Schultz in the 1870s MANITOBA ARCHIVES

This frenzied building continued through the winter of 1875-6 and continued well into the spring until it slackened due to a shortage of construction materials. As naturalist John Macoun wrote, "Selkirk's future was brighter than [that of] any other place in the then comparatively unknown province of Manitoba."[19]

The excitement about Selkirk's prospects was not confined to the town,nor even to the province. Men of money in Ontario and elsewhere sounded out their acquaintances at Selkirk about the chances of reaping quick profits from speculation in real estate. One such man was J. C. M. Logan, owner of a Guelph oil refinery, who wrote Colcleugh in the winter of 1875 for advice. He asked dozens of questions about the site: how wide was the river, was the land suited to agriculture or lumbering, could a good harbour be dredged economically, what was the town population and the usual nationality of its inhabitants, and what was the cost of living? "The above may seem perplexing questions," he added,

> but should your answers be favourable they may induce several of us here to pay you a visit and possibly result in helping you individually. Let me know at what price you could secure say a few hundred acres of land on both sides of the river—cash....In short, advise me *squarely* how you are progressing and what are the chances for money to *make money*, and would you make that commodity fast if aided by a strong financial backer.[20]

As a further inducement, Logan offered Colcleugh a "handsome commission" on any safe investments he was able to make in local real estate.

There were plenty of opportunities to make a great deal of money at Selkirk in 1876, but not in land. Not yet, at least. The value of real estate depended on the arrival of the railway and that event was still unpredictable. In the meantime, there were substantial profits to be made in providing lodging, building materials, transportation, and the staples of life to the hundreds of people flocking to the townsite.

Two inexperienced young men who did well in business at Selkirk were McKinnon and West. They arrived from Ontario in 1875 and, by pooling their cash, rented a hotel for $35 a month. Business was so good that within a year they had saved enough to build their own hotel, even though the weekly rate for room and board was only $6. It was beneficial, of course, that they assigned six or seven people to each room and then slept another two dozen or more on the floor.[21]

The business of transporting people between Winnipeg and Selkirk was just as profitable. In 1876 there was no livery stable at Selkirk, and those wishing to travel the King's Road could either walk or hire a rig in the city at a cost of $5 a day. With labourers' wages hovering around $2 per day, it is reasonable to believe that shank's mare received a good workout.[22] Those with a little more cash could travel in more style aboard the *Swallow*, a little steamer owned by Captain Flanagan. In the autumn of 1875 Flanagan built, at his own expense, a small wing dam on the St. Andrew's Rapids, and, as the *Free Press* commented, "the *Swallow* can now drag itself over."[23] By the spring of the next year the *Swallow* was making daily trips between Winnipeg and Selkirk, and she continued to do so until she capsized in 1878. Captain Flanagan's tragedy probably boosted the business fortunes of Connell and Burke, who started a stagecoach line between Selkirk and the city late in 1877. The round-trip took two days, with the stage leaving Winnipeg at 8:00 a.m. on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, and returning at the same time on alternate days.

Transporting staple goods was much more difficult. Not enough food was grown locally to supply the needs of all who came to seek their fortune at Selkirk and Winnipeg merchants were not yet engaged in wholesaling to any extent. The size of the problem can be seen in James Colcleugh's efforts to bring in supplies for his new drugstore on Eveline Street in the spring of 1876. He wrote to his

brother William in Ontario:

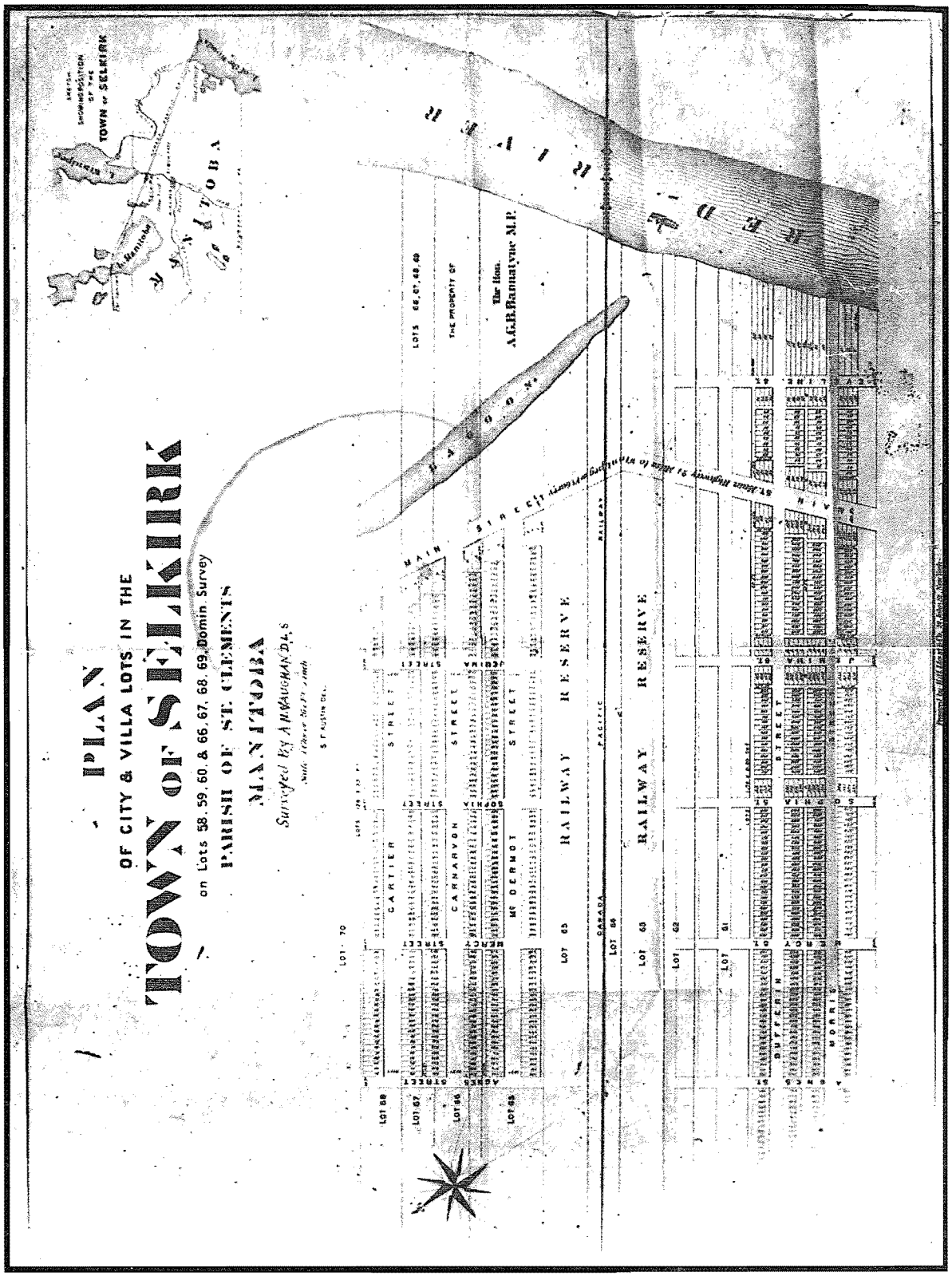
> The 1st of May is as early as anything can be got down the river from Moorehead [Minnesota] but as it is generally about the middle of May before any boats leave Sarnia, it makes it too late almost to get goods here by that route. If not too expensive it would pay to get our first shipments by Chicago and St. Paul and have them at Moorehead on the Northern Pacific [Railroad] ready for the first boats on Red River.[25]

It was an awkward route, very similar to that travelled by many of Selkirk's first residents, but it remained the best way of reaching Red River from the east before the railway was constructed.

A shorter route, somewhat less convenient, did exist. Named the Dawson route in honour of the surveyor who laid it out in 1868, it consisted of a series of rough trails connecting the chain of lakes between Lake Superior and Lake of the Woods. One person who chose this cheaper route was Robert Bullock, a tough 29-year old from Cornwall, who intended to establish a general store at the Crossing. He loaded his personal possessions onto a wagon and spent 28 miserable days between Toronto and Selkirk, while the stock for his store travelled the more luxurious route through the United States.[26] As soon as both he and his stock had arrived at Selkirk, the town obtained its biggest bootlegging business. The back of his store quickly became a popular rendezvous, and its liquid stock added greatly to his fortune. Still, it was a risky business because most of his customers were Indians and it was illegal to sell liquor to them. As Colcleugh wrote to a relative, "I find that it [liquor] is a very unsafe thing to deal in in this country where Penitentiary is the penalty for giving it to an Indian. I hope to do business without it...So let us bid good-bye to cock-tails."[27] But for those with more nerve, it could be profitable. Having arrived nearly penniless, within five years Bullock had $12,000 in cash and another $15,000 in real estate.[28]

Many of those who came to Selkirk were not as fortunate. Lacking sufficient capital to start a business or to gamble on real estate, these men sought work from the wealthy. Most became labourers, toiling on the boats or in construction for a couple of dollars a day. Others found employment on Sifton's railway and telegraph gangs, working as ditch-diggers or scraper operators or bush cutters. Still others managed to become hired hands on local farms, now that there was more demand for farm produce. But with room and board costing about $4.50 a week, they were not able to save much. If a man were lucky enough to be made foreman, he could earn as much as $56 a month plus room and board.[29] Worst of all, these people were totally dependent on the continuation of local economic growth for their livelihoods. And 1875 and 1876 were not steady boom years. In 1875 the grasshoppers returned and again laid waste to the crops in the fields. As a result, "many a farmer who was in a comparatively well-to-do way when he came to the country had to take the shovel and wheelbarrow last summer [1875], and if plagues return again this season the country will certainly be in a desperate condition."[30] Then, in the spring of 1876, the shortage of lumber at Selkirk threw many builders out of work. To make matters even worse, eastern Canada entered a period of economic depression and the Dominion government cut back the amount of railway construction. Needless to say, these reversals cut short "bright hopes and made peoples' faces unusually long."[31] Colcleugh reported that during the spring of 1876 there were many people at Selkirk who would do almost anything to keep food on the table until the ice went out and cheapened the cost of passage back to Ontario.

Yet those with money did not despair. Confident that the coming railway would bring prosperity, they endeavoured to create a handsome and industrious community. Now that most buildings were constructed along the



The original Selkirk town plan, c.1875

PUBLIC ARCHIVES CANADA

newly-mapped streets, of which Eveline was the main thoroughfare, they organized grading crews to straighten the roadways, level the ruts, and clear some ditches. And as the town lost its dishevelled appearance, they attempted to lure industries. They did so by offering financial bonuses to anyone willing and able to establish an industry that was needed in town. In 1876 some of the biggest investors in Selkirk, including Schultz and Bedson, used their money to interest Martin Hoover of Port Elgin, Ontario, in the establishment of a grist mill. Within a month, Hoover had obtained 12 lots in town and was planning a four-stone run mill.[32] Across the river, at the place already known as East Selkirk, other investors had constructed a pottery and brick-yard to supply local people with these necessities. Stone-quarrying on the outskirts of town began at the same time. Down at the West Slough, that inlet of water that flanked Selkirk on the north side, James Colcleugh constructed a 113-foot wharf and storehouse for the use of the riverboat captains. Actions such as these, which showed clearly that the town boosters were quite willing to back their words with cash, removed some of the sting from the financial downturn and made believers of many of the sceptics who were already packing their bags to leave. Gradually the population swelled, until there were more than 200 people living in the community.[33]

The optimism was contagious. Near Clandeboye, where a few determined settlers had already drained the land to turn it into pasture and cultivated acres of grain, a similar boom-time mentality was catching hold. During the summer of 1876, the *Free Press* correspondent from the district reported on the impact that the railway news was having on that village.

> The effect was magical. Property that was purchased a few months previously from the Government at $1 per acre rose immediately to $4 [in 1875], and now a little more than a year after $1000 has been offered and refused by one of our settlers for a quarter section of unimproved land, the fortunate possessor believing that our close proximity to the growing town of Selkirk, where already we find cash sales for our farm and dairy products, will in the course of eight to ten years more than quadruple its value.[34]

To all living in the vicinity of Selkirk, this unbridled euphoria seemed well-founded. Not only were new buildings rising heavenward daily, but across the river, at East Selkirk, a shiny pair of rails were already laid in the direction of Fort William. Some four hundred miles to the east, an identical set of tracks pointed toward Selkirk. True, there was still a 181-mile gap between the two points, but it seemed clear that completion of this link in the transcontinental railway was not far off. Moreover, preparations were being made for construction of a brick round-house at East Selkirk. Fueling the mood of hope even more was the brisk business being done in half-breed lands around the crossing. The government allocated these lands in early 1878 and speculators immediately snapped them up at prices ranging between $80 and $160 for 240 acres.[35]

Those who knew least about the politics of building the railway were happiest; those who knew a little more were growing anxious. The businessmen of Winnipeg were not pleased that the government intended to leave their town off the mainline altogether and they moved to better their prospects. Early in 1878 a delegation travelled to Ottawa to try to persuade Mackenzie's government that the railway route should be changed to run farther south through Winnipeg.[36] At the same time the chief district engineer urged the government to construct the Selkirk bridge immediately. Neither petitioner had much success, for the depression still lingered and Mackenzie was reluctant to spend huge amounts of money in a controversial manner on the eve of a general election. To his father, James

Colcleugh wrote that "I daresay the next session will be a hot one and will try McKenzie's Ministry pretty hard. We can form no idea here of how the cat is jumping."[37] Still, his anxiety was plain as he added that "this country's politics is Manitoba and Winnipeg is Manitoba."[38] Two months later, however, he seemed greatly relieved when he received word from Sifton that although the government might alter the route of the railway to the south, it had no intention of changing the location of the bridge.[39] Then a rumour began circulating that caused Colcleugh's spirits to soar. It was said the government would soon let the contract to build the 181-mile gap in the Fort William-Selkirk line, and Colcleugh wasted no time contacting a well-placed relative in the east, advising him that

> If there is any truth in the west[ern line] story, a few thousand dollars might be made...by having the information a little in advance. Now, if you have any means of finding this out and acquainting me by telegram yea or nay, I could make it interesting for you while whacking up on the profits which I can assure you would be considerable.[40]

But rumours could be worrisome as well as heartening, and the continued agitation of the Winnipeggers at Ottawa sparked a new Selkirk offensive. On the evening of March 5, 1878, Colcleugh and a small circle of friends and acquaintances gathered at John Sifton's new house to discuss the financing of a Selkirk newspaper. Most of Sifton's guests offered a few hundred dollars, while Colcleugh said he was willing to give the publisher a building rent-free for three years. Like all newspapers, this one would carry the usual burden of town gossip, merchant advertising, business cards, world news via telegraph, and editorializing; these items would hopefully keep it in business. But it was to have a purpose far above these mundane activities, and that was to be the boosting of the town and its prospects in the railway war with Winnipeg. Those who subscribed $1000 at Sifton's that night were of no single political stripe; rather, they were united by a common interest in 'booming' the value of Selkirk property through acquisition of the railway bridge. "The politics of the paper," as Colcleugh said, "is to be Selkirk."[41]

Partisan politics was in the air, too. It had been widely understood that Prime Minister Mackenzie would call a June election, and that if he did so, his chances of re-election were reasonably good. Even Sir John A. Macdonald, the Conservative leader, feared a summer campaign. The sitting member for Lisgar constituency, in which Selkirk was situated, was John Christian Schultz, a Conservative faithful. While he was unquestionably the single largest landholder in Selkirk, he was also known to have invested heavily in Winnipeg real estate. Moreover, if the country as a whole returned the Liberals to power, while Lisgar re-elected its Tory member, there was the possibility the bridge would be lost. Still more disturbing was Schultz's performance in the House of Commons, where he had openly and vociferously opposed the railway policy of Prime Minister Mackenzie, a policy that would have benefitted Selkirk enormously if implemented. These considerations led Colcleugh to approach Sifton with the proposition that he challenge Schultz for the seat.[42] Sifton was already the provincial member for St. Clement's and had been re-nominated as the Liberal candidate in the anticipated provincial election. He was well aware that if he ran against Schultz he would have to fight an uphill battle. He hesitated.

While Sifton dallied, Prime Minister Mackenzie announced that the election would take place on September 17th. This was a great relief to the Conservatives, as it gave them a chance to organize properly and to sell their platform to the electorate. As it became clear that Mackenzie would have a difficult time gaining re-election, Colcleugh and his cronies grew desperate and pressured Sifton to accept the nomination. Finally, on September 1st, he did so. The *Free Press*, a Liberal

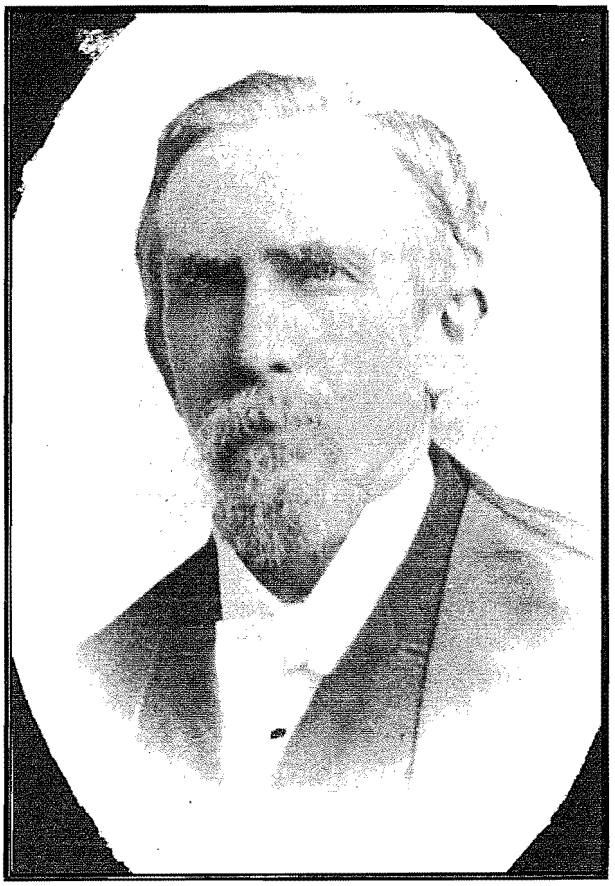
newspaper, gave Sifton an excellent chance of deposing Schultz, but even Sifton's most ardent supporter, James Colcleugh, knew better. As early as June he had written that "Schultz, if he lives long enough, will be re-elected. His constituency is comprised principally of half-breeds who know nothing about Dominion politics and he has been so long among them that it would be almost impossible to bring a man out to beat him."[43] That Schultz had worked hard to settle the half-breed land claims did much to aid his cause. The half-breeds could not have known, of course, that the wily politician only wished to make it easier for land speculators like himself to buy up these valuable lands. Still, the election would not be over until the votes were tallied, and Sifton's supporters mounted the hustings.

On September 12th, Sifton and Schultz faced each other at a public meeting in Selkirk. While the incumbent merely defended his record of service, Sifton attacked his opponent, the Tory party, and all that both stood for. A reporter from the *Free Press* recounted the gist of Sifton's speech:

> ...as a railway man, he Sifton would use his every exertion to open up the country with roads. He deplored the loss to the countryside in the delay caused by the action of the former representative of Lisgar in opposing the Government scheme to give us immediate railway communication.[44]

There had been plenty of liquor in evidence at the meeting and each inebriate in the place insisted on making a speech in favour of his chosen candidate. The evening wore on until every tippler had voiced his slurred support and then the meeting—and no doubt some of the imbibers—collapsed. In the morning, the *Free Press* remarked that Schultz would be lucky to get a dozen votes.

Elections were held differently in those days. While voting took place on September 17th in eastern Canada, it did not occur until the 26th in the west. As people marched to the polls in Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes,



John Ward Sifton, 1878 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

Sifton's supporters huddled about the telegraph key in Colcleugh's office, awaiting the first results. One of the earliest decisions of the evening came from Kingston, where Sir John A. Macdonald was defeated by 144 votes. Pandemonium broke out in the telegraph office and Colcleugh mentioned that "this looked like an indication of how others were going and our folks felt hopeful."[45] The rest of the night was not as pleasant for them, however, and by morning it was certain that the Conservatives had already won a majority of the seats. The rest of the nation's voters no longer mattered, and Sifton was forced to reconsider his position. If he did succeed in winning Lisgar, he would sit as a member of the Opposition and would in no way be able to advance the fortunes of Selkirk. Reluctantly, he withdrew his candidacy and Schultz won the riding by acclamation. Two days later the first issue of the Selkirk newspaper, the *Inter-Ocean*, appeared, its very name evoking images of a proud town astride the great transcontinental railway. But actually there was little to cheer about in the narrow columns of type. With Schultz as the member for Lisgar, Selkirk's ruin seemed certain.

It was a harrowing winter. Hope alternated with despair, and confusion was paramount. Immediately after the election debacle, Colcleugh had learned from an engineer of the line that the change of government would have no effect on the crossing site,[46] even though the Tories had promised to re-route the mainline through Winnipeg. Then it became known, in early February of 1879, that Schultz and several other big property owners in town refused to sell their lands because the price was not yet high enough.[47] Surely this meant that even Schultz still believed the bridge would be built at Selkirk. In a feeble effort to influence Schultz even more, Colcleugh and his allies circulated a petition about the bridge and other railway matters throughout Lisgar, and when this document had reached the length of ten feet, they forwarded it to Schultz at Ottawa for presentation in Parliament. The honourable member denied ever receiving it, although the Selkirkers quickly learned that it had been "kept back on purpose."[48] Worse news was still to come.

In late February or early March, the Selkirkers applied to Parliament for a charter to build a railway known as the Selkirk and South Saskatchewan. This line was to begin at Selkirk and run in the direction of the Assiniboine Valley, where settlement was rapidly occurring. More importantly, it was to have a spur leading into Winnipeg. It seems they hoped that by giving Winnipeg a connection with the Canadian Pacific mainline, they could retain the river crossing for themselves. Their plans were thwarted later in March, however, when Premier Norquay visited Ottawa in search of additional funding for the province. In exchange for promises of more money, the Dominion government received assurances from Manitoba that it would support the federal view that railways running parallel to the transcontinental line would be contrary to the best interests of the nation. This meant that as soon as the Dominion government shifted the mainline south of the lakes, which happened in early April, no charter could be granted for the Selkirk and South Saskatchewan Railway.

Meanwhile, Schultz and his Winnipeg friends worked hard to bring both the mainline and the bridge to the city. They financed a newspaper, the Winnipeg *Daily Times*, which spent most of its energies promoting a southern route for the Canadian Pacific mainline, through Winnipeg rather than Selkirk. Then they obtained a Dominion charter to build the Saskatchewan Colonization Railway. Unlike the Selkirk and South Saskatchewan, this line would not run parallel to the C.P.R. mainline and was therefore allowed. More significantly, its charter enabled the builders to construct bridges on the Assiniboine and Red rivers. This provision became very important

when the Minister of Railways announced that while the Dominion government would allow the Canadian Pacific to pass through Winnipeg, it would have nothing to do with the construction of a bridge there. James Colcleugh grew worried. To a relative he wrote that "the amendment to the CPR Act gives Winnipeg a Branch but no bridge unless they build it themselves which they are not likely to do as may be judged from the division that exists among them on railway matters at present."[49] But Colcleugh misjudged the Winnipeggers' determination. After nearly a year of bickering, the factions reached agreement and in February of 1880 work began on the Louise Bridge.

Later that year the railway affair received yet another twist. The Dominion government, unable to finance construction of the mainline, turned control of existing trackage over to a private syndicate of investors. One of those investors was Donald A. Smith, a Hudson's Bay Company notable and Member of Parliament for the riding in which Winnipeg was situated. The attention of the Selkirkers now shifted to Lower Fort Garry, where the H.B.C. owned a great deal of land on both sides of the river. Colcleugh remarked that he was "very much afraid the bridge will be built at the Stone Fort. The Syndicate getting possession [of the railway] don't improve our chances a bit."[50] In June of 1881, the C.P.R. presented its list of demands to the city of Winnipeg. It asked for a bonus of $200,000, free station property, and exemption from taxation in perpetuity. If it did not receive these, the bridge would be built at Lower Fort Garry. In desperation, the Winnipeggers agreed and Selkirk was robbed of its bridge.

The town was devastated. During the height of the optimism Selkirk's population had been between 300 and 400, but by November of 1880 the place was almost deserted. Its five hotels shrank to one, its six general stores to three. Colcleugh expressed the feelings of many when he said, "I haven't felt so blue and lonesome since I came to this country."[51] Real estate values dropped to nothing and he began to look elsewhere for investments. In August of 1881 the *Inter-Ocean* ceased publication. All hope evaporated.

Then the talk of incorporation began. If Selkirk incorporated, it would be able to sell debentures and offer a bonus for a branch line from Winnipeg. A petition seeking the approval of the remaining residents was circulated, and Colcleugh and his colleagues initiated negotiations with the Manitoba and Southwestern Colonization Railway, successor to the Saskatchewan Colonization line. As this was a Winnipeg-controlled railway, they were not optimistic. To their surprise, the railway's representatives agreed to build a branch from Winnipeg down the west side of the Red for $7500. This was not a large sum and the Selkirkers thought they could easily obtain it from the municipality of St. Andrew's without incorporating the town. But when they presented a proposal to the municipal council, a representative from the C.P.R. walked in and offered to build an identical line for a bonus of between $60,000 and $70,000.[52] The difference in cost was astounding, but the Canadian Pacific was too strong to resist and a bylaw was drawn up to be submitted for the approval of residents in December. Pessimism prevailed among the bylaw's framers until voting day, but when the votes were counted, they found that the measure had carried by 190 votes.

Notwithstanding this favourable turn of events, the townspeople were still smarting from the treasonous actions of Schultz. The advent of a general election in June of 1882 gave them an opportunity to vent their anger. They chose Arthur Wellington Ross as their candidate to oppose Schultz. Although Ross was a Winnipeg lawyer, he had invested in Selkirk real estate to the tune of $73,000 and, as Colcleugh put it, "we are not likely to be neglected."[53] The *Free Press* threw its support behind him, and constantly berated

Schultz for having "so shamefully destroyed the trust reposed in him."[54] Had Schultz attended the nomination meeting held for Ross, he would have known that he was finished. Though a total stranger to most of the delegates in attendance, Ross was greeted with prolonged applause and cheering. And when the votes were counted on July 5th, Schultz went down to defeat, 760 to 720.

Ross's victory and the start of construction on the branch line revived Selkirk's fortunes. The C.P.R. had subcontracted the railway work to Colcleugh and three other Selkirk men: Robert Bullock the merchant, R. Dickson, a building contractor, and J. A. Howell, a riverboat captain, and the new town council agreed to support them financially if difficulties arose. By March of 1883 the population had risen to its former level of about 400, and new buildings were going up every day. Down by the East Slough a huge saw-mill was taking shape, and it was said that Selkirk would soon have a registry office and a county court building. There was even talk of tendering a bid on the construction of a new insane asylum the provincial government was planning. And once again the local businessmen banded together to raise a bonus for a town newspaper that "will be a great assistance to us in blowing our own trumpet."[55]

On the morning of August 16, 1883, the townspeople arose unusually early even by their strict standards. Everywhere there were signs of activity as they hoisted all the bunting they could find into the shape of a giant archway above the railway tracks and made last minute preparations to receive a trainload of dignitaries and guests from Winnipeg. At 11:30 the special excursion train arrived and 800 people poured out to watch Premier John Norquay drive the last spike in the Selkirk branch of the C.P.R. A brief battle of politeness ensued concerning who should have this honour, and finally the mayor's wife took sledge-hammer to spike and drove it home. After everyone who was anyone had made a suitable speech in honour of the occasion, the crowd dispersed to explore the town and to picnic down by the river. And, when no one was watching too closely, Colcleugh and his cronies slipped away to the back of Bullock's store to quaff some of the 'refreshments' that had been "laid in for a very big *drunk* in celebration of the event."[56]

Arrival of the first railway locomotive in Selkirk, 1883
MANITOBA ARCHIVES

CHAPTER TWO

Head of Inland Navigation, 1883-1910

THE TOWN BUSTLED with prosperity. Each day the train brought yet another gang of young men looking for work as carpenters, plasterers, bricklayers and boatmen, and several times a week the steamers docked with cargoes of green lumber and shingles from the islands of Lake Winnipeg and the ferries crossed from East Selkirk with piles of building lime heaped high upon their decks. From this labour and these materials, a solid new community took its shape. Already the dusty corner of Eveline and Manitoba was the heart of the business district, a false-fronted cluster of five general stores, two butcher shops, a bakery, a drug-store, a blacksmith shop, two flour and feed stores, two hotels, a livery stable, two stationery and book stores, and a printing office where Gemmel and Groff ran off the Selkirk *Herald* every Friday morning. Behind these buildings, to the north, the south and the west, frame houses freckled the landscape. The southern reaches of Eveline were lined with fashionable residences, while more modest structures arose on empty lots farther back from the waterfront. This was the progress and the stability that the town boosters had sought, and, like it or not, they owed it all to the C.P.R.

It was a time when the absence of a railway could kill a fledgling town before it had a chance to do anything more than crow about itself, and the branch line from Winnipeg immediately became Selkirk's lifeline to the rest of the commercial world. No longer did local merchants and manufacturers have to rely on cramped wagons and creaking Red River carts that took all of one day to bring supplies from the city and all of the next to return with orders and merchandise for sale. Nor did they have to place their trust in the small steamers, like Colcleugh's *Lady Ellen*, which might take hours to negotiate the rapids of St. Andrew's. The train could carry much more freight and many more passengers and, best of all, could easily make the one-way trip in under an hour. But there was a price to be paid for such luxury of transport. Shortly after the town was incorporated in the summer of 1882 the first council, headed by Mayor James Colcleugh, passed a bylaw granting the Canadian Pacific a bonus of $35,000 to construct the branch line into Selkirk.[1] This was an enormous sum for the community with a taxable assessment of only $879,519, and in later years it would become an unmanageable burden. But in 1882 it was understood simply as the price of progress.

Signs of progress were everywhere in Sel-

Eveline Street, 1885

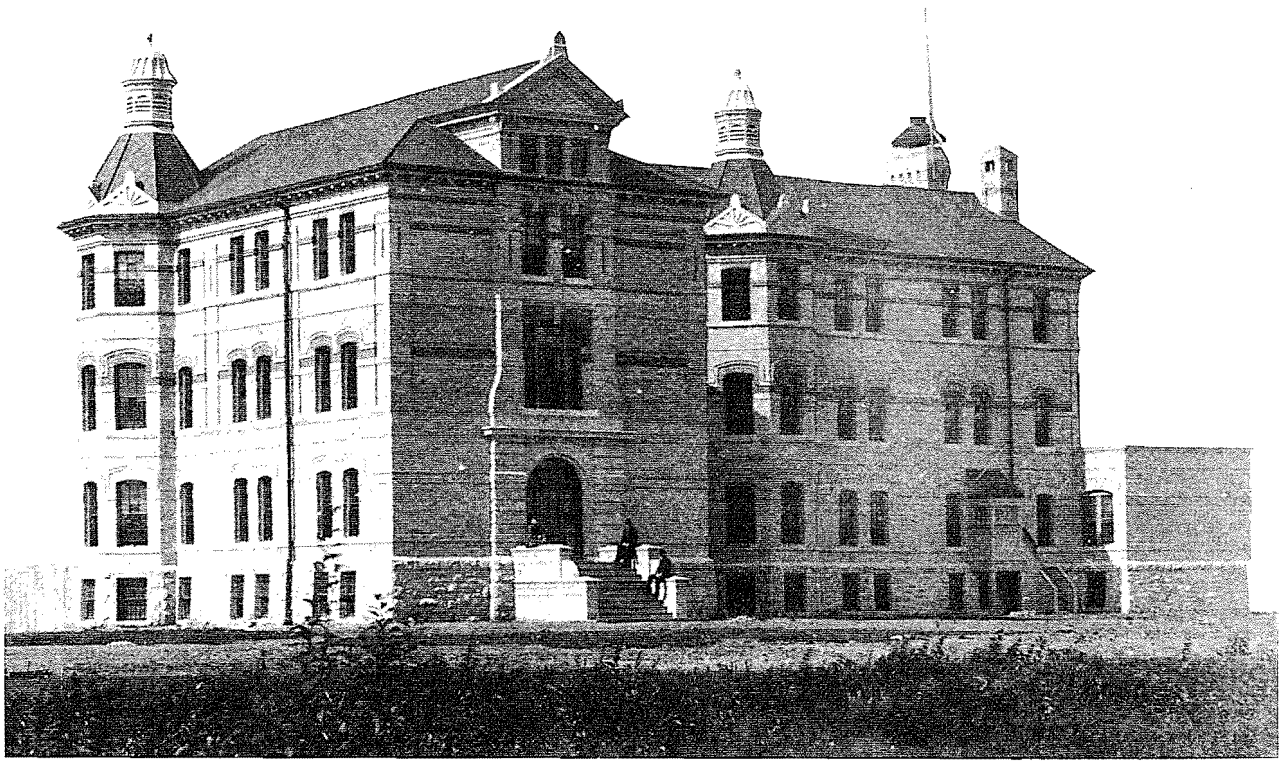
UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA ARCHIVES

kirk, and in few places were they more evident than far to the west along Manitoba Avenue. There, on an empty plot of land, the new provincial asylum for the insane began to take shape in the late summer of 1884. There was a real need for such an institution in Manitoba. Until the 1870s deranged people were sent out of the province for treatment, and those unfortunates who remained were locked in jails where they were treated like animals.[2] When space became available at Lower Fort Garry in 1871, provincial authorities fenced off the northern part of the compound for use as a prison and transferred the insane there. The prison warden, S. L. Bedson, protested against the confinement of demented people in his bailiwick because they disturbed the prisoners, but even after Stony Mountain Penitentiary was erected in 1877 the lunatics were still with him, although he did manage to confine them to the basement. Soon the penitentiary was filled to capacity and the provincial government, lacking the funds to build a proper asylum, once again moved the insane into Lower Fort Garry where they remained for another two years.

The first medical superintendent of the insane in Manitoba was Dr. David Young, a physician of some repute in Selkirk and throughout the Red River Settlement. Variously described as an "esteemed citizen"[3] and as a "drunken incompetent,"[4] Young was born at Sarnia in 1847 and received his medical training at Queen's University in Kingston. Like many young professionals of his generation, he moved west after graduation and became the medical officer of the penitentiary at the Stone Fort. He soon made a name for himself by treating the many victims of scurvy in Red River following the disastrous grasshopper infestation of 1875-6, and again during the next year when an epidemic of smallpox swept through the Icelandic settlements on the west shore of Lake Winnipeg. When the new asylum opened at Selkirk in 1886, Young seemed a logical choice for the position of superintendent, and for the next 36 years his handsome carriage was a familiar sight along the King's Road as he travelled daily between the hospital and his colonial home at Lockport.

The asylum he governed was an impressive sight, rising three stories above the flat prairie. It was constructed of white brick manufactured at Selkirk, with a few bands of red brick "to mark the lines of the stories and to give by variety of color a cheerful and effective appearance."[5] It was no accident the architect wished his building to present a cheerful aspect. It was modelled on plans drawn up by a Pennsylvania commission inquiring into the condition of the insane, and reflected the humanitarian attitude towards the demented that was coming into vogue. Several features of the building show this concern with pleasant surroundings for the patients. The wards, for example, were arranged so that every room was lighted with sunshine. And while it was necessary to place bars on the windows to prevent escapes, the architect was careful to obtain "cast iron guards rather ornamental in form, so as to obtain the same end without the depressing jail like appearance the straight wrought bar always gives."[6] In the yard, trees were planted for shade and beauty, an artesian well dug to provide ample water for drinking and therapeutic baths, and a great drain installed under the centre of Dufferin Avenue all the way to the river to "carry away the large amount of [water] soakage which is found to exist, especially in the spring, and so to keep the building healthy for the inmates."[7] Stables were built for cows and horses, and large plots of land were left open to be farmed by the patients. Still, there could be no doubt that this was an institution of confinement, for all around the site ran a picket fence, eight feet high and 3000 feet long.

The asylum quickly became a Selkirk landmark and a mainstay of the local economy. It provided steady work for 12 permanent staff



The newly-completed Selkirk Mental Hospital, 1887

MANITOBA ARCHIVES

as well as another job for James Colcleugh, who became its first bursar. Others benefitted more indirectly, as the institution required enormous quantities of food, linen and other supplies for the patients. These needs grew annually as the patient population increased from 59 in 1886 to 122 by 1892.[8] By that time the asylum was admitting patients from the North West Territories as well as from Manitoba, and this may explain the rapid rise in the hospital population.

While the provincial asylum hinted at the importance government funding would always have in Selkirk, there was another public building that stood for a kind of economic growth in which the town was never to have much success. This was the registry office, built in 1883 by local contractor Richard Dickson at a cost of $2080.[9] Like all small towns of the era, Selkirk wanted to become a trading centre for all the farmers of the area, a place to which they would come to sell their cream, butter and grain, to buy cotton cloth, harness and machinery, and to socialize around the cast iron stove in Bullock's store. Possession of a registry office, in which all land transactions were recorded, seemed an intelligent way to tempt farmers into town. The problem was there were very few farmers to attract.

Nature did not favour Selkirk in this respect. The river that bordered the town on the east may have been a highway to Indians and fur traders, but it was nothing more than an obstacle to those farmers who had settled the wooded lands of Springfield and Birds Hill. Until 1884 there were only makeshift ferries on the river at Selkirk, and after that the ferryman charged a toll for both passengers and teams. And, if the active merchants of Beausejour hadn't already captured the business of farmers on this side of the Red, those of East Selkirk certainly would. By the mid-1880s East Selkirk was a sizeable community with all the general stores and blacksmithing shops a farmer could want, and the construction of the C.P.R. roundhouse there in 1883 provided an excellent hall for church services, hospital facilities, and lively dances.[10] If a farmer needed work during a lean crop year, he could probably find it in the quarries, or in Arthur Doidge's brick and pottery factory, or down at Colville Landing where the steamers docked and transferred their cargoes to the trains. Over time an allegiance to this community developed among farmers on the east side, and it would be many years before they would find it necessary to cross the river regularly.

West of the town lay swamps. Visitors to Selkirk in the 1880s were absolutely convinced that the town was the sole high spot in Lisgar County and that it was surrounded by stagnant creeks and bogs that never drained.[11] To a degree, this was true. Not far west of Selkirk was the thin end of a 24 mile long swamp called the St. Andrew's Marsh, but more popularly known as the Big Bog. This waterlogged leviathan, ranging in width from two to five miles, served as the drainage basin for the creeks of five townships to the west and of Netley Creek to the north.[12] A more formidable obstacle to farm settlement could scarcely be imagined. In 1882 Colcleugh and other concerned citizens obtained the backing of the townspeople and attempted to find a practical route for the construction of a road across the bog to the settlements of Greenwood and Victoria on the far side. Under the guiding hand of surveyor A. H. Vaughan, the little party spent two months wading through the mud and water looking for a suitable roadway. They claimed to have found two routes, both through the thriving community of Clandeboye, but it seems they were unable to get additional funding from the people of Rockwood and their plan fell through. Undaunted, they tried to persuade the provincial government to drain the bog by dredging Netley Creek, its natural outlet into the Red, but the government found that this would cost $75,000 and

refused to consider the suggestion. Not until 1899 was this work done.

As if the Big Bog and the Red River were not sufficient barriers to the development of Selkirk as a farmers' trade centre, the town council had to contend with St. Peter's reservation directly north of town. Some of the finest farm land in the district was locked up inside the reserve, and the leaders of the town spared no effort trying to open it to settlement. Early in 1883 Colcleugh advised the Lisgar M.P., A. W. Ross, to "devise some means of busting [the reservation] and your name will be immortalized!"[13] He had just circulated a petition among the townspeople asking the Dominion government to relocate the Indians elsewhere and to put the reserve land up for sale to farmers in 100-acre blocks. As he told Ross, "the shape it is in now is always going to be a drawback to our growth and prosperity."[14]

It was not simply that the reserve prevented settlement; the town was constantly having trouble with the Indians, too. They were, according to the Selkirk *Herald*, "noted for their thriftlessness, immorality, and indolence."[15] The free flow of liquor in Selkirk's hotels did nothing to help matters, of course, and noisy brawls involving 25 or 30 Indians down at the Lisgar Hotel were common. It was said that the "braying" of drunks on the streets at night was a regular occurrence, and women did not venture out after dark for fear of assault. In 1888 a quarrel between an Indian from the reserve and an Italian who lived in a shack down by the river ended when the Italian drew his revolver and shot the Indian in the chest. Somehow the victim managed to stagger down the street to Mackenzie and Smith's store, and a doctor was called, but the man did not survive. About the same time a great disturbance took place on the reservation itself when close to 1000 Indians, upset at the way in which the government allocated food supplies, surrounded the Indian Agent, held him captive while drowning out his cries for help with war whoops, and stole the entire ration of bacon he had brought with him. Incidents like these, which received tremendous coverage in the local newspaper, did nothing to encourage farmers and their wives to shop in Selkirk.

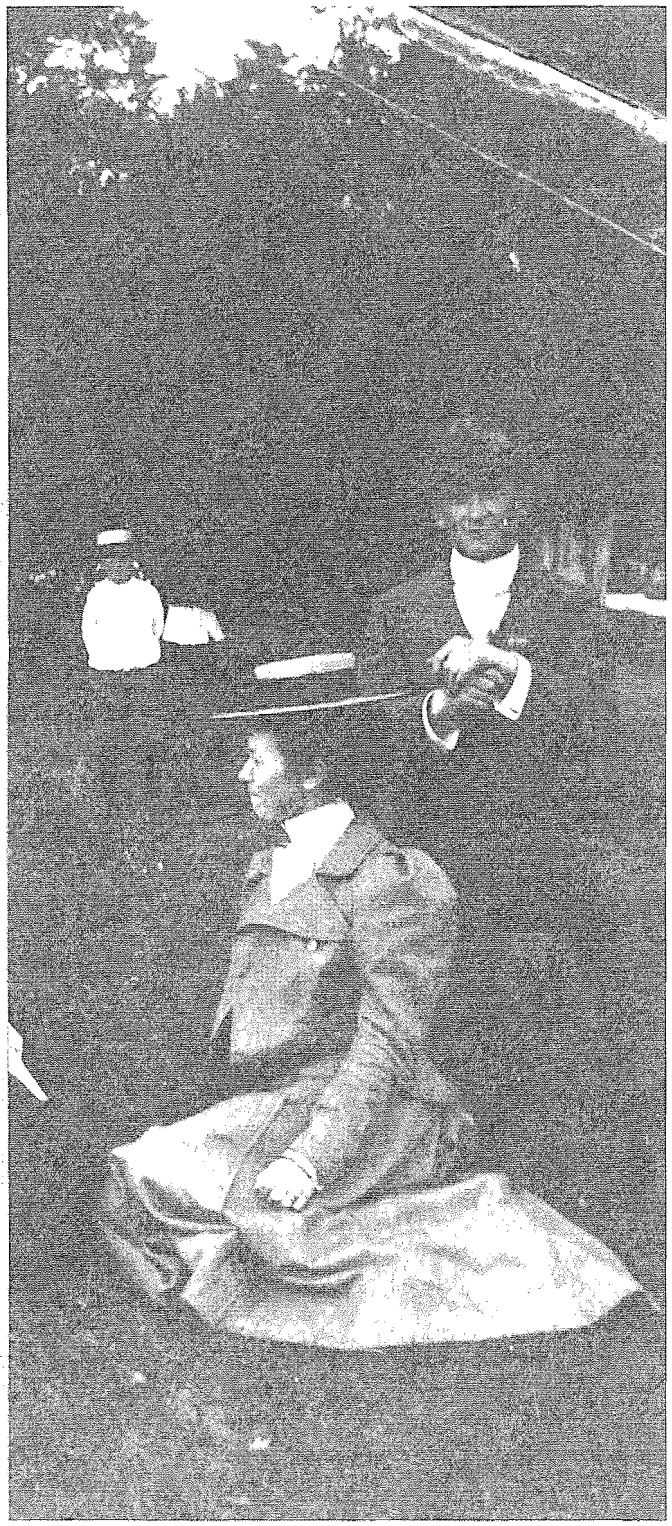
There was, however, a side to life on the reservation to which none of Selkirk's merchants objected. This was the annual treaty day, when Indian Agent McColl came to distribute $15 to every family of five at St. Peter's. On the night before, the merchants moved wagonloads of goods out to the reserve and set up tents in which to sell them to the enriched natives. At first only a few eager merchants participated, but by 1886 there was an hourly stagecoach running between town and the reservation, and steamboats carrying hundreds of passengers chugged down the river day and night.[16] Trading in cheap goods and liquor continued around the clock, and the place grew more riotous with each passing hour. By the turn of the century treaty day at St. Peter's attracted 2000-3000 visitors from Selkirk and Winnipeg, and dancehalls, dining halls and church bazaars were set up to accommodate them. The affair became an annual gala carnival, and with over $12,000 in treaty annuities at stake each year Selkirk residents began to count it as an important feature of their economy.[17] It continued to attract their attention until the Indian band was gradually relocated to a reservation between the lakes after the turn of the century.

Selkirk boosters had long envisioned the day when their town might become a popular summer resort for Winnipeggers, and in 1883 construction of the C.P.R. branch line made this possible. Soon thousands of visitors converged on the town every summer to relax and picnic amid the natural beauty of the fern grove at the river's edge or to rent one of the small sailboats always available from the fishing companies down at the docks. Holidays,

Lisgar House Hotel, Selkirk, 1894 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

especially Victoria Day, saw the greatest influx of people. On that particular occasion in 1884, Winnipeggers arrived by train and aboard the steamer *Marquette*, a shallow draught vessel quite capable of lurching over the treacherous St. Andrew's Rapids. The town council ensured that the "Thistle Inspector" had made his rounds in town and at the fairgrounds, and that Constable White had managed to swear in six 'specials' (at $12 for all six) to keep order on the holiday. All day long the visitors enjoyed an endless variety of sporting competitions, aquatic exhibitions, horse-races, and long-jumping contests, while the hastily-recruited Selkirk Brass Band tooted its tinny repertoire amid the general din of the afternoon. Still more impressive were the company picnics, notably those of the C.P.R. and of Ashdown's Hardware, that took place in the mid-summer months. To the usual sporting events and races, these added dancing platforms for the adults (with Italian string bands providing the entertainment), wheels of fortune for the adventurous and the reckless, and pleasure boats for cruising down the Red. To the visitors, this was great fun; to the businessmen of Selkirk, it meant great profits. As the new century began, the merchants succeeded in getting the Board of Trade to endorse the idea of a distinctive park for the town, one that would bring together all of the picnicking parties that spread themselves along the river bank. This was the beginning of River Park, "located in the north end of the town so that visitors from southern parts will require to come through the centre of the town,"[18] and thereby enrich the merchants as they passed by. From a Mr. Polson, the town purchased its park land on the flats between the West Slough and the river for $250 an acre. It was to be developed in conjunction with the newly-built Winnipeg, Selkirk and Lake Winnipeg electric railway, and to this day it is possible to discern the line's right-of-way loop by the circular arrangement of trees planted

Picnic at Selkirk, 1898



MANITOBA ARCHIVES

near the centre of the park.[19] By 1905 the town had completely cleared the site of brush and stones, built a pontoon bridge across the slough at the foot of Taylor Avenue, and erected a large dancing platform with concession stands in the middle of the park. Although River Park was to face stiff competition from the C.P.R.'s resort at Winnipeg Beach, it would always remain a favourite rendezvous for the youth of Selkirk and Winnipeg.

Of all the entertainments that contributed to Selkirk's coffers, none were grander than the steamboat excursions which became popular on the Red River and Lake Winnipeg in the early 1890s. Some excursions, particularly the earlier ones, were of short duration and consisted of nothing more than a one-day trip to Netley Creek, where a picnic lunch was enjoyed before the return to Selkirk. But for the princely sum of $15 (equivalent to as much as half of a labourer's monthly wage), there were available week-long cruises that carried wealthy Winnipeggers, Selkirk notables and visiting dignitaries as far up the lake as Grand Rapids. For these tours big ships like the *City of Selkirk*, *Premier* and much later the *Keenora*, were employed. Tourists would come to town on the C.P.R. line, disembark from the Bradbury station aboard a special carriage owned by Millidge's livery, and present themselves to the officers of the boat at the docks. Once the boat had taken on water for the boilers and cordwood for the engines, the crew would cast off to the loud cheers and wild waving of the local children who never missed the excitement of another departure. With passengers ringing the decks and the Union Jack and an assortment of other pennants fluttering in the breeze, the boat would slowly make its way downstream between the tree-lined banks, past the beaches, Hecla Island and Whiteway Point, and thence into the open lake. This was one part of the voyage that most passengers enjoyed immensely, and

those who had remembered to bring along their box Kodaks snapped furiously in every direction. As one Winnipeg socialite remembered,

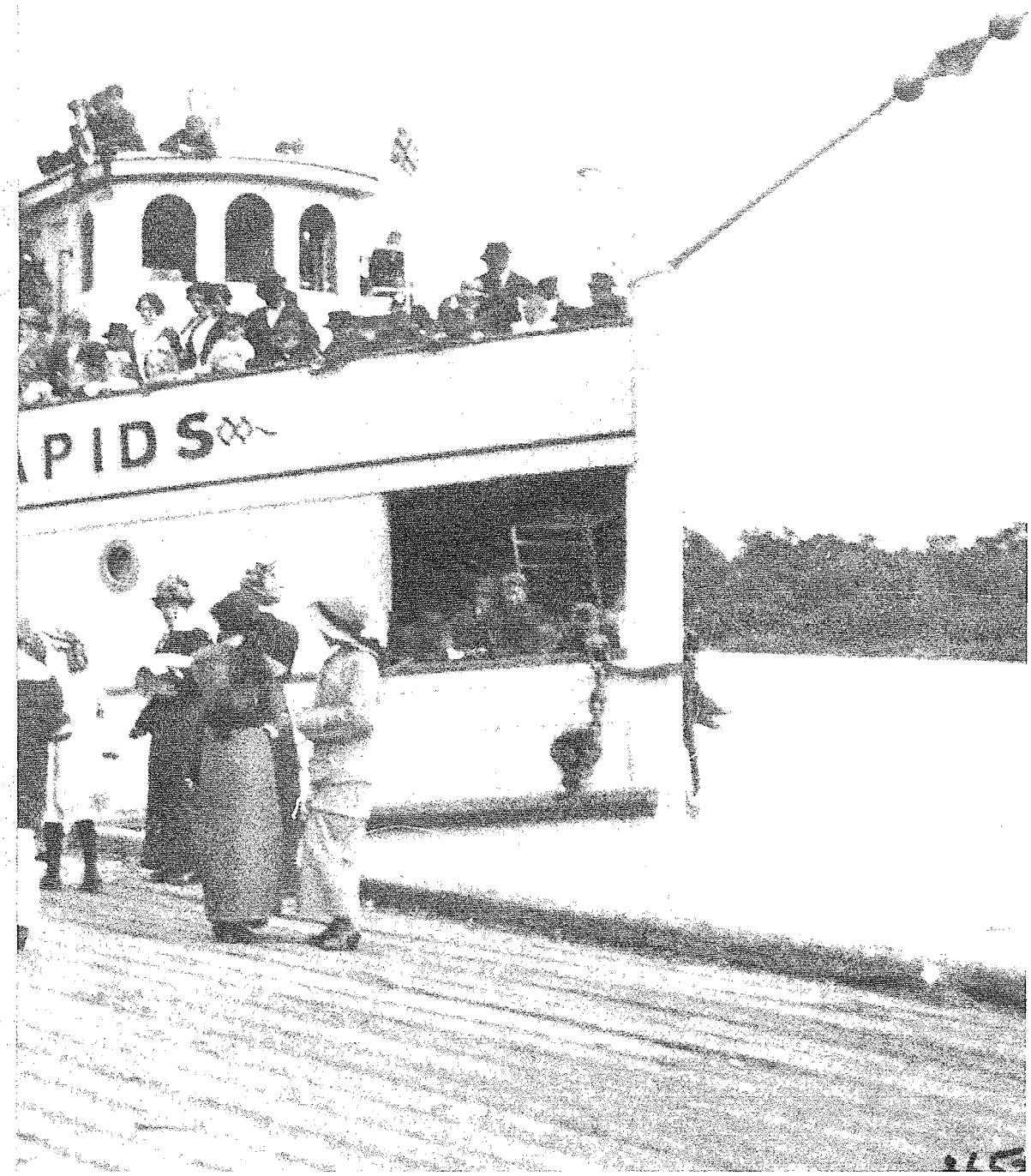
> It was a very pleasant sail through this part of the lake, past many pretty islands and small bays. Gull harbour is one of the prettiest spots, and being immediately in the course of the steamer, will no doubt soon become a favourite summer resort.[20]

On board the passengers dined well, and their every care was attended to by a bevy of stewardesses who sailed on every cruise. The only unpleasant aspect of the tour was the constant shower of cinders and sparks that floated down from the main stack and sometimes set fire to an elaborate hat or singed a few hairs of a lady's exposed coiffure. At frequent intervals the boat put in to be 'wooded up' again, and this gave the passengers an opportunity to go ashore and explore the tiny settlements and fishing stations, or to arrange a hasty visit to a lighthouse, such as the one perched upon the rocks of Black Bear Island. Before half the week was gone the excursion party would arrive at Grand Rapids, to be transported upon the tramway to Cedar Lake where the mouth of the great Saskatchewan was a sight never missed. The passengers always delighted in snapping pictures of the wreck of the old *Colville* that lay disintegrating on the shore, and then they made preparations for the return voyage. The steamer excursion was a tour unique in the west, and although the names of the boats would change over the years, its popularity would endure for decades.

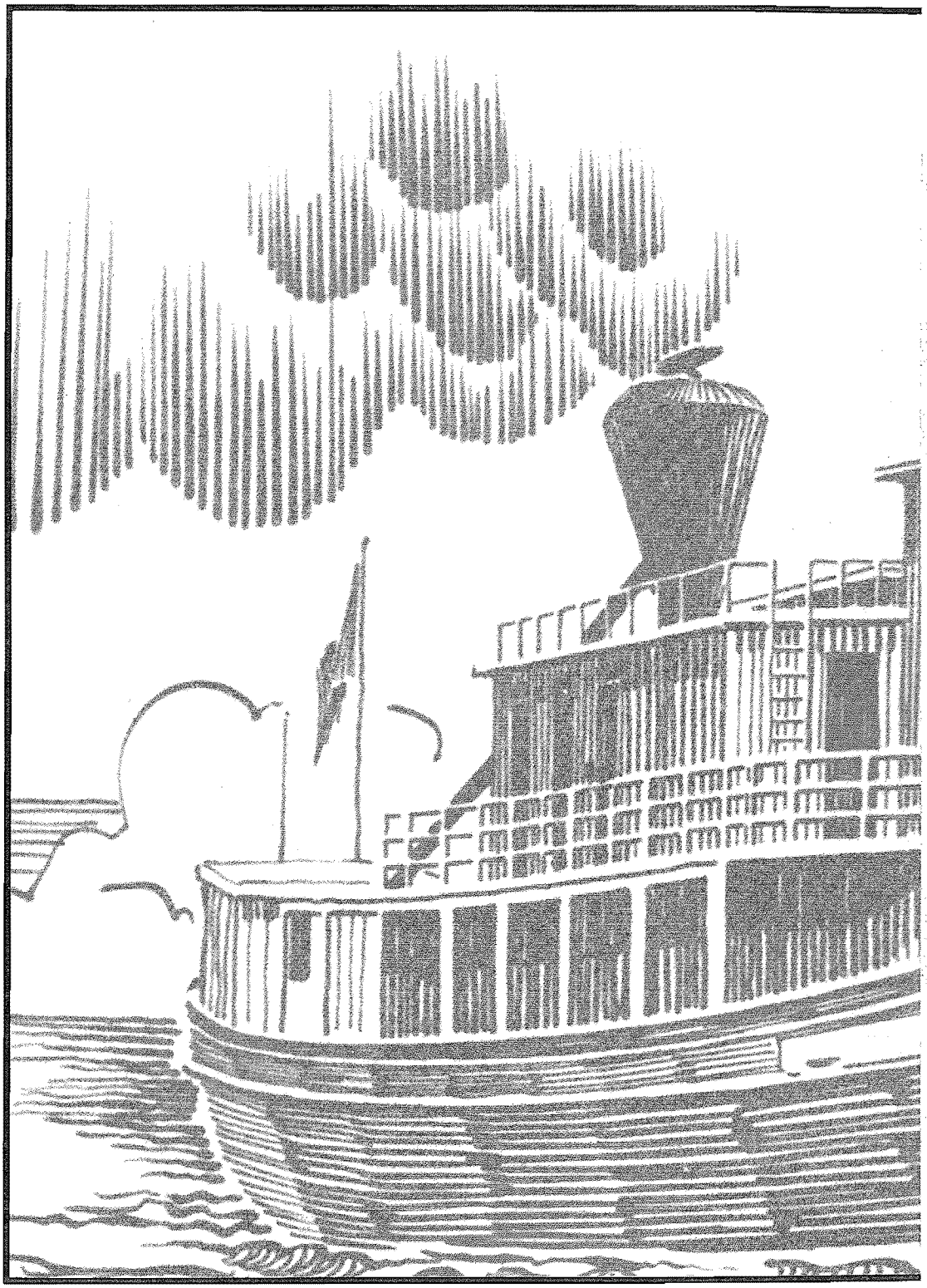
J. H. Ashdown's employee picnic at Selkirk Park, 1914

MANITOBA ARCHIVES

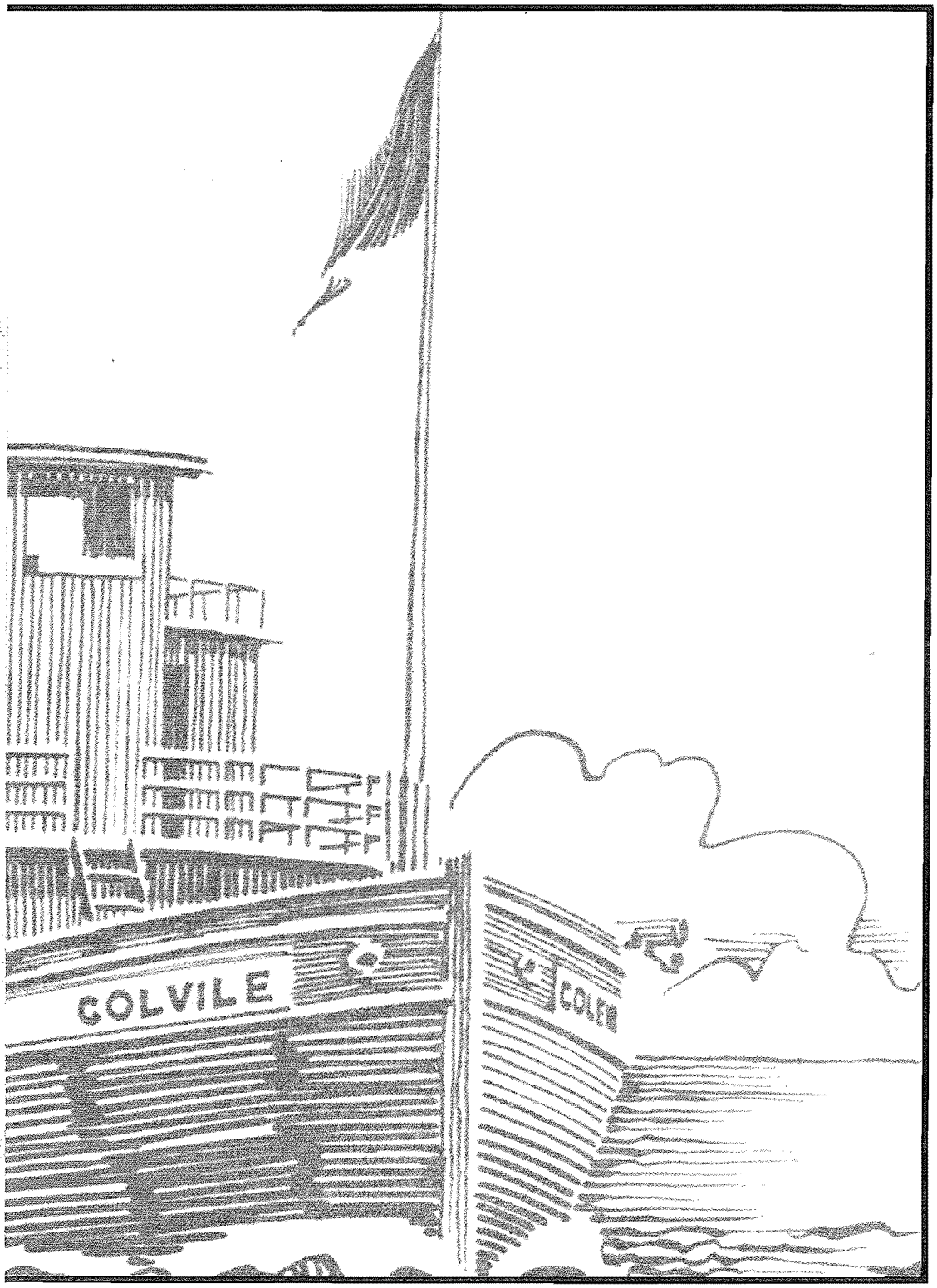
Excursion at Selkirk, Manitoba, c.1910



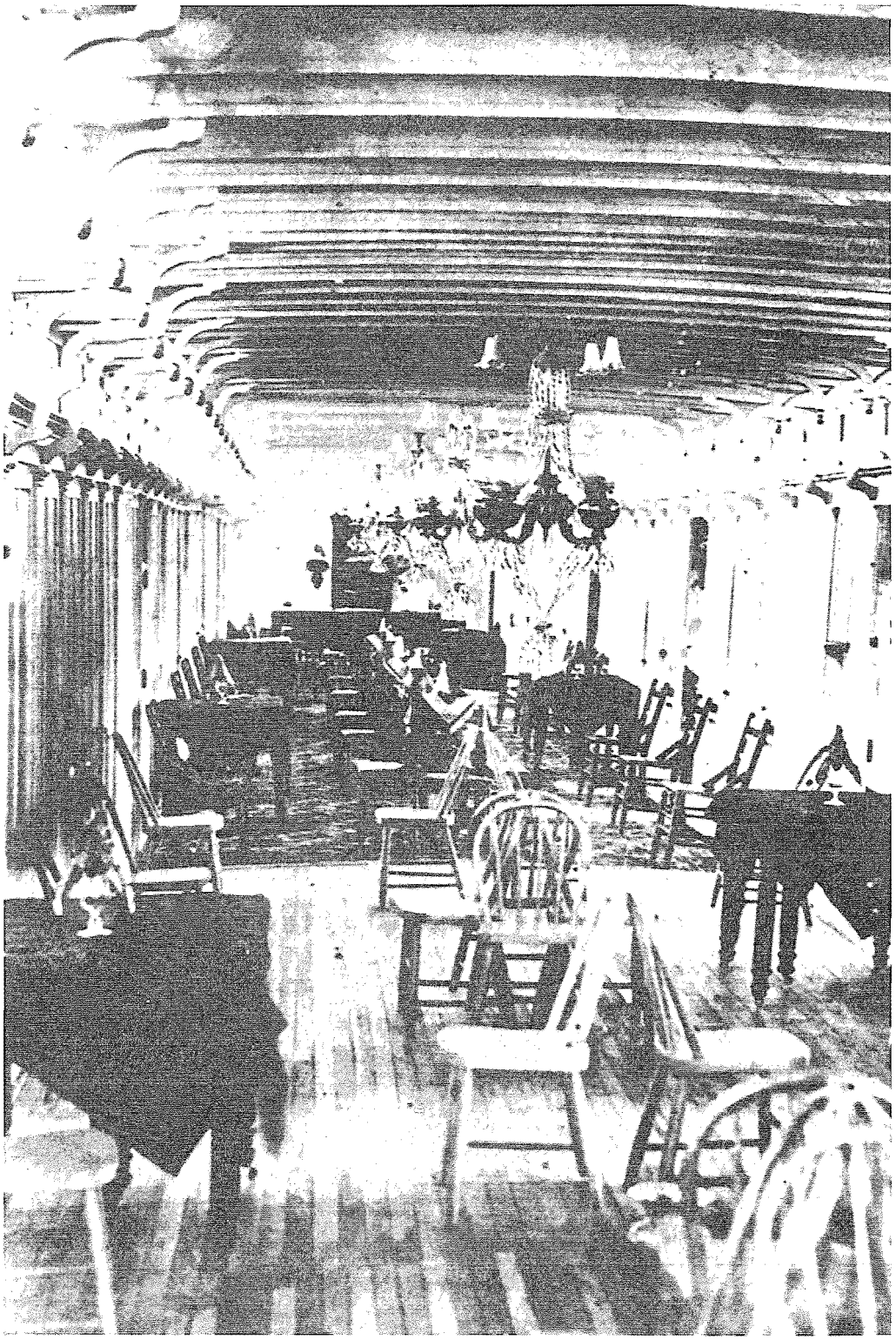
PUBLIC ARCHIVES CANADA



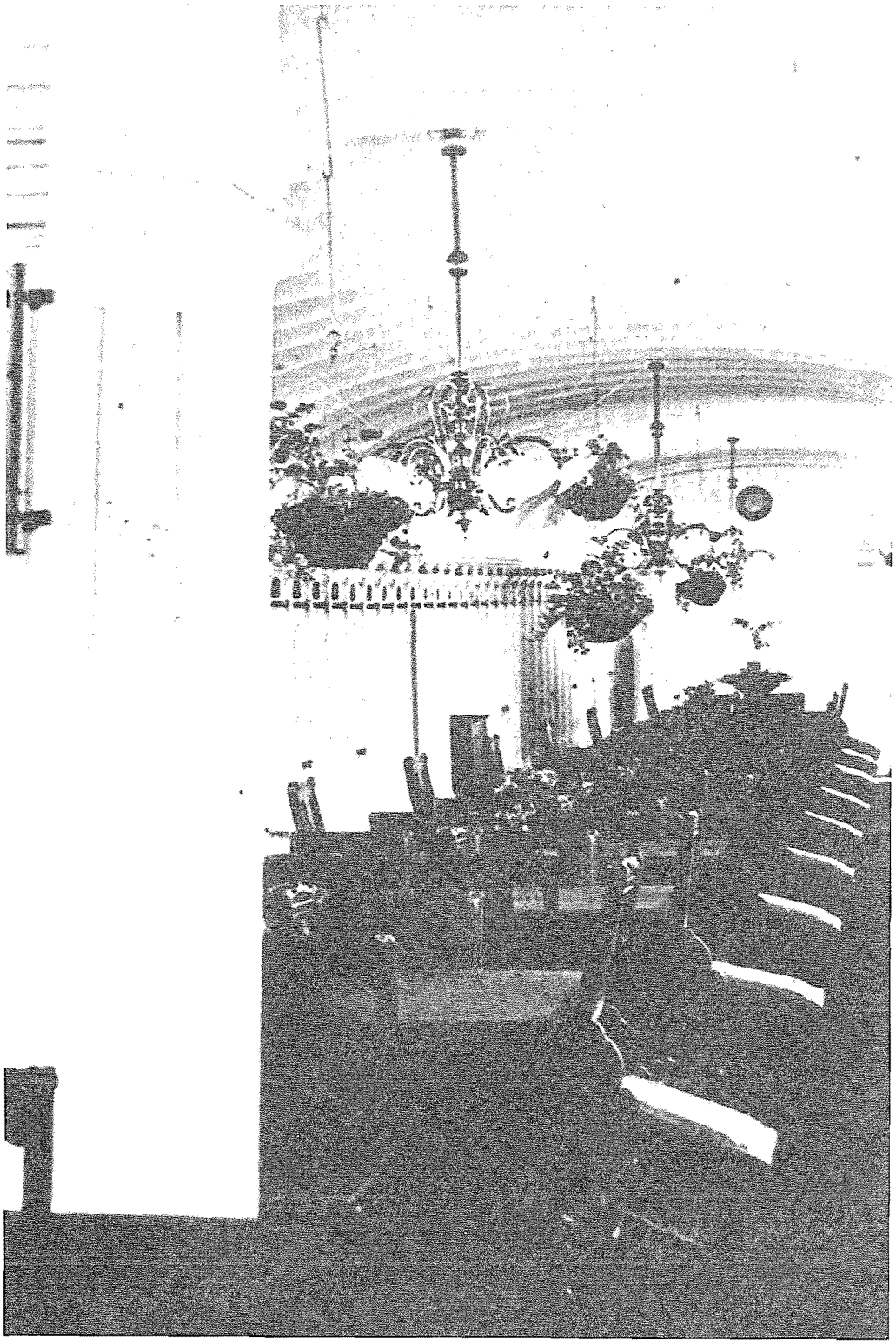
The Colvile, *the first steam screw ship on Lake Winnipeg. Destroyed by fire at Grand Rapids in 1894.*



WESTERN CANADA PICTORIAL INDEX



The general lounge of the S. S. City of Winnipeg *in 1881. This room was also used as a dining lounge.*
WESTERN CANADA PICTORIAL INDEX



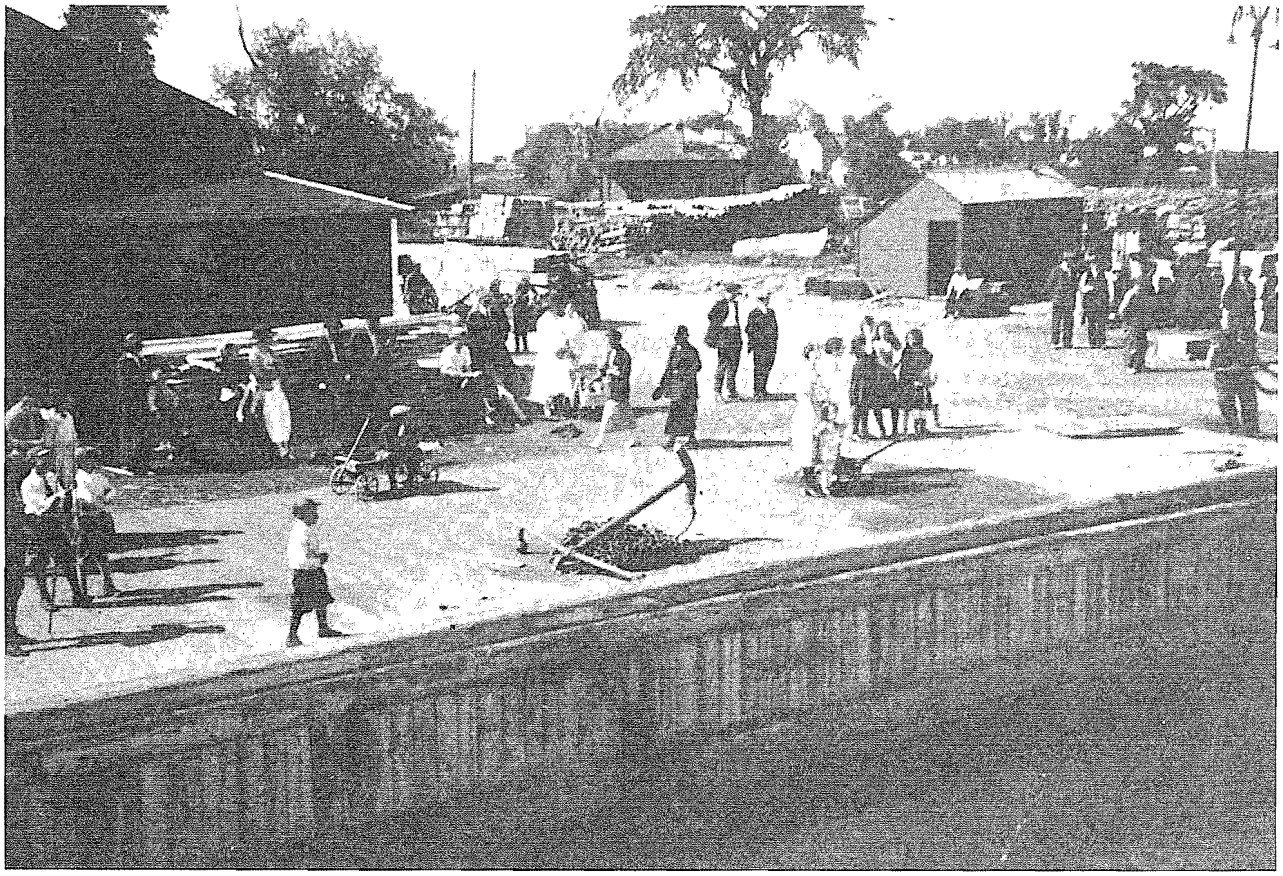
The interior of the dining room on one of the lake excursion boats, the S. S. City of Winnipeg, *in 1881.*
WESTERN CANADA PICTORIAL INDEX

The excursion was a side of life on the lakes that only the rich could enjoy. To most Selkirk residents of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the boats were merely floating places of employment. In those days, before the construction of the lock at St. Andrew's, Selkirk was truly the head of inland navigation in the west and to its docks came all the natural resources and trade of Lake Winnipeg and its tributaries. This meant profits for the enterprising businessmen of the community, and work for hundreds of prairie sailors. Of all the ingredients in this maritime economy, none were more important to Selkirk than lumber and fish.

Cordwood mattered most to Selkirk businessmen in the early years. The Indians of St. Peter's had long cut wagonloads for sale to the settlers along the river and to the people of Winnipeg, but with the settlement of Selkirk control of this lucrative trade passed from their hands into those of enterprising men such as James Colcleugh, and the Indians became mere wage labourers working in the bush.

The city was the main marketplace. It had grown at an incredible pace during its early days, skyrocketing from 241 people in 1871 to nearly 8,000 by 1881 and then to over 20,000 in 1886. This growth created a demand for cordwood, which sold for $4.00 a cord in Winnipeg as opposed to $1.50 at Selkirk. In the winter of 1879-80, Colcleugh purchased a small steamer called the *Lady Ellen* to haul cordwood into the city. He calculated that he earned a profit of $184 on each trip, and he had "contracts for all I can deliver."[21] Business was so good, in fact, that he hired master boatbuilder Malcolm Marten to build the schooner *Wallace*, a shallow draught vessel with a 52-ton capacity that could transport 64 cords of wood or 60,000 feet of lumber on every trip.

This was clearly profitable, but it compared poorly with the money to be made in dressed lumber. Until completion of the C.P.R. branch line into Selkirk in the autumn of 1883, the timber trade was exclusively the territory of businessmen across the river in East Selkirk. Those enterprising men constructed a spur from the mainline down to the docks at Colville Landing and could move lumber very quickly in great quantities. In addition to the demand for construction materials in Winnipeg, there was a substantial need for ties in the building of the Canadian Pacific. At first this timber was dressed at mills located along Lake Winnipeg, with one of the largest mills being at Fort Alexander, but early in 1883 plans were afoot to build a mill at dockside in East Selkirk. James Walkley and T. A. Burrows formed the Northwest Lumbering Company and began to negotiate for land near Colville Landing. Selkirk businessmen, under the leadership of James Colcleugh, moved quickly to quash these negotiations and to secure the sawmill for themselves. Colcleugh immediately corresponded with A. G. B. Bannatyne, who owned virtually all of the property around the West Slough, and made him an offer. He explained that Walkley and Burrows had come up with a sound proposition to cut logs on the lake, tow them upstream in rafts (something never done before), and dress them at one of the settlements. Selkirk was able to offer them a tax exemption, but nothing more because of the burden of the railway bonus. Would Bannatyne be willing to give them free land for the millsite, because the industry would certainly increase the value of his adjacent lands. They would need 200 feet of frontage along the slough and piling grounds running all the way back to Main Street. If the promoters failed in this enterprise, the property would revert to its original owner. After protracted negotiations and three full months of suspense, Bannatyne agreed and Selkirk assumed the mantle of chief lumber port for the entire North West. East Selkirk, robbed of a vital industry, began its slow decline as



Waiting for an excursion boat to arrive at the Selkirk docks, c.1923 WESTERN CANADA PICTORIAL INDEX

The Lady Ellen, *c.1878*

MANITOBA ARCHIVES

A. G. B. Bannatyne, an early Selkirk land speculator, c.1875

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a shipping centre for the lakes.

With completion of the railway into Selkirk, the lumber trade boomed. It seemed that new companies were being formed monthly, and names like Brown and Rutherford, Drake, William Robinson, H. B. Mitchell, S. Jonasson, and Hooker and Company became synonymous with the prosperity of the timber business. These firms provided work for hundreds of local men, both in the bush camps along the lake and in the sawmills themselves. The boatbuilding industry took off, too, as a great fleet of steamers and tugs was needed to transport the rough logs and finished lumber into town, where C.P.R. cars waited on the siding to take them off to distant points. Once or twice in a season, the rarest sight of all could be seen from town: the huge log rafts, hundreds of feet long and wide enough that small shacks could be built upon them to shelter the men, would drift upstream with sails billowing in the wind. Then the crews

A lumber raft sailing down Lake Winnipeg, 1891
MANITOBA ARCHIVES

would break apart the giant rafts and channel the individual logs into the slough where the ripsaws and planers waited, and the mills would run around the clock for days on end until the air was heavy with sawdust and the unmistakable smell of newly-cut spruce. As early as 1884 the lumber companies were producing in excess of three million board feet annually, with a peak production of seven million feet in 1905.[22]

However important the timber industry was to the local economy, Selkirk was better known as a fishing port. Knowledgeable men might—and did—argue the worth of each trade for hours, but it was the nickname 'fishtown' that stuck. The local newspaperman might write glowing editorials about both lumber and fish, but when it came time to change the name of the paper, it was Selkirk *Record and Canadian Fishing Gazette* that he chose. Even the jokes that made the rounds in town were decidedly fishy:

> Lawyer (to witness): What is your gross income?
> Witness: I have none, sir.
> Lawyer: No income?
> Witness: I have no gross income. Mine is a net income. I am a fisherman.[23]

Such trivial incidents and good-natured stabs at humour seem inconsequential in the life of a community, yet they nonetheless expressed a great truth about the people of Selkirk. They were, above all else, a maritime people.

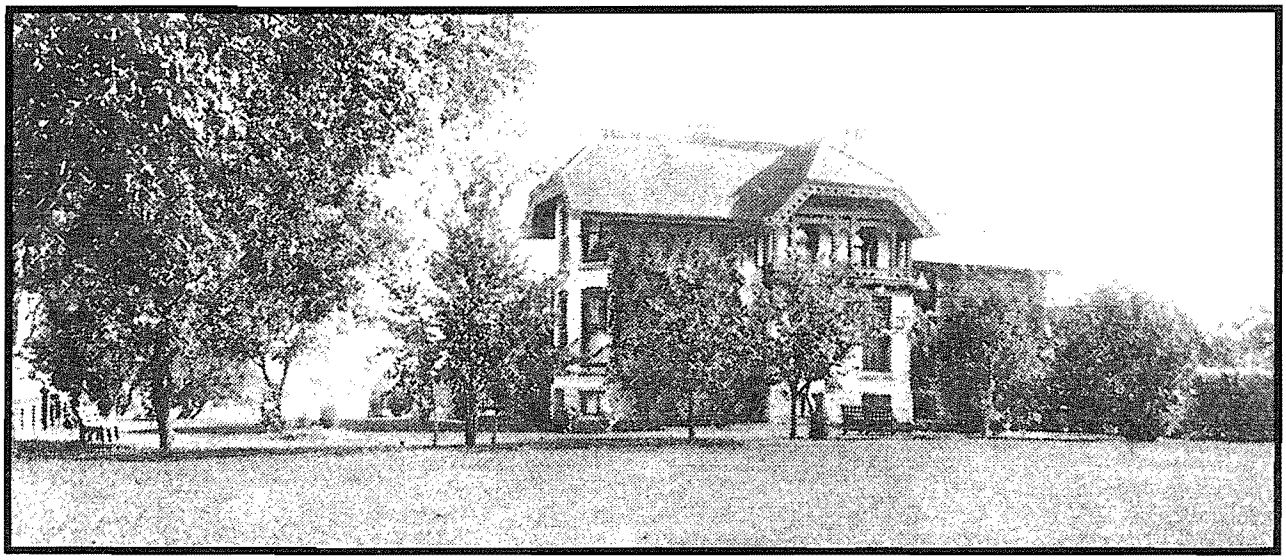
The first bold attempt to start a commercial fishery on Lake Winnipeg occurred in 1881, when two former Ontario men, Daniel F. Reid and his brother-in-law, David Clarke, set their nets about ten miles from the mouth of the Red River. Failing to catch a single fish there, they moved their camp to Big Island, about 70 miles farther north, where they managed to land about four tons of whitefish.[24] This could hardly be called a commercial success, but it was enough to encourage them to return with their single sailboat in the following year, when the catch amounted to more than 127,000 pounds. Apparently they had learned something about fishing Lake Winnipeg in the intervening year.

These men were not novices at the business. Both had been involved in commercial fishing at Collingwood, the great boatbuilding centre on Georgian Bay. Their training in Ontario and the first experiences on Lake Winnipeg must have convinced them that commercial fishing in Manitoba was a sound prospect, for in 1883 they expanded their operation to include a second sailboat, and in the next year they purchased the *Lady Ellen* from Colcleugh. By 1885 they handled 167 tons of fresh whitefish and 2270 half-barrels of salted whitefish, and had fishing stations at Big Island, Swampy Island, Beren's River and the mouth of the Little Saskatchewan River.[25]

In his New Year editorial of 1886, the editor of the Selkirk *Record* reviewed the great untapped resources of Lake Winnipeg and then lamented that "the only business that Selkirk has gone into so far has been the lumber business."[26] What appears at first glance to be editorial nearsightedness emerges as the truth upon closer examination. Reid and Clarke were Winnipeg businessmen, with offices on Alexander West and Main Street, and their profits lingered in Selkirk only in the form of wages for 30 employees. But during early 1886, a second commercial fishing concern took an interest in Lake Winnipeg and opened an office in town. This was C. W. Gauthier and Company, a firm with headquarters at Windsor, Ontario. By late summer Gauthier had constructed a refrigerator near the West Slough, a cleaning plant, and an ice house near the spur line.[27] Reid and Clarke realized the threat this posed to their business, and they approached the Selkirk town council for permission to erect a dock at the foot of Clandeboye Avenue with a ten-year tax exemption. Council agreed. It seems clear, however, that Reid and Clarke

Unloading lumber at the Selkirk docks, c.1910

MANITOBA ARCHIVES



Residence of fishing fleet owner D. F. Reid, 1913 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

were over-reacting, for while Gauthier's 1886 catch was worth $1206., theirs was worth $22,360.[28]

Then tragedy struck, and brought a dramatic change to the local fishing industry. David Clarke died of typhoid fever on October 21, 1887. The young man had become a "favorite of all"[29] during his brief stay in Selkirk, and his funeral was one of the largest ever held in town. All the flags flew at half mast on that sad day, and when the service was over two of the mourners went home to compose poems in his honour for publication in the next issue of *Record*. Reid was apparently unable to continue the business on his own, and before the year was out he had sold it to Captain William Robinson.

Will Robinson, an unassuming man with a thick brush of a moustache and a worn whiskbroom of a beard, was certainly no stranger to Selkirk residents. He had long been a captain on the steamboats that plied the North Saskatchewan between Edmonton and Grand Rapids, and it was said that he built the first steamer in Selkirk in 1878. When the C.P.R. finally reached the west coast in 1885, and steamer traffic on the Saskatchewan began to dwindle, Robinson moved to Winnipeg and became president of the Northwest Navigation Company, which seems to have been associated with the Hudson's Bay company.[30] Under his direction, commercial fishing operations on Lake Winnipeg expanded tremendously and before the century was out Robinson owned most of the fish companies with facilities at Selkirk.

The fleets grew rapidly after 1886. To Reid and Clarke's four Collingwood-built boats, which had been brought in at the start of the 1887 season, Robinson added his four large steamers, the *Colville*, the *Glendevon*, the *Marquette* and the *Princess*.[31] His ownership of the *Glendevon* seems to suggest that he had also purchased the C. W. Gauthier firm, for that steamer had previously been listed as their property. Seven other fishing companies, mainly small outfits, had steamers on the lake at the same time.

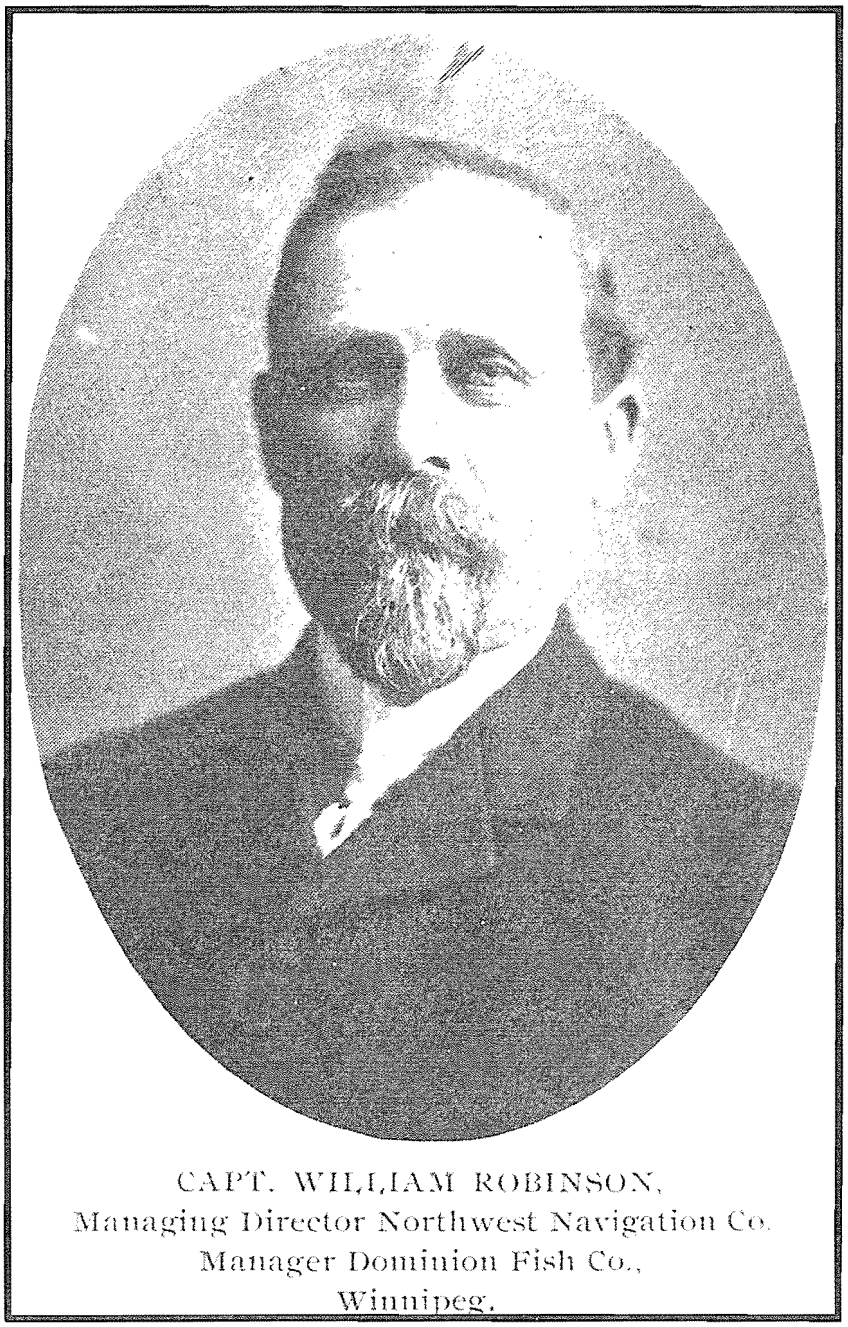
LIST OF VESSELS DOCKING AT SELKIRK, 1886

Name	*Tonnage*	*Owner*
Alice Sprague	36	D. Kilpatrick
Colville	165	Northwest Navigation Co.
Glendevon	100	Northwest Navigation Co.
Marquette	354	Northwest Navigation Co.
Princess	531	Northwest Navigation Co.
Millie Howell	24	Howell and Daly
Ogema	62	Reid, Clarke and Co.
Lady Ellen	19	Reid, Clarke and Co.
Kathleen	8	Waterous Brothers
Victoria	238	Jonasson and Company
Regina	7	G. S. Whittaker
Lotus	Unknown	C. W. N. Kennedy
Gold Seal	27	T. Bamford

Source: Selkirk Record, 18 March 1886

All but two or three of these steam vessels, presumably the smaller ones with shallow draught, worked on Lake Winnipeg and Lake Manitoba.

As the fishing companies gained experience on the lake, the number of stations grew and the dockside operations at Selkirk expanded. Reid and Clarke had fishing camps all over the lake, and in the winter they moved their operations to the mouth of the Little Saskatchewan River. All together, the company was worth about $25,000.[32] Gauthier, with 40 whitemen, 30 half-breeds and 100 Indians in its employ, operated chiefly at Swampy Island and the lower Saskatchewan River. Like Reid and Clarke, it boasted a total plant value of about $25,000. The remaining companies were small, independent concerns, without facilities at Selkirk, and it seems they



Captain William Robinson MANITOBA ARCHIVES

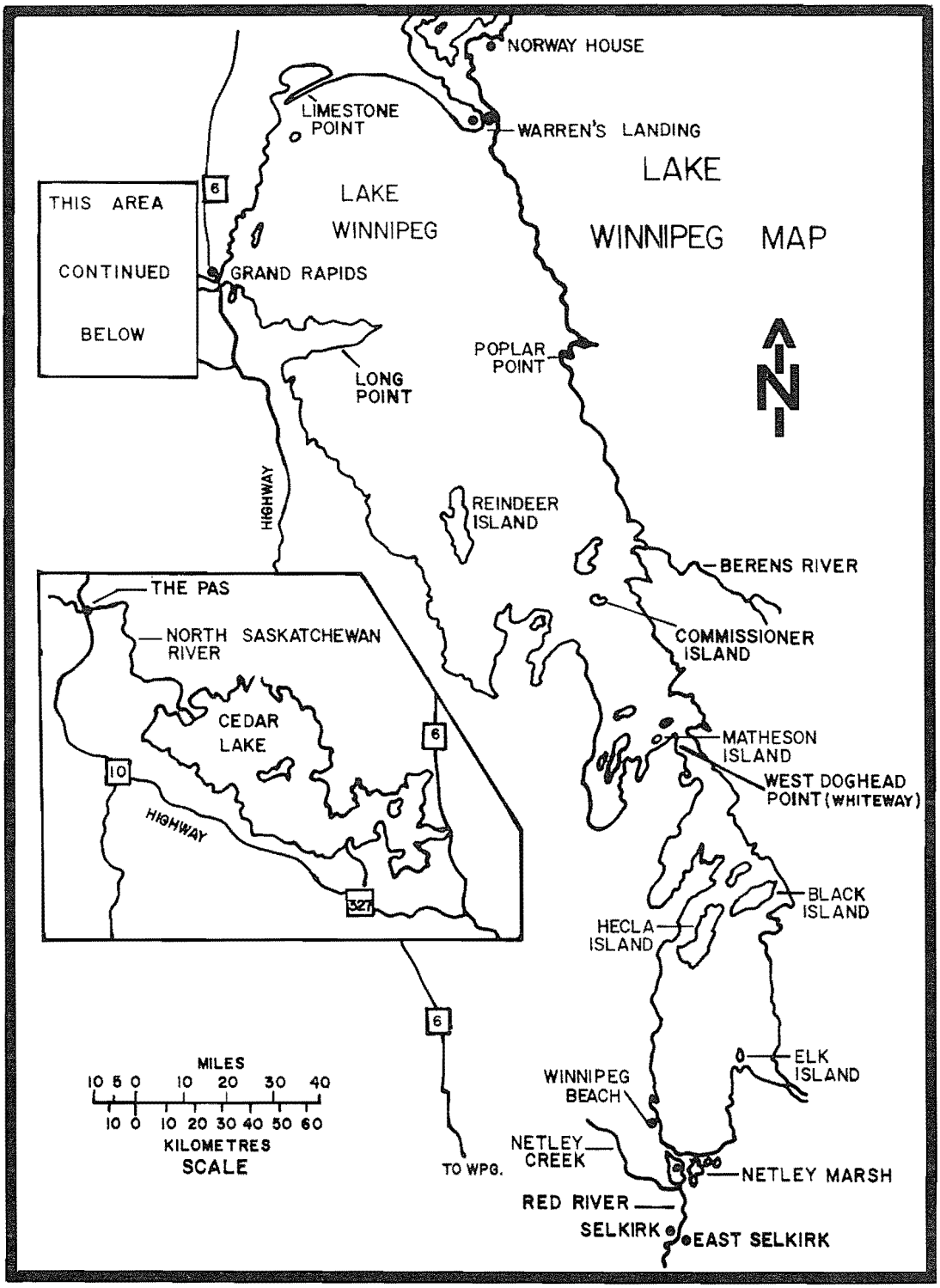
sold their catches to companies under the Robinson umbrella. As time went on, the fishing companies diversified into the manufacture of fish oil from the refuse of whitefish and others that could be sold in Winnipeg for 40¢ a gallon as a lubricant for machinery. The technique was simple, consisting of nothing more than boiling the fish in vats and then rendering the oil from them, and after a while the Indians who lived at Grand Rapids, Little Saskatchewan River and Fort Alexander went into the business for themselves and sold the oil to the fishing firms. One enterprising businessman even went into the sturgeon canning business, and by 1888 C. W. Gauthier was producing sturgeon caviar at Pigeon Bay and Grand Marais, which sold for 60¢ a pound in New York. No doubt this explains why sturgeon was virtually extinct in Lake Winnipeg by 1909.[33]

Most of the fish taken from the lake were marketed in the United States. C. W. Gauthier's first shipment in 1886 travelled by train to Windsor, location of the firm's headquarters, and was then reshipped to various points throughout the States. Reid and Clarke's first carload found its way to Kansas City, and subsequent shipments ended up in Minneapolis, Chicago, Detroit, New York City, and Buffalo. The value of the American market is evident from the 1887 records, which show that of a total catch of two million pounds of whitefish worth $100,000, only about 80,000 pounds (or $3978 worth) stayed in Canada.[34] As time went on and officials of the government learned more about the Lake Winnipeg fisheries, it became increasingly evident that the Americans were more than mere consumers of Manitoba fish: they were, it seems, owners of almost all the companies operating out of Selkirk. In 1889 the Selkirk Fish Company, managed by William Roberts, was taken over by Booth Fish Company of Chicago.[35] Two years later C. W. Gauthier changed its name to Manitoba Fish Company which was, according to local Member of Parliament George Bradbury, "an American concern, 96 per cent of the stock being owned or controlled by gentlemen living in Detroit."[36] And by 1900 all but the small independents had been taken over by Captain Robinson's Dominion Fish Company, which was a front for Booth as well.[37] In 1901 five Selkirk men and a Winnipegger formed the Northern Fishing Company which was to become one of the town's largest fishing concerns. But, as Bradbury informed his colleagues in the House of Commons,

> I am sure that the minister and the department [of Fisheries] knows that the majority of the stock of the Northern Fish Company belongs to what is called Buck Eye Fish Company and Buck Eye Fish Company is controlled by Booth Fish Company of Chicago.[38]

The sole fishing firm at Selkirk that does not seem to have been controlled by Americans was J. K. McKenzie Fish Company Limited, also formed in 1901. This firm later became Imperial Fish.

The American takeover of Selkirk's fishing industry, which seems to have been fairly common knowledge in town at the time, was a repetition of the events that had taken place earlier in the Great Lakes fishing industry. In the late nineteenth century, it was strictly illegal for anyone but a British subject to fish commercially in Canadian waters. Indeed, in order to obtain a fishing licence, the fleet operator had to declare that his boat and gear were owned by a British subject. But this made marketing the fish something of a problem, for while the best markets were situated in the United States, the American government imposed a tariff on all Canadian fish to make them less competitive in price. By secretly financing the Lake Winnipeg fisheries through men of reputation such as Captain Robinson, American investors were able to avoid Canadian regulations about ownership, and then by declaring to American customs officials that the fish being imported were actually caught in American-owned



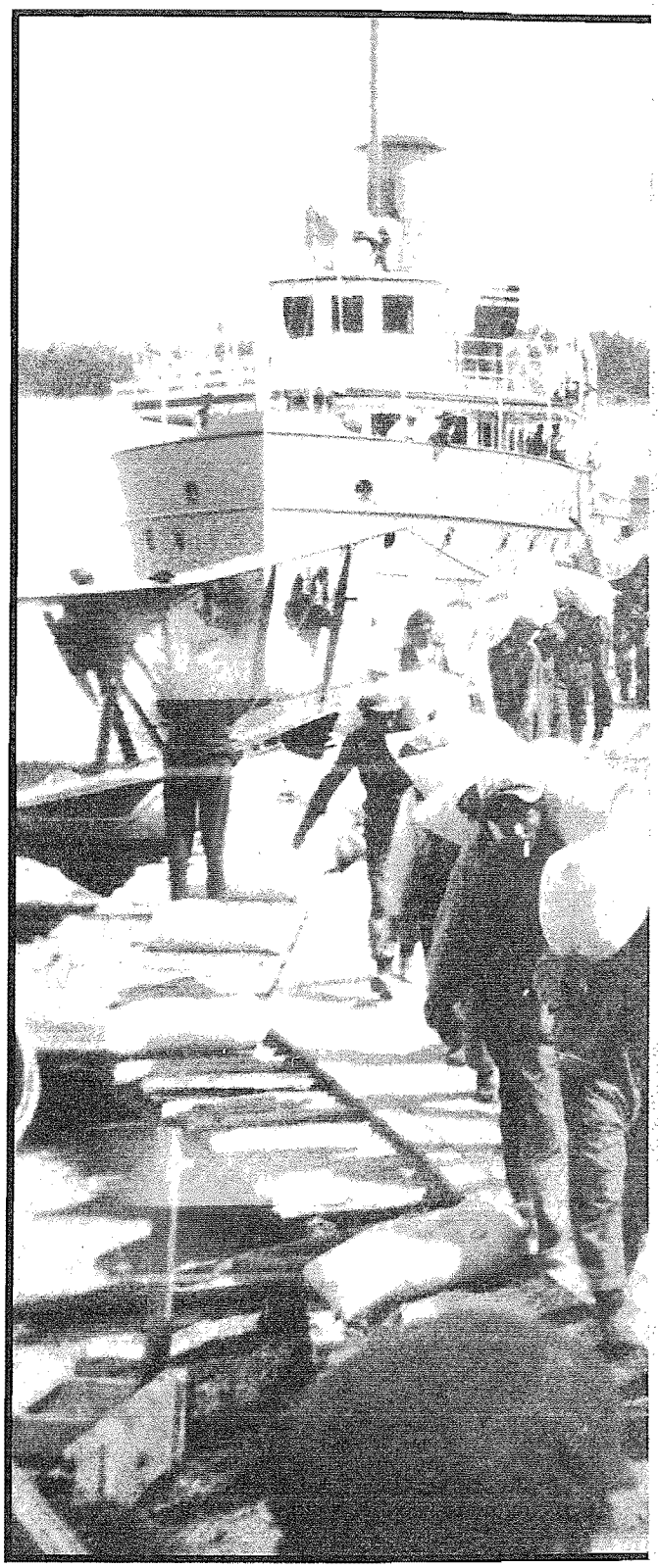
Lake Winnipeg, showing the main physical features and ports of call for Selkirk fishing and excursion boats
GARY PURPUR

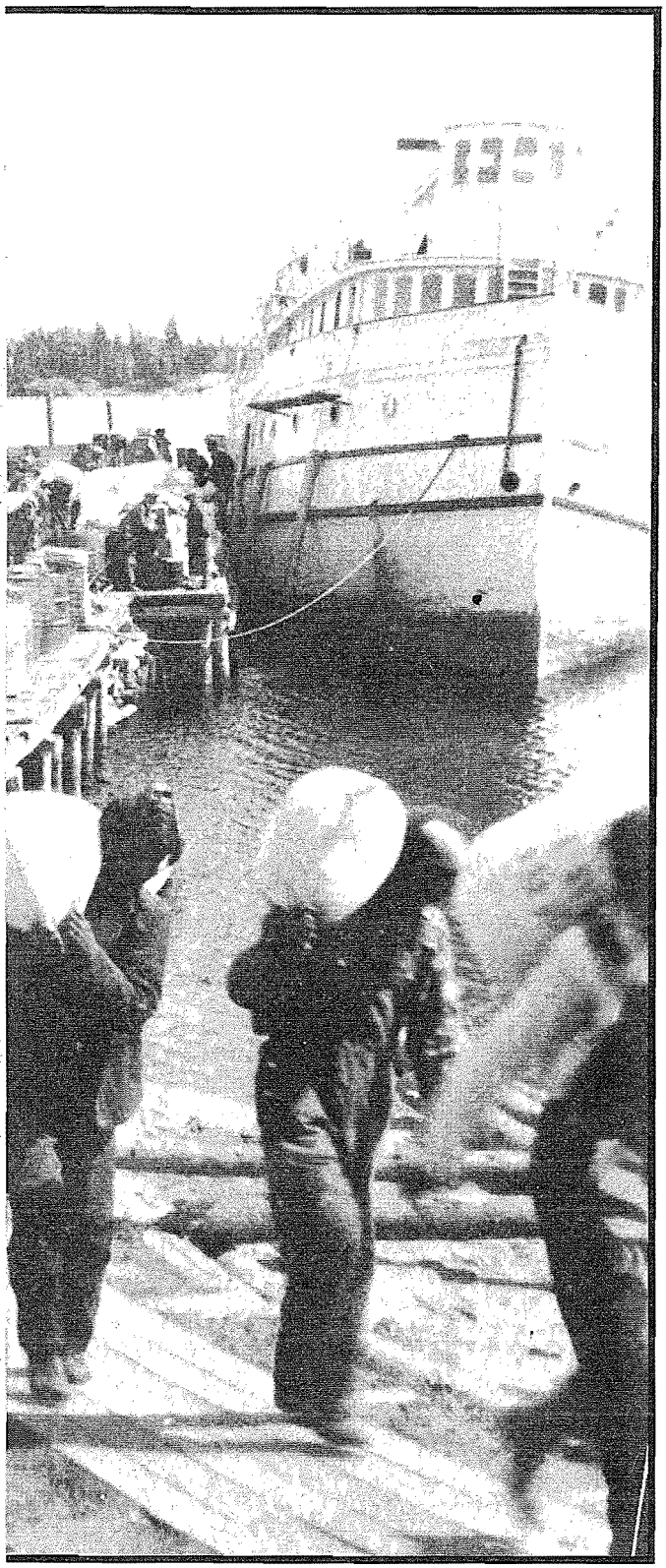
nets, they were able to bring them in free of all duty. It was a clever bit of manipulation.

With new companies being formed all the time, it was to be expected that the issue of whitefish depletion in the lake would soon arise. Close seasons had been established as early as 1885 for whitefish (November 1-February 1), pickerel (April 15-May 15), and speckled trout (October 1-January 1), the intent being that

> as civilization extends and territory becomes settled it is necessary to have some effective means of controlling and regulating fisheries for the benefit of residents and settlers, particularly in the area of Lake Winnipeg.[39]

As it turned out, the fisheries inspectors were usually much more concerned about the welfare of the white settlers than of the native residents. Year after year the inspector's annual reports suggested that close seasons were well observed except by the Indians. This mattered less as time passed, for the natives' catch was nothing compared to those of the great fleets from Selkirk. In 1893 the Dominion Commissioner of fish, S. Wilmot, warned that a further increase in the annual catch of over three million pounds would seriously jeopardize lake stocks. Wilmot retired shortly after making this report, and was replaced by an Englishman named Prince. In 1895 Prince toured Selkirk and the new fish hatchery just off Eveline, and then steamed around Lake Winnipeg inspecting all the fish stations. His subsequent report was glowingly optimistic about the fisheries, which is understandable given that his guides were none other than Captain Robinson, William Overton (manager of Manitoba Fish), Daniel F. Reid and James Tait (of Reid and Tait, successor to Reid and Clarke), Robert Bullock (who also owned fishing boats), and LaTouche Tupper, the hatchery superintendent of whom Bradbury said "if he had been a paid official of that great American combine, he could not have done more to assist in the destruction of the





fisheries of Lake Winnipeg than he did."[40] A more sober voice entered the debate about depletion in 1898, when F. W. Colcleugh became Inspector of Fisheries for Manitoba. Colcleugh pointed out that with each new year the fleets moved farther north on the lake, suggesting that the southern end had already been depleted, and he called for stricter control of the catches. But his appointment lasted only two years, and his every recommendation was totally ignored by federal authorities. His replacement, W. S. Young, was said to be Robinson's nominee and also said to be unable to tell "a whitefish from a tullibee or a tullibee from a pickerel."[41] His explanation of declining catches was that they resulted from "less vigorous prosecution of fishing."[42] Obviously the debate would not be settled by government appointees, and in 1909 the Dominion government acceded to public pressure and created a commission to investigate the depletion question.

The editor of the Selkirk *Record* was wary of the commission. Although he was pleased to have an investigation take place, he pointed out that the commissioners were "strong party men" and anticipated that "the inquiry will amount to the customary whitewashing affair."[43] He was to be surprised. The commissioners visited Selkirk, the hatcheries on the lake, and many of the fishing stations during the 1909 season, and tendered their interim report in December. To the outrage of most Selkirk residents, the commission found that depletion was serious and recommended changes to the fishing regulations that would have meant the end of commercial fishing in Selkirk. The citizens petitioned their town councillors to protest the commission's findings, which they did, and in the final report the commissioners indicated that while depletion was a recurring problem, the lake seemed remarkably resilient. The

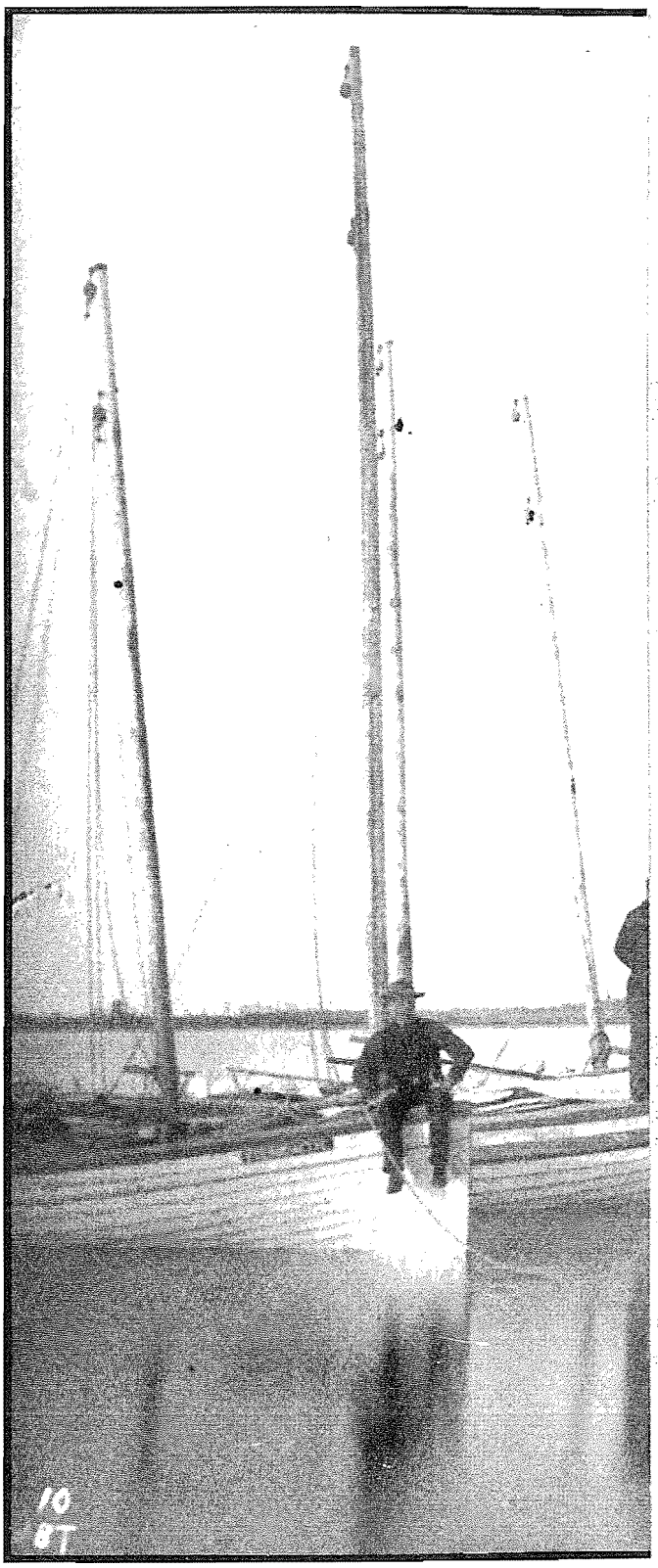
Stevedores unloading the S.S. Keenora (on right) at a Lake Winnipeg port of call. The Bradbury *is shown on the left*

WESTERN CANADA PICTORIAL INDEX

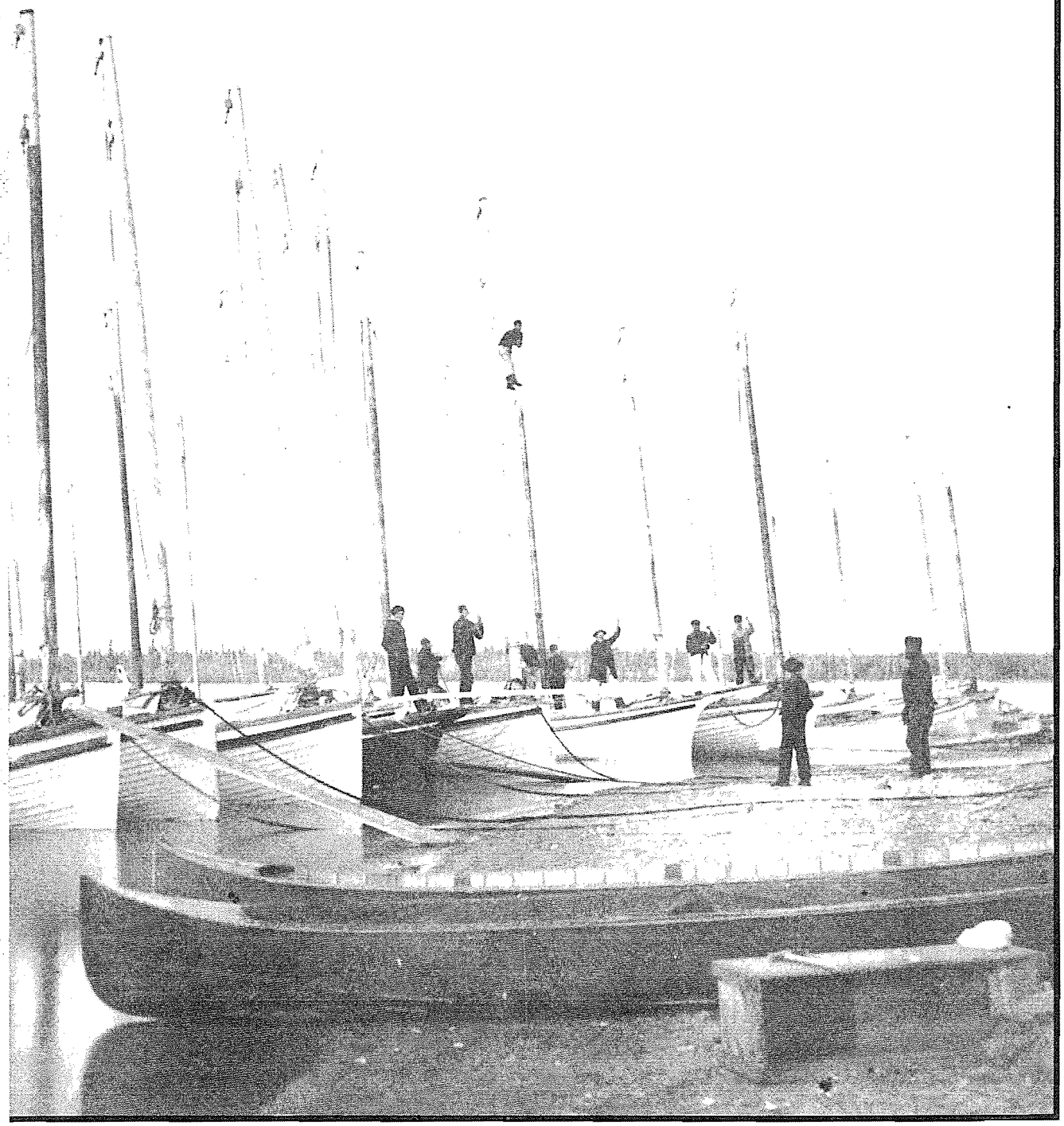
original recommendation about the closing of the summer season disappeared completely.

The summer season was crucial to the fishing companies. From June to November about 1000 men were employed on the boats, at the fishing stations, and in the refrigerators and the cleaning plants at dockside in Selkirk. Weeks before the season started officially on June 15th, the men were taken by steamer to the stations along the lake to make ready for the fishery. The dock was piled high with boxes and barrels as they prepared to leave, fishing gear for the crews, government provisions for the Indians, and Hudson's Bay Company freight for the trading posts. These farewells were as exciting as the great excursion departures, but they were tinged with sadness too, as many of the men were married and would not see their families again for several months. The youngsters and older bachelors of the crew could be seen, as often as not, pacing impatiently around the gangplank, more than ready to leave, with a grip in one hand, a new coal oil can of 'medicinal spirits' in the other, and with the long necks of suspicious flasks poking out of their pockets.[44] When all was made ready, the captain tugged at the whistle cord, and as the steamer moved slowly from its moorings, the last of the lingerers leaped aboard, some more successfully than others, as might be judged from the number of brown bottles bobbing under the wharf.

Shortly after passing the mouth of the river, the steamer usually encountered long stretches of ice floes and often the captain had to put in at George's Island or Horse Island to allow the crew to nail planks to the bow to prevent damage from repeated collisions with the ice. At times the floes were 100 miles long and progress was slow as the steamer threaded its way up the lake. Eventually the stations were reached, one by one, much to the relief of the fishermen who never found galley food as palatable as that which their own cooks managed to concoct on shore.



Fishing boats in Swampy Harbour, Manitoba, 1889
PUBLIC ARCHIVES CANADA



even though gull and pelican eggs often ended up on the table for the sake of variety. The work began immediately, for the boats needed caulking, the sails and nets needed mending, and the stations themselves needed repair. Then, at dawn on the morning of June 15th, the men set out for the fishing grounds aboard the smacks, two men to a boat, with tackle and nets at their feet. They set their nets for nightfall when most of the fish would be caught, and returned in the morning to haul in the catches. This was the whitefish season, which lasted about five or six weeks, and then the pickerel fishing began.

When the smack was full, the fishermen returned to the station. They discharged the fish into long sluices where Indian workmen waited to clean them before packing them loosely into boxes half-filled with ice and placing them in the freezing chambers.[45] Twice a week at the large stations, and once a week at the small ones, the steamer would pick up the cases. Each steamer was equipped with a freezer plant of its own, and few fish spoiled on the return trip to Selkirk. There the fish were placed in the storehouses, repacked, refrozen and despatched across the continent aboard the special refrigerated boxcars of the C.P.R. During the winter season, the crews fished beneath the ice with gillnets and jiggers. This was cold work, but at least the temperature solved the problem of preserving the fish. Once the catch was crated, it was hauled by team to the nearest shipping point, which might be anywhere from 75 to 200 miles away. Not until the Great War were gasoline tractors used for the cartage work.

The routine lasted six days a week. On Sunday, some of the men simply rested and wrote letters to their wives or sweethearts. Others brought their coal oil cans and bottles from hiding, rosinned up their fiddle bows, and soon had their friends dancing jigs and reels. Still others, possessing more mischievious natures, delighted in playing practical jokes on the unsuspecting. Usually these were fairly mild pranks like placing dead fish in someone's bed or freezing a gold watch in a block of packing ice. On occasion, however, matters got out of hand, such as the time one unlikable fellow had his ankles tied with rope during the night and awoke to find himself dangling from the ceiling, or the time when one merrymaker ran Harry Seach's Sunday trousers up the flagpole, only to have the rope foul, making it impossible to retrieve the pants until there were only tatters left. Worse still, perhaps, was the incident involving a clever and industrious young man who manufactured a cheesecloth netting for around his bed to keep the vicious bulldog flies and mosquitoes at bay during the night. In the morning he was covered from head to toe in itchy, swelling bites from the cloud of mosquitoes that his comrades had generously added to his refuge while he slept.[46]

Tragedy was just as much a part of life on the lakes. In the last week of August, 1906, the *City of Selkirk* steamed into port bearing the unbelievable news that the *Princess* had just gone down off Snake Island.[47] To many Selkirk residents, it seemed like an accident that should never have happened. The *Princess* had just taken on a load of fish from the Dominion Fish Company station at Poplar Point when she sprang a leak out on the lake. It was early evening and the crew was confident about repairing the damage. For the next three hours she took on water constantly, until Captain Hawes decided to turn back towards George's Island. By early morning the fireroom was filled with water and the wind was hard to the northwest. Then the water rose above the dampers on the boilers, killing the fires and stopping the engines. The *Princess* was adrift, in the worst sea the first mate had ever seen. Captain Hawes said he hoped to keep her afloat until daybreak, when the crew and passengers would have a better chance in the lifeboats. By 4 a.m. the hold was full and the mate instructed the

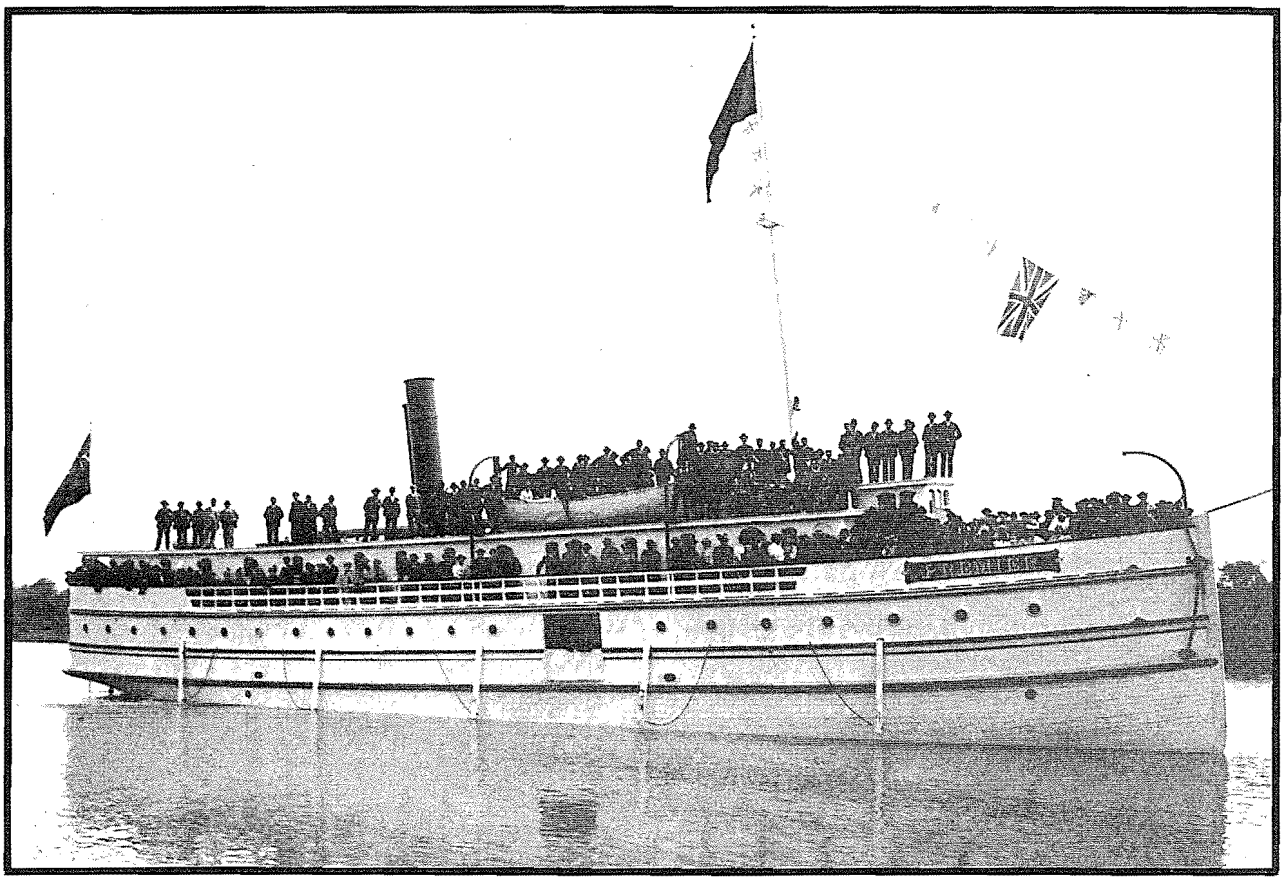
passengers to don their lifebelts and prepare to take to the boats. But, for reasons no one quite understood, the captain refused to give the order to abandon the boat. The two stewardesses and three of the passengers took the captain's actions to mean that there was no emergency, and they did not even put on lifebelts. By dawn, Captain Hawes and those who preferred to rely on his judgment were dead.

Captain William Robinson's warehouse on the docks at Selkirk, c.1900 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

Two years later, almost to the day, the *Premier* burned at Warren's Landing with the loss of eight lives. The first reports of the disaster indicated the *Premier* had been caught in a heavy gale which she battled all day and half the night before being driven upon a reef where she capsized and caught on fire. As the investigation proceeded, however, a very different story emerged. The *Premier* had, in fact, been docked at Warren's Landing when she started to burn around midnight. Almost everyone on board was asleep, including the captain, John Stevens, who had given orders to leave for Selkirk at 4 a.m. A Dominion Fish watchman on shore first noticed the flames about 1 a.m., and as they burst through the roof of the vessel near the smokestack, it became apparent that the fire had been burning for quite some time before it became visible. Soon people could be seen madly scrambling across the decks to the safety of the water or to the deck of the tug *Idell* that was lying alongside. The dry wood of the cabins and the piles of cordwood in the hold and on the deck were kindling for the fire, and those who attempted to rescue passengers still asleep could get no closer than 25 feet to the intense heat of the flames. The stricken steamer broke from her moorings and drifted downstream a few hundred yards until she grounded on a shoal to the northward. There she burned for the next 14 hours, until enough water had poured in to drown the fire. In the first light of morning, a crew from Warren's Landing pumped the water out of the hull and searched for the remains of those who had been trapped on board. "All that remained of eight bodies were small portions of some of the bodies and a few handfuls of charred bones...these remains could only be identified from the places in which they were found."[48] Two passengers, the cook, a fisherman from Spider Island, a cook's mate, and three little boys perished in the blaze. The investigation that followed this tragedy only deepened the grief of the families involved. It was learned that the only person on watch that night, the fireman, was fast asleep when the blaze started. No attempt was ever made to ring the alarm bell, no water had been pumped or even thrown on the flames, and little effort had been made to alert the 77 slumbering passengers before the heat from the blaze made this impossible. Worst of all, Captain Stevens seemed to be in a state of shock throughout the calamity, standing about "like a dead man and...giving no orders" to his disorganized crew.[49] His only action was to call to the skipper of the *Idell* to come alongside to take him off the burning boat. "When you got into that skiff," an investigator asked, "why did you not go round the *Premier* and see how bad the fire was and whether it could be put out? Too rattled to try were you?"[50] Stevens did not answer. He had been a captain only two months.

However grievous life on the lake might sometimes be, Selkirk residents remained proud that their town was the inland port of the entire west. Whether a man worked in the lumber camps at Bad Throat River, at a fishing station on George's Island, in Hod Gates's fish-packing barrel factory on the flats in Selkirk, or as a deckhand on one of the dredges, he could be confident he was doing vital work unavailable in any other prairie town. And, if editorials in the local paper and articles in booster pamphlets were to be believed, the lake country still contained more natural resources than the total number already being exploited. Best of all, the townspeople knew that the future trade in these resources would all flow into Selkirk, for the St. Andrew's Rapids—the only serious clot in the watery artery that flowed past the town—were situated upstream and effectively ruined Winnipeg's chances of participating in the lake traffic.

Since the mid-1880s Winnipeg businessmen had been trying to convince the Dominion government of the necessity of building a



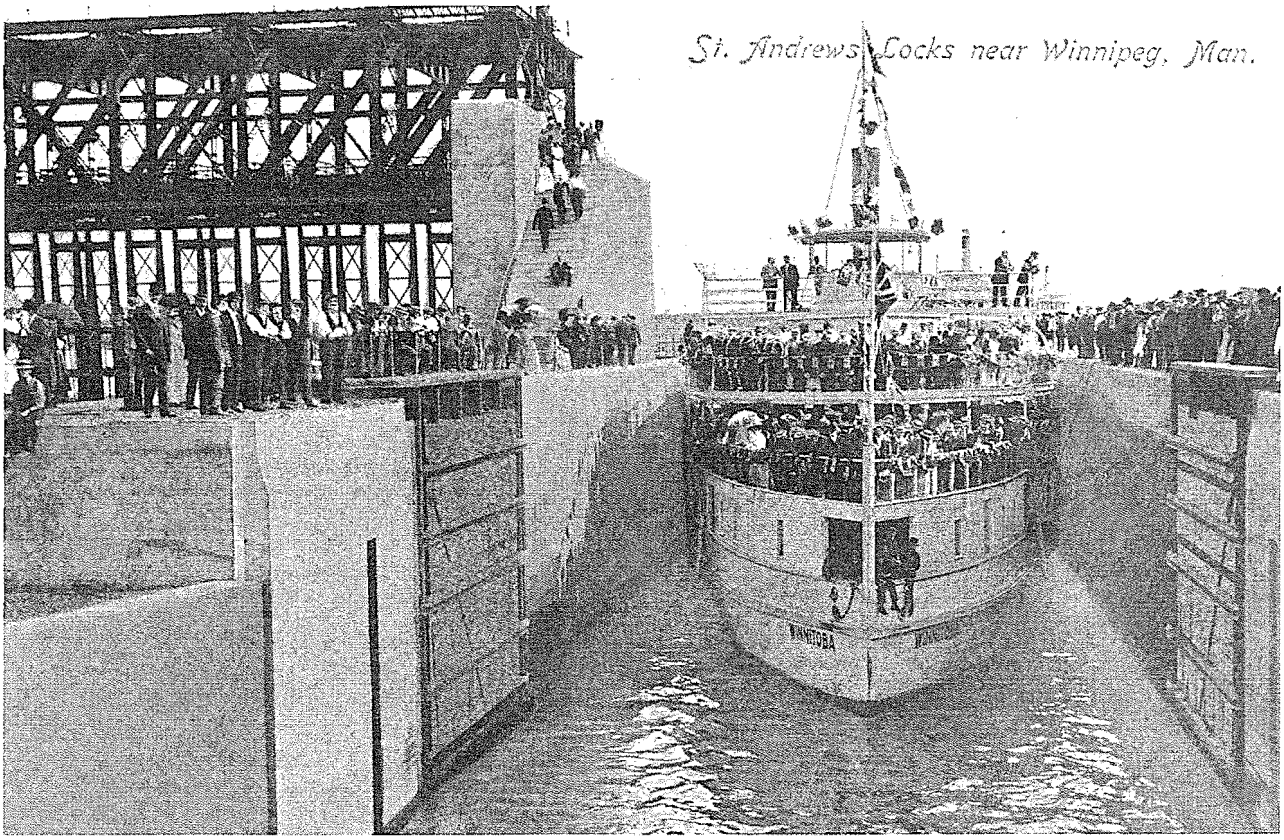
The S.S. Premier, *c.1907*

MANITOBA ARCHIVES

lock-gate at St. Andrew's, or at least of dredging a deeper channel through the obstruction. Selkirk reacted by calling the project impractical due to cost, and unnecessary because of the excellent transshipment facilities offered by the C.P.R. in town. It was estimated that clearing the rapids would cost at least $500,000, and the local editor felt this money would be better spent on government docks at Selkirk, and he initiated a petition to obtain as much local support as possible for this position.[51] Ottawa tended to agree about the cost, and remained uncommitted to the locks project for the next decade, although the Winnipeggers seldom flagged in their lobbying.

In 1895 the Winnipeg Board of Trade doubled its efforts and attempted to secure a bonus of $100,000 from the Manitoba legislature with which to entice the Dominion government.[52] Before this could be accomplished, the federal Minister of Public Works announced that not only was the project too expensive, but it seemed the town of Selkirk did not favour the scheme. The government possessed petitions from the town council and from Selkirk citizens to prove this, and the federal member for Lisgar, A. W. Ross, confirmed that construction of the locks had never been an issue of importance in his constituency. Again the Winnipeggers changed tactics, stating that if the government would grant $500,000 towards the cost of the project, the city would undertake the work itself. Dominion authorities merely replied that if the project were of such financial importance, then a private contractor or the city should be willing to attempt it without any government assistance. It was not until the general election of 1900, in fact, that Winnipeg made progress on the issue. As the editor of the Selkirk *Record* noted in October, "Mr. Kelly, the contractor for the building of the St. Andrew's locks, is down again fooling around the river banks, which is a sure sign that the elections are on."[53] In this instance, however, the Dominion promises to construct the locks were more than political rhetoric, and before the decade was out the rapids were navigable.

It seemed that, once again, Winnipeg had outmanoeuvred Selkirk in a matter vital to the economic health of the little lake port. As it turned out, the Winnipeggers had no sooner won the prize than they lost interest in the contest.[54] A full year after the locks were completed, the city had still not built any docking facilities. One coal and wood dealer complained that he had brought a barge of lumber into the city, only to have to return to Selkirk and load it onto railcars for shipment to Winnipeg because of the lack of docks. With the same spirit of neglect, the city failed to provide accurate charts of the river, to establish important navigation aids, and to satisfactorily complete the locks. As a result, insurance rates on boats passing through the locks were exorbitant. As soon as river captains became aware of all these difficulties, the amount of traffic into Winnipeg fell off sharply. In Selkirk, by contrast, river traffic had risen greatly and lake business was up 25 per cent by 1912.[55] More men than ever before were engaged in the fishing industry, and plans were afoot to provide the town with a railway dry dock that would ensure that all boat repair work continued to be done at Selkirk. And of course, no other place along the river could afford boats the security of winter shelter that the famous West Slough could. "Selkirk," as the town editor noted in 1913, "will always continue to be the port of Canada's great inland waterways."[56]



The Winnitoba *passing through the lock-gate at St. Andrew's. 1912* PRIVATE COLLECTION

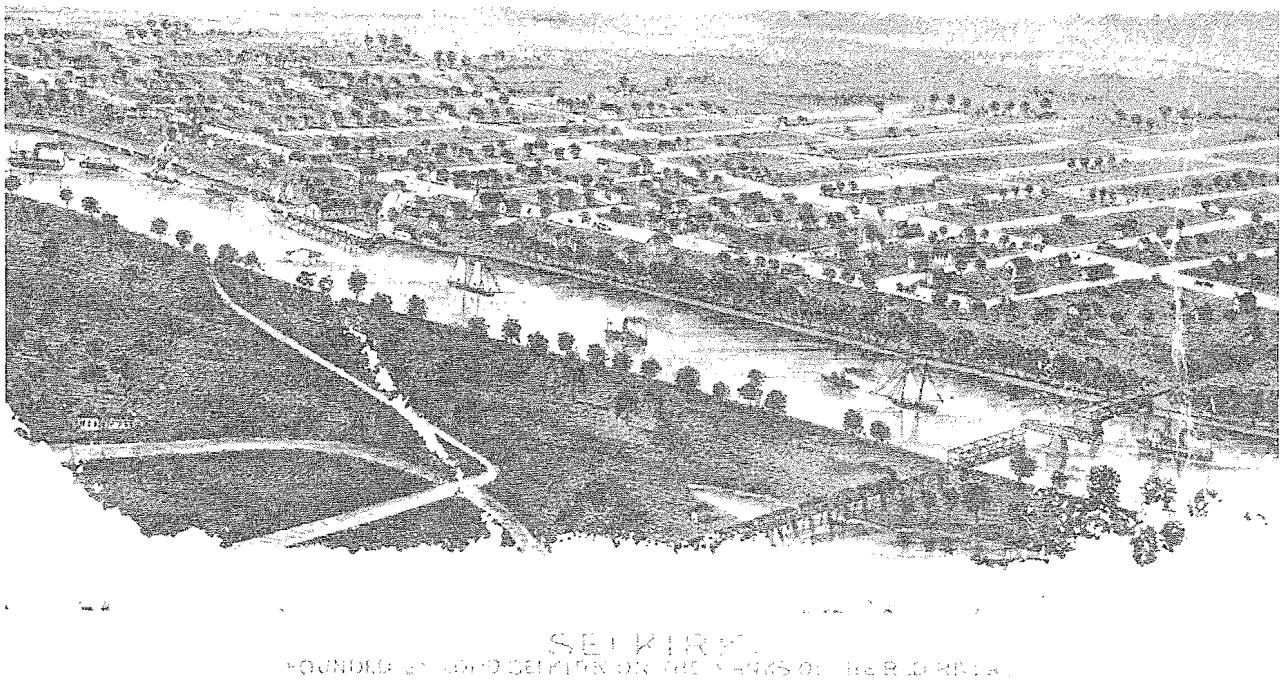
CHAPTER THREE

The Passing of Frontier Selkirk, 1883-1910

BORN OF THE RAILWAY and nurtured by the sea, Selkirk was destined for success. Perhaps the branch line was not the economic blessing that the mainline would have been, but it did tie the town and its merchants and manufacturers to the greatest railway centre in the west, splicing their fortunes inseparably for all time. The townspeople might still detest Winnipeg and its leaders for past guile and gall, but they could not deny the value of nearness to the city's unrivalled wholesaling houses, its immense market and its metropolitan amenities. They might not realize that while hundreds of tiny settlements across the prairies were locked in struggle for a station on the transcontinental line, their struggle was over and their stability as a community was assured. If, in 1883, they did not appreciate their singular good fortune, it was because they had yet to develop the potential of their town. Selkirk was, in that year and for many more to come, a raw frontier community.

The river and the railway, which shaped the lives of the townspeople, shaped the town as well. In the middle 1880s, when there were not more than 30 commercial buildings and about 130 houses in town,[1] they perched along the river bank on Eveline Street and had just began to turn the corners that led to the Main Highway. Some houses were scattered almost indifferently on isolated lots, but all were within the sweeping arc of the C.P.R. tracks that ran nearly parallel to Main until they reached Mercy Street and then curved past the Bradbury Station into town and down to the wharves and fish-packing plants and lumber piling grounds on the flats. Only the white brick insane asylum stood outside these community enclosures. The river, which had imparted order to the old river lot community, now became the starting point for the town's administrative divisions. Selkirk was sliced into three wards, each beginning at the river bank and running narrowly westward.

The middle ward, Ward II, was the preferable part of town in which to live. It took in the business district at Eveline and Manitoba, and several blocks on either side of this junction. This made it convenient for businessmen who had shops and warehouses there, and for the customers who patronized them. More importantly, perhaps, it was the most urbane part of town. Here the houses were larger and neater, the lots more spacious, and the cattle barns and piggeries less numerous. By contrast, the other two wards were almost rural in nature. Most residents kept several milk cows and a few pigs, and several had



Birdseye view of Selkirk, c.1880 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

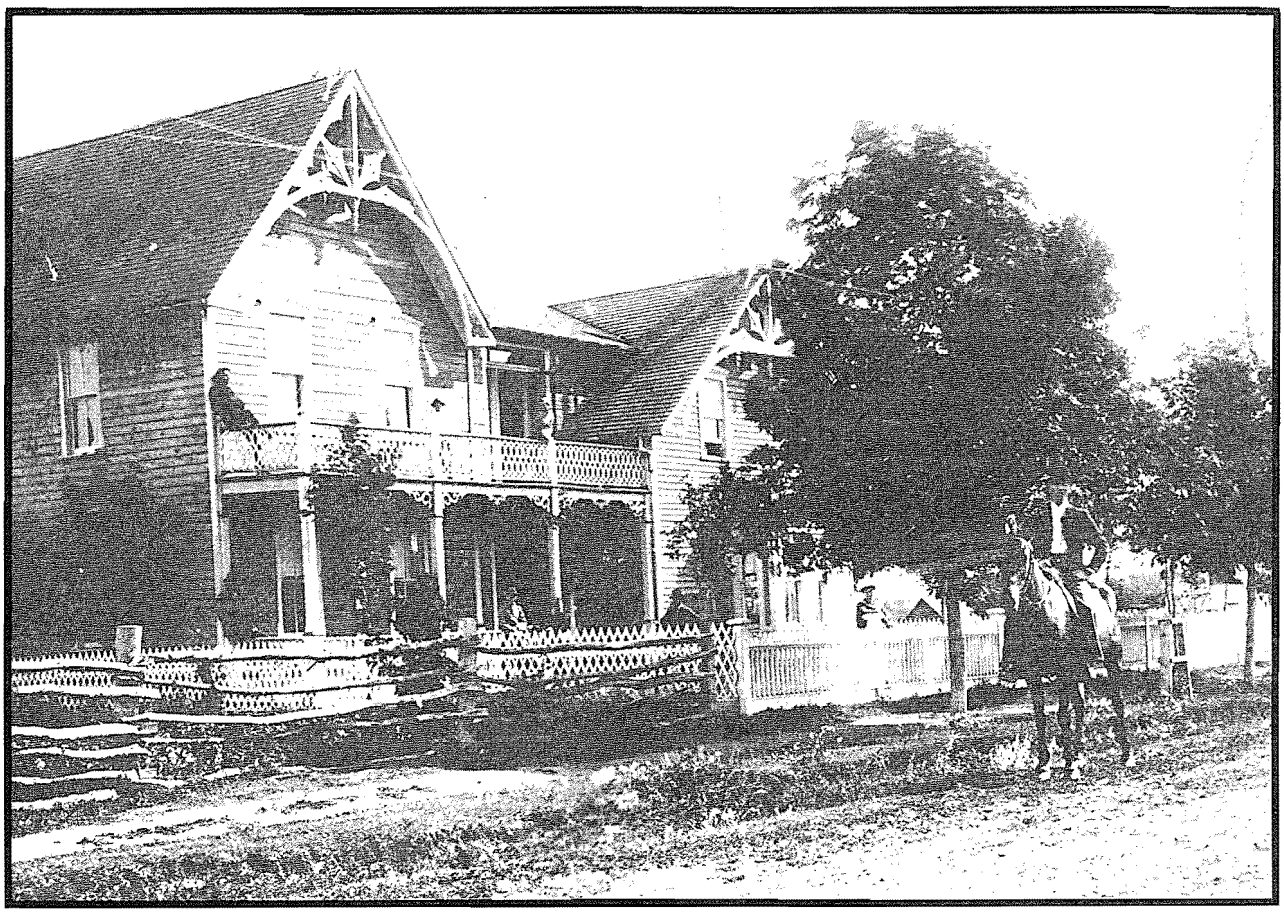
small flocks of sheep that chewed their yards down to a cropped mat of brown grass. The incessant mooing and bleating emanating from these parts of town were a constant source of annoyance to the well-to-do on Eveline Street. So, too, was the lack of care given the appearance of houses and yards in the outer wards. Haystacks abounded, outbuildings and some homes were ramshackle affairs, and the cosmetic value of paint seemed unknown to many residents. The businessmen of Selkirk were appalled by such indifference, mainly because they believed it detracted seriously from the attractiveness of their community as a place to live and work. If these conditions could not be changed, there would be few new families moving into town. As early as 1884, the town editor indignantly observed that "there are more unpainted houses in Selkirk than in any other town of its size in the Dominion."[2] Exaggeration aside, this comment reflected a genuine concern of the civic leaders in the 1880s. Signs of neglect were even worse when they were evident in the vicinity of Eveline Street. This was the case with the yard of the Dominion Fish Hatchery. The *Record* called attention to Selkirk's latest government institution, the "Dominion Experimental Weed Farm".

> Every possible weed is now to be seen, and should be a delight to the botanist, whatever the gardeners may think of it. The French weed, shepherd's purse, thistles, lamb's quarters, mustard, wild oats, artichokes, quack grass, wild rye and many other garden and field weeds are in all stages running from flower to full seed...Selkirk should be proud of the loving care the good Grit government gives the piece of ground presented to them by the town.[3]

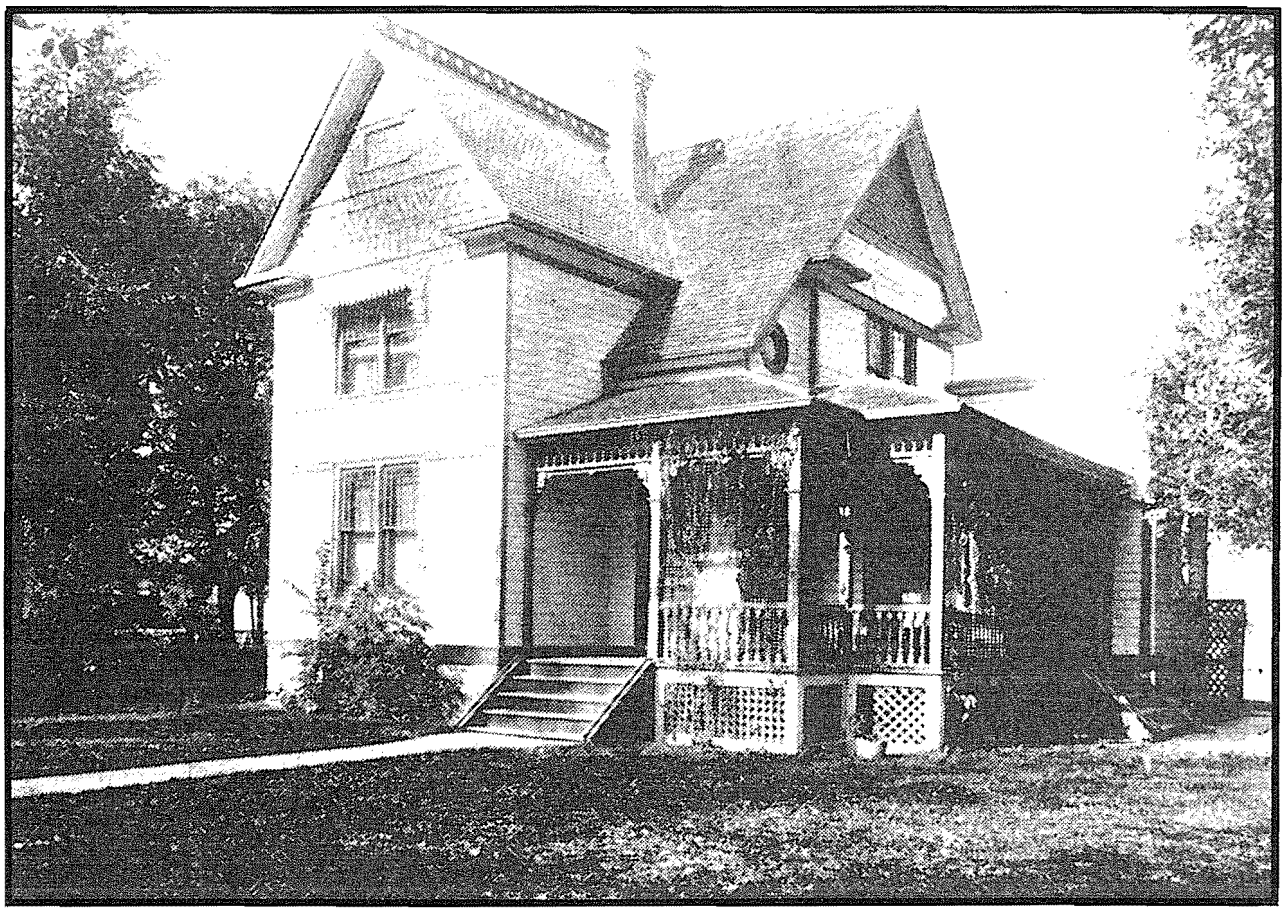
Yet even this neglect was insignificant in relation to conditions among the shanties on the flats. The flats were home to the poor. There a few families of Italians and Icelanders lived a beggarly existence among the half-breeds who still made up about one-third of the entire population.[4] It was a separate community, with its own crude eating-houses, tar-paper shacks, less than reputable boarding-houses, and 'blind-pigs' where liquor was cheap and always plentiful.

There were certain features of the town that even the rich had to endure for years. Selkirk had grown quickly after the arrival of the railway, and the streets were still little better than wagon trails. The town businessmen had made an early effort to grade them and provide elementary ditching, yet every spring they were awash with the run-off from melting snow. Some were impassable. All were badly rutted. Residents were quick to blame the town council for these conditions. R.W. Stewart, editor of the *Record*, noted that "strangers who visit the town occasionally are not disposed to view the disgraceful state of our principal streets with that calm indifference which is so characteristic of our town councillors."[5] Worse still, the main thoroughfares were wide enough for six or eight wagons to pass at once without scraping hubs; wide enough, as Stewart observed, for a city of several millions. This virtually ensured that the streets would not be properly maintained, because the town was too deeply in debt to the C.P.R. to handle this extra financial burden. To their credit, the councillors had provided wooden sidewalks along the main streets in 1884, but within five years these were badly in need of repairs that were almost grudgingly undertaken.[6]

Then there was the smell of the town. Winnipeg residents and businesses dumped their sewage and all manner of noxious material directly into the river as a matter of course. The Selkirk council protested, but to no avail. By the time the raw refuse and slaughter-house offal had floated down to Sugar Point, it was in a uniquely ripe state of decay. Fortunately, east winds were rare. There was, however, no escape from the malodourous fumes that wafted up from the asylum sewage and water drain running under the



Residence of James Colcleugh, c.1888 MANITOBA ARCHIVES



Residence of Robert Bullock, 1913 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

centre of Dufferin Avenue. The heavy concrete and metal manhole covers could not contain the stench at times, and the prevailing north-westerlies carried it across town. Each year the increasingly desperate newpaper editor would earnestly beseech the council to flush the drain to eliminate the odours and the possible spread of disease, suggesting that most councillors possessed a rather undeveloped sense of smell. The location of an abattoir in the centre of town gave variety to the character of the atmosphere and contributed the bawling of animals awaiting slaughter. No sooner had the council arranged to have the slaughter-house removed to the outer limits of town than complaints poured in about "several piggeries in town, which are becoming a nuisance."[7] The newspaper advised that "parties who are sufferers should give notice to the health officer."[8]

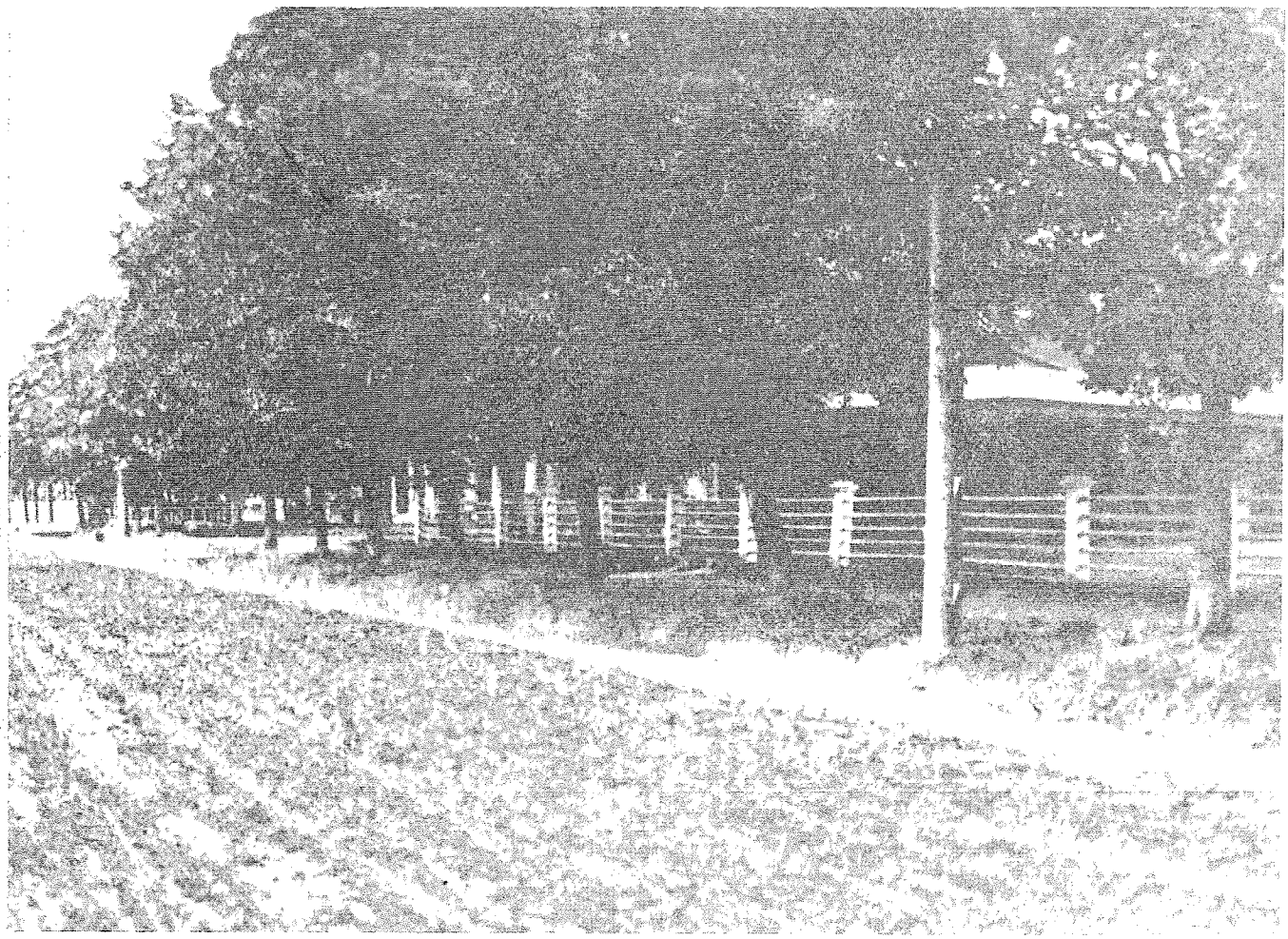
Wandering cattle were another of Stewart's obsessions. Every few months he would pen another editorial about the "herds" that roamed about town, grazing indiscriminantly on grass, weeds and vegetable gardens. In 1891 the town clerk, Thomas Partington, complained that cattle had invaded his garden, eating 30 bushels of potatoes, 75 heads of cabbage, and a large quantity of turnips, corn and other vegetables.[9] Partington, who would serve as town clerk for 25 years, seldom concealed his fondness for figures. When migratory cows ate the leaves of saplings that the council had planted along Eveline to beautify Selkirk, he was there to record the damage and call for immediate retribution. The councillors reacted by establishing a cattle pound to contain all livestock running at large, and imposed a stiff 25¢ fine for their release to the rightful owner. At first the pound-keeper enforced the new bylaw with enthusiasm, but it was not long before conditions had deteriorated to their former state. The cows continued to graze contentedly on the ornamental trees, rubbing the bark off them, and befouling the town pump as they paused to drink at the pool of water around it. Time and again the campaign against them was revived, only to fail once more. It would be decades before Selkirk lost its reputation as a community pasture.

The owner of the *Record*, Robert W. Stewart, usually won the editorial battles he waged against the town councillors and apathetic citizens, if only in the long run. Often it took years of cajoling and gallons of printer's ink to bring about the desired change. Yet Stewart never seemed discouraged, and during his 47 year career as editor and publisher of the town's chief newspaper, he remained a stal-

Eveline Street in 1905 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

wart booster, his enthusiasm for Selkirk and its material advancement never flagging. He was the eternal optimist in a community of sceptics, yet his background was not unlike that of most of his neighbours. Perhaps that is why he was able to deal so successfully with their complacent natures.

Like most of them, he was born a Scot and a Presbyterian in the North West, at Fort Garry in 1857, to be exact.[10] His father, James Stewart, was an Orcadian who came to the North West in 1851 to work for the Hudson's Bay Company and later settled at Fort Garry where he reportedly established the first drugstore. His mother, Robina McKay, was born at Kildonan, her maiden name suggesting half-breed origins. If anything set young Robert apart from his fellow townsmen in an obvious manner, it was his four-year stint at college in Toronto. When he graduated, he returned to the North West and rapidly gained experience in the newspaper business with the *Manitoban*, the *Free Press*, the Edmonton *Bulletin*, the Regina *Leader* and the Neepawa *Canadian*. Thus he came to Selkirk in 1885 well versed in the ways of both the small town and the city, and in the means of transforming one into the other. At 28, he was younger than most of the men in town, and he was still a bachelor, as most of them had been at his age.[11] This was not entirely his fault, for men still outnumbered women two to one in



Selkirk. But soon he was courting Isabella Hume and he married her before he turned 30. Like most couples in town, they had five children and lived rather modestly in a two-story frame house not far from his office on Manitoba Avenue. Throughout his long life, Stewart remained a faithful church-goer and a staunch Conservative. In all these ways, he represented the attitudes and lifestyle of Selkirk's leading citizens. He would never be a rich man—newspapermen seldom were—but the loudness of his weekly editorial voice compensated amply for his lack of financial clout.

Among the first generation of Selkirk residents, only a handful took a leading part in civic affairs. These men were usually merchants or manufacturers or professionals, men whose stake in the community was greater than that of most. Their homes were bigger and their buggies fancier than those of most people, but during the 1880s and 1890s these differences was still quite subtle. It was the turn of the century before they had amassed enough wealth to erect homes of brick or stone along Eveline and more substantial business blocks on Manitoba. In the early years it was their degree of involvement in local affairs, rather than their conspicuous wealth, that set them apart from most people.

There were the Colcleugh cousins, James and Frederick, who had started out together in the drugstore and telegraph businesses, but later became bitter enemies when James was chosen mayor and F.W., as Frederick was known, won only a councillor's seat. F.W. refused to sit on the same council with James because of this electoral slight, and later took an active part in evicting his cousin from the bursar's chair at the insane asylum.[12] Understandably, the families were never close.[13] Nonetheless, each man contributed in his own ways to the advancement of the town. James served as mayor for several terms, became a successful local merchant and investor, and started Selkirk's first telephone exchange. F.W. did become mayor in his turn, and was later elected to represent the town in the provincial legislature on two occasions. In 1898 he became the provincial fisheries inspector. He also ran a general store and invested heavily in lumbering and fishing operations.

William Gibbs, always referred to as a pioneer merchant of Selkirk, arrived in 1875 and immediately opened the town's first bakery.[14] He was from a family of bakers from Bridgewater, Somerset, England, and had established a small store in New York before moving to Winnipeg in 1874, and on to Selkirk in the next year. At first, he produced 20 loaves a day, which he sold from a dogsled at the Lower Fort and to settlers along the river. By 1895 he owned a large store and warehouse, turned out more than 100 loaves daily, and employed others to distribute the bread throughout town from a "neat delivery wagon." Admired for his "sterling integrity," he was elected first to the local school board and then to the town council. Later he became a director of the St. Andrew's Agricultural Society, which had organized the famous fair and exhibition at Selkirk since 1878, and an executive member of the Manitoba Liberal party. In 1890, with fellow Liberals Frank W. Hooker, W.H. Eaton, F.W. Colcleugh, James F. Reid and William Overton, he organized the Selkirk Electric Company to bring that modern convenience to the townspeople.

F.W. Hooker, "who had been identified with every feature of the town and community life since 1882,"[15] pursued similarly diverse interests. He was born at Welland, Canada West, in 1860, and studied pharmacy at Toronto and Orangeville before coming west in 1882 to join his brother Edward in the lumber and building business. While Ed Hooker manufactured bricks at St. Boniface, Frank moved to Selkirk in 1883 and established the first planing mill in town. They soon had mills at Grand Marais, Grindstone Point and Deer Island, and owned an immense lumber yard in the heart of Selkirk. In 1915 F.W. Hooker began a long association with local politics,

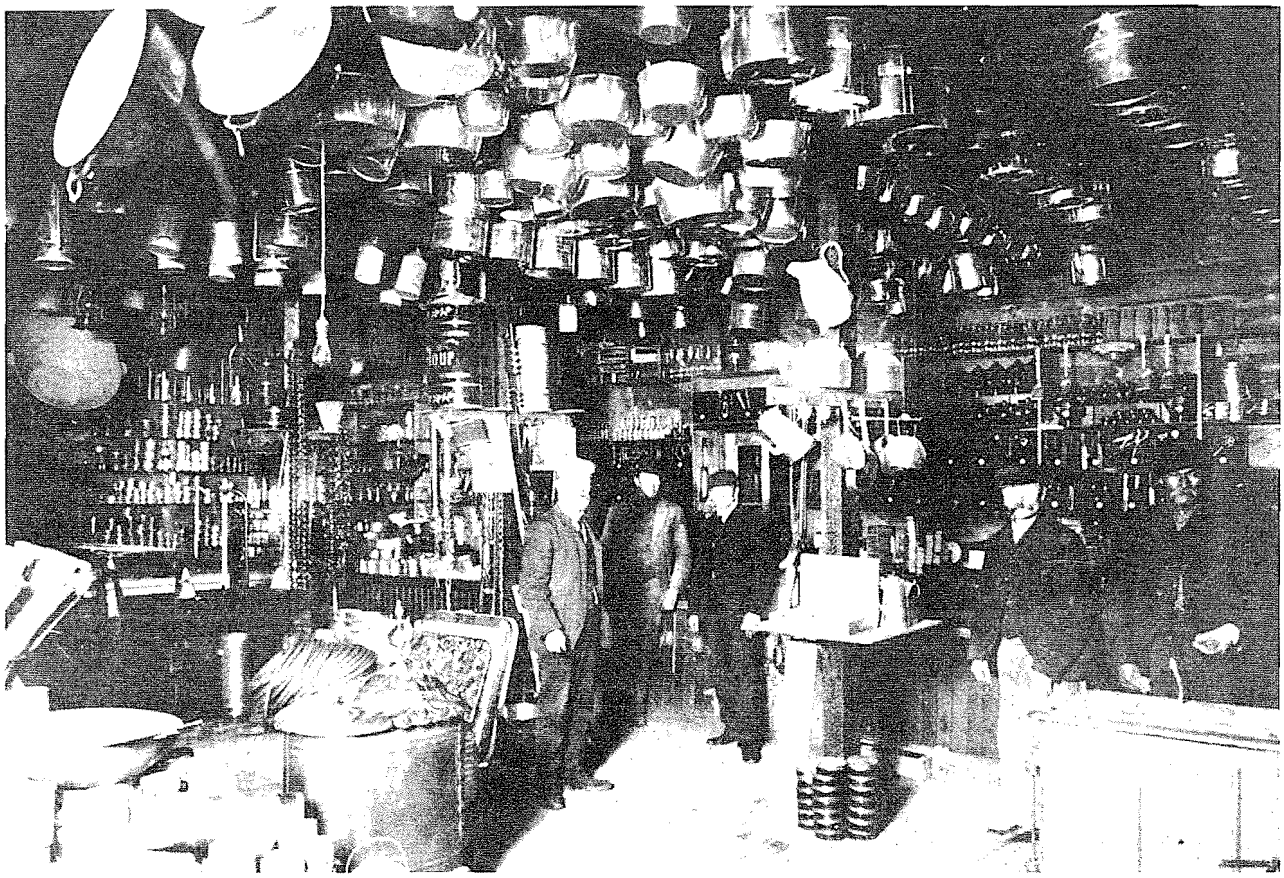
serving first on the council for four terms and then as mayor in 1920 and 1921. He participated in hospital affairs and was president of the St. Andrew's Rural Credits Association. His connection with the Liberal party was lifelong, his influence on the Selkirk Liberal Committee nothing short of legendary.

The Combers, Edwin and Reuben, were both steady town boosters for a half century. In 1870 Edwin left Somersetshire, England, aboard the old windjammer *St. Leonards*, and arrived in Quebec 47 days later.[16] From there he travelled to Hamilton, where he was offered a position in Robert Tait's grist mill at Silver Heights, just west of Fort Garry. He remained little more than a year, and then opened his own mill at Middlechurch. In 1883 he came to Selkirk and began a career of civic involvement that included 20 years on the town council, 14 years as warden of Christ Church and 15 years on the local school board. He was also a dedicated Odd Fellow, and served as librarian in the Carnegie Library in his later years. Reuben arrived in Canada four years later, having spent time in the navy as assistant butcher on the *Arethusa*, and opened a butcher shop in Selkirk in 1876.[17] The shop quickly gained a solid reputation, and Comber became procurer to many of the steamboats and lumber camps up the lake. For six terms he sat on the town council, and was instrumental in establishing the Selkirk Hunt Club, which provided the town with a patina of English gentility. Without exaggeration, the *Record* remarked that "every enterprise for the advancement of the best interests of the town meets [with] this public-spirited gentleman's hearty concurrence and support."[18]

There were many other businessmen who participated in local affairs with equal vigour and steadfastness. W.H. Eaton, owner of a large general store on Eveline and a relative of the famous Timothy Eaton, sat repeatedly on the town council and took part in local business ventures and clubs.[19] F.A. Gemmel, who served on council, as mayor, as secretary of the Board of Trade, as president of the hospital board, and in various capacities with fraternal organizations and volunteer agencies, was an esteemed real estate and insurance agent.[20] R.H. Gilhuly, proprietor of the best-known drugstore in Selkirk, arrived in 1880 to work with James Colcleugh in a combined general store and drugstore operation before purchasing the business in 1885. He, too, served on the town council and as postmaster starting in 1888.[21] The Vaughans, A.H. (Amos) and L.S., who surveyed most of the town in the 1870s and later became the offical town surveyors and engineers, virtually alternated as town councillors for more than two decades.[22] R.C. Moody, a pioneer hardware merchant and undertaker, was universally recognized as a "public spirited man, always supporting community enterprises,"[23] served on the council and in various organizations and business ventures for decades. General merchant and fishing fleet owner J.K. McKenzie, Dr. Orton Grain, blacksmith and machinist Fred Pook, store keeper Robert Bullock, lawyer Fred Heap, real estate and insurance agent James Dagg—all these men worked tirelessly to advance the fortunes of the town and their own fortunes as well.

They had much in common besides their political and financial concerns. In the 1880s most were still relatively young men, in their late twenties or early thirties. Unlike the bulk of the townspeople, who were originally from Manitoba, these boosters usually claimed British or Ontarian roots. They had come to Selkirk to realize their own potential in community affairs and commerce, rather than to find steady work on the boats or in the lumber camps. This reflected both their education and their political ties, characteristics that mattered enormously in their era. By virtue of their background and the influence of their business mentors, they possessed a deep appreciation of the need for boosterism in a small town like Selkirk. They were, in a word, visionaries.

Interior view of Gilhuly's drugstore on Eveline Street, c.1905 GEORGE GILHULY



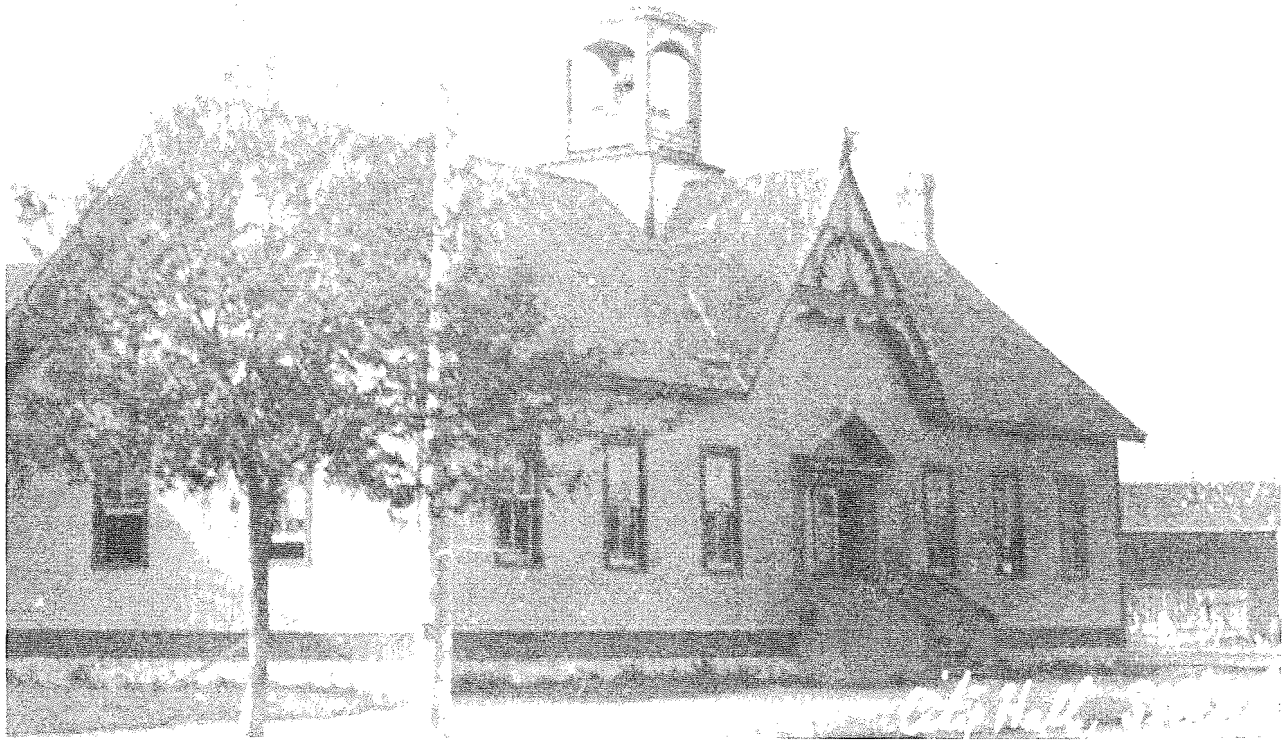
Moody Hardware store interior, Selkirk, 1903 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

As men of vision and sophistication, they placed their mark on Selkirk, giving the town its unique social texture. They tried to recreate the institutions and the lifestyle of the communities they had left behind to settle in Selkirk. Some, like Reuben Comber and W.H. Eaton, established the traditional fox-hunt on the prairies just west of town. Others, like James Colcleugh and F.A. Gemmel, started a Masonic Lodge as early as 1878.[24] Those of strong religious conviction worked assiduously to find the funds to erect churches, and by 1883 the congregations of the Episcopal, Presbyterian, Methodist and Roman Catholic churches each had its own building in Selkirk.[25] The inevitable missionary societies and women's auxiliaries started at the same time. A Selkirk Literary and Debating Society began in 1882, and its members gathered weekly to listen to poetical readings, to debate controversial topics like "early marriages are desirable" (the negative side won narrowly), or to hear visiting lecturers speak on "The Search for Franklin" or "Modern Science and Free Thought, Evolution, Mind and Matter." Soon the ladies of the town formed the Young Ladies' Mutual Self-Improvement, Semi-Literary, Sewing and Benevolent Association. Festive occasions such as Robbie Burns Day, Victoria Day, and the Glorious Twelfth saw parades down the main streets and picnics by the river. The list was endless, and each newly-formed society or annual holiday procession spoke volumes about the roots of the people who settled Selkirk, oversaw its conversion from a mere place of residence into a vibrant community, and gave it character.

The character of the community, that invisible and yet tangible quality that made each town and village unique, derived mainly from the lifestyle and attitudes of the leading families in the settlement. It mattered little that they were the numerical minority in town. By virtue of their wealth and their positions of power, they created the image of the community that outsiders were most likely to remember. It was their voice that was heard in the Legislature and in Parliament, their weddings and funerals that made front-page news in the papers, their fashions and vacations and indiscretions that were the subjects of gossip and scrutiny. The actions of the great majority of townspeople may have been more typical, but they were also far less interesting and far more easily forgotten.

A deep sense of Anglo-Canadian patriotism comprised part of Selkirk's character. Usually this pride of nationality, this awareness of belonging to the greatest Empire the world had ever known, found expression in subtle and rather commonplace occurrences. When the mate on the steamer at the docks raised the Union Jack each morning, he raised a symbol of loyalty to the Crown and to Queen Victoria in particular, just as much as he raised a maritime convention. When thick, black borders framed the obituary of Sir John A. Macdonald in the Selkirk *Record* in 1891, they marked the end of a very special tie between Canada and Great Britain. When a patriotic concert was held in Pearson's Hall in February of 1900 to raise funds for the widows and children of Canadian volunteers who had lost their lives fighting for Britain in the Boer War, and Dr. Grain gave a "gifted address on patriotism," which was followed by the singing of patriotic songs, the townspeople once again reaffirmed their unflinching belief in the Empire and all that it represented.

At times this patriotism inspired remarkable public display. This was the case when it was learned, on July 13th, 1885, that the troops who had just quelled the North West Rebellion of Louis Riel and his Metis followers in Saskatchewan would be passing through Selkirk on their return to the east. The rebellion was seen as a revolt against the freedom and good government that the British tradition inspired in Canada, and "it was determined that the returning soldiers should be



Selkirk's First Town Hall, c.1890 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

greeted in a manner expressive of the high appreciation of their deeds of valor entertained by our citizens."[26] It was Monday, and as the troops were expected by steamer on Wednesday, a general committee was quickly formed to superintend the arrangements. Sub-committees developed to handle specific events for "our townspeople were determined to prove themselves equal to the occasion, and all joined heartily in the good cause." The carpenters in town were recruited to construct 3000 feet of table-space and the ladies started to prepare the feast that would be set out in the parade grounds. Volunteers stepped forward eagerly to carry out any and all duties associated with the celebration. On Tuesday evening a final meeting was held to iron out unexpected wrinkles in the organization for the next day.

"Wednesday morning dawned brightly, and people were early astir, members of the committee and the Mayor being especially busy in seeing after the arrangements." They thought the *Princess* would dock in the early afternoon, but at nine o'clock they heard great shouting and much whistle blowing a short distance down the river. The brass band readied its instruments, and as the steamer rounded the bend, the musicians "struck up the strains of an inspiring tune, while cheer after cheer arose from the crowds on the banks and were answered back as lustily by those on the boats." The *Princess* docked, then the *Colville*. The troops disembarked, shook hands all round, and started the luncheon. When this was over, Mayor Colcleugh rose to address the veterans of the war on the banks of the Saskatchewan:

> You deserve well of your country. You nobly supported the liberty and constitutional government by your valorous achievements in quelling the turbulence of discontented and traitorous subjects and have added a glorious page to Our Country's story. You have shown the world what the children of young Canada, while yet in her teens, can dare and do in defence of law and order, and have given increased assurance of the stability of our institutions.

General Middleton, the commander, replied briefly and the troops dispersed for a stroll around town or a nap under the trees. The townspeople flocked onto the *Princess* to visit the sick and the wounded. Then, in mid-afternoon, the soldiers climbed aboard a special troop train waiting at Bradbury Station and were off on the next leg of their long journey home. By Stewart's reckoning, "the day had been a great one for Selkirk and long to be remembered." Undoubtedly the townspeople agreed.

Politics generated the same intense loyalty and enthusiasm among Selkirkers. The townspeople were fiercely partisan. Most expressed their political preferences by swarming to the polls on election day. It was a rare election that did not bring out at least 75 per cent of those eligible to cast a ballot in Selkirk.[27] Invariably, a small but acutely active and vocal minority campaigned openly for their candidates, enlivening the town streets and meeting halls with their bombast and their bottles for the duration of the contest. And of course R.W. Stewart, who was so profoundly conservative that he found sailing on Sundays deeply offensive, contributed all the editorial vitriol he could muster to the defeat of the Liberal hopeful. Seldom was the seriousness that characterized local politics more evident than in the provincial fight of 1886.

Prior to this election, Manitoba was essentially a one-party province. The Conservatives, led by a politically nimble, 300-pound Metis named John Norquay, were the dominant force. Opposition came from many sides, each with its own particular grievance, but this factionalism prevented serious resistance to the all-powerful Tories. By 1886, however, these factions had coalesced under the leadership of Thomas Greenway and his chief lieutenant, Joseph Martin, and a united Liberal party was born. For this reason, the election of 1886 has

been described as the first truly partisan contest in the province, fought on the basis of two very distinct views of Manitoba's future. But in the riding of St. Andrew's, it was nothing of the sort. It was, in fact, little more than a mudslinging match based on personalities and personal abuse.

Although the election did not occur until December, R.W. Stewart started his editorial campaign to re-elect Tory chieftain John Norquay in January. And for six months he was able to voice his support for the type of government the province had been enjoying under Conservative leadership without having to contend with any Liberal opposition. In late July, however, the newly-formed Selkirk Liberal Association nominated Mayor F.W. Colcleugh to carry its banner, and underwrote publication of a second Selkirk newspaper, the *News*, to champion its cause. Stewart launched his attack without delay, castigating the Liberals for the unmanly way in which their nomination meeting was arranged, claiming that its secrecy was "characteristic of the present opposition to Mr. Norquay. They are ready at all times to sneak around in a clandestine manner and vilify those better than themselves, but they have not the manliness to come out boldly and in a dignified way declare their objections

F. W. Colcleugh, 1888 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

and have them discussed openly."[28] This description of party organizers as unmanly, sneaky vilifiers would soon pale in comparison to Stewart's vicious characterization of F.W. Colcleugh.

Colcleugh was a perfect political target, tailor-made for lampooning. His hot temper was infamous, chiefly as a result of his indignant response to his cousin James's triumph in the civic election of 1882. F.W.'s subsequent refusal to sit in the same council with his cousin as mayor earned him no end of ridicule. His part in the recent royal commission inquiry into charges of corruption on the part of Norquay, S.L. Bedson, his cousin James and others in locating the provincial asylum on their own property west of town did nothing to better his image. F.W., who had been a Norquay supporter, turned against the Tory leader and his cronies because, it was said, he wished revenge on James who became bursar of that institution. Then there was F.W.'s record as mayor of Selkirk, a position he attained in 1885 and then again in 1886. As Stewart wrote,

> he might tell us what his claims are to entitle him to be our representative. He, for instance, ought to show us what good he has already done in his position as Mayor of Selkirk. As a public officer he ought to show something he has done for the benefit of our town; such as enhancing the value of real estate, for example, or whether he did anything towards getting a Town Hall, or assisted those who wished to build one, or he might tell us what became of the resolution that was put in his hands anent the navigation of the Red River. He might tell us of various other things that he has done to entitle him to the confidence of the people....We certainly think that a man who seems so anxious to get into power as to make assertions where there is no chance of confuting them, is working for his own benefit and not that of the public.[29]

As the campaign wore on, Stewart compounded his caustic caricature of Colcleugh by adding charges of wholesale corruption. He quoted approvingly from other Tory newspapers that reported Colcleugh as saying "that he could beat Norquay if the whiskey held out."[30] He published letters that urged people not to "prostitute the word 'Reform' by attaching it to such men. You know the word 'Grit' can be attached to almost anything. A Grit whiskey slinger, for instance. You know that grit belongs to that part of the sand that is generally thrown into mud holes, as being unfit for anything else, as (politically speaking) Mr. F.W. Colcleugh certainly will be after the present contest is over."[31] Eventually, though it seemed to tax his creative powers, Stewart managed to sum up his view of Colcleugh in a little poem:

> How doth our busy candidate
> Improve each shining hour.
> He neatly baits his fishing-hook
> With whiskey pork and flour.
>
> He makes himself with voters' wives
> As solid as a rock.
> He taketh up and kisseth all
> The babies in our block.
>
> And if a voter takes a nip
> Our candidate with guile,
> Will whisper to that voter man
> "Good neighbor let us smile.
>
> But if that voter is a man
> Who on the Sabbath day,
> Do go to church, our candidate
> Will whisper, "let us pray."
>
> Lots of gush and taffy
> And barrels full of prate.
> Make up the little outfit of
> Our busy candidate.[32]

Little is known about the Liberals' response to the attacks of Stewart and other Tory stalwarts, mainly because no copies of the Selkirk *News* have survived. It is certain, however, that their behavior was not exemplary either. They maligned local Tory supporters and Norquay in particular, both in their newspaper and during their stumps throughout the riding. They challenged innumerable voters in the Court of Revision, continually raised the issue

of Tory corruption in the asylum scandal, and catered to every grievance they were able to elicit from unhappy Conservative supporters. They even brought in other Tory turncoats in an effort to show Norquay's loss of support within his own party. The issues of the day stood no chance of exposure in this barrage of partisan invective.

The results of the election demonstrate, as nothing else can, the intensity of the passion that marked the long, bitter campaign. Norquay managed to retain St. Andrew's, but only by 69 votes, or about 11 per cent of the ballots cast.

Poll	*Norquay*	*Colcleugh*
South St. Andrew's	81	32
North St. Andrew's	57	29
St. Peter's	17	20
Clandeboye	39	42
Mapleton	19	24
Selkirk	129	126
TOTALS	342	273

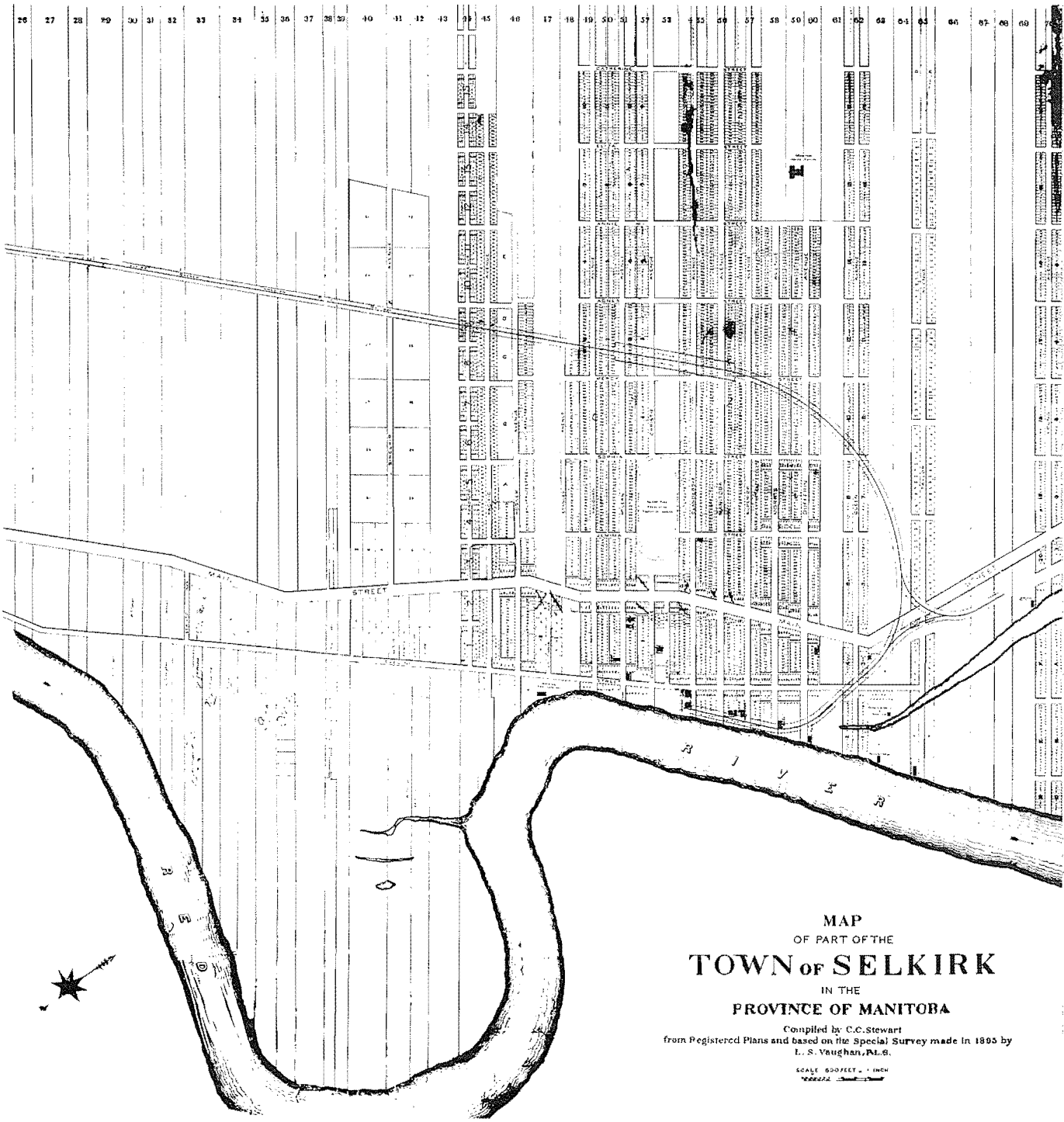
Source: Selkirk *Record*, 8 December 1886

When the final tally was announced, Stewart smugly observed that there was no need to gloat over the result, for the actions of the people had said all that needed to be said about the righteousness of the Tory cause. He may well have regretted this generosity two years later, when F.W. Colcleugh won the seat by acclamation.

It would be too simple to claim that all of Selkirk's character as a community derived from the behavior of leading citizens. In the main this was the case, for those very people spearheaded local political organizations, directed the annual fair and the holiday parades, formed the fraternal clubs, and of course financed the fishing fleets which provided the town with its special maritime flavour. But at times small groups of people on the very edge of polite society, or indeed beyond it altogether, could do just as much to provide the town with a singular reputation. This was certainly true in the 1880s and 1890s when vice of different sorts and particularly juvenile delinquency became an unenviable and undesirable thread in Selkirk's social fabric.

Vice had many guises. In 1881 a small band of temperance advocates appealed to the young men of Selkirk to throw away their bottles and save themselves from eternal damnation. These teatotalling zealots were repulsed by the behavior of storekeepers like Robert Bullock, who always stocked ample quantities of liquor in the back of their establishments for treating their friends and for outright sale to anyone with the required cash. Persuasion did not work too well among those who were accustomed to a wee dram on a daily basis, but the temperance workers did possess a stronger weapon. This was the Scott Act, a piece of federal legislation passed in 1878 that permitted any county to hold a vote on enforcement of total prohibition if one-quarter of the eligible voters petitioned for it. The prohibitionists managed to garner the required support and an election was set for early April. Meeting after meeting was held throughout Lisgar County to convert the undecided, and often these degenerated into loud and abusive shouting matches with the Methodists taking a strong stand for complete abstinence and almost everyone else arguing against it. Feelings ran high and the debate grew especially bitter in Selkirk where F.W. Colcleugh allied himself with the prohibitionists solely to put Bullock out of business.[33] When the vote was counted, it was found that although a majority in Selkirk had voted against prohibition, most of the county favoured enforcement of the Scott Act. James Colcleugh believed the unusual vote in town was largely a reaction against his cousin's self-proclaimed vendetta against Bullock, which caused many prohibitionists to shun association with such a man and others to vote not at all. Nonetheless, all of Lisgar County was now legally dry.

As it turned out, this was a blessing in disguise for the liquor dealers. Certainly it



MAP

OF PART OF THE

TOWN OF SELKIRK

IN THE

PROVINCE OF MANITOBA

Compiled by C.C.Stewart
from Registered Plans and based on the Special Survey made in 1895 by
L. S. Vaughan, M.L.S.

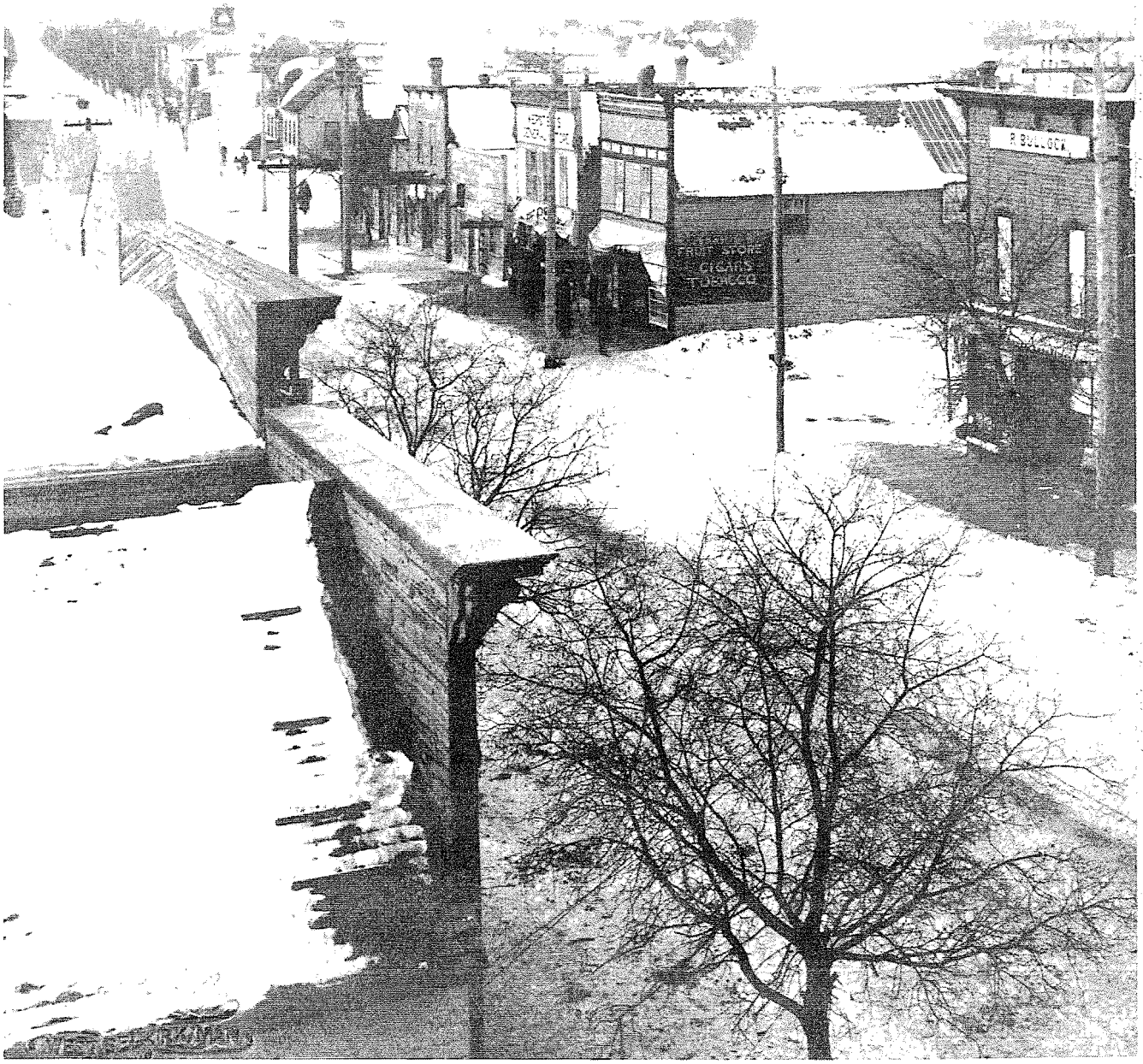
SCALE 600 FEET = 1 INCH

hurt the business of local hotelkeepers who had to close down their bars, but the traffic in booze continued at an even faster pace behind locked doors. With no liquor licences to pay, profits were greater than ever. One simply had to be careful not to get caught, for a stiff fine and ultimately imprisonment awaited the reckless transgressor. The prohibitionists must have been dismayed to find that drunkenness was actually on the upswing since the Act came into force.[34] Worse still, they were now attacked because enforcement of this law deprived the town of much-needed revenues from the sale of liquor licences. And most assuredly the tipplers cursed them as never before, for it was soon nearly impossible to obtain anything other than rot-gut whiskey. It is little wonder the townspeople returned to the licence system after only a few years of drought.

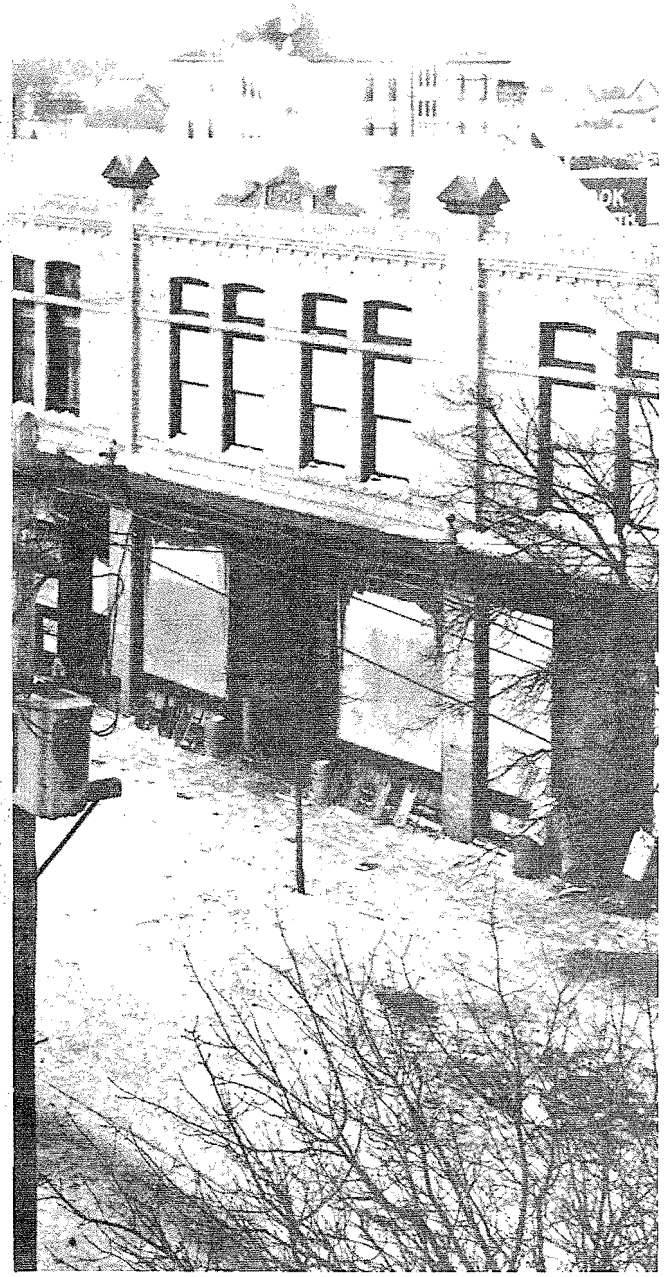
When Selkirk was but five years old, the residents started to feel the need for a permanent form of police protection. Petty crime, especially break, enter and theft, had gotten completely out of hand by 1886.[35] In the next year R.W. Stewart felt obliged to report that "frequent complaints have come to our ears with regard to immoral dens in this town, and we have been urged upon to advocate the expulsion of this social evil from our midst."[36] Prostitutes were one thing, but the pedlars who visited town every spring and took away money without actually contributing anything to the services offered in Selkirk were quite another. The townspeople demanded protection of their merchants who paid business taxes annually and thereby contributed to the building up of the town and its amenities. When a lone vigilante took matters into his own hands in the summer of 1888, and began locking up people without authority, the town councillors finally decided to take remedial action. In August, Harry Hodgins became town constable.

Hodgins seemed to come upon the scene at precisely the wrong time. If anything, matters only got worse after his appointment. The first generation of Selkirk boys were his nemesis. Every week, without fail, Stewart recorded more misdeeds on the part of these youngsters. In the daytime, they were wont to fire their rifles on the streets and to throw dirt in the faces of innocent passers-by. At night, when they were commonly out to two or three o'clock, they delighted in stoning windows and pulling down fences. As time went on, they added the detonation of firecrackers at the front door to their repertoire. By 1892 Stewart was advocating the creation of "some kind of society for the improvement of the morals of the young boys of Selkirk."[37] He noted that it was becoming all too common to see lads of eight to fourteen years walking the streets with pipes or cigars balanced on their lips, or with great wads of chewing tobacco bulging in their cheeks. Time and time again, he called for a curfew bell to keep these menaces off the streets at night. By the turn of the century Stewart's interest in pipes, cigars and chewing tobacco had waned and he turned his attention to cigarette smoking. If not chastised for this vile habit, he warned, the children of Selkirk would surely become "cigarette fiends."[38] Harry Hodgins seems to have had little moral effect on the boys, and it finally fell to certain responsible citizens to institute religious exercises at school in an effort to curb their 'depravity'.

The constable's other problem was controlling the drunks who prowled the streets at night, molesting women and causing them endless embarrassment with disgusting outbursts of profanity. Often this cursing lasted through the night and could still be heard by early risers in the morning.[39] On one occasion, Hodgins attempted to arrest an obstreperous drunk, only to be attacked by several others who found his actions offensive. A lively scuffle ensued, but for once Harry got his man. No doubt his task was much lightened when, in 1908, the town councillors bought him a new patrol wagon for hauling drunks off to



West Selkirk, Manitoba, c.1903



PUBLIC ARCHIVES CANADA

jail. It was a fine vehicle, consisting of one wheel in front and two handles at the rear.[40]

Though rich in industry and culture, Selkirk was a pauper when it came to adequate civic amenities. Fifteen years after the town was founded, it still had no town hall. The streets remained a disgrace, the sidewalks in a perpetual state of disrepair. There was no fire department, not even a volunteer bucket brigade, to guard the largely frame community. Empty lots and the river itself remained the local nuisance ground. Although the population was nearly 1000, only one school had been provided for the young. There was not even a town cemetery, and burials continued to take place at Mapleton.

Stewart was quick to blame the town council for these deficiencies. In 1892 he remarked that "the town is at present at a standstill and is not making any progress whatever that is noticeable. The only cause to which this state of affairs may be attributed is to [sic] the want of energy and resolution on the part of our citizens; and more especially those at the head of affairs."[41] To some extent, he was correct in this assessment of the situation. Certain inadequacies were clearly the result of local apathy. But to a greater degree, the lack of progress in Selkirk was the result of the community's crushing burden of debt.

By 1894 Selkirk owed $110,000 to various creditors who had purchased the railway bonus bonds and civic improvement debentures in 1882. The country as a whole had entered a period of depression and it was impossible for the community to meet even the interest payments. Whenever the council needed a loan of $500 to make improvements to the schoolhouse, for example, the secretary-treasurer first had to obtain personal guarantees of repayment from the councillors before the bank would extend credit. Soon Selkirk was known as the "town that did not pay its debts," and was unable to borrow a dollar from any source.[42] Acting mayor Edwin Comber was authorized to start negotiations with the

town's creditors, particularly the C.P.R. and the Canada Permanent Mortgage Company, which held most of the outstanding debentures, to see if he could arrange better terms. Comber, in turn, appealed to Captain William Robinson to use his influence, which was said to be considerable. Robinson took the outlandish step of offering the C.P.R. $10,000 for its accumulated $70,000. The railway balked at this, but did eventually accept $15,000. The captain then approached Canada Permanent and succeeded in having them accept payment of the amount of principal due, with interest, to the date of settlement. Through his generous exertions, the town saved $60,000. In 1898 Mayor James Dagg forged an agreement with the provincial government to guarantee the interest on the remaining $50,000, borrowed at four per cent with a low scale of repayment. This consolidation was, as Stewart noted, "appreciated by the citizens, as it brings the town out of a muddle which has always been a detriment to its progress."[43]

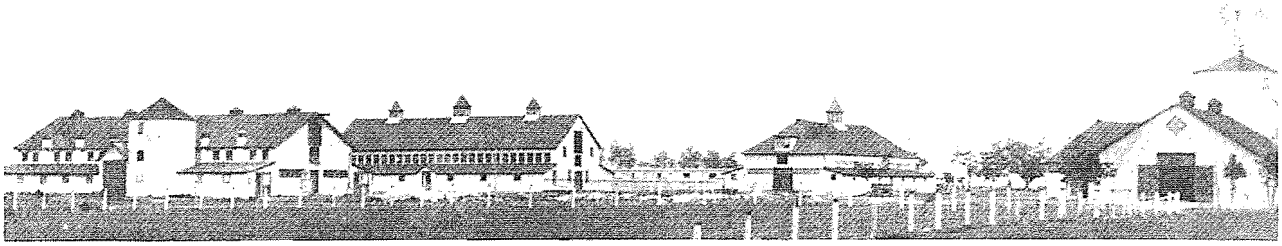
Settlement of the debt problem coincided with recovery of the national economy and Selkirk entered its first true boom period. By 1898 the population had doubled to 1,836.[44] The property assessment for taxation purposes rose from about $267,000 in 1888 to $436,337 by 1896, and then nearly doubled to $841,428 in 1901.[45] Farm settlers poured into the countryside, especially near Gimli, and the province started to drain the Big Bog to provide even more arable land. The old roundhouse at East Selkirk became an immigration hall in 1899.[46] Much of this new enthusiasm about farming around Selkirk was attributed to Sir William Van Horne's purchase of some 5,000 acres at East Selkirk around the turn of the century.[47] The newly-formed Board of Trade, led by Captain Robinson, cashed in on this economic development by persuading the Winnipeg Elevator Company to construct a 30,000 bushel grain elevator at Selkirk in 1902.[48] Two years later, the town council set aside an empty lot at the corner of Main and Clandeboye for a farmers' market square. Stewart expressed the feelings of all Selkirkers when he wrote that "we are evidently having our innings at last."[49]

Prosperity gave the town a facelift. In 1898 a building boom commenced, as the I.O.G.T. put up a large hall on Main Street; Oliver and Byron, the flour and feed merchants, built a new store at Main and Manitoba; butcher G.H. Fox erected a substantial building on Manitoba and one of his competitors, L. Mills, constructed a fine two-storey building complete with a large stable and ice-house on Eveline. In 1902 Captain Robinson razed the buildings on the north side of his general store on Eveline and replaced them with a 56 by 100 foot, three-storey edifice that became Selkirk's first department store. Moody and Sutherland followed suit with a new brick store next to Bullock's on Eveline. The old Merchant's Hotel, built by Schultz in 1877, was moved to make room for C. Sheldon's "splendidly decorated" replacement.[50] Fred Pook renovated his blacksmith shop and started an agricultural implement dealership. The boom continued into 1903, with Dr. Ross, Fred Heap, photographer J.H. Clarke and J.W. Simpson erecting new houses, F. Partridge and J.S. Chambers adding stone foundations to their homes, three-hotel keepers making extensive renovations, and the Presbyterian congregation putting up a new brick church.[51]

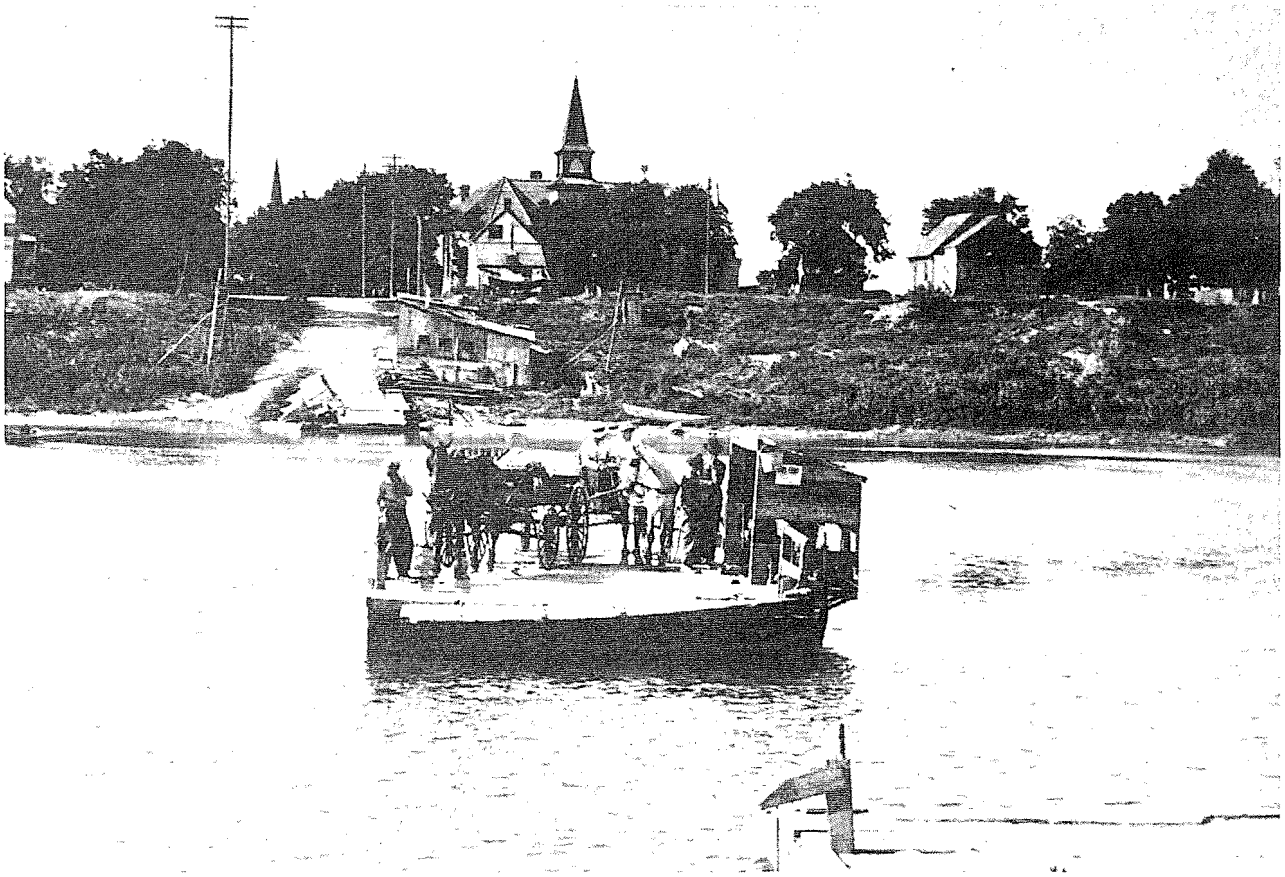
New public buildings soon followed. In 1905 a protracted debate began about the site of the proposed post office building. The town merchants, most of who had establishments on Eveline near Manitoba Avenue, wanted the post office built there. Several lots were still available, and Mayor McKenzie indicated he would be willing to sell one of his at a reasonable price. The Board of Trade, composed largely of businessmen with interests along Eveline, naturally endorsed this plan. But other store-keepers whose places of business were farther west on Manitoba argued just as strenuously in favour of a site near

Main and Manitoba. For reasons unknown, the Dominion government sided with these merchants and the new post office building began to take shape on the south-east corner of Main and Manitoba in the fall of 1905. When completed, the spacious brick structure housed not only the post office, but the customs house, the fishery office and Indian agency as well.[52]

The post office was still under construction when the townspeople decided they needed a cottage hospital. They formed a committee, incorporated the Selkirk General Hospital, and began to solicit contributions for its construction. Captain Robinson became the first president of the hospital board and, with the generosity for which he was universally known, gave the town 25 feet of his property from Eveline to the river for a new street past the hospital site, to be called "Idell."[53] Equally generous contributions of money from many of the residents enabled the committee to call for tenders in April, 1907. They were especially pleased with the site that had been obtained; it was far enough from town to assure the patients of quiet surroundings and a beautiful view of the river, yet within easy walking distance from residential areas. Henry Bird of Selkirk became the general contractor, and by January, 1908, the neat, three-storey structure, built of white pressed brick resting on an East Selkirk limestone foundation, was ready to admit patients.[54]

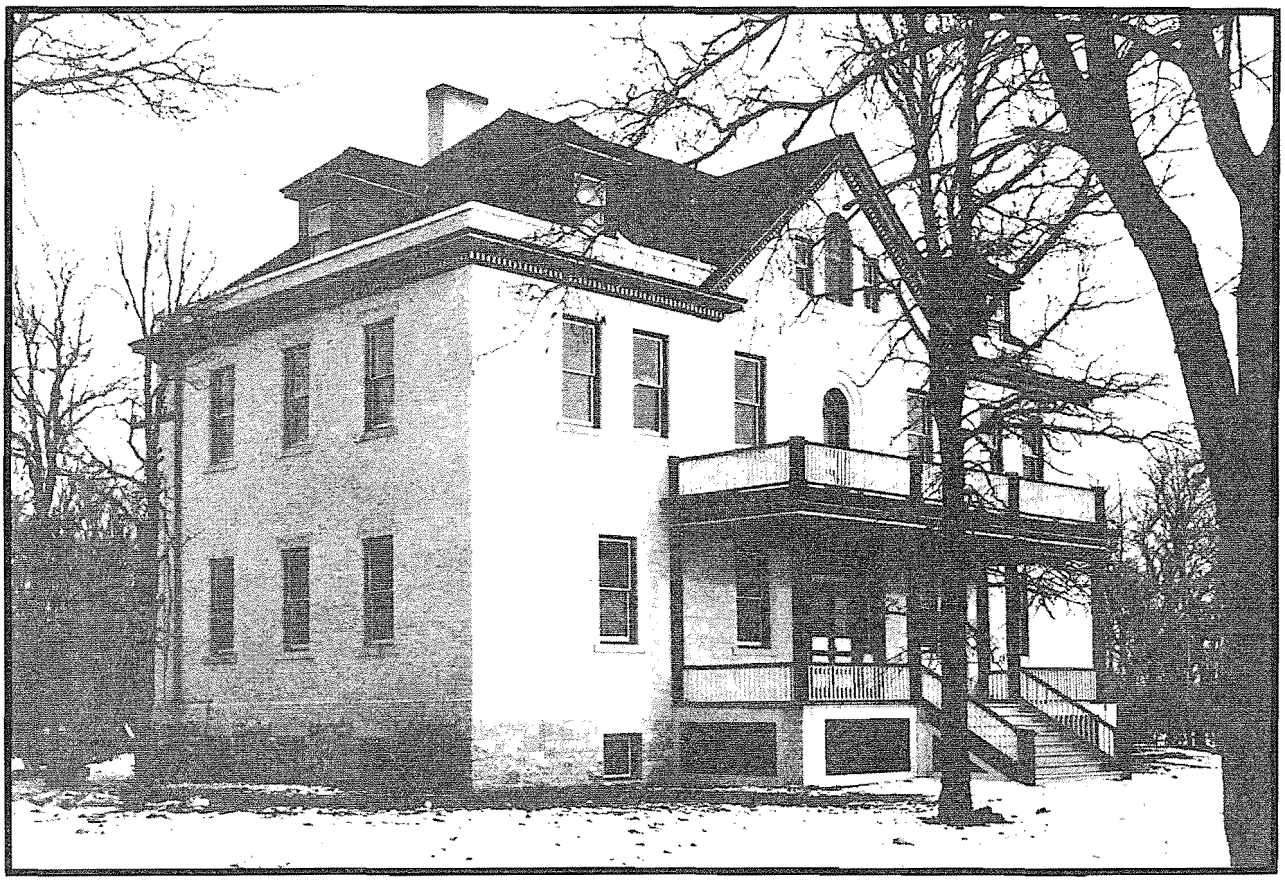


Farm of Sir William Van Horne, East Selkirk, 1913 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

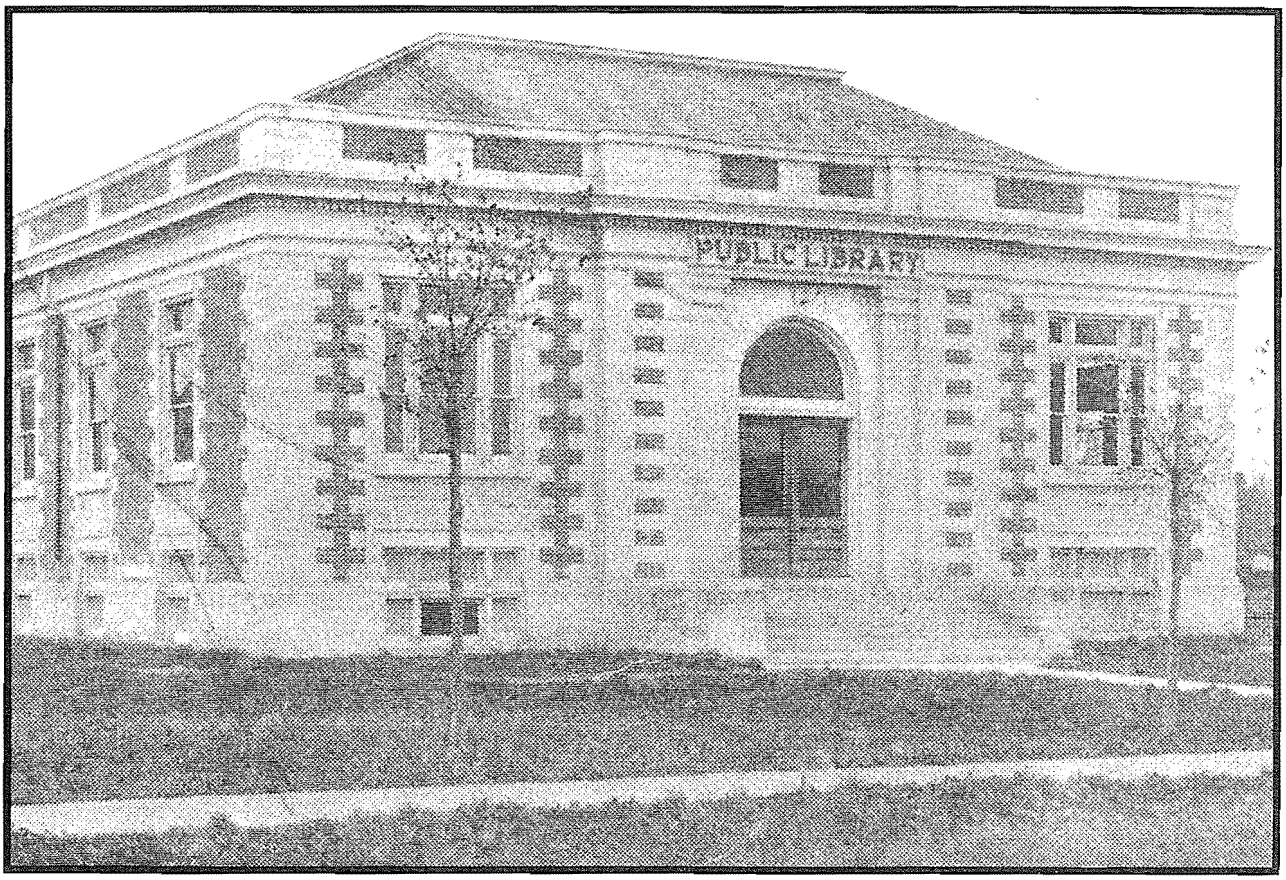


Selkirk Ferry (Holgate's), c.1905 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

Public Building [Post Office] in Selkirk, Manitoba, 1909 PUBLIC ARCHIVES CANADA



Selkirk Hospital, c.1908 MANITOBA ARCHIVES



The Carnegie Library on Eaton Avenue, 1913 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

The town council had meanwhile been negotiating with the famous Carnegie Foundation in the United States for funds with which to erect a public library. Just a week after the hospital opened, the Foundation notified the council that it would be willing to donate $10,000 towards a library building if the town would provide a suitable location and an annual grant of $1,000.[55] It was a marvellous offer, and the town quickly accepted the Foundation's terms. The councillors obtained a lot on Eaton Avenue, just off Eveline, and within a year and a half Selkirk could boast another magnificent brick building. Inside, there were two large reading rooms on the main floor (one for men and one for women), a board room and a library room filled with almost empty shelving. As his good deed for 1909, William Robinson completely furnished the library with modern fixtures. In the basement, provision was made for a bath-house and a gymnasium. Patrons were permitted, upon payment of five cents for a library card, to borrow one precious volume for a two-week period. In the coming years, Captain Robinson did much to stock the empty cabinets and bare shelves.

The Carnegie Library was the latest in a long line of public entertainments enjoyed by the people of Selkirk, and its boardroom provided much-needed meeting space. In the early years, club meetings were usually held in private homes, which worked satisfactorily as long as membership was small. As the town grew, and clubs proliferated, the schoolhouse was used as a meeting-place. Being unused by the teachers and pupils at night, it seemed ideal for larger gatherings. But in 1888 the town council, hard pressed to meet the expenses of its school board because of the debt, raised rental fees to an exorbitant level. James O'Donohue, owner of the Lisgar House, responded by opening a public hall above his carriage house.[55] By 1900 meeting-rooms were readily available above many of the new business blocks, in the town hall, in the old school, and of course in Pearson's Hall.

Being close to Winnipeg, Selkirk was often able to enjoy the finest travelling shows of the day. Pauline Johnson, the famous Indian poet and story-teller, appeared in town quite often, delighting the townspeople with readings from her own works of Indian romance, legend and adventure. There was J.W. Bengough, the most famous of the nineteenth century cartoonists, who would arrive at Pearson's Hall well in advance of his speech hour to chat with his sponsors and enjoy a glass of port. Then, during his speech, which was always profusely illustrated by his deft hand, he would create caricatures of some of the sponsors and work them into the presentation. "As a general rule," he observed, "the 'victims' enjoy the fun as well as their neighbours."[56] By 1897 Selkirkers had already seen the famous Cosgrove Merrymakers three times, and the crowd was larger every time. The entertainment varied each year.

> The attracting feature of the [1897] season will be Edison's Projecting Kinetoscope, which produces life as we see it every day among our neighbors, every action being reproduced. The Jubilee Procession, with Queen Victoria and other members of the Royal Family passing in full view, a Spanish bull fight with 10,000 people in the background, and a large number of Manitoba views will be among the pictures exhibited. Mr. Harry W. Fay, the great English comic singer, and Miss Ada Cosgrove will also contribute to the programme, while Miss Alice Galbraith, champion highland dancer, will attract all good and loyal Scotchmen.[57]

Not until 1908, when one corner of Pearson's Hall was fitted up by the Newman Electrical Comedy Company to show moving pictures, where these live shows surpassed.

As Selkirk began to lose its raw character, both physical and cultural, the townspeople demanded civic amenities of the sort they learned about in Winnipeg. With the population rising steadily and new buildings going up each year, protection from the scourge of

fire loomed as an important concern among residents. They were only too familiar with its destructive power. One Sunday evening in 1894, when most people were still talking about a small fire that had broken out downtown earlier that week, the bell at Christ Church sounded the dreaded alarm once again.[58] Smoke could be seen pouring out of one corner of Robinson's fish freezer at the bottom of Clandeboye Avenue, and by the time more volunteers arrived the flames were darting into the night sky. There was a strong south-east wind blowing, and it seemed certain the freezer was doomed, but the men worked feverishly to kept the fire from spreading. The telegraph operator sent word to Winnipeg for a fire engine to be sent by special train, and teams were despatched to the station to await its arrival. They waited and waited, only to receive word that the city could not spare its sole working engine. Meanwhile the flames had spread to Pearson's stables and Stovel's boot and shoe store, Gilhuly's new drugstore next to Stovel's was scorching, and sparks were showering down on the Dagg Block and Robinson's department store across the street. Embers were landing as far away as three-quarters of a mile from Pearson's and igniting small blazes. As the fire spread, so did the fear, and soon everyone believed the entire town would be lost. The fire-fighters covered as many buildings as possible with blankets and then soaked them with water that other volunteers were hauling from the river in buckets. Hours later, their work finally paid off as the fire died down and before the night was over only wisps of smoke and smouldering lumber was in evidence. But much had been lost. Robinson was hit worst with the loss of about $50,000 worth of warehousing, ice, fish and tools, on which he had only $35,000 insurance. Pearson's loss was $4,000, Stovel's about $600, and Gilhuly lost much of his stationery and stock of drugs. Aside from the actions of a few despicable persons who had busied themselves looting stores under the guise of protecting property, it had been a grand display of community solidarity in the face of disaster.

Just one week before the calamity, Stewart had renewed his editorial campaign against the town council for its neglect of fire protection, and now he severely chastised the members for their inexcusable behavior. Disgust dripped from his pen during the next few weeks, and finally it was announced the town would purchase a fire engine and form a hook and ladder company for future security. As time passed, and rebuilding commenced, the sense of urgency faded until at last no one spoke of creating a volunteer force. No doubt the councillors' preoccupation with the debt question helped to blur their vision.

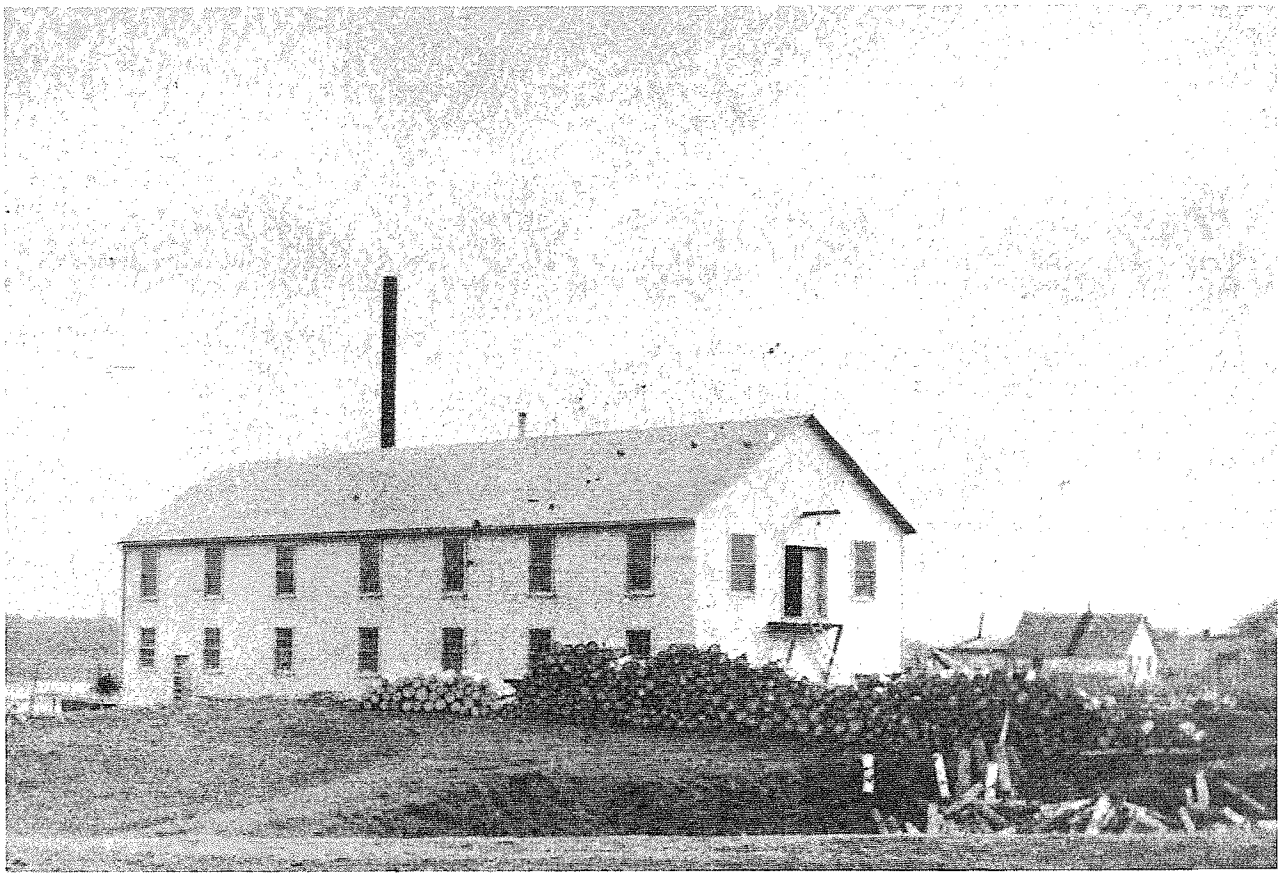
Then, in the winter of 1896, disaster struck again. A drayman named J. Wilson had arrived from Winnipeg in the early morning, lighted a lantern and put his horse into the small stable he rented behind the Lisgar House. He left the lantern burning while he went to get something to eat, and when he returned the stable was ablaze. Again a strong south-easter was blowing and it quickly carried the fire westward between Manitoba and Clandeboye. Almost everyone was in bed, and many learned of the blaze barely in time to escape their homes. The efforts of volunteers proved of little use, and 20 buildings burned to the ground, including the Lisgar stables, Beal's carriage shop and stable, O'Grady's butcher shop, Reuben Comber's stable and meat locker, the offices of the Selkirk *Record*, F.W. Hooker's house, and McDonald's blacksmith shop. The total loss was about $30,000 while the insurance amounted to only $2,000. Still more tragic, R. Beal died later of the burns he received.

Unbelievably, nothing was done about procuring fire fighting apparatus and organizing a volunteer brigade until 1904, when F.W. Colcleugh became chief of a small force. The town purchased a little chemical engine, which was replaced three years later by a No. 6

Watrous engine and 1500 feet of hose in two reels.[59] Even this modern equipment was not always adequate. In 1905 the local grist mill, Selkirk Rolling Mills, burned to the ground. Two years later the Selkirk High School was consumed. One week after that blaze, the town's only grain elevator burned along with 6,000 bushels of wheat. The Selkirk Bottling Plant was lost in 1908, and in 1910 the Selkirk Match Company's factory outside of town was reduced to ashes. Of course Stewart demanded better protection, but there were limits to what a small town could afford.

It was 1909 before water did not have to obtained from the river. Three years earlier, when the population of Selkirk was about 2,700, Captain Robinson formed a citizens' committee to consider the provision of modern water and sewage service. He was a man to whom people paid attention, and when he said that the town had reached the point "when it was no longer possible to avoid entering upon such a scheme without great detriment to the future welfare of the town,"[60] the townspeople voted overwhelmingly in favour of his plan. Three years later the work was completed. Selkirk drew water from a 225-foot artesian well, pumped it into a 130-foot tower with a capacity of 62,000 gallons, and then distributed it to the residents through nine miles of water mains. The system was equipped with 50 hydrants, concentrated in the downtown area, and had a 25-horsepower gasoline engine to provide additional pressure for fire-fighting.[61] The cost to each household, including interest charges on the debentures, was about 24¢ a month.

The Selkirk Volunteer Fire Brigade, c.1905
MANITOBA ARCHIVES



Selkirk Match Factory, c.1905 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

Telephone service came to Selkirk by a different route. In the spring of 1885 Mayor James Colcleugh established a small exchange in the post office, connecting the town with Winnipeg. Apparently this worked quite well, but when a group of Winnipeg businessmen approached the town council in 1893 and offered to install a modern exchange with many more subscribers, the townspeople jumped at the opportunity. By 1895 the system was complete, and the councillors passed a resolution thanking the Bell Telephone Company for an exchange that "is a credit to our town as well as to the company."[62] Long distance connections started in 1900, and Selkirk was in touch with far distant communities. Bell continued to provide service until the creation of Manitoba Government Telephones in 1908.

Selkirk's experience with electricity was not so fortunate. In 1890, W. H. Eaton, F. W. Hooker, William Gibbs, James F. Reid and William Overton incorporated The Selkirk Electric Company.[63] Within a year they had installed all the necessary poles, wires and lamps, and had located their dynamo in Hooker's planing mill on Manitoba Avenue. At first the company supplied only street lighting, with six clusters of four lights each at Main and Manitoba, Manitoba and Eveline, Eveline and McLean, Eveline and Rosser, Clandeboye and Eveline, and Queen and Main.[64] As might be expected, this arrangement blanketed most of the town with light, with particular attention being given to the business district. The lighting plant even became a source of evening entertainment to the townspeople, as many would trudge down to Hooker's through the snow every night just to watch the dynamo operate. They soon came to depend on the lights and were appalled when the system broke down for a few days, which happened regularly. As the newspaper pointed out in 1898, "our citizens are growing tired of the miserable service given in the electric light system of the town. The light itself was not so bad while it is burning, but the trouble has been that no dependence can be placed upon it, and generally when needed most something goes wrong and the lights go out."[65]

In 1906 this bad service got worse. W.H. Eaton and his cohorts sold the business to Joseph and John Flavelle of Lindsay, Ontario, for $40,000,[66] and much of the concern about local needs evaporated. According to Stewart,

> There is now an even more miserable service and people are asked to pay the same old price every month. It is time there was a change for the better and the public given a square deal. Note—Just as we were putting this item in type the lights went out for a few minutes, and we cussed during the interval.[67]

For the next two years the townspeople endured this erratic service, until the town council arrived at a better solution. There was now an electric railway line between Selkirk and Winnipeg, and the owners offered to supply the town with electricity at half the current price, or about ten cents per thousand kilowatt-hours. They would sell industrial power at a cost of one cent per horsepower, too. Eager to do business with men who had more of a stake in the town, the councillors sought a way out of their arrangement with the Flavelles.

It did not take long to find one. As they examined the arrangement the town had signed with Selkirk Electric in 1891, the councillors found that the franchise was only for a ten-year period, and that the Flavelles had been supplying service without an exclusive right to do so. The town council immediately went to court to establish its right to set up a competing electrical system. In December of 1910 the court found in favour of Selkirk, and the Flavelles, realizing their business would soon be ruined, shut down their plant.[68] For the next nine months, while the town installed a new and completely modern distribution system, those residents who had been enjoying electrical service rediscovered the burden of cleaning sooty lamp

chimneys and the ever-present smell of coal-oil. But their patience was well rewarded, for the municipally-owned system greatly exceeded the old in cheapness and reliability.

The Winnipeg, Selkirk and Lake Winnipeg Railway Company, which supplied Selkirk with electricity, exerted a profound influence on the town after the turn of the century and for decades to follow. The origins of the company are still somewhat obscure. As early as 1892 a group of Selkirk businessmen formed the Selkirk Electric Railway Company to build a line between the town and Winnipeg, but it was not until May of 1900 that it received its articles of incorporation.[69] During the same spring session of the legislature, five men from Winnipeg and district chartered the Winnipeg, Selkirk and Lake Winnipeg railway. Whether or not these two firms joined forces is not known, but the W. S & L.W. name was given to the line. In 1903 the Selkirk town council awarded the W. S & L.W. an exclusive 85-year franchise and a 20-year exemption from taxation in return for daily service between the town and Winnipeg. Construction took place over the next year, and in August of 1904 the first passenger train ran along the tracks. A small steam locomotive, affectionately called "Dinky", pulled the freight and passenger cars during the first year, but in 1905 a larger engine was obtained. Because no turning facilities had been built at Selkirk, the big locomotive had to run backwards into the city.[70]

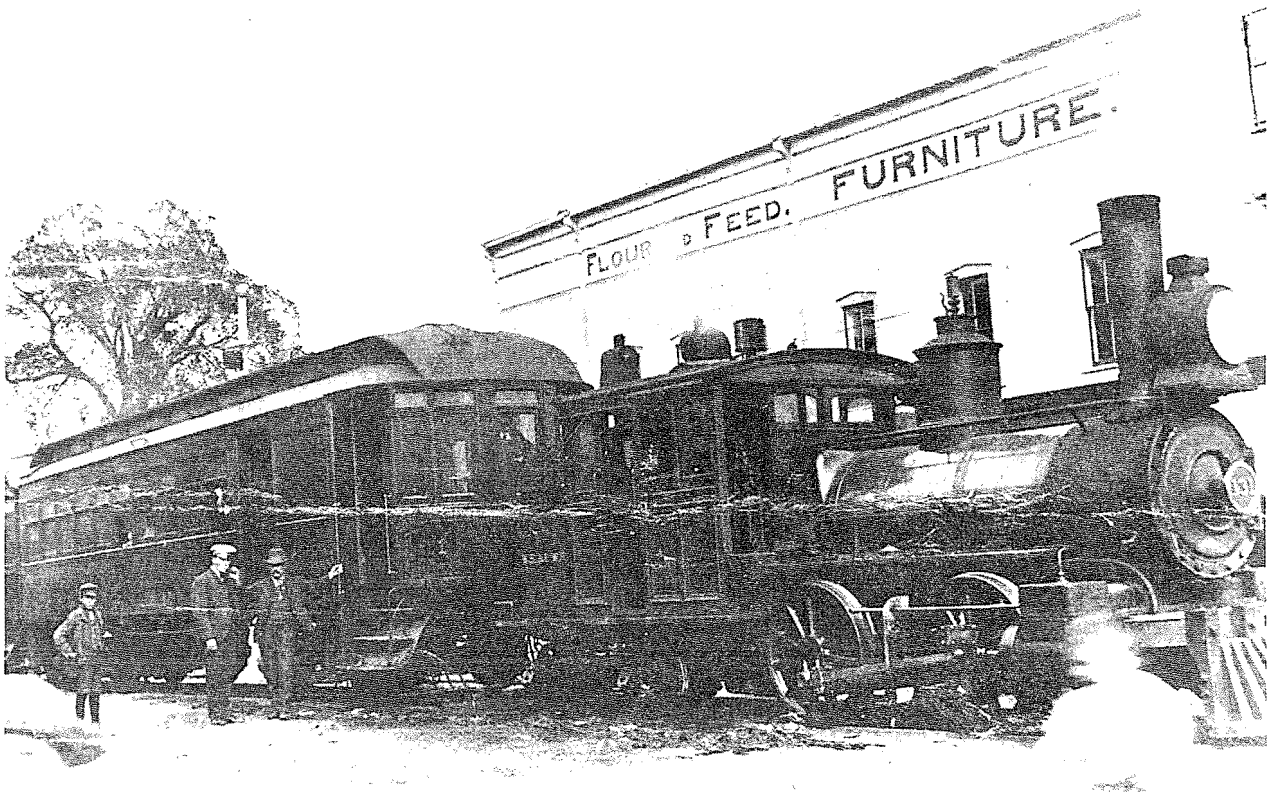
In 1906 the W. S & L.W. became affiliated with the Winnipeg Electric Street Railway, and electrification of the 22-mile line began. The tracks were upgraded, a car barn and station was built at Selkirk, and a "wye" was installed for turning the cars at Taylor and Eveline. A spur was constructed into Selkirk Park and a passenger and freight station took shape on the north-east corner of Eveline and Eaton. By May of 1908 the electric railway was ready to roll, and Selkirk became the proud possessor of the only substantial radial inter-urban on the prairies.

It took a mere 50 minutes to make the run between Selkirk and the city, and five round trips were made daily, starting at 7 a.m. The elegant brown and cream cars, with their stained-glass windows, mahogany panelling and plush red seats, were quite an improvement over the dingy C.P.R. accommodations. Each was lighted electrically and had adequate heating and cooling systems for the different seasons. The W. S & L.W. even supplied separate smoker sections to save women and children from the annoyance of dense cigar smoke and foul language. Yet it seems that too much was spent on luxurious cars and not enough on the roadbed over which they travelled. This was a light-rail system, laid on a minimal roadbed with little ballast, and the cars rocked violently as they sped down the tracks at 30 miles an hour. Even today, there are many people who recall the sensation of 'seasickness' that accompanied each and every trip along the rickety line.

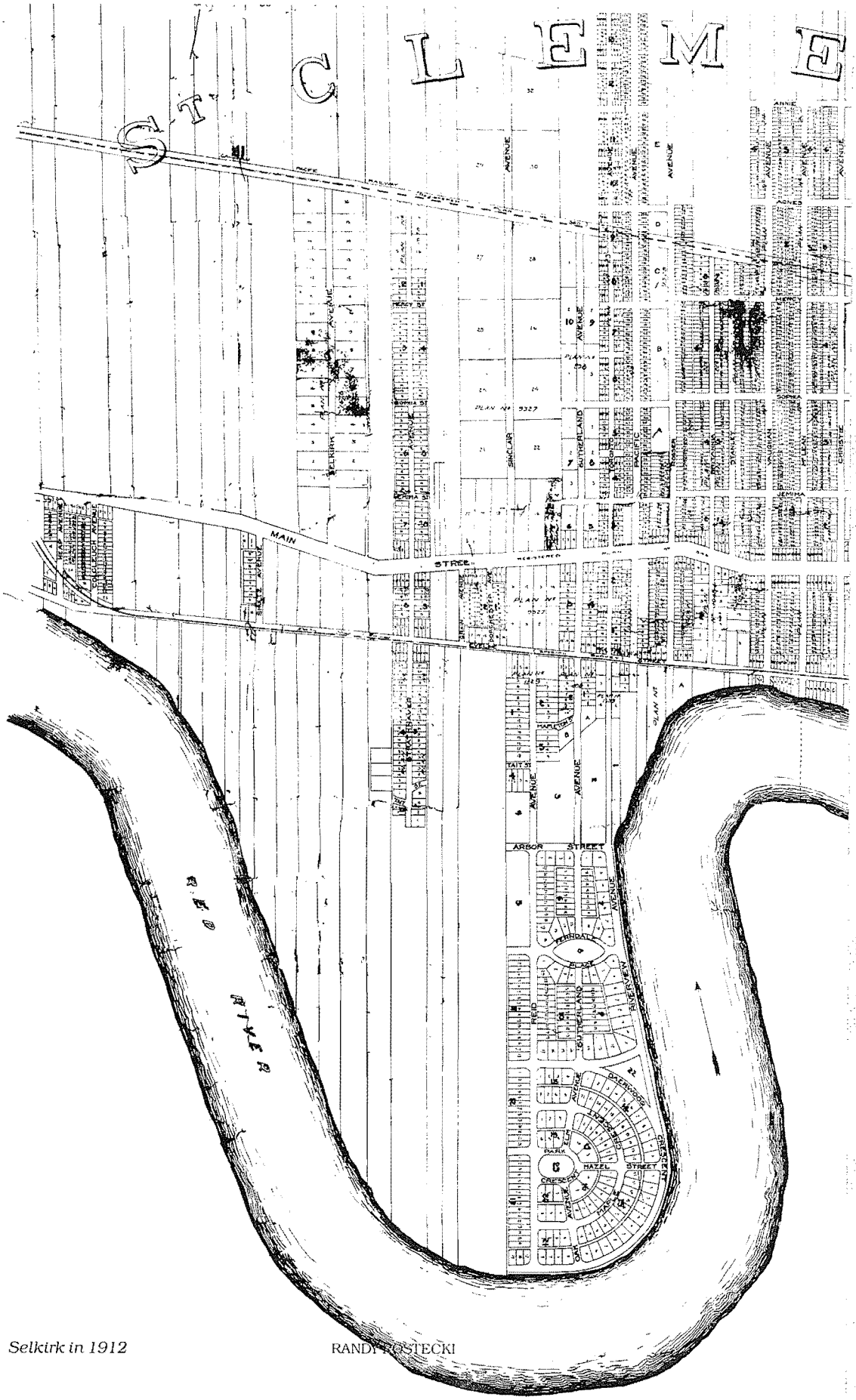
"This is an age of progress," the *Record* announced in 1911, "and Selkirk should not lag behind in the race."[71] The W. S & L.W. symbolized that progress as nothing else could. With its speed and its luxury, the line greatly enhanced the attractiveness of Selkirk as a resort town for wealthy Winnipeggers. Hundreds converged on the town every weekend to enjoy the scenic beauty of Selkirk Park, with its unrivalled boating and picnicking facilities and spacious dance pavilion. The age-old dream of turning Selkirk into a popular summer resort was at last becoming a reality. The excellent electrical service provided by the railway illuminated not only Selkirk's streets and homes, but brightened its industrial prospects as well, for inexpensive power was now available to even the largest manufacturing concern that cared to locate there. Coupled with offers of free industrial sites and generous tax exemptions, electrical power made Selkirk a manufacturer's mecca. And of course the railway changed the

townspeople's image of themselves and the good life. For just 80¢, a Selkirk shopper could travel to Winnipeg, with its smart shops, glorious variety and other attractions, browse and buy all day long, and still be back home by suppertime. The temptation to do just that became even greater as some of the larger Winnipeg department stores, such as Eaton's, started to advertise regularly in the Selkirk newspaper. The sophistication of big-city life was only 50 minutes away.

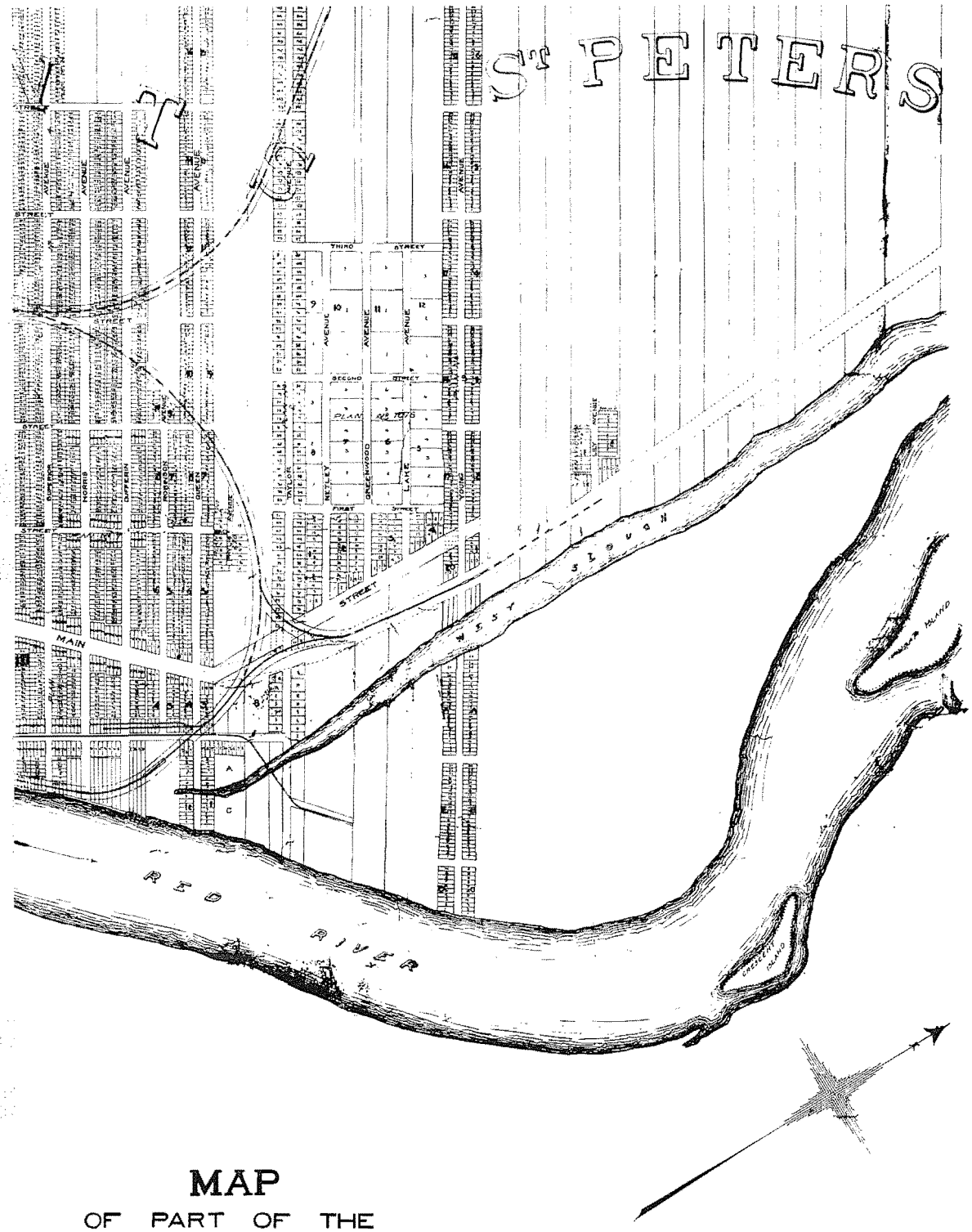
The W. S & L.W. brought a new spirit of confidence and optimism to Selkirk, just as the C.P.R. line had done decades before. It ended the isolation of the town, and took it out of the shadow of its frontier past. It broadened the townspeople's view of themselves and their community, allowing those with vision to plan a future of prosperity and stability. By 1910 Selkirk was poised on the brink of striking change, and local leaders rose to meet the challenge.



A steam locomotive used on the Winnipeg, Selkirk and Lake Winnipeg Electric Railway prior to electrification in 1907-8.
WESTERN CANADA PICTORIAL INDEX



Selkirk in 1912 RANDY POSTECKI



MAP

OF PART OF THE

OWN OF SELKIRK

IN THE

ROVINCE OF MANITOBA

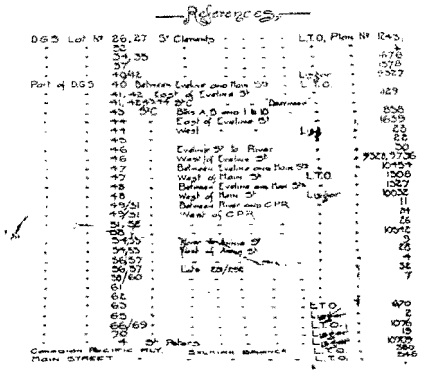
1912

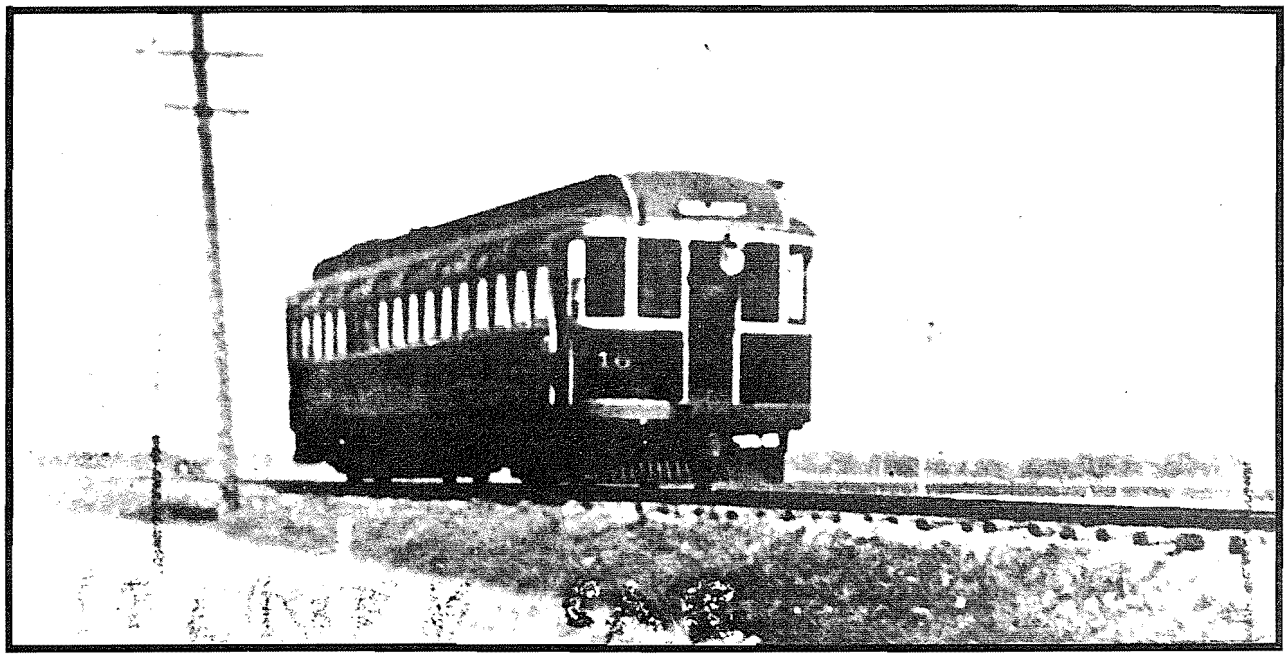
COMPILED BY A.S.PARTINGTON

STERED PLANS AND BASED ON THE SPECIAL SURVEY MADE IN 1895 BY

L.S.VAUGHAN, M.L.S.

SCALE 300 FEET = 1 INCH.





Passenger car of the Winnipeg, Selkirk and Lake Winnipeg Railway, 1918 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

CHAPTER FOUR

A New Industrial Era, 1911-1929

ON A COLD THURSDAY EVENING in January of 1911, members of the Selkirk Board of Trade assembled at the banquet-hall of the Merchant's Hotel for their ninth annual meeting.[1] It was to be a gala affair, befitting a community on the threshold of unparalleled progress, and special care had been taken to ensure its success. The organizers arranged an excellent menu and hired a city orchestra to entertain the guests during supper. Attendance was large. The Board had been recruiting new members at a furious pace, and on this occasion invited some 50 guests from various Winnipeg business associations to share their experiences in civic promotion. C. N. Bell, secretary of the Winnipeg Board of Trade, gave the keynote address in which he stressed the importance of harmonious effort, the application of sound business sense, and the avoidance of partisan political bickering as central ingredients of an effective commercial organization. But it was Charles Roland, commissioner of the spirited Winnipeg Industrial Bureau, who gave the most stirring speech of the evening. His topic was "The Helping Hand." "In order to obtain the results looked for," he said, "the helping hand must be extended by the community at large; and to be successful two things are necessary, cooperation and confidence in the future."[2] In the years ahead, his advice became the guiding principle behind every action of the boosters as they led Selkirk away from dependence on the fishing fleets and into a new industrial era.

It was necessary to foster optimism among the townspeople if Selkirk were to become a progressive and prosperous community. Ever since the arrival of the electric railway, which brought the people of Selkirk into close contact with the attractions of Winnipeg (now a city of more than 136,000) for the first time, the town seemed split into two camps. There were those who could now see nothing but the dullness and limitations of smalltown life, and there were others who could envision a new age of solid growth and more cosmopolitan lifestyle built on modern technology and progressive thought. R. W. Stewart, inveterate town enthusiast that he was, sided with the forward-looking group and turned the *Weekly Record* into a powerful weapon of their cause. In his view, it was a veritable war between the 'boosters' and the 'knockers'.

This war to decide Selkirk's future was fought on many fronts. One of the first threats to growth that Stewart noticed was the loss of local revenue resulting from changing

shopping habits of the townspeople. When Selkirk was still a frontier community, the only menace to local merchants was the travelling pedlar who skulked through town with his wares each spring and fall. Such undesirable characters were usually run out of town by the local constable. But now the ease of transportation and the growth of free rural mail delivery offered the Selkirk and district shopper greater selection and competitive prices. In 1913 *The Commercial*, a leading business magazine published at Winnipeg, summed up this new trend.

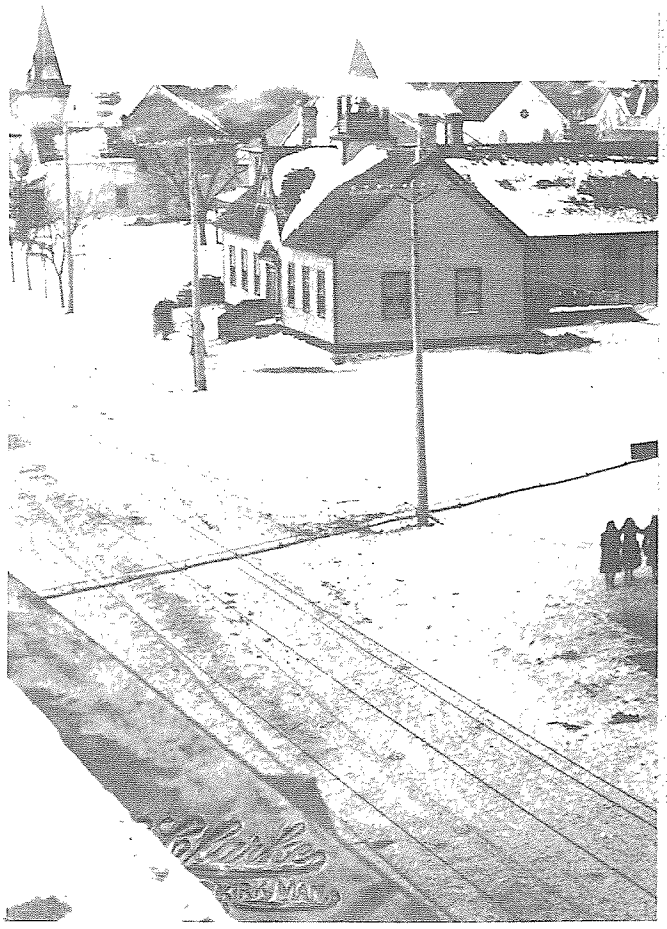
> In town and country, both men and women now want all kinds of merchandise. They want new fabrics and new styles: they want tropical fruits, breakfast foods, olives and delicacies of all kinds. If they don't find merchandise that they like at the home store, they will go to the city for it or order it from mail order houses.[3]

Soon every town and farm family had its own, well-thumbed Eaton's catalogue, from which to order vast quantities of merchandise that was not carried locally. The amount of money leaving the town can be grasped by a glance at the number and value of the money orders issued at the Selkirk post office. In 1902 about 800 money orders worth a little more than $12,000 were issued; in 1908 (when free rural mail delivery began), 2,283 were issued at a cost of $35,937.[4] The average value of a money order remained about $15, but three times as many people were purchasing them. This posed a genuine threat to local merchants and, of course, to the town itself.

These figures do not include the amount of money that was spent in Winnipeg by customers who travelled there aboard the W. S & L.W. As Stewart observed in 1909,

> One loss of business, which we hear of so often, is the steadily growing practice of people going to Winnipeg for their merchandise. With such easy access as the electric line to the city, people may be seen alighting from every car laden with parcels...We believe that full half of our people have acquired the habit of scanning the departmental store advertisements in the daily papers and frequently make special trips to the city for 'bargains'.[5]

Stewart tried to convince his readers that once the railway fare and the cost of meals eaten in the city were added to the value of the merchandise, it was no less expensive than goods

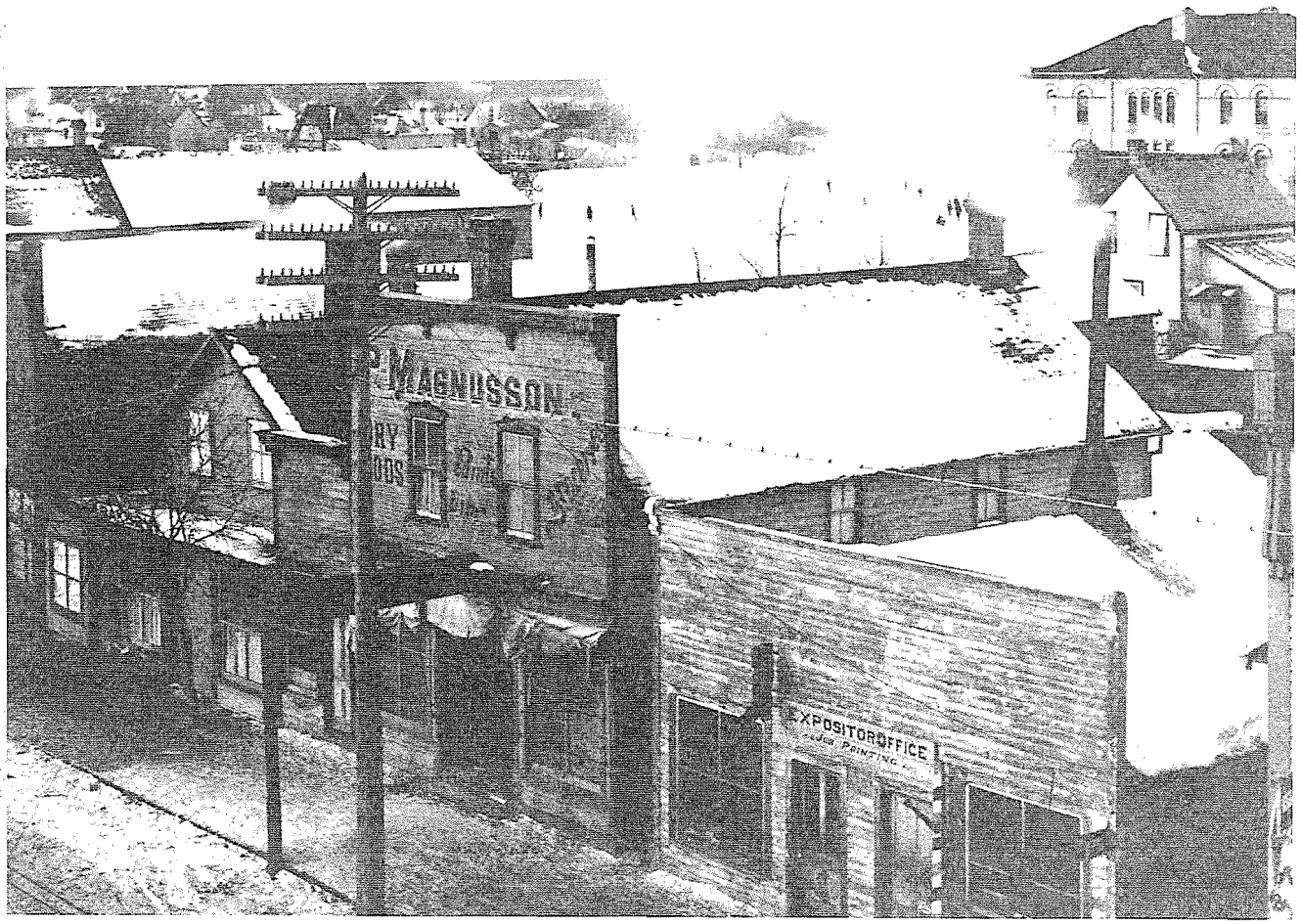


West Selkirk, Manitoba, c.1910

which were sold in Selkirk stores. At the same time, however, he found it difficult to show much sympathy for many town merchants, who seemed to believe the problem would go away if they ignored it.

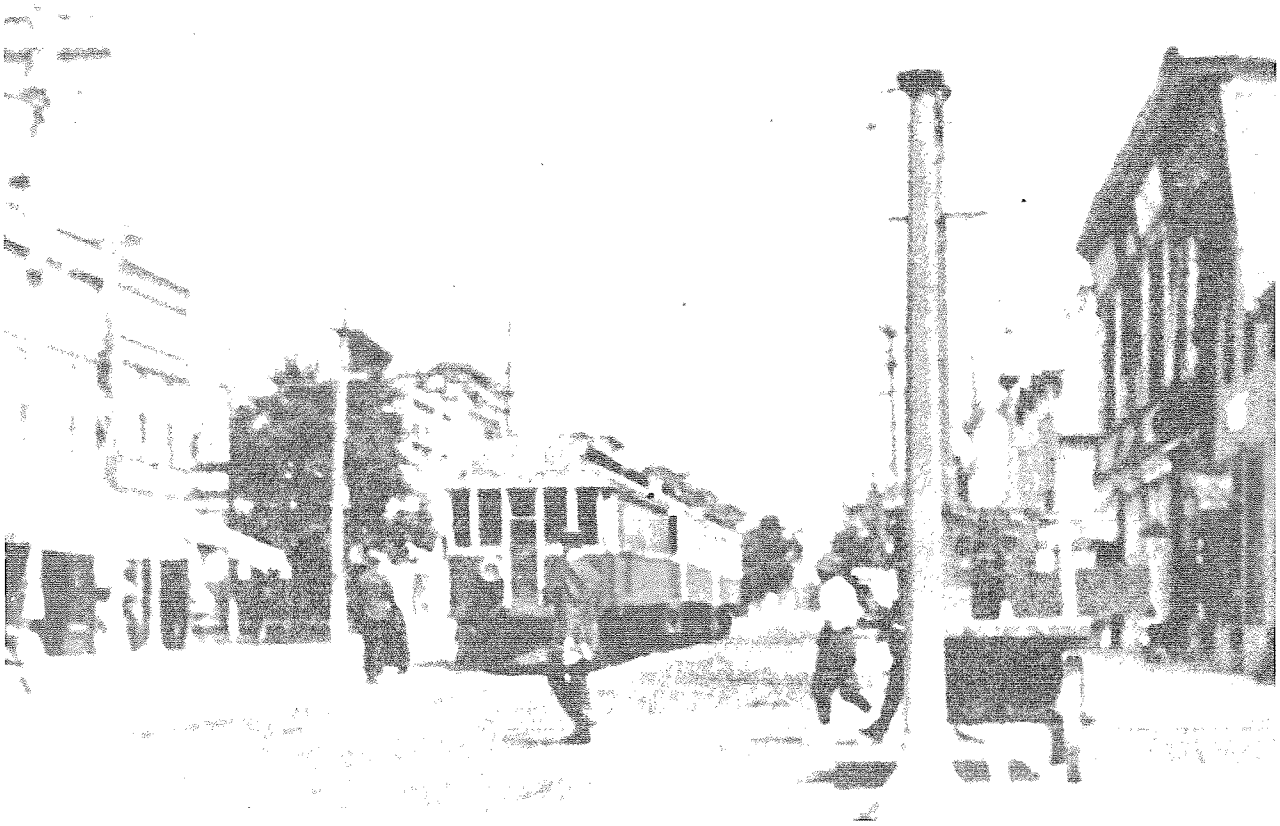
> They quietly submit to the inevitable, and think advertising a burden and unnecessary expense. If they get in a shipment of goods nobody but themselves and the railroad company knows anything about it. They take pot-luck at having people call to see what they have in their store. As for prices, it is a crime to divulge them. Is it any wonder people are lured away by outside firms.[6]

In time, some of the larger businesses in town, such as Robinson's, Bullock's, and Shepard



PUBLIC ARCHIVES CANADA

Eveline Street in 1913 MANITOBA ARCHIVES



W.S & L.W. car on Eveline Street in 1919 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

and Peers, did run sale advertisements in the *Record*, the first of their kind, and gradually the newspaper gave over much of its space to full-page notices about new merchandise and weekly sale items.

While Selkirk merchants learned to recapture wayward customers, local entrepreneurs attempted to boost the town's attractiveness in novel ways. The Board of Trade was in the vanguard of this movement. Since 1902, in fact, it had been advertising Selkirk in Winnipeg newspapers, in popular western periodicals and in special publicity numbers issued by the *Weekly Record*. By 1906, it was printing small booklets that extolled the virtues of Selkirk and area, such as the town's links with the untapped resources of Lake Winnipeg and the vast unsettled farm lands of the district. The content of these booklets changed with the times. One 1913 booklet, for example, concentrated on the inexpensive industrial power and abundant recreational facilities available at Selkirk, an obvious indication of the tremendous impact of the W. S. & L.W. These were all handsome publications, and their smartness was due, in large measure, to the work of Bruce Campbell, Selkirk's own public relations officer. His services were acquired in 1910, when the Board of Trade announced that "our citizens should wake up, get busy, boost Selkirk and secure a share of the wave of prosperity which is now passing over the west,"[7] and recommended employment of a publicity agent as a first step in that campaign. The Board contributed $1000 towards his salary, the town council matched this, and other citizens subscribed an additional $1945.[8] Nothing could have illustrated the growing town spirit more concretely, for the Board had indicated that only $2500 was required.

The Board of Trade might make endless recommendations about Selkirk's needs and might, from time to time, persuade government officials to assist a local scheme or two, but it was the town council that possessed the spending power needed to implement most development plans. Urged by the Board of Trade and by many other concerned citizens to take a progressive view of civic affairs, the councillors began to take small but necessary steps to modernize the town further. Beginning in 1910, they provided funds for the gradual replacement of all the rotting and decrepit wooden sidewalks in the business area with up-to-date granolithic walks.[9] In 1911 they talked the Dominion government into providing street letterboxes in various parts of town, making it possible for the first time to mail a letter without walking all the way to the post office.[10] Swift rail transportation into Winnipeg boosted the fortunes of local market gardeners, and in 1912 the councillors purchased a larger market site west of Main Street.[11] They acquired a gravel pit in the same year to provide for better street maintenance[12] And they passed the town's first building code to regulate the sort of construction that might take place in Selkirk for, as Stewart commented, "the haphazard, do-as-you please in the way of building will not go any longer."[13] The councillors even solicited the advice of Professor A. A. Stoughton of the University of Manitoba architecture school on the development of a comprehensive town planning scheme. Among the recommendations that came out of these discussions were the numbering of all houses in town, the immediate acquisition of land for future streets and avenues, the provision of increased playground facilities for children, and the relocation of the W. S & L.W. tracks from Eveline to Main Street, which would be divided by a grand boulevard in the manner of Winnipeg's Broadway Avenue.[14]

While it seems doubtful the councillors proceeded with all these recommendations, they did take steps to ensure better transportation links between Selkirk and other communities. Automobiles were becoming more and more common, and by 1912 Charlie Cornish had opened Selkirk's first garage,

where he handled mechanical repairs, sold gasoline and operated what was probably the town's first taxi service.[15] R. W. Stewart eagerly noted the acquisition of each and every auto in town in his social column, boasted continually that "our 'honk-honk' family is steadily growing,"[16] and ventured that "the next thing in order will be for some of our citizens to invest in a flying machine."[17]

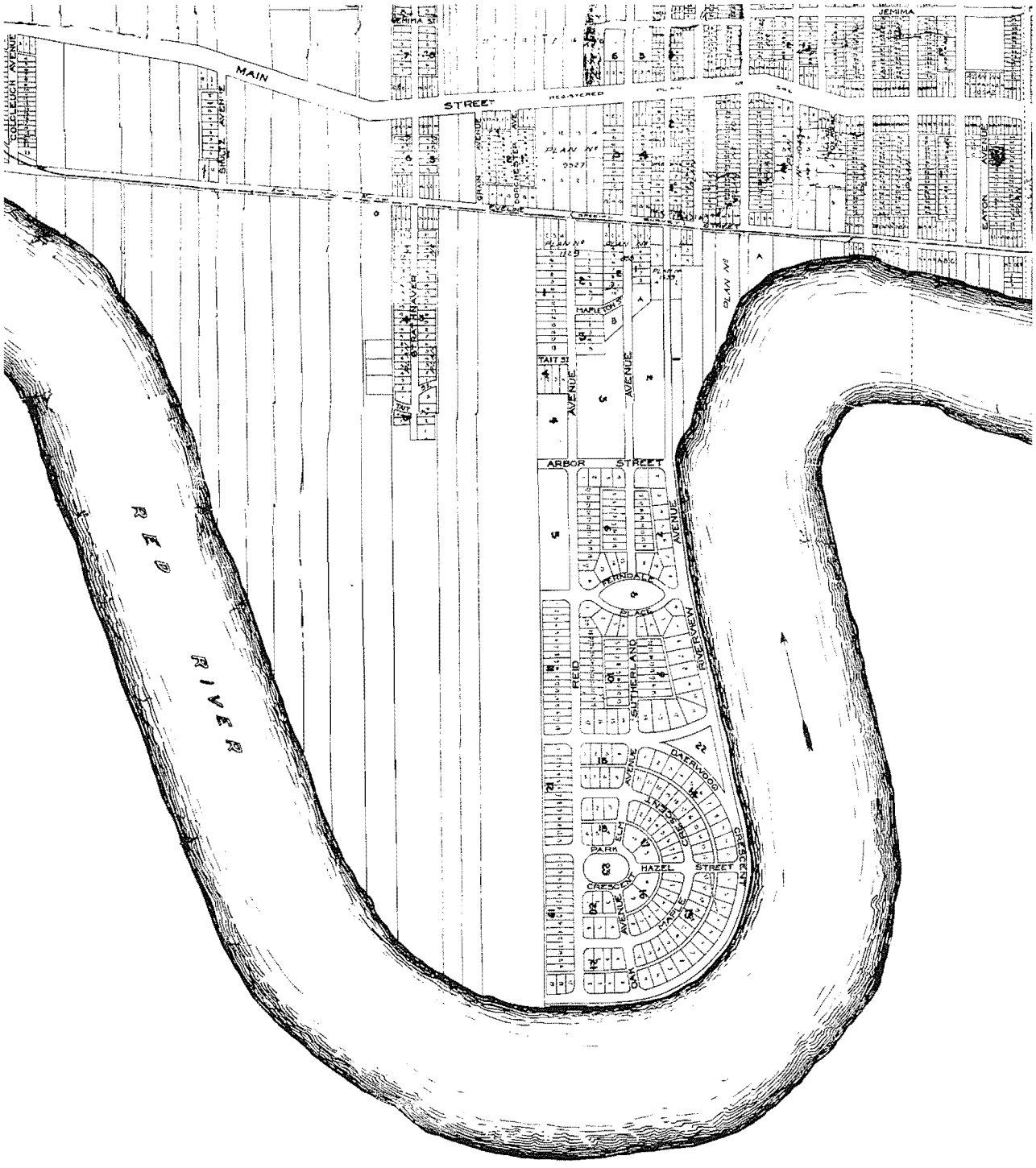
With more sobriety, the councillors and the Board of Trade concerned themselves with improvement of the road system. As early as 1911 a rumour had been circulating about a planned 16-foot paved road between Winnipeg and Selkirk, and two years later the widening of Main Street was nearly completed. Once gravelled, this all-weather highway greatly increased the amount of motorized traffic between Selkirk and the city. And, as the number of cars in town increased, the council found it necessary to pass bylaws regulating the behavior of motorists. To the consternation of the town constable, the councillors decided upon four different speed limits: fifteen miles per hour in the outer limits of town, six m.p.h. in the business district, ten m.p.h. around corners, and four m.p.h. at all intersections.[18]

With all these demands on its treasury, the town welcomed the efforts of private land development companies to create the new Selkirk. One of the earliest, and certainly the best-known of these concerns, was the Selkirk Land and Investment Company. It was started by R. C. Moody, J. Grisdale, F. A. Gemmel, D. G. Ross, Robert Bullock, J. Maillhot, D. Morrison, E. F. Comber, and F. Kochen around 1904 to take advantage of the land boom that was anticipated along the route of the W. S & L.W. railway.[19] The principals of the company purchased all available farm land and residential property between Winnipeg and Selkirk at still low prices for resale at what were termed "reasonable" rates once the boom began.

The most infamous scheme of the Selkirk Land and Investment Company was its development of a northern half of Sugar Point as a prime summer-cottage community. In one of its lavish advertisements, the company referred to this location as

> the most ideal spot that Nature has placed for the suburban homes of Manitoba's citizens within the confines of the Province. This plot has been surveyed by the foremost landscape architects of Manitoba, has been gone over inch by inch, winter and summer, and every advantage of Nature has been combined with the principles of modern, expert town-planning to arrive at an ideal plan. One half of the lots front on Red River; the others face concentric avenues that parallel or look onto the river at some point of its majestic sweep around Sugar Point.[20]

This beautifully-designed subdivision was created with the desires of wealthy Winnipeggers in mind, and several of the promoters actually built substantial summer cottages on the site to attract other buyers. To ensure a certain standard of quality, the company stipulated that any cottage constructed there had to be worth at least $1000. The promoters even sponsored a contest to name the subdivision, and in 1912 the prize of $50 was awarded for the name 'Daerwood Park'. There was only one problem with this "vast old English estate," as the promoters liked to call it. Almost every spring ice drifting down the Red would jam at Sugar Island and flood the low-lying land behind it, including nearly all of Daerwood Park. Those who purchased lots in the new subdivision got more than their fair share of river frontage.



The ill-fated Daerwood Park sub-division, 1912 RANDY ROSTECKI

Selkirk's other major land development company was formed in June of 1913. Appropriately called the Selkirk Development Company Limited, this firm was closely affiliated with the Selkirk Land and Investment Company.[21] Its officers included C. W. N. Kennedy, D. G. Ross, H. B. Stiles, F. A. Gemmel, L. S. Vaughan, G. Shepard, Bruce Campbell, A. J. Norquay and G. M. Newton.[22] The company announced that its authorized capitalization was $500,000, and that it intended to promote local manufacturing as well as the development and sale of its extensive land holdings. While this was true enough, it would have been more to the point to say the company was specifically interested in bringing the Manitoba Rolling Mills to town and in developing and selling adjacent residential properties to the mill workers.

Negotiations between the Manitoba Rolling Mills and the Selkirk Board of Trade (many of whose members later became officers of the Selkirk Development Company) began in late 1912 or early 1913.[23] The iron works firm had outgrown its St. Boniface plant site, and was actively seeking a new industrial location and a bonus of $250,000 to cover the cost of relocation. Local businessmen immediately formed the Selkirk Development Company, bought up 450 acres on the southern outskirts of town, and offered the Rolling Mills a free 30-acre site on which to build. At the same time the town council, no doubt encouraged by Mayor D. G. Ross, approved a bylaw that granted the firm a 40 per cent reduction of its property taxes for a period of 12 years, in exchange for the company's assurance that it would employ at least 15 local people.[24] The deal was concluded on these terms, and by June the *Weekly Record* was proudly announcing "the birth of a new industrial era for our town."[25]

Construction began in October of 1913. The work proceeded swiftly throughout the winter months, and by February the 16-inch mill of the Manitoba Rolling Mills Company and the nine-inch mill of its subsidiary, Manitoba Nut and Bolt Works, were completed, together with buildings that housed the immense furnaces, a coal pulverizing plant, scrap shed, machine shop and offices. The installation of machinery followed, and the firm anticipated that the mills would be operative by June 1st. Soon, as one enthusiastic booster observed, "the wheels of a great new factory...will begin to turn out their product, giving employment to hundreds, where there existed before neither work nor people. This is progress, and Selkirk wants more of it."[26]

Such rapid progress created a serious housing shortage in town. Usually winter was a dull time for local building contractors, but during the winter of 1913-14 their tradesmen logged many long, cold hours in an attempt to meet the demand caused by the influx of mill workers. Late in January the Selkirk Development Company placed its residential properties near the mill on the market and by April nearly one-quarter were sold. The sale of these lots supplied the Selkirk Development Company with funds to meet the $250,000 bonus requirement of its agreement with the Rolling Mills. As the company's first annual report indicated, "inasmuch as this subdivison will undoubtedly be the one most directly benefitted on account of its proximity to the mills a comparatively large proportion of the bonus and site obligation had to be charged to this subdivision."[27] Additional residential properties came onto the market as the Selkirk Land and Investment Company developed sites somewhat farther north, in the subdivision called Strathnaver Park. For three dollars a foot and up, purchasers were assured beautifully-treed and serviced lots immediately adjacent to "the high-class and most desirable residential portion of Selkirk, its de luxe Southend."[28] This was the most rapid residential development in Selkirk's history, and it shifted the town's centre of gravity to the

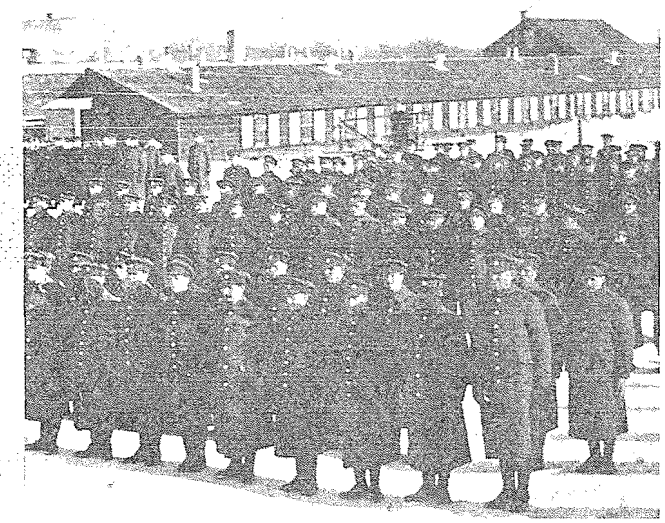
south overnight.

Manitoba Rolling Mills was quickly nearing its official opening when, on August 4th, Great Britain formally declared war on Germany and plunged Canada into the European struggle. On August 6th the Canadian Minister of Militia issued the first call for volunteers to form an overseas contingent, and on the following day the Mills laid off all its construction workers.[29] The townspeople were very interested in the European developments and local newspaper vendors could hardly meet the demand for the latest war bulletins. In the streets, in the hotels and at home all the talk was of war, and it was with patriotic enthusiasm that residents agreed that Britain's course was the right one and that Germany would undoubtedly get the worst of it in battle. Not just the young were excited. Those oldtimers who could well remember the conflicts of their day, the Crimean War, the Riel insurrection and the more recent Boer War, trotted out their recollections once again and regaled all who would listen. One Fenian raid veteran announced his readiness to march to the front if his services were needed, and quickly added that he would be willing to supply his own horse.[30] Others, who dared to raise a voice in support of Germany, received nothing but denunciation from their fellow citizens. R. W. Stewart remarked that it was with deep regret that local people heard Selkirk's loyalty to the Crown being "sullied by a number of individuals who are a disgrace to the country in which they make a living. Men of that stamp are no good to any country, and the sooner Canada is rid of them the better."[31] By Christmas, when the news from the front seemed encouraging, nearly everyone was confidently predicting the war would be over within a year.

There was no shortage of volunteers at Selkirk. Two young graduates of the local nursing school were among the first to enlist, and in 1915 a third girl joined them. Young men signed up daily, and in 1915 a local battalion, the 108th, was formed under the command of Lieutenant-Colonel G. H. Bradbury, who had long served as Selkirk's Member of Parliament. These soldiers, who were under the direct supervision of Major W. T. Colcleugh of Selkirk and Captain G. C. McLean of Winnipeg, were stationed at W. L. Parrish's Red Feather Farm, just off Eveline Street. Because of the large chicken barn on the site, the battalion adopted the symbol of a rooster, or fighting cock, for its badge. Although the unit was broken up after going overseas in September of 1916, it was the only Canadian regiment ever to have 'Selkirk, Manitoba' on its cap badge.[32] Those Selkirk residents who remained at home contributed as much as they could to the war effort. They organized a Patriotic Fund to assist the families of enlisted men, held countless 'patriotic' bonspiels, dances, teas and other social events, rolled bandages, knitted socks and parcelled clothing for the Red Cross, and, before the war was over, contributed $200,300 to the Victory Bonds campaign. Even the youngsters joined in, forming a cadet league and drill-marching all over town at every opportunity.

Local reformers, convinced that alcoholic intemperance was somehow related to the protracted conflict in Europe, once again launched a campaign to bring prohibition to Selkirk. A similar effort could be found in almost every prairie town in 1916, but in Selkirk the "debauchery" of the 108th Battalion made it imperative that action be taken. Conditions were so extreme that in February of 1916 the provincial liquor commissioners held hearings into the state of the liquor traffic in town. They found ample evidence of repeated drunkenness among both the soldiers and the civilians. Dr. Ross, who was also the mayor, testified that he had had patients who died of delirium tremens; others who had fallen from their bunks when drunk and suffered serious ruptures and, in one case, death; and still others who had collapsed in

The 108th Batallion at the Red Feather Farm in early 1916



WILLIAM HALL

the snow after a session at the bar, only to lose both hands to frostbite.[33] Other witnesses recalled drunks lying unconsciously across the roadways at midnight, the need for military police on each W. S & L.W. car leaving town, the 'uncivilized' behavior of soldiers at the library where a bar had been fitted up in the basement, and the ease with which the hotel-keepers dispensed liquor to anyone with the money to pay for it. As a result of the government's enquiry, the Merchant's and Canadian Pacific Hotels had an additional two weeks' suspension of their liquor licences, and the wholesaling store of Goldberg and Arnsowsky received its first two-week suspension. As the March referendum on prohibition drew nearer, the Board of Trade endorsed the temperance platform, claiming that it would work in the best interests of the town. The vote in March showed the degree to which the residents agreed with this stand: 424 cast ballots in favour of temperance, only 153 voted against it.[34] Once again, Selkirk was a dry town.

Perhaps this reforming zeal at home had something to do with the contrast between the boys of the 108th Battalion and their counterparts in the trenches overseas. While the young men stationed at Selkirk spent their $1.10 a day on entertainment down at the bars or at the dance pavilion in the park, those fighting overseas were going through an unimaginable hell. Some, when writing home to their parents, tried to put their predicament in a favourable light:

> Being under fire is not so bad as one would imagine, and it is surprising how soon one gets used to the bullets hitting the sand bags which form the parapets of the trenches: even though they come so close that the earth is thrown all over one. As our fellows say (and quite right too)...you don't hear the bullet that hurts you.[35]

The Merchant's Hotel, 1913 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

Others, like Corporal H. C. Fryer, found it difficult to be philosophical about the horrors they saw. "It is an awful strain on one's nerves," he wrote home,

> dodging shells and bullets, and seeing friends knocked out, for three days and nights. None of us got a minute's rest during all that time. The [enemy] trenches were so close that we were blowing each other up with hand bombs.[36]

The glory of the war tarnished quickly as the lists of casualties began to pour in, and those with sons and daughters at the front approached each new list with an inescapable sense of dread. In the spring of 1915 Sapper H. R. Gilhuly became the first Selkirk boy to die in action, and his obituary was soon followed by a legion of others: Arthur Couture, Walter Taylor, Alex Sinclair, John Clark, Alfred Kennedy, Kenneth Asham, and many more. The list of dead was long. Countless others were wounded. In April of 1917 alone, 27 men of the 108th received wounds at the front. Before the conflict was finally over, 156 Selkirk and district boys were dead.

Appreciation of the efforts of the Selkirk recruits was high among the townspeople, and as early as 1917 they organized a Selkirk Returned Soldiers' Association to welcome the veterans and to arrange housing and employment for them. When the Armistice was declared in 1918, they hastily made preparations for a victory parade, only to have their efforts stymied by an outbreak of the Spanish flu. The entire town literally closed its doors until this epidemic, which had enveloped the whole world, passed. No public meetings were permitted, and people were encouraged to remain at home. Both doctors came down with the flu, and for nearly two months Selkirk was a quarantined town. Finally, in early December, the townspeople had recovered sufficiently to take part in the parade. On a Wednesday night a long procession of men and boys bearing torches marched through the main streets and on to the central school grounds where a huge bonfire was lighted and an effigy of the Kaiser burned. The crowd waited for the fire to die down, and then retired to Pearson's Hall to hold a final patriotic meeting.[37]

In July of 1919, after the signing of the Treaty of Versailles, a peace parade of grander proportions was held. Everyone turned out to watch the marching bands, the boys in uniform, the horsedrawn floats and the sporting events that followed. In the evening a huge dance was held in the park and loudly brilliant fireworks, like the last exploding shells, ended the celebration. In November of 1918 Stewart had remarked that "we have so long been steeling ourselves by saying 'cheer up, the worst is yet to come,' that we have forgotten the right phrase now is 'Rejoice, it is all over.'"[38] On that summer day in the park, their relief was almost palpable.

Armistice Day Parade. July 1919 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

Armistice Day Parade. 1919 [July] MANITOBA ARCHIVES

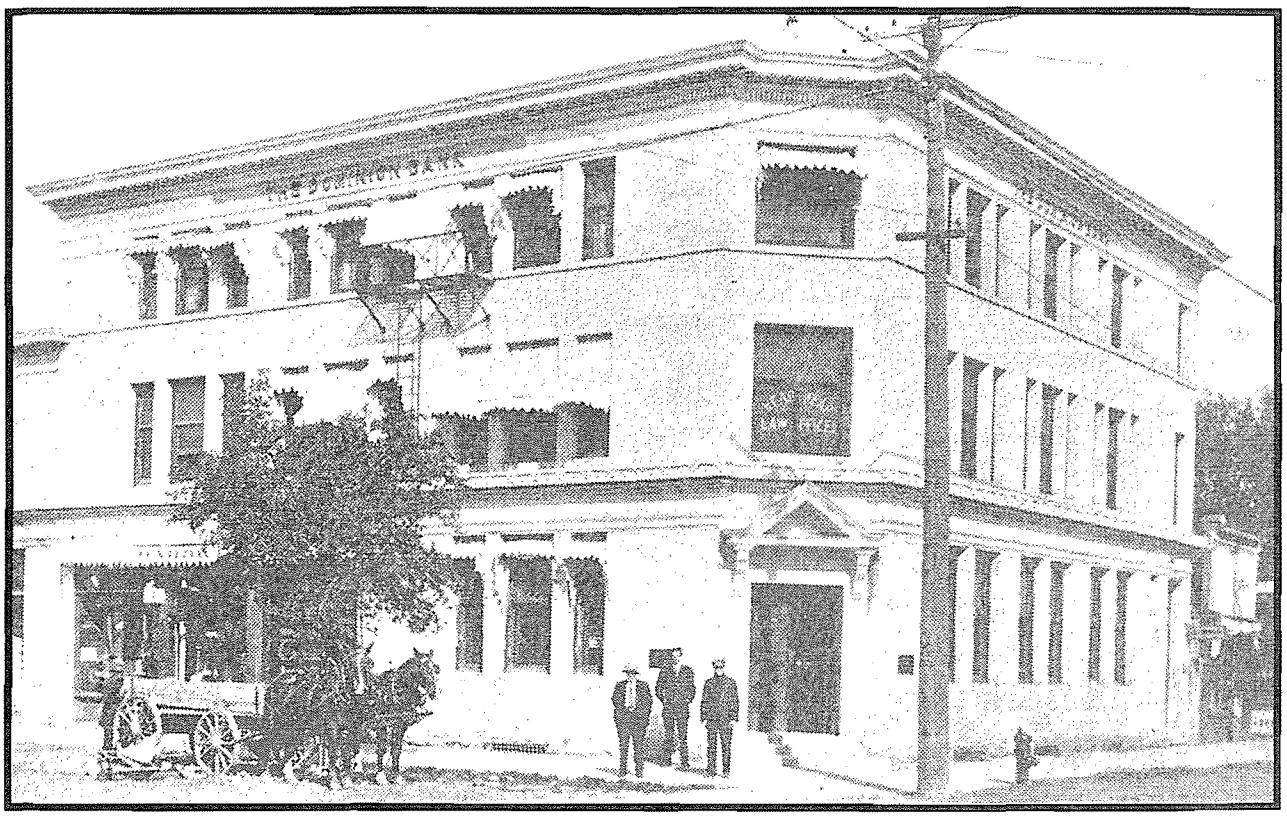
While the war was over, its effects lingered, casting a heavy pall over the town. "The star in the industrial horizon, which shone so brightly in the spring of 1914...dimmed almost to extinction during the following dark years of war and business stagnation."[39] Both the Manitoba Rolling Mills and the Manitoba Foundry, which had been built across the street in 1916, found their orders falling off after the war and had no choice but to lay off many men. Out-of-town buying, which had been a serious concern even in prosperous times, became a threat to the continuation of many businesses in the post-war depression, and prompted many storekeepers to band together in a Retail Merchants Association to boost local business.[40] The fishing industry appears to have undergone similar stress due to falling prices, and by 1922 only the Northern Fish Company and the North West Navigation Company were working out of Selkirk. The seriousness of the general workers' strike at Winnipeg in 1919 added to the social malaise, and fear spread that the same thing might happen in Selkirk. A committee formed to ration staple foodstuffs, the newly-organized Great War Veterans' Association agreed to maintain law and order if local conditions deteriorated, and special constables were sworn in to prevent vandalism.[41] No one could recall a period of similar unrest, economic instability and general uneasiness. R. W. Stewart, as baffled as his fellow citizens, observed that

> there seems to be a strange, apathetic condition prevalent just now, that is very hard to account for, and the deeper one digs for the reason, the harder it seems to get at the solution. It cannot altogether be due to hard times consequent on the war, the present state of unrest, or the prevalence of unemployment....Hand in hand with this want of interest in the serious questions of the day, there is, especially amongst the young people, an everlasting craving for amusement, for things that are superficial and only benefit for the moment, things that affect the welfare of the individual and the present and future prosperity of the country, are allowed to go by the board.[42]

Adding to the troubles of the town was a new debt crisis. The expansion of municipal services prior to the Great War left Selkirk with a debt of $260,000[43] Industry's slump and the rise in unemployment made it impossible to collect sufficient tax revenue to meet the interest on the outstanding indebtedness. The Dominion Bank, acting on behalf of most of the creditors, refused to advance Selkirk enough money to meet its basic expenses. The town council had no choice but to reduce drastically its costs and those of the school board. Salaries were slashed, work and maintenance crews were reduced in size, burned-out street lamps were replaced with lower wattage bulbs, teachers were dismissed, tax sales were held, and many planned projects were simply abandoned. H. M. Outhwaite, the town's secretary-treasurer, worked assiduously with the provincial government to get that body to guarantee payment of $75,000 of the debt, an amount sufficient to persuade the bank to reopen a line of credit.[44]

Fortunately, the depression did not last much beyond 1923. Signs of recovery were apparent even earlier. In 1921 the General Utility Company built a factory for the manufacture of automobile tire chains, the Western Chemical Company opened an office at the corner of Main and Manitoba, the Canadian Insulation Factory, which manufactured "Sealofelt" insulation from flaxstraw, expanded its operation, many places of business were remodelled, a new telephone exchange building went up on Manitoba, and rumours began circulating about imminent construction of a large Imperial Oil plant in town. During the next year George Simpson's fish-box factory, which had been in operation since 1916, diversified into dressing rough lumber for local customers. Slowly the housing industry recovered, the ill-fated cottages

of Daerwood Park were relocated to Main Street, and several sports-minded residents looked into the possibility of developing the southern half of Sugar Point into a golf course to boost tourist traffic from Winnipeg.



The Dominion Bank, Selkirk, 1913 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

Looking west on Manitoba Avenue in 1923 WILLIAM HALL

Looking east on Manitoba Avenue in the summer of 1924 WILLIAM HALL

It was the election of P. J. Smith to the mayor's chair in 1923, however, that seemed to signal the beginning of another prosperous era in Selkirk. Smith was the general manager of Manitoba Rolling Mills, and his election certainly made clear the importance of that industry to the local economy. In recent years there had been much dissatisfaction with the manner in which civic affairs were conducted, and everyone pointed to the debt crisis as the chief example of administrative incompetence. When D. J. Black, who had been treasurer of the town for six and a half years, resigned suddenly at the height of the crisis because he felt his recommendations were completely ignored by the councillors, the townspeoples' suspicions of maladministration seemed confirmed.[45] Smith, by contrast, seemed to embody good business sense and strong administrative ability. When the election was over, Stewart wrote about the old divisiveness.

> Looking back we must all admit that we have not been pulling together, and the town had been split up, more or less into factions, with the result that when trouble came, we were not a united whole to meet it, and if this state of affairs had continued, it could only have lead to one ending and that is disaster.[46]

The election, he said, cleared the air and joined the townspeople under the banner of Selkirk boosterism.

Apart from this restoration of community pride, the election changed little. Certainly it did not bring about a radically new sort of civic administration. It was not that P. J. Smith and his councillors were lacklustre administrators, but rather that heavy industries like the Mills and the Foundry tended to create their own growth momentum in town. They generated local boosterism through the capture of distant markets, the expansion of industrial capacity, and the employment of hundreds of local men. Once the mill's 40 per cent property tax exemption expired in 1925, the firm contributed even more substantially to the town coffers. Councillors and ratepayers alike found their role in civic affairs diminishing as time passed. Their boosterism was not merely less effective than that of the big companies; it was largely unnecessary. The mills were to this second generation of Selkirkers what the big fishing companies had been to their parents: all-powerful, benevolent, and indispensable. Whether or not the townspeople realized it, their autonomy was eroding.

It was impossible not to notice the mills as one approached Selkirk from the south along the W. S & L.W. line or by automobile or buggy down Main Street. They loomed large, even on the spacious 30-acre site, with their rippling roofs of corrugated steel, their high tapering stacks belching out dense columns of black smoke, and their connecting network of miniature overhead railways. Along the south side of the main building, a 60,000 square foot mammoth, stood an array of boxcars and flatcars on the sidings that linked the plant to the C.P.R. line. In an adjacent structure stood the open hearth furnace that produced the molten metal for ingots. These ingots fed the huge rollers at the western end of the building, and eventually became the ribbons of iron and steel for the marketplace. Directly adjacent was the scrap and shearer building, which housed the raw materials until they were sent down the overhead tracks for reduction in the main building. Slightly to the west, across the street, stood the steel foundry which made castings of all sorts. Outside of Winnipeg, no community could boast an equally magnificent industrial complex. One can almost imagine the heads nodding in agreement as Stewart wrote

> No doubt you've heard of Selkirk West
> With factories, works and all the rest.[47]

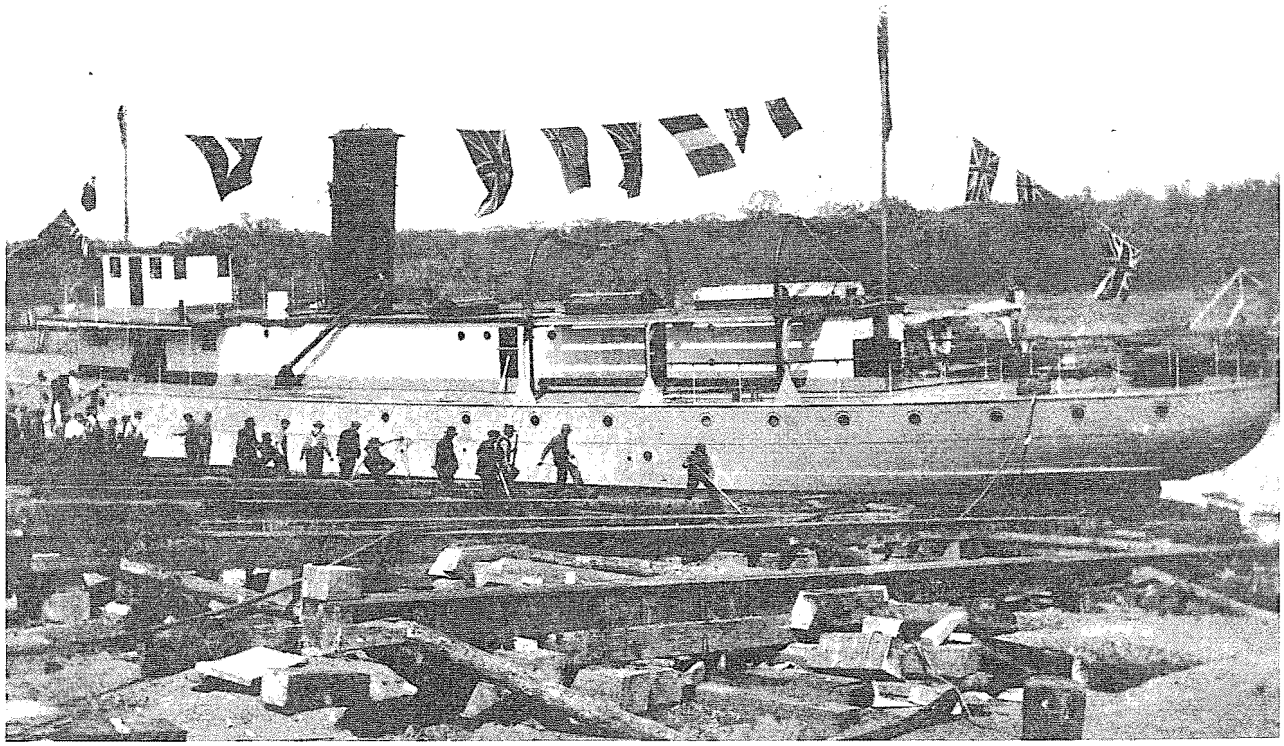
It is difficult to underestimate the value of the complex to Selkirk. By 1920, just after the Manitoba Bridge and Iron Works took over the Rolling Mills, the plant was turning out

nearly 2,000 tons of bar iron each month. Four hundred tons had been shipped to Japan, and the company was besieged with requests for its products from countries around the globe, although Canada and the United States remained its main markets. The cost of freight alone on the 1919 production was $170,000.[48] Wages paid out in just the month of March, 1920, amounted to $36,000. So many men were needed to operate the factories that housing became a serious concern. It was so troublesome that P.J. Smith informed the town council that his firm was experiencing a very high turnover rate and that the town would be wise to take advantage of the federal government housing assistance programme for returning soldiers. Most of the 300 men at the plant had no choice but to leave their families in Winnipeg while they boarded locally five or six days a week.[49] As would be expected, the strain on family life was considerable.

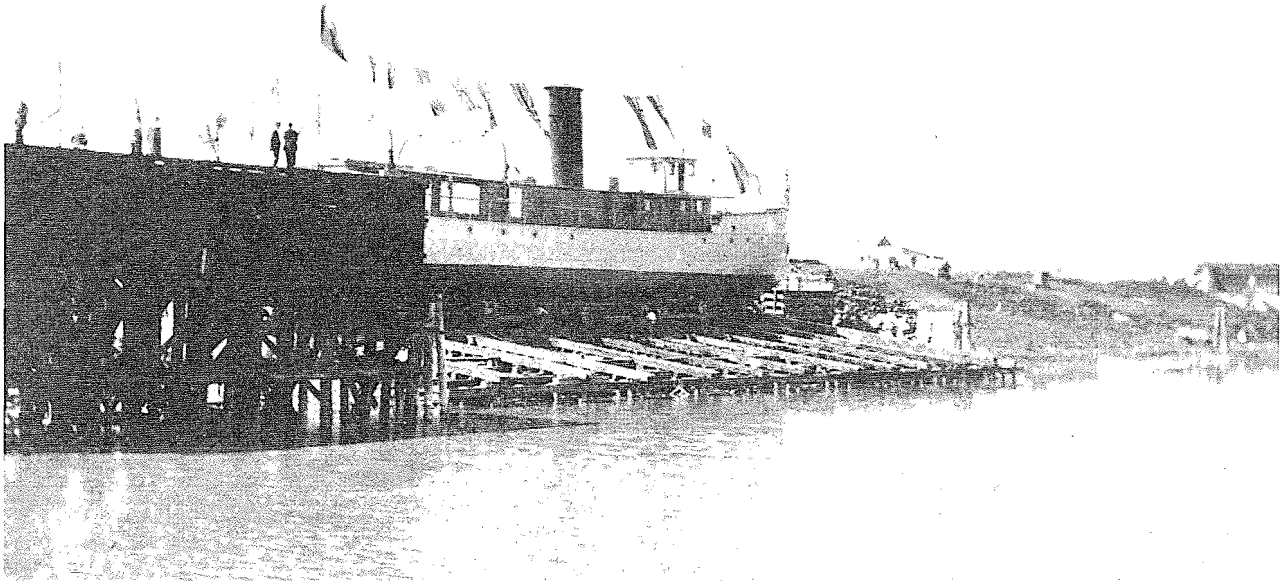
The contribution of the Mills to the welfare of the town remained large throughout the 1920s. In 1925 wages paid out to local workers alone totalled $348,255, or nearly $1000 per day.[50] Outside labourers, who were needed to handle the incoming scrap materials and provide transportation services, received an additional $227,000. It was calculated that these wages turned over seven times in Selkirk, thereby benefitting people not even remotely connected with the manufacturing plant. Tax revenues from the Rolling Mill plant averaged around $3000 per year, and the president of the firm was careful to remind town residents that these taxes and wages "would have gone to some other town (probably in the East) had the Rolling Mill not been here, and the fact is worthy of the consideration of every citizen of Selkirk."[51] In 1928 the company spent an additional $40,000 on a second open hearth furnace that increased the steel making capacity to 160 tons per day, or around 50,000 per annum,[52] and enabled the plant to operate the rolling department on a double shift whenever demand required it.

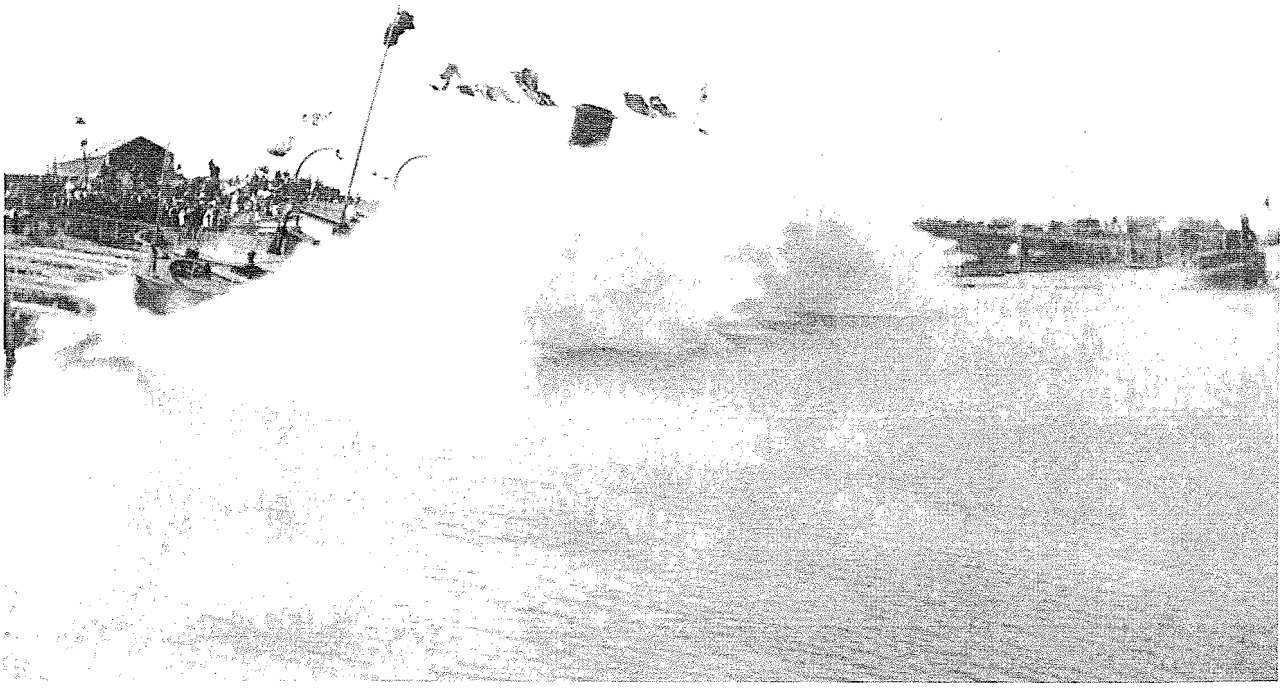
While less is known about the Manitoba Steel Foundries Limited, which was started by Montreal businessman Thomas Arnold at Selkirk in 1916, it certainly complemented the Rolling Mills operation and contributed substantially to the prosperity of the townspeople. The Foundry possessed the first electric smelting furnace in Western Canada, and specialized in the production of railway castings for the C.P.R., the C.N.R. and the Western and Pacific lines.[53] When it burned to the ground in 1926, the loss "cast a pall over this town."[54] Fortunately, the foundry was rebuilt at a cost of $150,000. By 1928 the wages paid out monthly amounted to $13,000.[55]

Without a doubt, the new prosperity was won at high cost. Its achievement had strained the community treasury and taxed the unity of the townspeople. And yet, as remaining members of Selkirk's first generation of boosters must have observed, such financial and emotional stress had always been the price paid by their town for economic advancement. Rapid and substantial growth never came easily to a small town with little more to offer than glowing self-confidence, and it was a tribute to Selkirk's progressive leaders that they had successfully courted these industrial giants with so limited a dowry.



Launching of the S.S. Bradbury *at the government boatyard in Selkirk, c.1915* MANITOBA ARCHIVES





Manitoba Rolling Mills in the 1920s WILLIAM HALL

Telephone operators at the Selkirk exchange, c.1927 WESTERN CANADA PICTORIAL INDEX

CHAPTER FIVE

Bitter Lessons, 1929-1946

THE STOCK MARKET CRASH of October 29, 1929, went unnoticed in Selkirk, as it did in countless other towns. It happened on a Tuesday, and a very ordinary Tuesday at that. The men spent the day working down at the boatyard, on the docks, or at the mill; the women tidied their homes, did some shopping, and an odd one cleaned the stove pipes in anticipation of the coming winter months; the children were either at school or playing hooky down by the slough. Storekeepers routinely swept their patch of sidewalk, hotelkeepers polished their glasses, the waterman made his rounds through the older parts of town. Even those who scanned the business page of a Winnipeg newspaper were little alarmed by the financial chaos that was rocking Wall Street that day. It all seemed so remote. Shrewder local investors may have grasped that hard times lay ahead, but even they expected nothing more serious than the shortlived depressions of 1907, 1913, or the recent post-war years. When the *Weekly Record* finally published a story about the crash, more than a week later, it was in the form of a brief article clipped from another paper that chastised the foolish speculators who had been buying stocks on margin. No one in town had any idea of the decade of depression that was before them, a decade of sorrow and want that would be relieved only by the outbreak of another world war.

There had been no sign that such catastrophe was near. In fact, Selkirk seemed to be riding a new wave of prosperity. The C.P.R. had just finished a new brick station at Bradbury Junction, the Merchant's Hotel, Gibbs's drugstore and other businesses underwent extensive renovations and remodelling, commercial lots on Main Street were selling for as much as $12,000, and a Safeway store was taking shape. George Simpson erected a sawmill on Eveline to facilitate the manufacture of his wooden fish boxes and, not far away, a New York firm had purchased land between Manitoba and Superior for the erection of another fish plant. Over at the mental hospital, a new building was under construction on the north side, close to the newly-completed nurses' residence. The Board of Trade had almost convinced the Mitchell Grain company to put up a new elevator by the tracks, and rumours were circulating that the Manitoba Pulp and Paper Company would soon begin work on a pulp mill near town. Money abounded, and it seemed that the industrial boom that had been started by the Rolling Mills was gaining momentum.

The Soldiers' Pavilion of the Selkirk Mental Hospital during construction in 1930 WESTERN CANADA PICTORIAL INDEX

It was mid-1930 before the gloom began to take hold. Faced with declining markets and lower prices, the Rolling Mills and the fishing companies started to lay off men. Together with the mental hospital, these industries were the largest employers in Selkirk and their inevitable cutbacks were felt throughout the local economy. With hundreds out of work, merchants soon grew accustomed to only a handful of patrons each day instead of dozens as before. Window shoppers seemed plentiful enough, but paying customers were scarce. The bakeries suffered as women spurned convenience for the economy of their own ovens. Garage owners found they had automobile inventories they could not sell. Travelling salesmen, hawking everything from brushes to life insurance, became more numerous than ever before. The tourist trade dwindled. Nearly everyone was rediscovering the virtue (which fast became a necessity) of thrift, of doing without, until better times returned.

But better times did not return. By October of 1930 the town was receiving relief money from the federal Department of Public Works under the Unemployment Relief Scheme.[1] The federal government was responsible for 40 per cent of the cost of the relief programme, the province matched that amount, and the town was expected to contribute the other 20 per cent. Soon much of the work being done around town was paid for out of this fund. The unemployed registered down at the municipal office, and then waited until the chairman of the Board of Works called them for a job like gravelling the main streets or repairing the sidewalks. Direct relief was handled by the Police Committee of the town council, which made many people feel like criminals as they sought assistance. At first the committee members tried to dole out necessities on the strength of their personal knowledge of a family's circumstances, but

by the spring of 1931 so many needed aid that they were obliged to make a personal appearance before the entire town council to ask for help. At the height of the crisis, nearly 170 families were on the relief rolls.[2] Pride kept many more from seeking assistance.

As the depression deepened, Selkirk's crime rate began to climb. These petty break, enter and thefts revealed the plight of people as nothing else could. The new Safeway store was one of the first businesses to be robbed. One September night in 1930, the constable saw three persons leaving the darkened building. He gave chase and while one escaped, he apprehended the other two on McLean Avenue. In their possession, Constable Campbell found some cigarettes, a package of chocolate, one loaf of bread and a couple of cans of sardines.[3] The *Record* constantly reported poultry snatchings and thefts from clotheslines. Robberies at clothing stores like William Epstein's became increasingly common. All were reflections of the growing desperation of many people.

Those who were in a position to help the needy did so quite willingly. "We have observed," the newspaper editor wrote, "a larger sympathy on the part of the average person for their less fortunate fellow-citizens than has been noticeable for a long time. Fewer people are inclined to turn a deaf ear to stories of distress or appeals for help."[4] This sympathy took many forms. When, for example, the town council was considering the purchase of a tractor for street grading, one citizen appeared at the meeting to argue that local teamsters needed the work. The owner of the Central Theatre, 'the talky temple,' provided a free movie showing for all 300 children of the unemployed. The Unemployed Association of Selkirk, formed in 1932 at the Alexandra rink, started a fund to provide medicines to those on relief, as this necessity was not handled by the town council. The Rolling Mills tried, whenever possible, to give Selkirk residents the first chance at a job. Church groups, such as the Social Service Committee of Christ Church, held teas, bake sales and other events to raise money for boxes of groceries, clothing and other necessities for the needy. Other citizens, possessing more querulous natures, wrote letter after letter to the editor calling upon the town council to make every possible reduction in staff and salaries. Eventually a Ratepayers' and Citizens' Association was formed to guide the council down the path of civic economy.

These critics were not entirely fair to their councillors, who faced the unenviable task of juggling steadily increasing relief costs with rapidly declining revenues, while simultaneously meeting the annual interest payments on the town debt. At times their performance seemed almost miraculous, such as in 1933 when they managed to reduce the tax rate from 41 to 38½ mills despite the fact that relief expenses were five times their 1931 level.[5] Criticism notwithstanding, the councillors did attempt to pare civic expenses when they could. In 1932 the Finance Committee recommended reductions in the salaries paid all civic employees. Those earning over $100 per month lost ten per cent of their income, those earning between $75 and $100 lost five per cent, and everyone working for an hourly wage found their incomes reduced by an average of five cents per hour.[6] Even so, such salaries compared very favourably to those received by men in the boatyards, for example, where four dollars a day was good money. Economy was the watchword in other matters as well. In 1935, when it was decided that something had to be done about the dust on Main Street, the councillors rejected the notion of purchasing a water sprinkler in favour of securing free, used crankcase oil from the local garages and bulk oil plants to pour on the street.[7] They also tried to ensure that local people were employed in local jobs whenever possible. They approached the steel plants about this concern, and discovered that only about one-

quarter of their workers lived outside Selkirk. Of these, most were residents of East Selkirk and the rest came from Old England and Lockport. Enquiries at the mental hospital revealed equally gratifying news. Fully 60 per cent of the men working at the institution, and over 48 per cent of the women, were from Selkirk. Local people were, in fact, highly represented on all but the nursing and clerical staffs, suggesting that not enough qualified personnel were available locally for these positions.[8]

Even those townspeople fortunate enough to have good jobs seldom earned more than they needed to get by in the depression, and as a result entertainment took on a decidedly home-made, thrifty cast. People tended to visit much more than they had before, and card parties, quilting bees and listening to the radio shows became favourite evening pastimes. Hockey and baseball did not cost much to play, and skating and tobogganing parties were easily arranged down by the river. Excellent bob sleigh slides could be found by Knox Church, and with a good push it was possible to glide clear across the river and two-thirds of the way back.[9] After the rink was renovated in the early 1930s, curling gained many new fans. Those with theatrical aspirations formed a Dramatic Club in 1932, and turned out shows of such quality that in the following year they won the coveted *Free Press* shield for their production of Harold Brighouse's *Lonesome-Like*, judged the best amateur show in the province.[10] The Choral Society continually attracted new voices, and soon the *Record* reported that the Selkirk Music Festival was one of the most popular community events of the year. The children in town seemed content with inexpensive amusements like sledding, skating, shooting at birds with their home-made sling-shots, and rolling hoops down the streets. But they, too, had their fads, such as the great yo-yo craze of 1931.[11]

Many forms of entertainment were still reasonable in price, such as the weekly Saturday dance at the pavilion in Selkirk Park. This event attracted throngs of young people until the blast from an exploding gasoline tank levelled both the pavilion and the refreshment booth in 1936. Movies were cheap, and the Central Theatre was often packed for showings of Spencer Tracy and Bette Davis in *20,000 Years in Sing Sing*, or Jackie Cooper in *Divorce in the Family*. Even such forgettable films as *They Just Had to Get Married*, starring Slim Summerville and Zazu Pitts, attracted a fair number. If someone had a car and everyone else pitched in for some gas, a group of friends might run down the bumpy road to Winnipeg Beach for a day of swimming and riding the roller coaster and then stay on for the evening dance at the dance hall. Evening trips on the Moonlight Special from Winnipeg were always crowded, too. Those who stayed at Selkirk could frequent one of the three miniature golf courses that were built in 1930. Of these, Harry Moody's Riverview Golfette on Eveline was the most popular, perhaps because it had a fine archery range as well.[12] In 1931 the more professional golfers made arrangements with the town council for lease of 50 acres in Daerwood Park for a new course and provided another reasonable amusement. Just south of Moody's 'club', the town built a first-class bathing beach complete with diving tower and change houses. Then there were special attractions, like the aerial display sponsored by the Selkirk Hockey Club in 1932. More than 500 people came out to Hagaard's field to watch the tactical formations, stunt flying and parachute jumping. The braver citizens even took advantage of the free flights over town. Needless to say, each of these amusements was a form of relief in its own way.

Throughout the lean years people needed distractions to make them forget their troubles for a while, and Selkirk residents were more fortunate than most in this regard. For six years they were able to watch as a

The famous roller coaster at Winnipeg Beach
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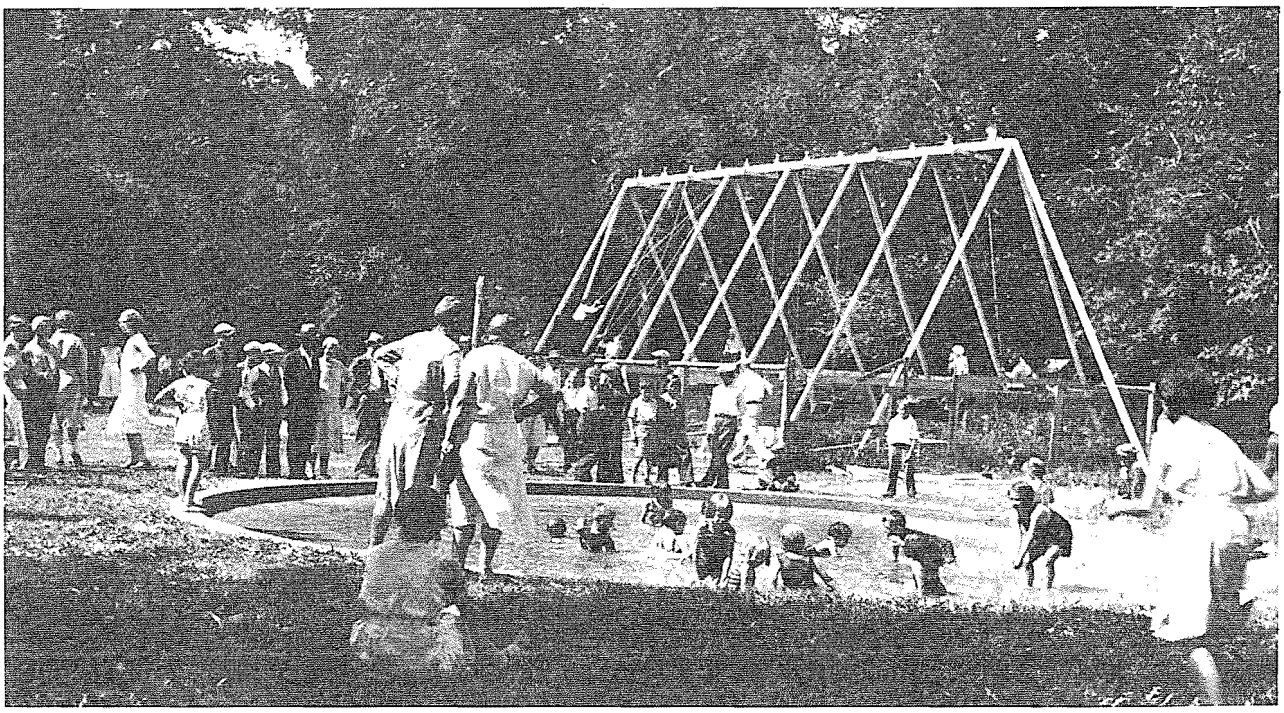

The children's playground in Selkirk Park, 1931
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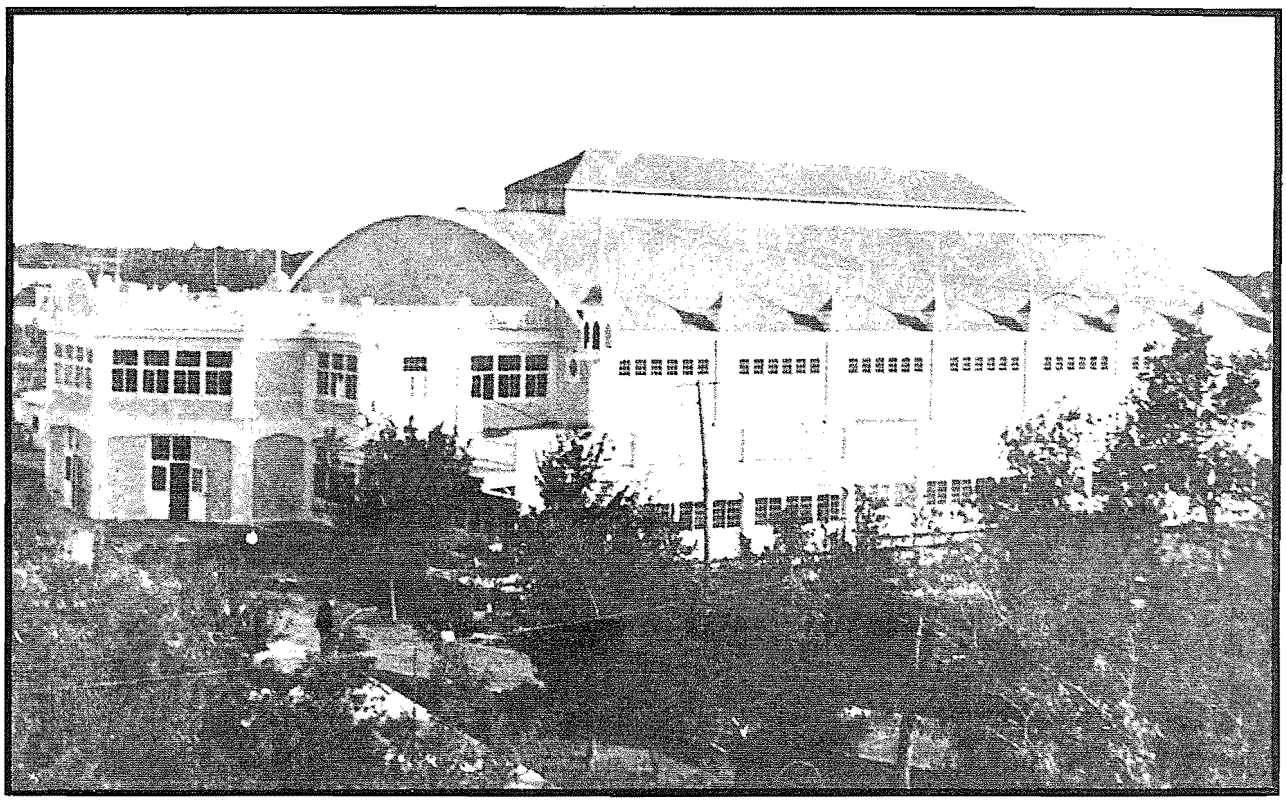


The dance pavilion at Winnipeg Beach WESTERN CANADA PICTORIAL INDEX

bridge across the Red took shape amid endless political controversy and intrigue. The bridge held little significance to the youth of the town, who saw it as just another link in the modern road network that was developing around them daily. Many of their parents, able to recollect the promises of a bridge made during the 1911 federal election campaign, must have looked on with scepticism. But to the last pioneers of Selkirk, who had fought so hard for a railway bridge in 1879, seeing this new structure span the water was like a dream come true.

It was in 1931 that construction of the bridge first became a distinct possibility. There had been talk as early as 1927 about Canadian National Railways erecting a combined railway and automobile bridge at Selkirk as part of a new branch line, but the depression quashed these plans.[13] They were resurrected in a somewhat different form when, in 1930, a booster organization known as the Eastern Manitoba Development Bureau succeeded in having the Trans-Canada highway routed north of the Dawson Trail through Whitemouth and Beausejour. W. W. Childe, the Bureau's executive director, wasted little time contacting the Selkirk Board of Trade about the tourist trade potential of the highway. He pointed out that a connection between Ontario and Manitoba would soon be made, and that "if by that time there is not a good road connecting East Selkirk with the Trans-Canada Highway a little west of Garson, and a traffic bridge across the Red River into Selkirk, then Selkirk is going to lose out."[14] Selkirk businessmen had no difficulty grasping this impeccable logic and immediately vowed to participate in promotion of the scheme.

In August, Mayor J. J. Bell and M.L.A. James McLenaghen met with W. R. Clubb, the provincial Minister of Public Works, and asked for his co-operation in developing the bridge as a relief project. Clubb was enthusiastic, and preliminary plans were drawn up for construction of a traffic bridge at a cost of between $250,000 and $300,000.[15] It was anticipated that the federal government would contribute 50 per cent of the funding, the province would provide 30 per cent, and the town would give the remaining 20 per cent. As the municipalities of St. Andrews and St. Clements made it quite clear that they were not in a position to assist financially, Selkirk proposed to issue about $60,000 worth of debentures for a period of 20 years. During that time the bridge would collect tolls from everyone who used it, and those revenues would assist greatly in retiring the debt.

The project developed swiftly. The town officials called in engineers from the Dominion Bridge Company to provide advice on the best sort of structure and its cost. They recommended a bascule, or counterweighted liftspan, type of bridge and estimated its cost at $300,000.[16] A public meeting was called to discuss the bridge question, and "it was announced with some confidence that with an immediate start, the bridge could be completed in nine months."[17] The mayor repeated that this would be a toll bridge, and then added that the municipal council of St. Clements had, at a recent meeting, agreed to raise $10,000 for construction costs if Selkirk was able to raise its $60,000 share. This seemed likely, for the provincial government had already agreed to guarantee the town debentures. Events were moving at a frenzied pace because everyone realized that the success of the project depended on federal support, and no one knew how much longer the authorities in Ottawa would be interested in financing relief work such as this. No one could know, of course, that the depression had hardly begun. Nor could anyone have guessed that, just as the federal government approved the project, the Manitoba authorities would suddenly back out completely, claiming that there were insufficient relief funds with which to begin the bridge in

1931.[18] For the next three years, nothing more was heard about the Selkirk bridge.

As the troubled administration of Prime Minister R. B. Bennett approached the end of its term in office, the Selkirk bridge project was revived by an injection of relief funding into Manitoba in early 1934. "Quite a flutter of excitement was prevalent in Selkirk on Tuesday," the *Record* noted,

> when it was announced through the city papers that spring would see the start of several large undertakings in Manitoba by the Federal Government...the government intends to spend at least $4,600,000 in Manitoba and included in these projects was a bridge at Selkirk to cost approximately $250,000.[19]

In June, Bennett himself announced the government's intention to proceed with the bridge, and one month later Selkirk's Member of Parliament, Conservative J. H. Stitt, informed the town council that it had only to decide where to build the bridge and work would commence at once.

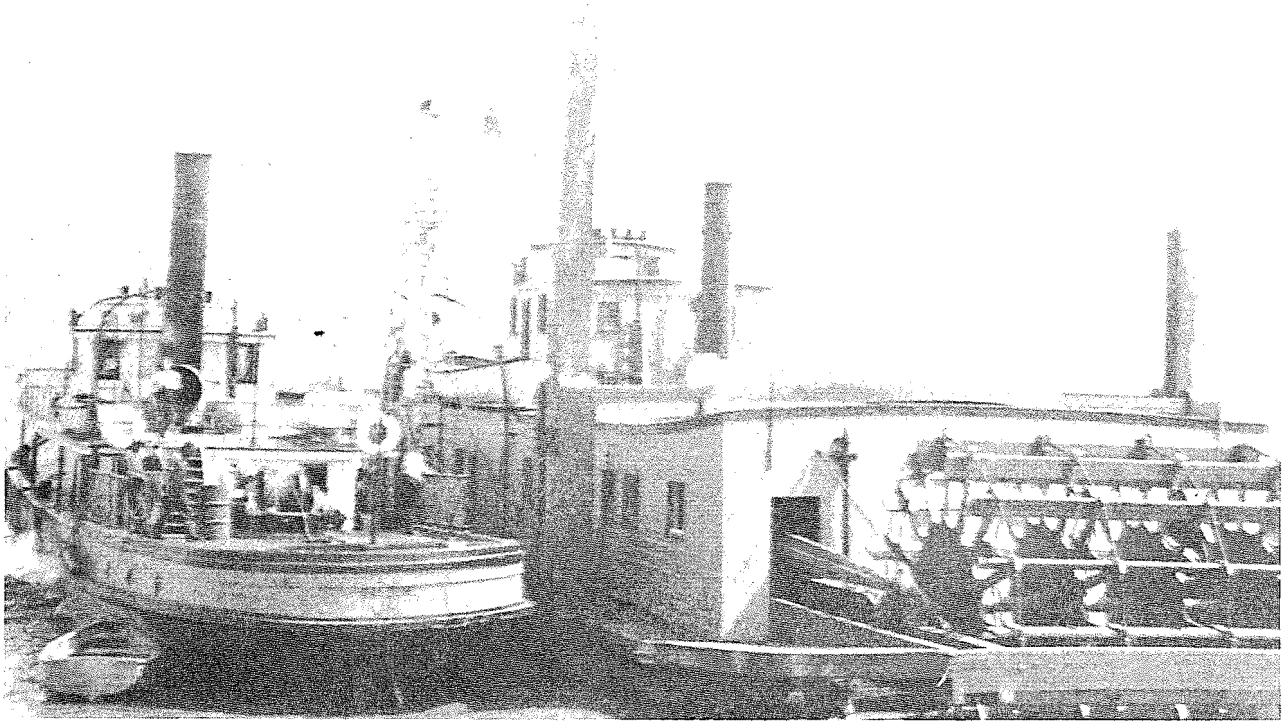
Three locations seemed feasible. The foot of Clandeboye Avenue, where James Colcleugh had landed over half a century before, was the choice of most Selkirk councillors, as a bridge at that point would direct all incoming traffic straight into the business district. The St. Clements council, which had to be consulted because of its financial commitment to the project, favoured a McLean Avenue approach. The federal engineers, however, were more favourably disposed toward the Eaton Avenue approach.[20] In their opinion, the Clandeboye site was too near the wharves on the waterfront, and the McLean Avenue approach was too close to the bend in the river, which might cause serious ice problems each spring, as well as being adjacent to power and telephone lines crossing the river. The Eaton Avenue location, on the other hand, was free of such problems. Test borings of the riverbed confirmed that the Eaton approach was practicable, the town donated land for such an approach, and a contract was let for construction of the bridge before the year was out.

From the beginning, it was understood the bridge was to be a relief project. In August of 1934 the federal authorities indicated that local tradesmen should be hired whenever possible, without regard to individual political affiliations. This action did much to diminish local concern about political patronage, a matter which was generating considerable controversy in the government boatyards,[21] and the local editor added that "if the majority of the labor is done by man power rather than using grading and other machinery, this would give employment to at least a large number of men who are now on the relief lists of the town."[22] But as early as November, 1934, complaints were pouring in about the hiring of a Winnipeg trucking firm to haul gravel from Birds Hill for construction of the bridge piers. In unison, the town council, the Board of Trade, the St. Clements council, the local Conservative Association, the Canadian Legion and concerned citizens telegrammed their disapproval to Ottawa. The work stopped almost immediately, and did not recommence until 50 local teams and 70 men could be found to do the job. This slowed construction somewhat, but at least the spirit of the agreement was honoured.

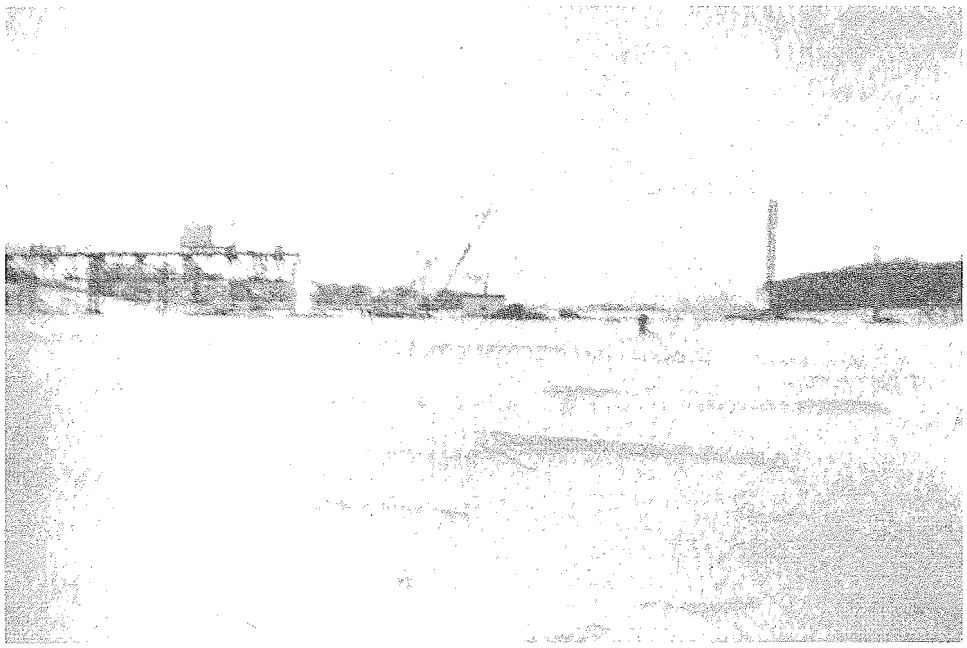
The work took most of the next two years. Because the contract was let late in 1934, little more than excavation work, pile driving and some pier construction was possible before the onset of winter.[23] During the following year the entire substructure was completed, and the townspeople enthusiastically compared the actual structure with a fine model that was on display at Gilhuly's drugstore on Eveline. In the autumn, the towers for the lift span were built. This was the central section of the bridge which could be electrically raised to a height of about 80 feet above summer water levels to allow large boats to pass underneath. By the spring of 1936 only one pier remained to be completed, and

steel could be laid to the middle of the river where final work was being done on the lift span itself. Painting, approach work and the completion of a four-foot sidewalk on the north side was finished in the summer.

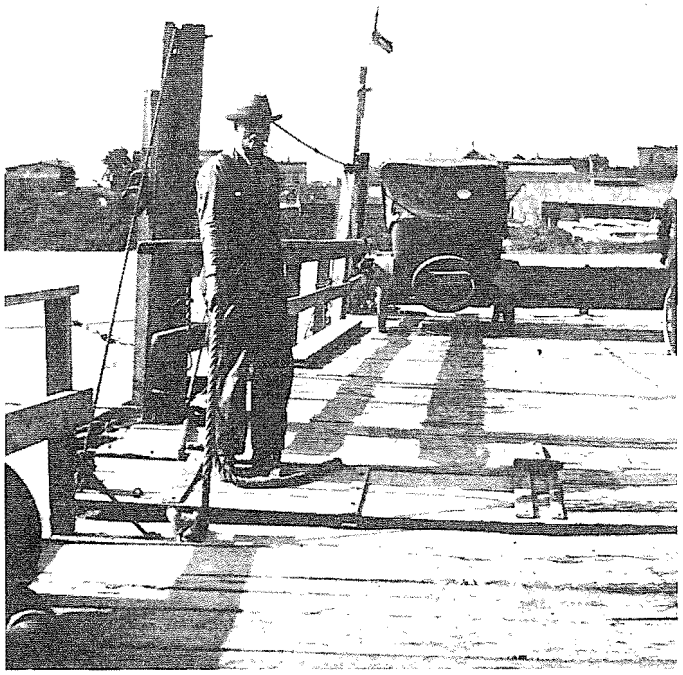
While this work approached completion, an acrimonious debate started among the three levels of government about responsibility for the cost of bridge maintenance. The federal government had, from the beginning, made it plain that it only paid for bridges of international or interprovincial stature.[24] Since



The tug Baldur, *built at the Selkirk boatyards in 1939, alongside an earlier paddlewheel dredge.*
WESTERN CANADA PICTORIAL INDEX



The Selkirk Bridge under construction in 1935 WILLIAM HALL



Otto Scramstad operating the Selkirk ferry in 1926
SCRAMSTAD COLLECTION

the Selkirk bridge had neither, it had to be built as a relief project in order to garner any federal funding. As late as the summer of 1935, Ottawa authorities informed W. R. Clubb that they assumed Manitoba would take over the bridge upon its completion. Clubb quickly replied that the province only paid the cost of upkeep on bridges joining provincial highways and that, as far as he was concerned, this was clearly an intermunicipal issue.[25] The town of Selkirk and the municipality of St. Clements were burdened with other relief expenses and could only plead poverty. As the bridge was nearing completion, it became imperative that something be done to resolve the impasse. In the spring of 1936 the federal government returned to the original bridge proposal and recommended that, in view of the positions of the three levels of government, a toll schedule be established to pay for part of the maintenance costs.[26] This recommendation, based on the town's own proposal of 1931, earned federal authorities the unremitting wrath of the townspeople.

Local reaction came swiftly. The town council declared the schedule prohibitive and said that if it were enforced, people would demand the return of the ferry.[27] The editor of the *Record* published the schedule and commented that "with a toll being collected at the bridge, Selkirk and district has gained nothing by having it built, but is practically in the same position, or worse, than before. Is it not time this town and district had a fair break?"[28] Another columnist said "it is hard to understand why they [federal authorities] are acting this way now that the bridge is nearing completion. Anyway, the time for bargaining was before the project was started ...it would appear that it might be well in order to transfer the bridge to Ottawa to repose with other costly relics. There is still a lot of service left in the ferry."[29] Other citizens affixed their signatures to petitions for a free bridge and fired these off to Ottawa as a demonstration of their unanimous indignation.

Throughout the summer and fall of 1936 the federal, provincial and local representatives met to resolve the impasse. By July it seemed that the parties had agreed to open the bridge toll-free as soon as all signed an

RECOMMENDED TOLL SCHEDULE, SELKIRK BRIDGE, 1936

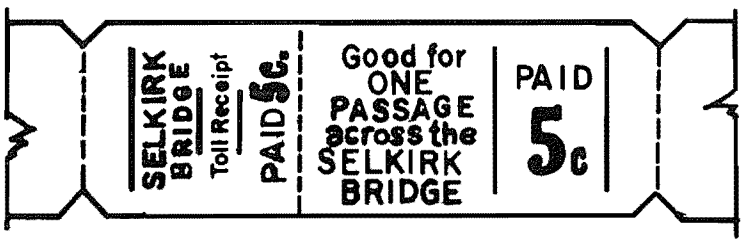
Foot passengers	— 5 cents
Passenger, auto & driver	— 25 cents
Passengers in vehicle	— 5 cents
Commercial Vehicles	
Up to 1 ton	— 25 cents
1-2 ton	— 35 cents
2-5 ton	— 45 cents
5 ton & over	— 55 cents
Motor buses & driver	— 50 cents
Motor bus passengers	— 5 cents
Motorcycle & driver	— 15 cents
One-horse vehicle	— 15 cents
Two-horse vehicle	— 35 cents
Livestock (per head)	— 10 cents

Source: PAC, RG 11, Volume 4396, File 1624-6-A.

agreement to split the cost of maintenance for an initial period of five years.[30] In the interim, the federal government suggested that the old ferry toll schedule be used to defray expenses, and it went so far as to pass an order-in-council to enforce these fares and printed toll tickets for the bridge. This was unacceptable to J. T. Thorson, the Member of Parliament who was acting on behalf of the municipalities. He stressed that "to impose tolls for the short period that would elapse pending the completion of an agreement would in my opinion be purely a source of irritation and resentment, and would serve no useful purpose whatever in view of the willingness of the Provincial Government and the Dominion Government to work out an agreement for contributions to the cost of operation and maintenance."[31] The townspeople agreed with Thorson. Any imposition of tolls would be self-defeating, especially in view of the fact that people could use the Lockport bridge toll-free.

Winter came and passed, and still no agreement was signed. The bridge was structurally completed, yet stood with the lift-span raised high in the air so that vehicular traffic was impossible. In December the *Record* reported that this albatross would soon be a boon to local sportsmen. "According to what is said, some man, of considerable means, had purchased our dear old white elephant...and proposes covering it and turning it into a bowling alley."[32] Another aggrieved citizen suggested planting shrubs and flowers for the creation of the town's own 'hanging gardens.' By spring breakup, when it was no longer possible to cross on the ice, mill workers from East Selkirk and other athletic 'passengers' could routinely be seen climbing over the span, bicycles clutched precariously in hand, to get to work. One determined farmer even managed to carry a calf across on his way to market. Viewing this situation with alarm, the Selkirk Board of Trade implored Ottawa to lower the lift-span to at least a safe level. The Minister of Public Works replied that while he sympathized, nothing could be done until a procrastinating W. R. Clubb felt ready to sign an agreement.

Finally, in late April, the federal government succeeded in having Clubb sign an agreement that turned all responsibility for the bridge over to the provincial authorities in exchange for a lump sum payment of $6000 from Ottawa.[34] But one thoroughly disgruntled citizen by the name of Ed Maloney, who knew nothing of these negotiations, took matters into his own hands and lowered the lift-span by means of the manual crank.



Blueprint of the toll tickets printed by the federal government in 1936 for use on the Selkirk Bridge. The tickets were never used. PUBLIC ARCHIVES CANADA

For one glorious afternoon traffic poured across the bridge. When officials of the Dominion Bridge Company learned of this, they arrived to return the lift-span to its former elevated position, only to find a group of townspeople blockading the bridgehead. Despite this protest, the lift-span was raised. Telegrams again flooded into Ottawa, and the company men were ordered to return the span to a safe level that still prevented auto crossings.

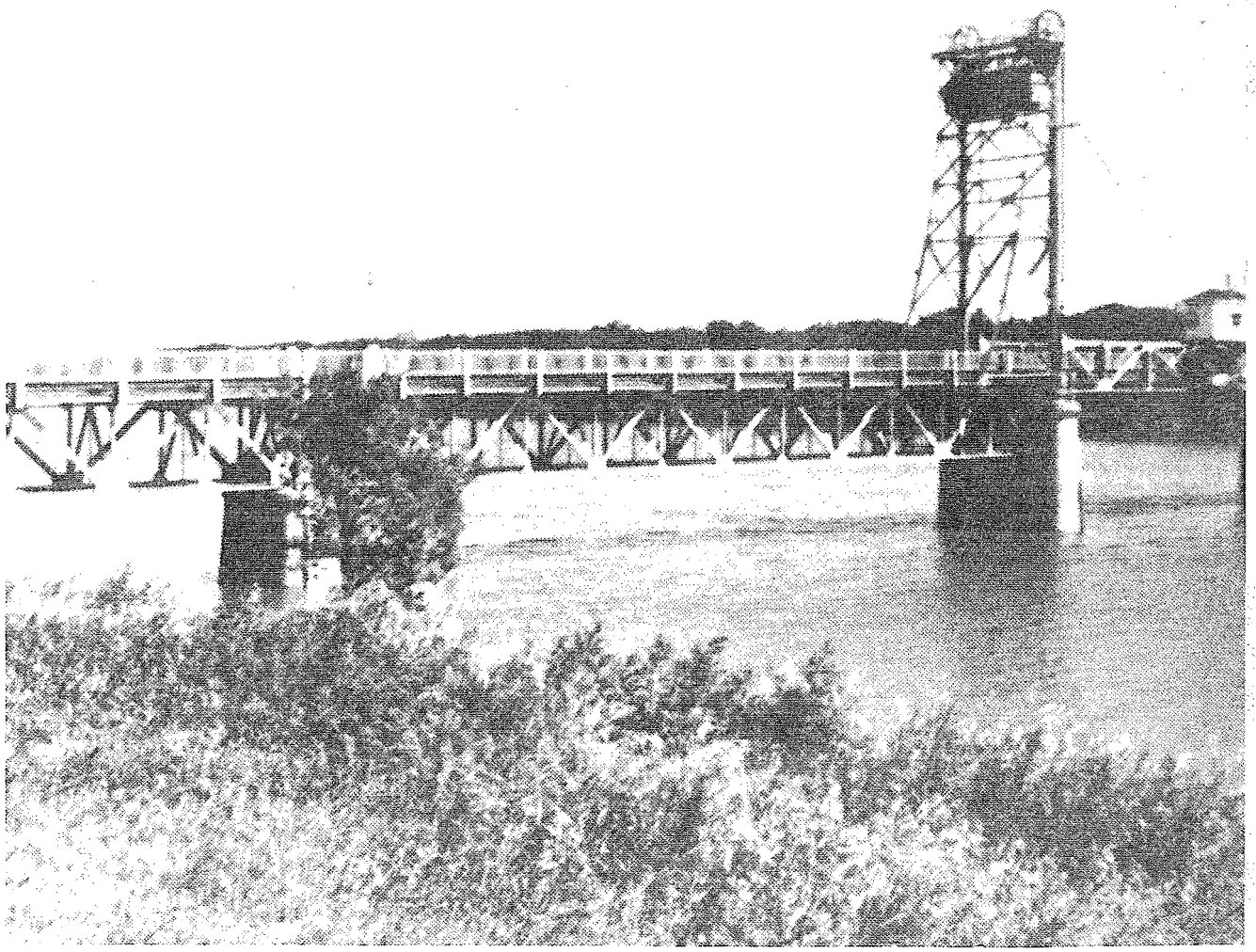
Two days later, the government officials came to open the bridge themselves. They arrived at mid-morning to no fanfare whatsoever, met with some town councillors and the town engineer, tested the span and finally opened the bridge to traffic. The engineer ran a town truck across for the sake of formality. Then the government officials unceremoniously handed the keys to the electrical switch-box to the town representatives and returned to the city. The whole affair took two hours, and was appreciated by no one. What little reverie there was centred around the true hero of Selkirk's battle of the bridge, Edward Maloney. As one local bard wrote, some twenty years later,

> With weeping and with laughter,
> Still will the tale be told
> How Ed Maloney lowered the bridge,
> In the brave days of old.[35]

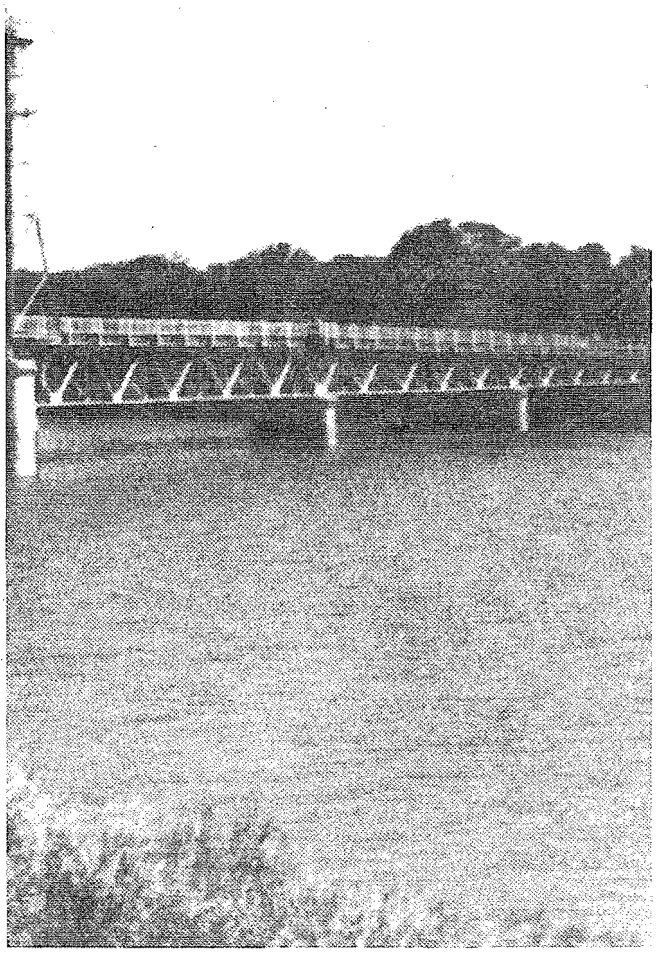
The building of the bridge emphasized the importance that motorized transportation now had in the daily lives of the townspeople. Signs of this change were everywhere. Automobile garages and gas pumps had taken the place of the livery stables and hitching rails around town. The prosperous years of the 1920s had filled Selkirk with automobiles and by 1926 one out of every three farmers in the district owned a car.[36] Naturally, the town council became concerned with the quality of streets and incoming roads. Main Street, which was made a provincial highway in 1930, was hard-surfaced from the town's southern limit to the corner of Manitoba Avenue in 1936. A short time later, the merchants on Eveline and Manitoba petitioned the council to pave their streets to keep down the dust and to "provide an incentive for many to visit our business section and stop and shop."[37] In the spring of 1938 work began on the Selkirk Oil Refinery, just north of the C.P.R. spur line, and it was soon producing gasoline, diesel and furnace fuel and distillate. During the next year the council succeeded in having the beach highway re-routed down Manitoba Avenue west to the new highway linking Selkirk with Clandeboye. This encouraged travellers from Winnipeg to the beaches to pass directly through town, and boosted the fortunes of many businesses.

Perhaps the most telling sign of the automobile's new importance was the demise of the Winnipeg, Selkirk and Lake Winnipeg railway. The decline of passenger and freight traffic and the increasingly unmanageable burden of the depression forced the company directors to seek exemption from taxation in 1932. The town seemed divided on this issue. While the Board of Trade supported the company's plea for assistance, the more representative Ratepayers' and Citizens' Association was strongly against such a concession. When the Selkirk town council finally did act, in conjunction with the municipality of St. Andrews, it merely requested the provincial government to provide additional funding for maintenance of the highway between Selkirk and Winnipeg.[38] Over the next few years the quality of service and the condition of the railway slowly deteriorated. In 1937 the W. S & L.W. started daily bus service between the two centres,thereby confirming its own obsolescence. Not even the outbreak of war in 1939 could have rescued this outmoded transportation system.

To the townspeople, on the other hand, the start of the war signalled the gradual return of prosperity after the long drought of depression. Being an industrial town, Selkirk benefitted more than most prairie centres from



Selkirk Bridge, n.d.



MANITOBA ARCHIVES

the new demand for munitions and war materiel. The Canadian Industries Limited explosives factory (Brainerd Plant), which had been constructed at East Selkirk in 1934 to serve the mining districts of northern Manitoba and northwestern Ontario, found a new market for its deadly products. The Manitoba Rolling Mills increased production and began to manufacture shell casings.[39] The foundry diversified into casting Valentine tank tracks, gun mounts, asdic domes and other submarine detection components.[40] The demand for clothing enabled Fairfield's woolen mill to double its capacity with the addition of a new factory and equipment, and in 1944 a Winnipeg firm, Monarch Overall Company, opened a Selkirk plant in the former Odd Fellows Hall at Main and Manitoba. This growth did much to diminish the relief rolls.

This war did not strike with the awful suddenness of the Great War. In 1939 Canadian participation on the battle front was still two years away, yet the people of Selkirk responded to the struggle as though it were happening just outside their doors. The Selkirk local of the Army and Navy Veterans' Association immediately organized for active service. The local platoon of the 106th Infantry Reserve Company swelled to full strength by September of 1940.[41] Members of the Red River Rifle Association formed the Manitoba Volunteer Reserve to serve as special constables if required, and trained under the direction of veterans like Matt Bennett, who had seen action in the Boer War, the Natal Uprising of 1906, and the Great War.[42] Before long, Selkirk had a local war savings campaign organized, a salvage corps overseeing the collection and sale of scrap materials, and an entirely new spirit of thriftiness created by the universal distribution of coupons and ration cards. When the unexpected bombing of Pearl Harbor took place in late 1941, the townspeople organized for a morale-boosting trial blackout, complete with the sounds

of airplanes, bren gun carriers and exploding bombs.

Local concern about Japanese participation in the war took on new meaning in 1942, when the British Columbia Securities Commission was instructed to relocate about 23,000 Japanese nationals inland from the sensitive coastal region. In the spring some 1100 Japanese found themselves in Manitoba, where they were to work in the sugar beet fields of the south and in essential industries at and around Winnipeg. Of these, perhaps two or three per cent were situated at East Selkirk, Selkirk and in the Lockport and Little Britain areas.[44] Despite the small number of people involved, the Selkirk Board of Trade and the municipal councils of St. Andrews and St. Clements vehemently protested their placement. Representatives of the Fairfield Woolen Mills, the Manitoba Rolling Mills, Manitoba Steel Foundries and C.I.L. added their voices to these demands for removal of the Japanese.[45] The fear of sabotage reigned throughout the area.[46] The protesters did succeed in moving the Lockport Japanese, but in 1945 there were still 12 at East Selkirk and 19 in town.[47]

As in the Great War, enlistment of Selkirk men took place rapidly. For brief periods these recruits trained with their units in Canada, and then shipped out to distant parts of the globe. Some saw little action, like those with the Royal Rifles and the Winnipeg Grenadiers, who arrived in Hong Kong just a month before the island fell to the Japanese on Christmas Day, 1941. Many soldiers spent years in Japanese prisoner-of-war camps, which did nothing to lessen the anti-Japanese sentiments around Selkirk. Other soldiers waited restlessly in Great Britain, eager to join the real action on the continent. Those serving with the Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders got their chance on August 19th, 1942, when they took part in the ill-fated commando assault on the town of Dieppe, which resulted in nearly 3,400 Canadian casualties. Although it was later said that the Cameron Highlanders had penetrated farther inland than any other battalion on that horrible day, this was little consolation to the families of the five Selkirk boys who did not return.[48] By the end of the war, 76 more local boys would be dead.[49]

As the conflict ceased, the townspeople braced for the post-war depression they felt certain would come. Memories of the financial collapse that followed the Great War were still fresh, and there were those who had blamed the Depression on the First World War. Yet the expected fiasco never arrived. Instead, the economy began a sharp upswing and the expectations of the townspeople soared. Unlike many prairie towns, Selkirk actually gained residents during the depression years, moving from 4,486 people in 1931 to 4,915 by 1941.[50] By the end of the war the population had topped 5,400. This growth occurred just as the town emerged from under the cloud of debt that had so long cast a shadow over its affairs. For the first time in decades there were sufficient funds to undertake needed civic improvements. At the same time housing starts leaped in number. Automobile garages boomed. Returning soldiers opened a variety of new stores. The mechanization of local farms spawned many new implement dealerships in town, and soon a 22,000 bushel grain elevator opened to service the farmers. The town even acquired a new newspaper as the *Record* and the *Journal* amalgamated in 1946 to form the Selkirk *Enterprise*. Its very name symbolized the type of change the townspeople were now looking forward to, and the new editor, G. C. Kroft, wasted little time in announcing that "today we realize that we are at the threshold of a new day in Selkirk. In the very near future, changes must occur which will make this town and district occupy a much different position in the province."[51]

CHAPTER SIX

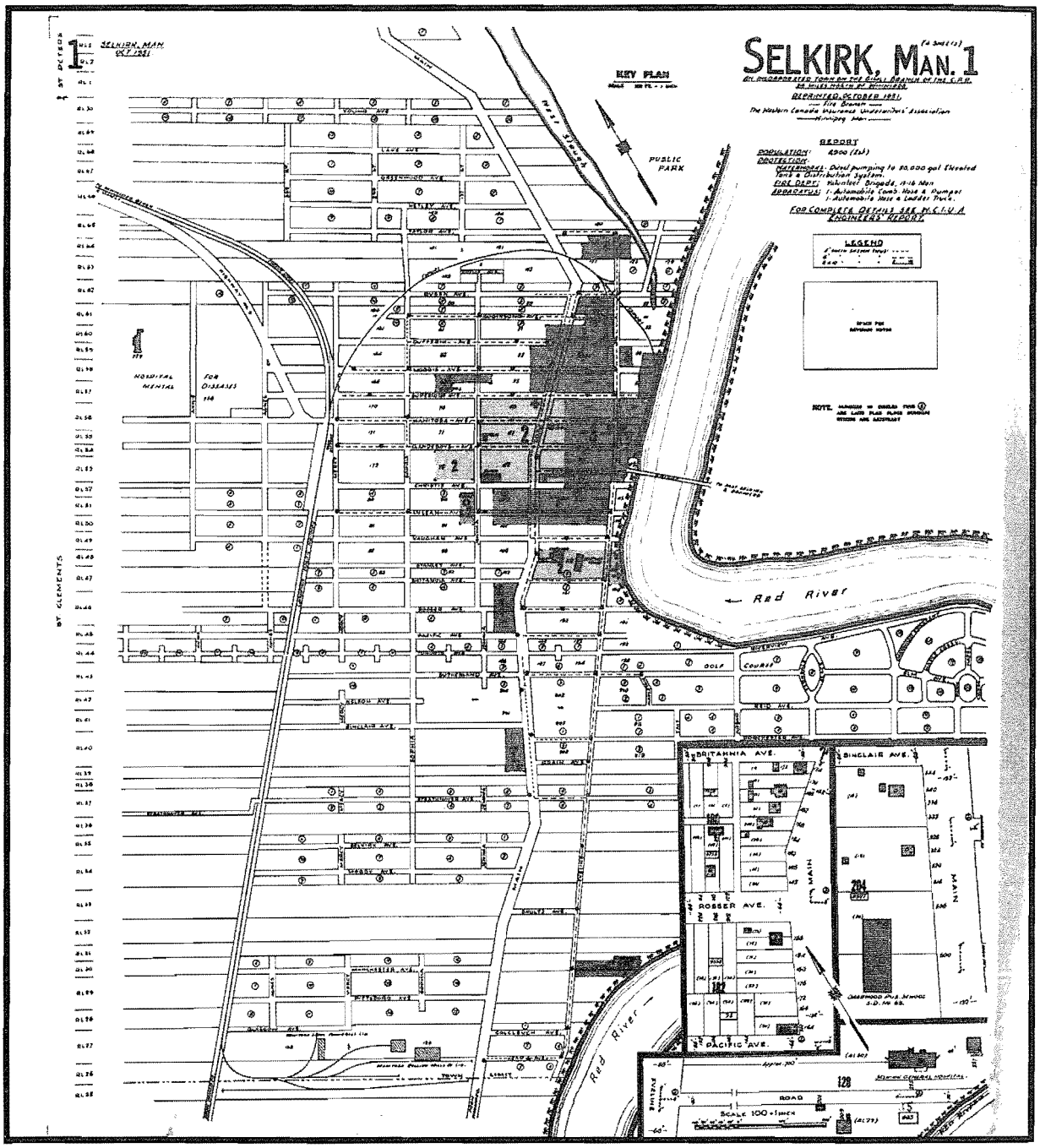
The Modern Town, 1947-1980

SINCE 1875 Selkirk had been struggling to achieve economic growth, to fortify its sense of community, and to bestow upon its citizens those amenities that blunted the sharp edge of material progress. These were the constants in the life of the town, the unchanging objectives that overcame every difference of opinion and outlasted every generation. The precise character of these civic goals altered as the community matured, but the underlying motivations of the town's leaders and the sentiments of the townspeople never varied. They sought only to build their community and to better their lives. This had been the case in years past, and it was just as true as Selkirk approached its first century as a community.

Money was the lifeblood of the community. When it was in good supply, as it had been around the turn of the century, the town surged forward, everyone pulling together, everyone benefitting; when it was lacking, as it had been after the Great War, the community spirit flagged and progress stalled. Experience taught these lessons and it was not surprising that, after the catastrophic economic reverse of the depression years, the townspeople attempted to reap the benefits of the unexpected post-war boom.

One of their main aims was the capture of local farm trade, an accomplishment that had always eluded their forebears. Farming in the Selkirk district had changed greatly in recent years. Between 1941 and 1951 the number of tractors had doubled, as had the number of trucks, and the value of machinery on a typical farm had risen an astonishing 600 per cent.[1] The farms were growing larger as well, and gained, on average, about two quarter sections between 1941 and 1956.[2] The farming community was now mechanized and mobile, and Selkirk gained from both these developments.

In 1949 alone, local businessmen invested $150,000 in the construction of farm implement dealerships.[3] The volume of grain being trucked to the new Selkirk Co-operative Elevator rose steadily from 297,285 bushels in its first year of operation to more than 597,000 bushels by 1951-2.[4] Two years later the farmers' co-operative found it necessary to build an annex which more than tripled the elevator's storage capacity, despite the recent flooding of farmland in the district. The Agricultural Fair, which had languished for years, was revitalized and by 1954 its backers could boast the largest dairy cattle exhibition in the entire west and the participation of more than 400 4-H clubs. Even the



The Selkirk townsite in 1951 PUBLIC ARCHIVES CANADA, NATIONAL MAP COLLECTION

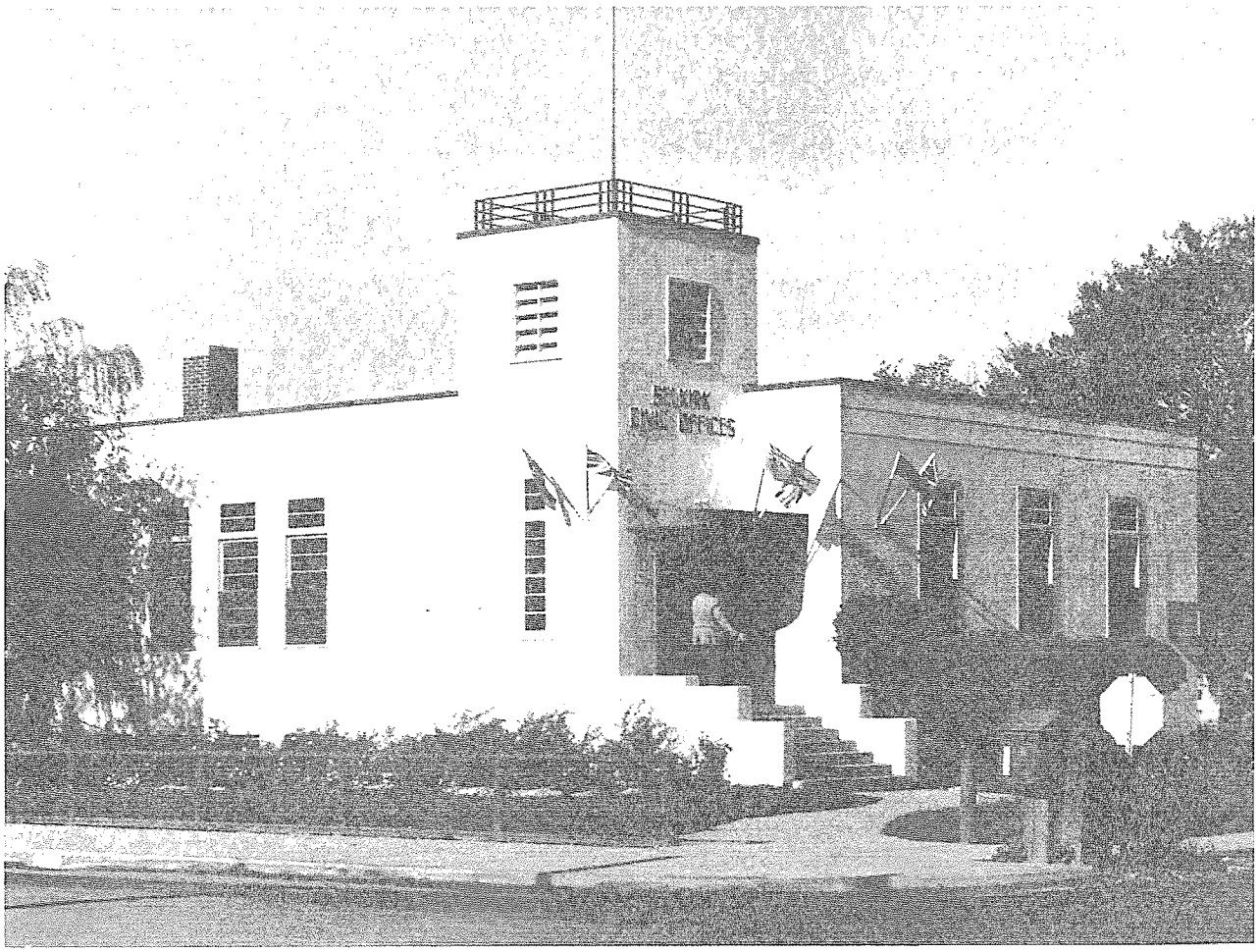
local newspaper reflected the changing nature of trade in the town, as it modified its name to Selkirk *Enterprise and Lake Winnipeg Argus*, and weekly columns from rural correspondents appeared in unprecedented numbers to inform readers of the latest happenings in Gimli, Cloverdale, Clandeboye and other small settlements. Selkirk was finally becoming the farm service centre it had always hoped to be.

Not satisfied with the industries already situated in town, civic leaders embarked on yet another campaign to boost Selkirk as an industrial centre. Like their predecessors, they continually extolled Selkirk's abundant labour supply, its fine geographical setting, and its excellent transportation links with outside markets.[5] Their efforts were not, however, capped with immediate success. The only new industry to locate in town was a Coca-Cola beverage plant, which employed a mere 15 people. In the next year, 1951, the Manitoba Rolling Mills began a $1,000,000 expansion that created work for another 100 people, but this had little to do with local promotion. In fact, it was not until the spring of 1955, when the Dyson Pickle Company and E.R. Gardiner chose Selkirk as the site of a drying and screening plant for their silica sand operation on Black Island, that significant change took place in the manufacturing sector.

Yet the town did stride forward during the 1950s, mainly because of its growing population. In 1951 there were 6,218 people in Selkirk; a decade later the population was 8,576.[6] While slightly more than half of this increase was attributable to a climbing birthrate, the rest seems to have been due to the arrival of new residents who found work in existing industries that were expanding and in various service, retail and government jobs.[7] This rapid growth had a profound impact on the town. The construction business boomed as about 50 new houses were put up in each year between 1948 and 1956.[8] The value of building permits skyrocketed from $184,000 in 1948 to nearly $2,000,000 by 1959.[9] And, with more people earning more money than ever before, the value of retail trade and service outlet revenues shot up as well.[10] This was the sort of prosperity that had not been experienced for decades.

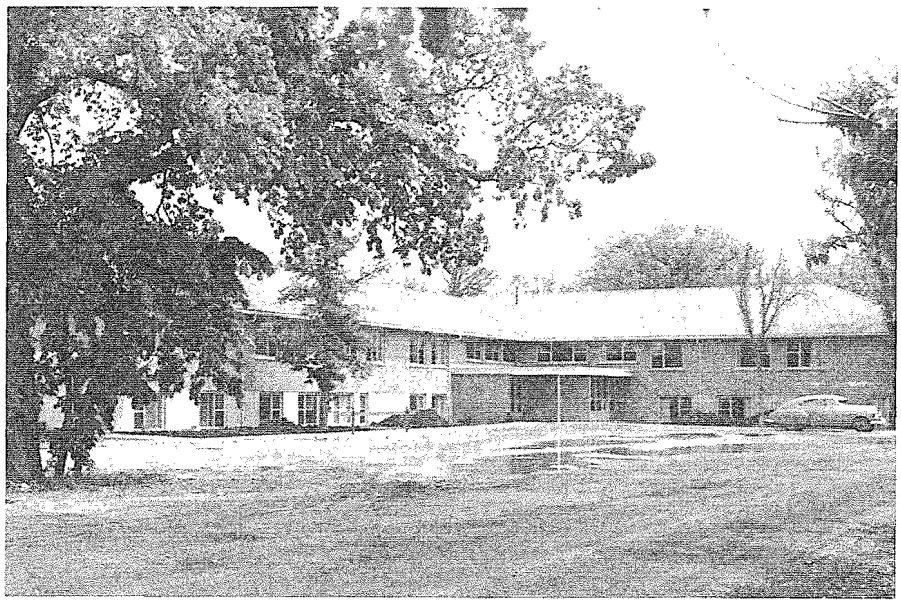
The rising population created new demands for better services and increased amenities, which the town council met through a rather lavish outlay of public funds. As soon as the war was over, the council launched an aggressive sewer, water and street paving programme. Between 1948 and 1951, $55,000 was spent on new sewer and water mains, and $65,000 on new streets.[11] Those residents whose homes were now located on serviced streets were compelled to install indoor plumbing and slowly the backyard biffy became a relic of the past. A new garbage collection system had been inaugurated in 1942, and this went far to ensure more attractive surroundings. Miles of cement sidewalks were poured as well. The few remaining remnants of the old town were either swept away completely or camouflaged beneath artificial brick facades and neon signs.

Health services in Selkirk underwent remarkable changes after the war. In 1948 a local diagnostic unit was set up and X-ray facilities were purchased for the Selkirk General Hospital. This vastly improved early detection of tuberculosis and saved Selkirk residents thousands of dollars that would otherwise have gone to clinics in the city. Rising costs were more of a burden than the town alone could bear, however, and in 1952 the Selkirk General became the centre of General Hospital District No. 31, serving the rural municipalities of St. Andrews and St. Clements as well. This redistribution of financing worked well, and soon the combined ratepayers agreed to build a new hospital with assistance from the federal and provincial governments. Over 5,000 people attended the official opening of the modern facility in 1955.



Selkirk Civic Offices, 1957

MANITOBA ARCHIVES

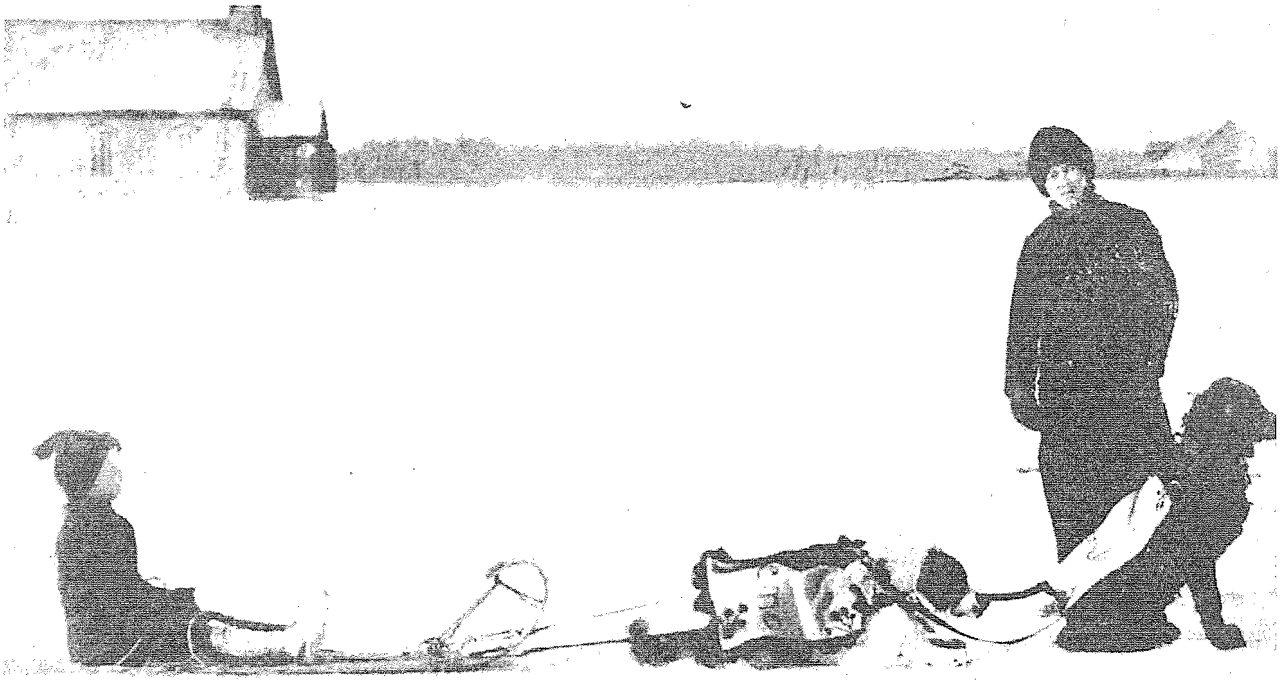


The new Selkirk General Hospital, built in the mid-1950s
UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA ARCHIVES

Of all the new demands on the town treasury after the war, none was more pressing than the need for improved educational institutions. Even before the baby boom started, attendance records were being broken as 1000 students crowded into Selkirk's four small schools. All had been constructed before 1920 and could no longer provide adequate instruction facilities. In 1949 the ratepayers approved funds for a ten-room building to be called Daerwood School, but just four years later all the schools were overcrowded again. The problem was particularly acute in the north ward. During the following year a four-room extension was built onto Devonshire School and the school board found it necessary to prohibit enrollment of non-resident students.[12] Still, it was impossible to accommodate all the students and the school board had to resort to staggered class hours to meet the demand.

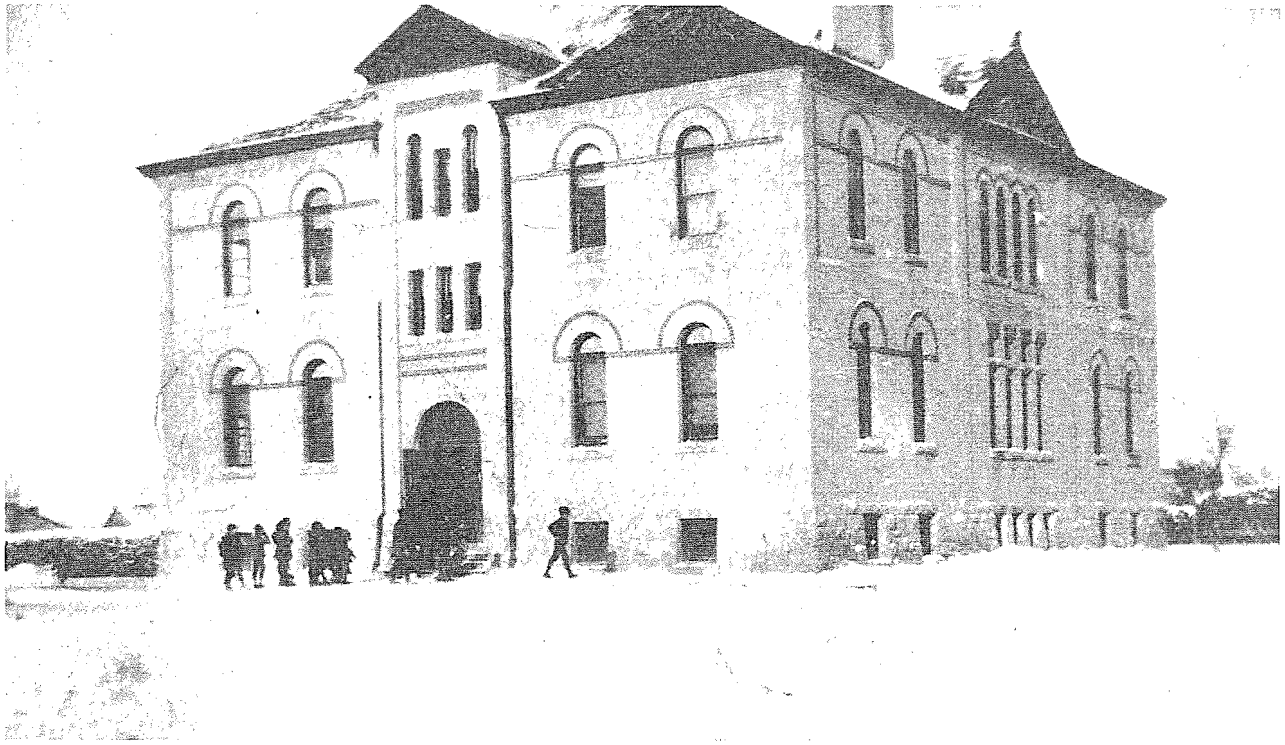
As school district consolidations began around 1959, and rural students were bussed into town, the school board had little choice but to build new facilities. The Robert Smith School went up in 1959 and in 1965 an addition was built onto the nine-year old Collegiate. In 1967 yet another elementary school was needed. While each facility marked a genuine advance in the quality of education offered in Selkirk, together they increased the tax burden to the point of strain.

The growing ranks of the young in Selkirk made it imperative that adequate recreational facilities be provided. The people of Selkirk were very conscious of the generally good behavior of their youth, and as late as 1950 were proudly proclaiming that their town had none of the young vandals and juvenile gangs which plagued Winnipeg. They attributed this to the abundance of sports committees and youth clubs, which they believed instilled the values of co-operation and responsibility in their teenagers.[13] Local service clubs had appointed a director of physical fitness for all school-age children, and a swimming club was organized to provide instruction and supervision at the West Slough until a pool could be built. When the campaign for a new rink started in 1948, its supporters extolled sport as second only to the church as an influence for good.[14]

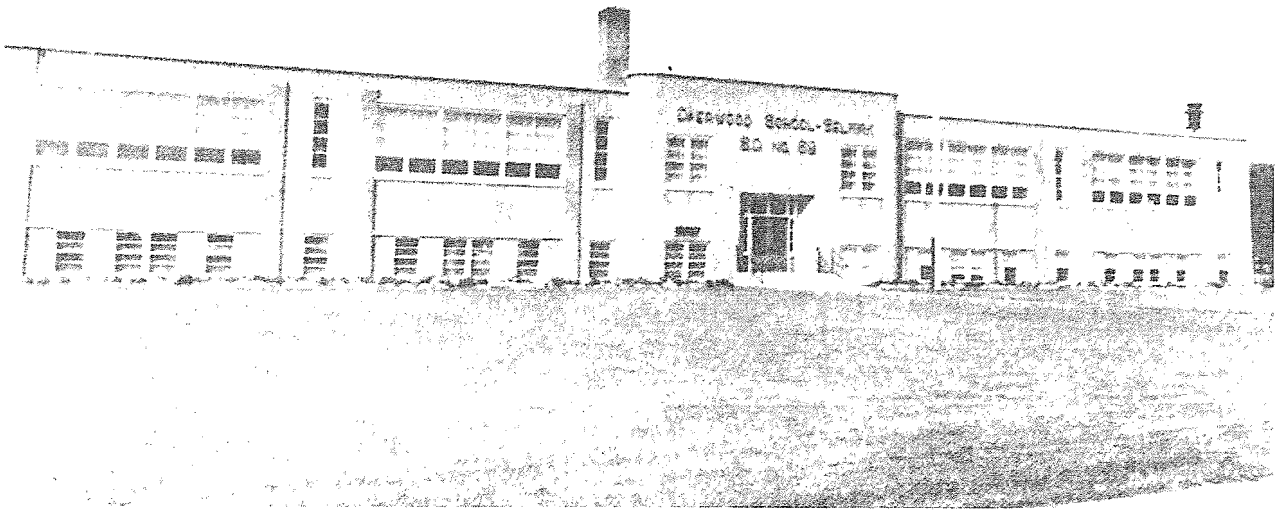


Mushing around Selkirk's first school, 1886 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

The Class of Selkirk School, c.1890 MANITOBA ARCHIVES



Central School, Selkirk, 1897 MANITOBA ARCHIVES



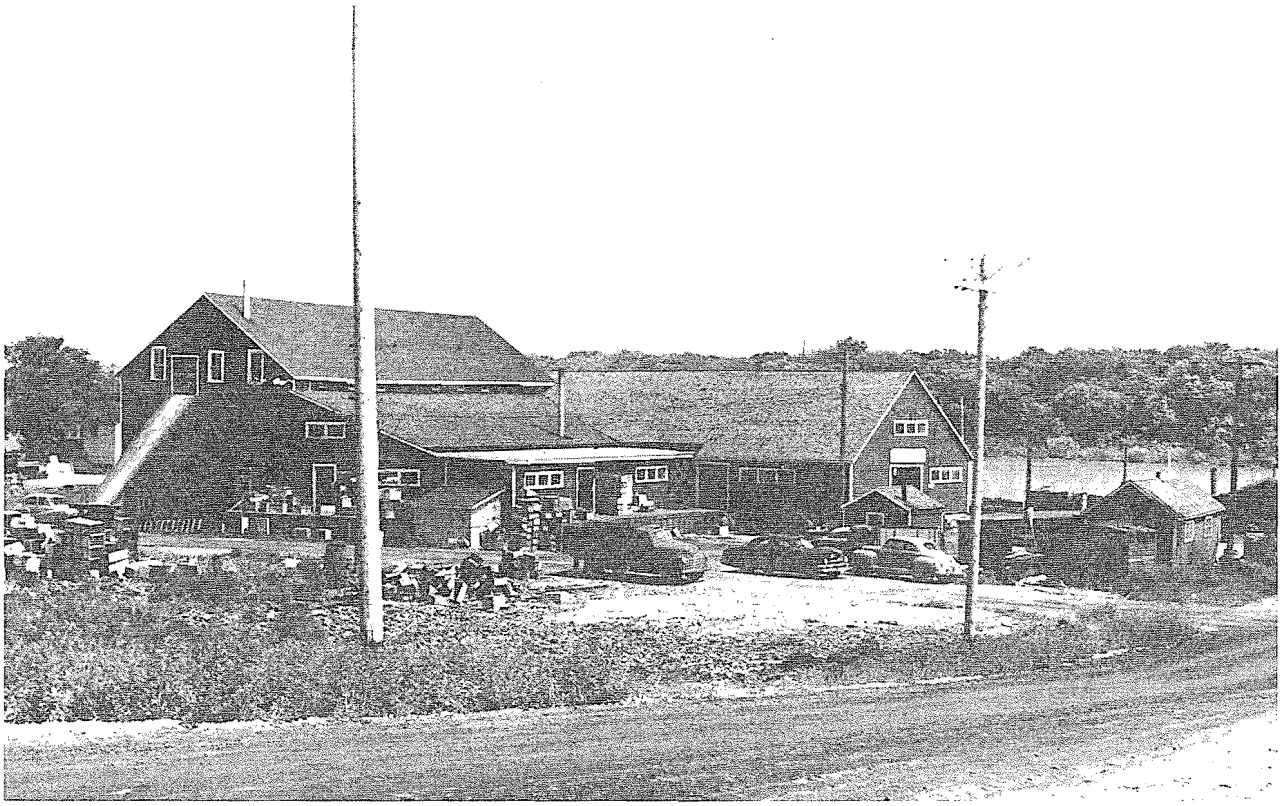
Daerwood Elementary School, 1960 MANITOBA ARCHIVES

Unfortunately, this widespread belief in sport as a builder of character did not prevent the rise of vandalism in town. By 1952 the *Enterprise*, which had just two years earlier declared Selkirk to be free of delinquency, was lamenting its prevalence. Break-ins and burglaries were most common, and many of the incidents were liquor-related. When this local problem received considerable attention from the Winnipeg press, it was seen as a blemish on the entire community.[15] The *Enterprise* appealed to the townspeople to become more involved with the youth, especially since the youth director was no longer able to handle the task himself. The problem did not abate, however, and by 1956 Selkirk had a juvenile crime rate that exceeded that in the worst district of Winnipeg.[16]

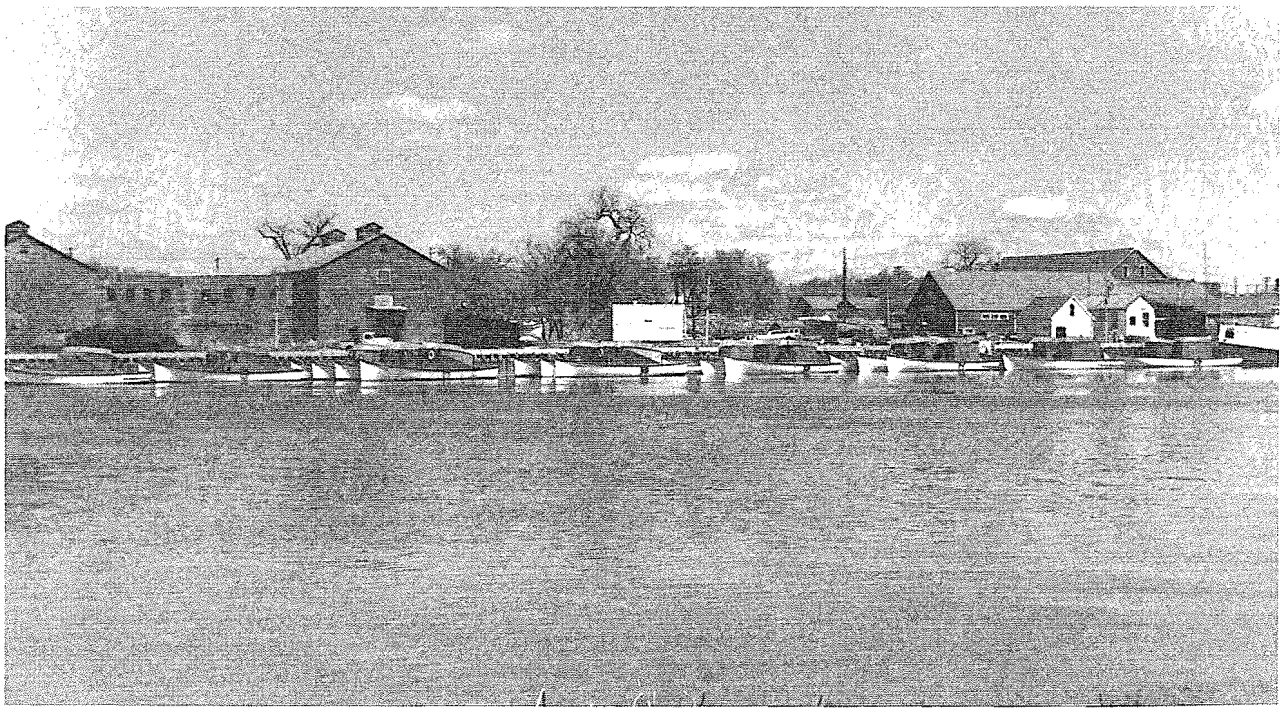
The concern that was expressed about this delinquency was quite appropriate, yet it tended to obscure the fact that most of the young people in Selkirk were not vandals. And, when local probation officers suggested that Selkirk lacked sufficient recreational facilities, they clearly failed to notice the high participation rate among youth in local sports. Selkirk was, in fact, extraordinarily proud of its record in sports, and justifiably so. In 1949, for example, the Junior B's hockey team carried off the Manitoba championship by defeating Shoal Lake 3 to 2 in a game that attracted 1,300 fans. This team of local high school students, which failed during its first season to win a single game, could easily claim the support of the entire community. These youngsters took the Baldy Northcott Trophy again in 1950, and then once more in 1956, while their older counterparts, the Flyers, won the Intermediate "C" hockey championship of Manitoba in 1952 and 1953. Some local players even went on to greater glory in the professional leagues. In 1951 Paul Meger started his career with the Monteal Canadiens, having spent several years in the American Hockey League with the Buffalo Bisons. Not since Paul Goodman tended net for the Chicago Black Hawks in 1939 did the townspeople have a National League pro to applaud. Then, during the 1954-5 season, Jimmy Skinner, a Selkirk native whose father had owned the Alexandra Rink, became coach of the Detroit Red Wings. As the *Enterprise* noted, Skinner had "permanently stamped the name of Selkirk in the annals of professional hockey."[17]

Those who wished to teach Selkirk's youth the virtues of co-operation, hard work and benevolence received a remarkable, if tragic, opportunity to do in the spring of 1950. The Red River spilled over its banks to cause the worst flood within living memory. And while there were those who pointed to the inundation of Winnipeg with a certain smugness from their high ground at Selkirk, the majority of the townspeople unhesitatingly pitched in to assist their neighbours. Hundreds of local workers helped to build dikes around the city; shift workers from the mill and the foundry spent their off-hours sandbagging; fishermen and dock workers, who could not pursue their work because of high water levels, assisted in any way possible. The town council sought and received the hearty co-operation of the townspeople in providing temporary accommodations for homeless families, food for the dike workers, and clothing for the destitute. Even when the flood waters had receded, the local outpouring of benevolence continued. A relief fund was established, with most Selkirk workers contributing a day's wages. "We have always been proud to be part of community life in Selkirk," the local editor said, "today we are just a mite more proud."[18]

It was not until the late 1950s that the first wrinkles appeared in the usually smooth complexion of civic affairs. No single event can be pointed to as the cause of the discontent welling up in the community. On the town council, there was dissatisfaction expressed about issues ranging from the location of public buildings to inequitable taxation to the general direction of town growth. Among



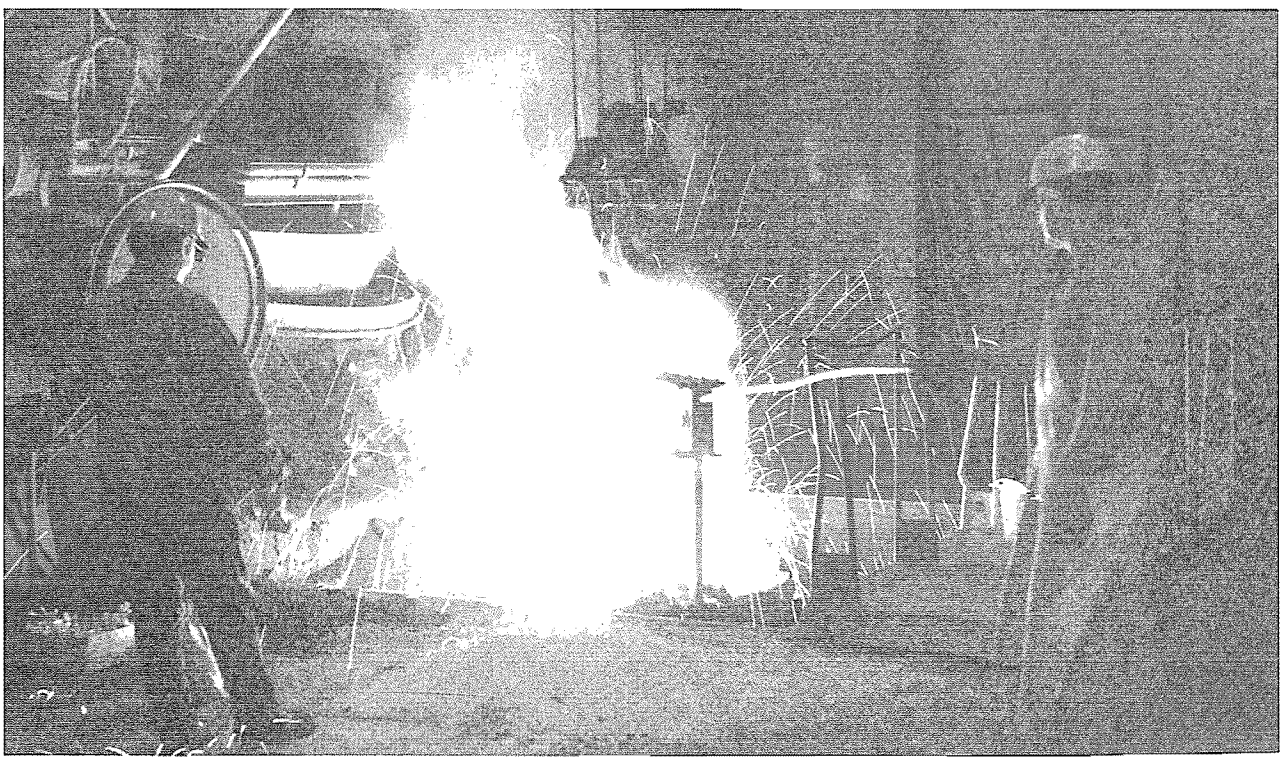
Booth Fisheries, 1957 MANITOBA ARCHIVES



A view of the Selkirk docks, c.1960 UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA ARCHIVES

the industrial workers, complaints were heard about current wage levels and in 1957 a strike at the mill was narrowly averted. As the new thermal generating plant took shape in East Selkirk, a dispute arose about the employment of non-union workers and 400 union men walked off the job. While the newspaper berated residents for spending too much money in Winnipeg, local construction firms retorted that the town council might set a better example by awarding contracts to them instead of contractors from the city. Juvenile delinquency was still rampant, making it necessary to enforce a 10 p.m. curfew bylaw more strictly. Ratepayers were smarting from increased taxes due to new school construction. And when donations to the Red Cross blood clinic began to dwindle in 1958, the Society took full advantage of the traditional north-south rivalry in town and divided Selkirk into competing sections.

The tension only grew worse as 1960 ushered in an economic downturn. For the first time since the war more people were leaving town than were moving in.[19] The constantly rising costs of street paving, sewer construction, hospital maintenance and educational facilities obliged the town council to seek provincial assistance.[20] But perhaps the most serious blow to civic solidarity came as fierce competition in the steel industry led to massive lay-offs at the mill in 1960. In May the company cut its payroll by 300 workers, only to precipitate a major labour crisis. Negotiations between the United Steelworkers of America (Local 5442) and the Manitoba Rolling Mills stalled completely. When the firm flatly rejected the union's position, the steelworkers voted to strike if no settlement was reached by August. August brought no change, aside from a further layoff of 120 men, and the remaining workers



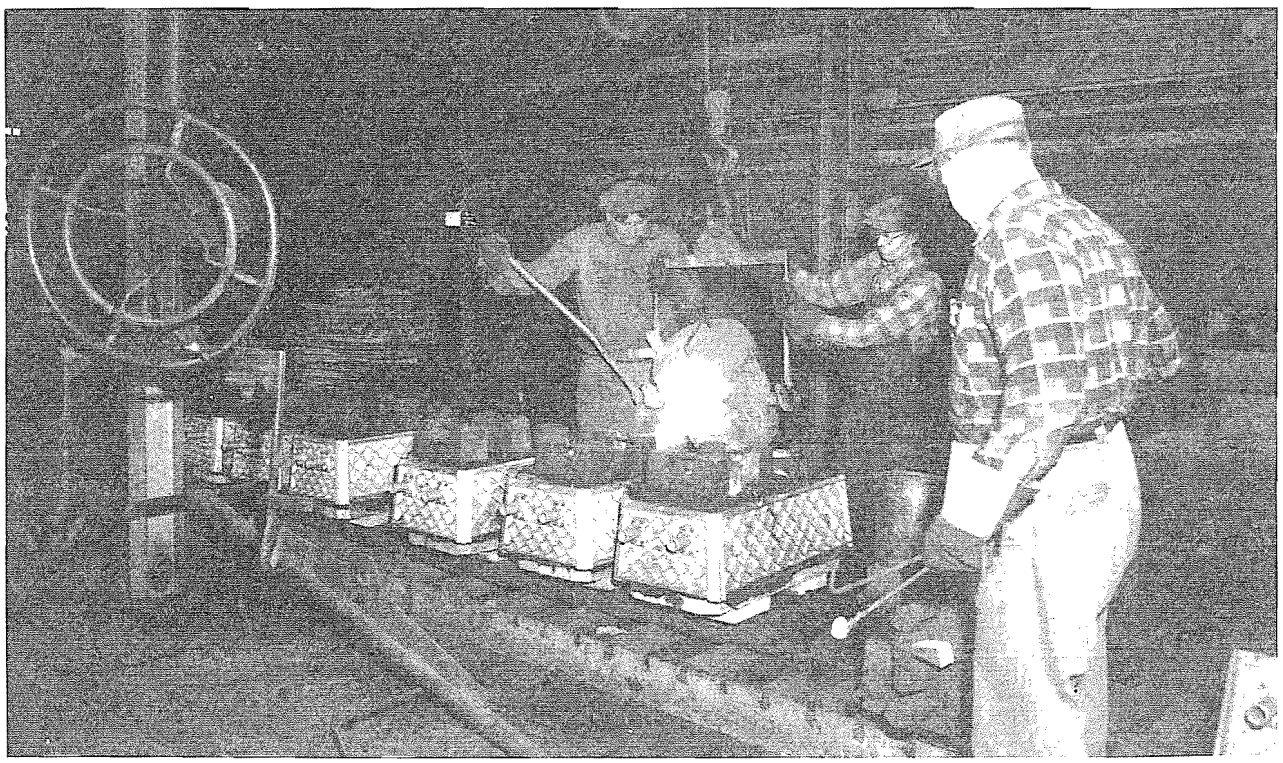
Working in the Manitoba Rolling Mills, 1964 UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA ARCHIVES

walked out. During the ensuing 92-day strike, feelings ran high in town as this disruption at Selkirk's largest place of employment began to hurt local businesses. Not until 1961, when most of the men were rehired to provide steel for the Manitoba Power Commission's hydro-electrical project at Grand Rapids, did the conflict abate.

The strike of 1960 pointed not only to the difficulty of labour-management relations, but to the fragility of Selkirk's industrial base. As a result, town planning schemes that had languished during the 1950s were revived. Prospects brightened further in 1962 when a group of West German industrialists purchased a large tract of land in town for development as an industrial park. Yet little came of this. Even a multi-million dollar modernization of the Rolling Mills between 1964 and 1966 created few new jobs because of its automated nature.

If there was a lesson in the failure of this promotional campaign, it was one that past generations of Selkirk leaders also learned the hard way. Townsite promotion was an intensely political affair. To be successful in the increasingly competitive sphere of industrial boosterism, a town needed much more than an abundant labour pool, or good transportation connections, or a serviced industrial park. It needed, above all else, the sympathy and active support of those in the larger political arena. Only with their co-operation was it possible to direct government funding assistance, which was critical if large manufacturers were to be wooed and won, to a specific town.

In 1967 Selkirk received the political support it required. The federal government implemented a new program, called the Fund for Rural Economic Development (FRED), to boost the economic fortunes of relatively



Casting at the steel foundry in the 1960s UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA ARCHIVES

undeveloped rural regions and chose the Interlake as one of the first areas for development. Selkirk, as the acknowledged capital of the Interlake, was marked for special assistance. As the formal agreement between Ottawa and the Manitoba government noted

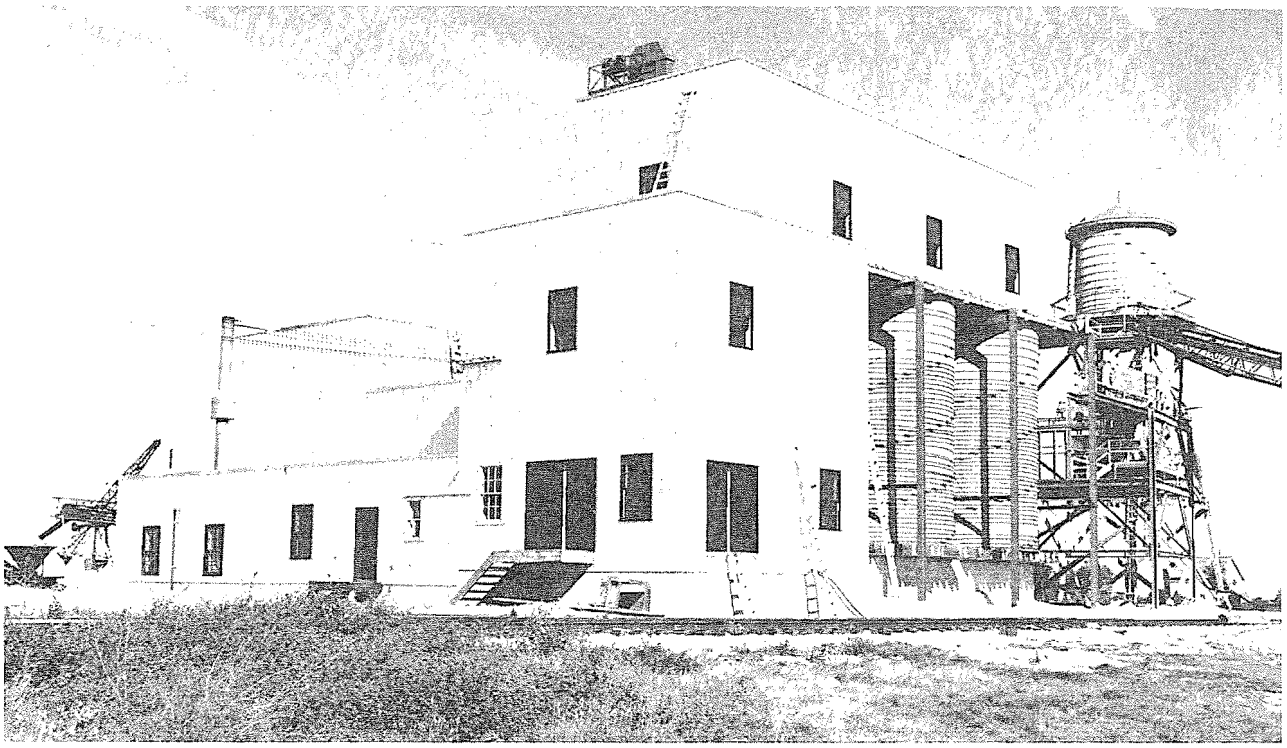
> Selkirk...provides excellent opportunities for industrial expansion. It has a highly-skilled labour force and all utilities, including natural gas; it is close to recreation areas and to Winnipeg, has good business services and progressive civic and community leaders. It is ideally located to serve as a major centre for expanded fish processing based on the production potential of the [Interlake] Area, and there is already a nucleus of industrial and manufacturing activity which could serve as a base for further growth. In particular, there is potential for further development of the primary iron and steel industry, and development of farm equipment and related steel products industries based on the existing steel industry. The refined silica sand at Selkirk could provide the basis for a glass container plant, and labour surveys indicate the feasibility of a garment plant operation.[21]

Under the FRED agreement, which was to last a full decade, Selkirk was considered "an urban, industrial centre that could provide a choice to people who wanted to live in the Interlake. Selkirk also acted as a transition point for people making the jump from a rural community to the city."[22]

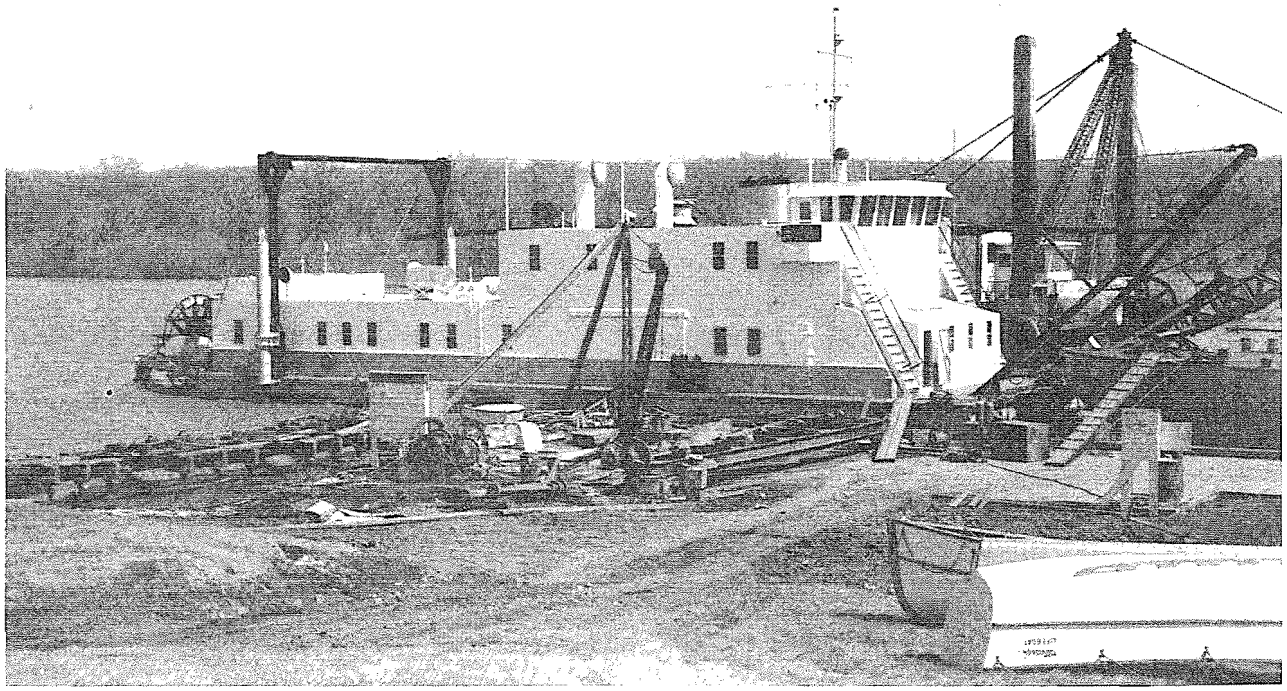
This artificially-induced boom was backed by an $85 million federal-provincial contract. About one-third was to be used to develop land, water and transportation resources, another third would be spent on adult training and the remaining third would assist in the development of educational facilities.[23] Its benefits were quickly realized. More than eight million dollars were allocated for educational purposes, according to the list of priorities established by Interlake residents during negotiation of the FRED agreement. By March of 1975, these funds had created 610 new classrooms throughout the Interlake, including the Lord Selkirk Comprehensive High School at Selkirk. The industrial training programme was handled through a Manpower training facility in town, where as many as 50 trainees learned new skills at once.

It was the fully-serviced industrial park at Selkirk, however, that truly embodied the aspirations of the townspeople. The agreement provided an initial grant of $400,000 for the development of the park in the northwest part of town, to be matched by an equal grant in 1976.[24] While the town was ultimately responsible for development of the facility, government officials actively promoted it to prospective manufacturers. It did not take long for industrial growth to begin. In August, 1967, Consolidated Plastics announced it would locate a plant employing 30 people in the park. Electro-Knit, a Montreal-based textile firm, built a two million dollar fabric manufacturing plant in the next year. Then Futronics, a company that produced sophisticated electronics circuitry, started its operation. In 1969 Union Carbide and Mandak Metal Processors moved in. When Noco Drugs opened its facility in 1969, Selkirk gained new status as a small pharmaceutical manufacturing centre. Complementing all these heady developments was the provincial government's decision to assist with the construction of 100 new housing units in town in 1970, which was followed two years later by the important selection of Selkirk as the site of a new Manitoba Liquor Control Commission outlet, a mail order office of the Manitoba Lotteries Commission, and the Lake Winnipeg Regional Office of Northern Affairs.

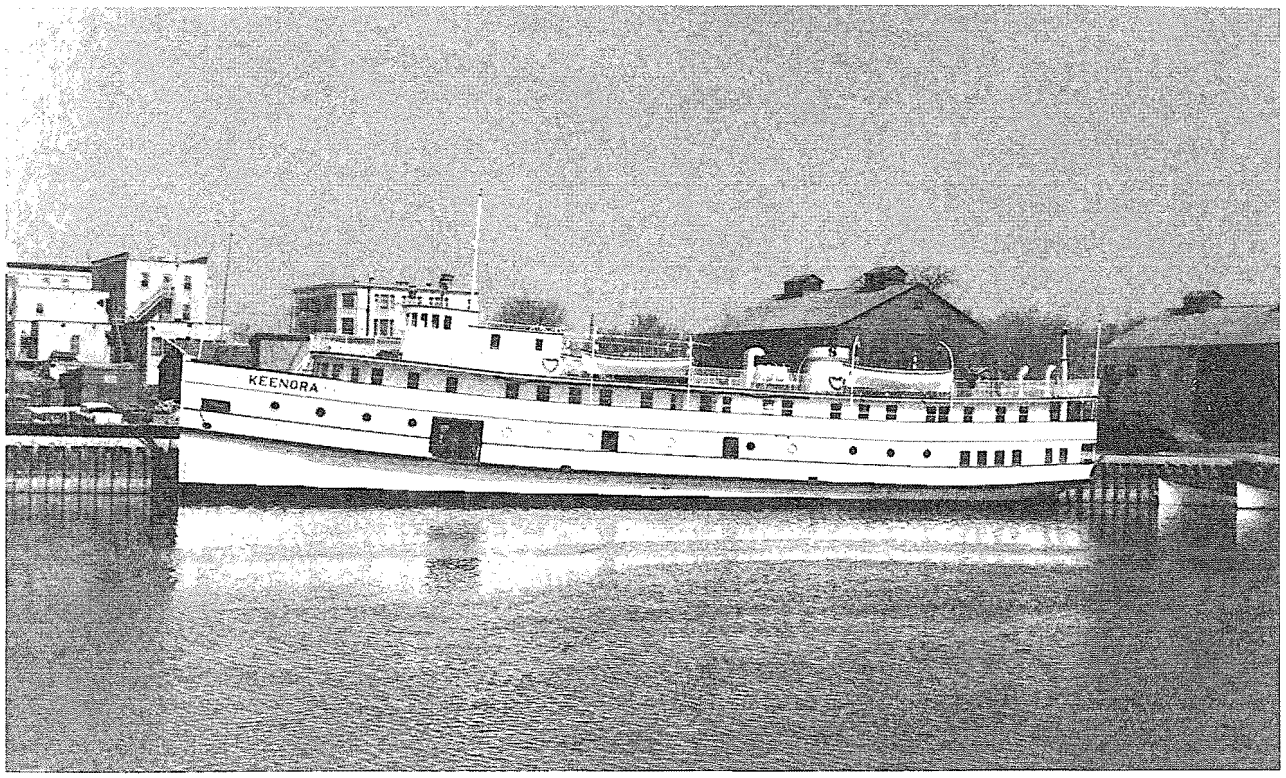
Spurred on by such rapid expansion, the town councillors embarked on several ambitious development projects of their own. Chief among these were the hiring of a national public relations firm to promote the industrial park and the creation of a comprehensive land-use plan to regulate future growth. Included in this study were plans for a huge



Silica Sand screening plant, Selkirk c.1956 MANITOBA ARCHIVES



One of the many dredges built at the Selkirk boatyards, 1965 UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA ARCHIVES

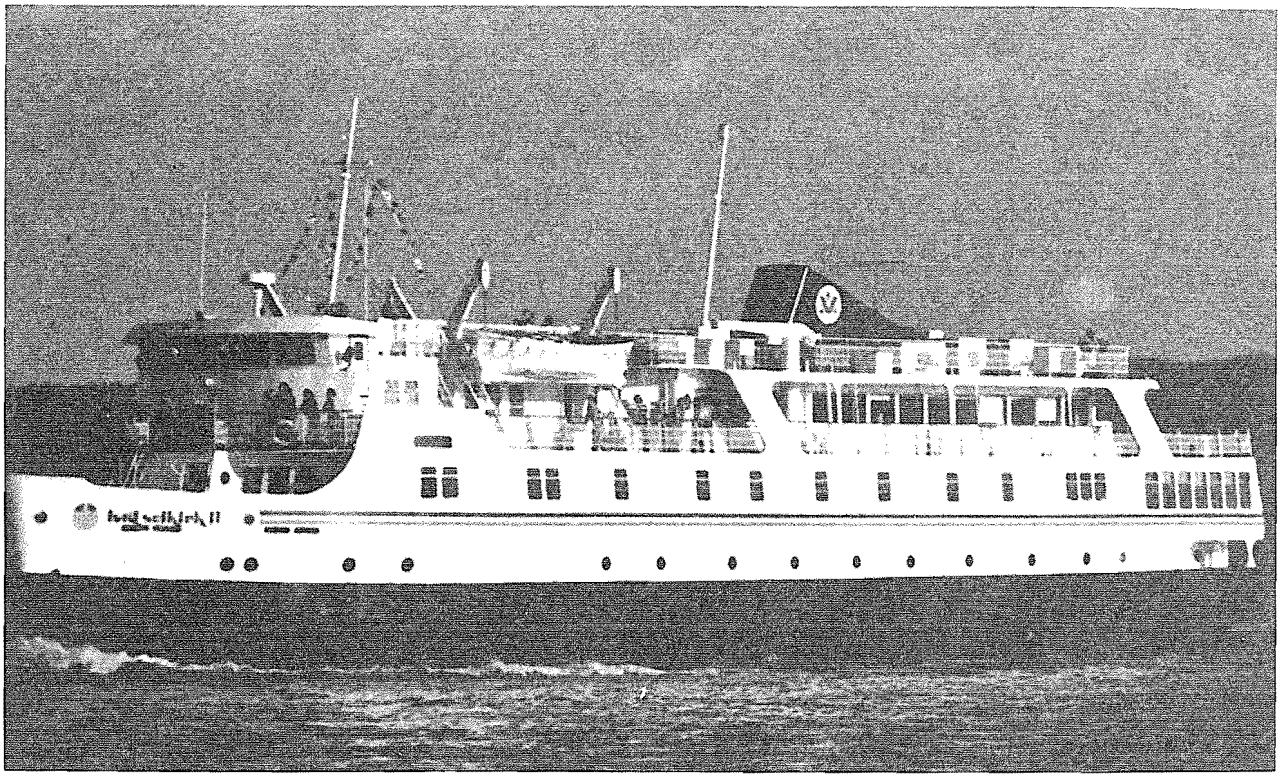


The S.S. Keenora, *which operated on Lake Winnipeg for half a century beginning in the early 1920s*
UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA ARCHIVES

new residential district west of the mental hospital, a second industrial park and an area zoned for institutional structures.[25] Yet as these grandiose plans matured, it became clear that the townspeople were not of one mind about the future of Selkirk. Citizens' groups protested the proposed location of the industrial sites, claiming that property values would decline precipitously. When a major construction company proposed a low-cost housing project in the area east of Eveline Street, residents attempted to block the development on the grounds that it would ruin the character of this traditionally prestigious neighbourhood. Efforts to introduce parallel parking in the business district met with concerted opposition from local merchants who feared a loss of business. It soon became obvious that the townspeople would accept progress only to the extent that it did not threaten to disrupt the lifestyle they had come to know and love.

Some of the townspeople, must have looked upon the subsequent decline in Selkirk's fortunes with relief. As early as 1970 there were intimations that all was not well. The central change was that the federal and provincial governments jointly revoked the town's special status under the FRED agreement.[26] In that same year Selkirk lost a proposed Fresh Water Fish Marketing Corporation office to Transcona. To compensate for this multi-million dollar loss, the federal government agreed not to phase out the Selkirk Fish Plant, but in 1973 it burned to the ground. Then the C.I.L. plant across the river started to close down its operation. Balancing these misfortunes was the opening of a two million dollar laundry facility to service the mental hospital and Winnipeg's municipal hospitals.

The degree to which a belief in progress and a belief in the *status quo* co-existed in Selkirk



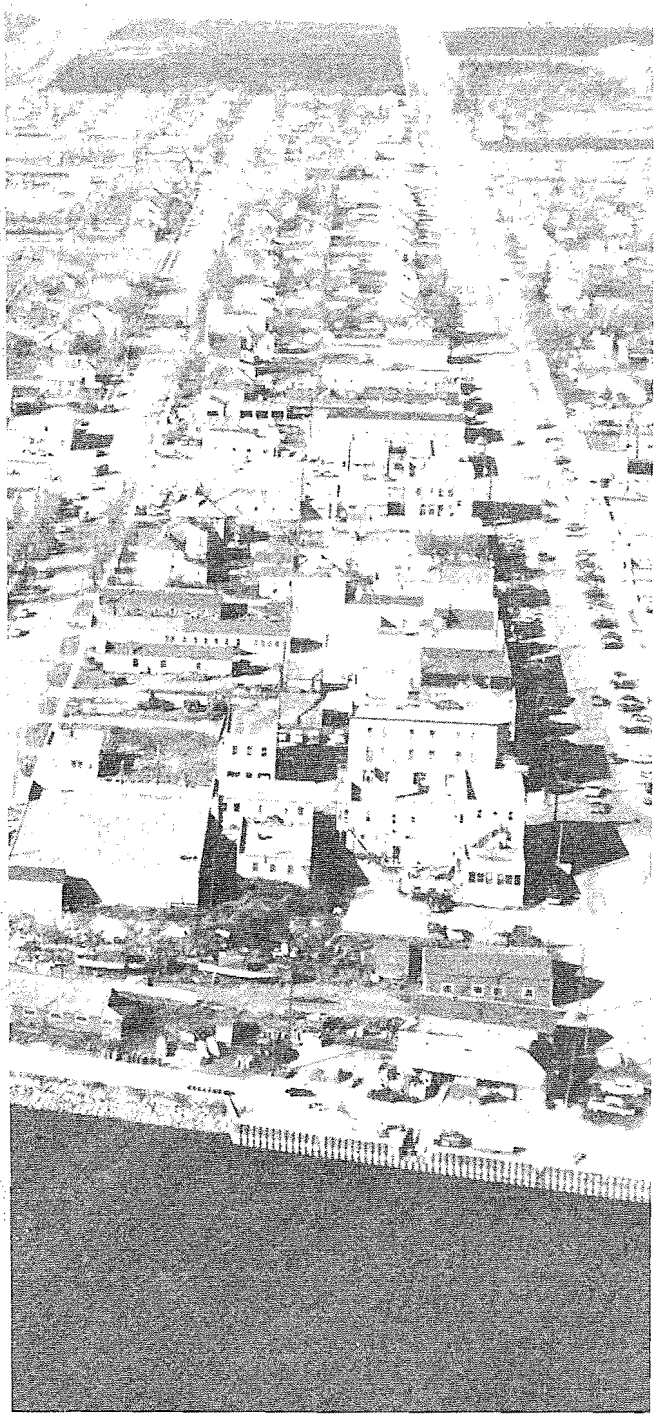
M.S. Lord Selkirk II, *successor to the great excursion boats of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in 1976*
WESTERN CANADA PICTORIAL INDEX

can best be seen in the 1977 debate over the federal prison issue.[27] With many factories closing their doors or at least reducing their staffs, many local people were gratified to hear that the federal government had offered to locate a new maximum security prison near town. Such a facility would create considerable employment, either directly or in service industries. Yet a very vocal citizens' group saw the project as a serious threat to the quality of life in Selkirk. Petitions and counter-petitions were circulated and emotions ran so high that the town council finally decided to hold a public referendum on the issue. When the vote was in, more than two to one had cast their ballots in favour of the prison, believing that the employment and taxation possibilities were too substantial to refuse. With this hurdle cleared, the federal government announced its intention to build at Selkirk. But in 1978, much to the relief of the protesters, the federal government introduced a drastic restraint programme that aborted the entire scheme.

Like James Colcleugh and his cohorts in 1879, these modern Selkirk residents were now fully acquainted with the fickleness of politicians. Yet they knew, as did their forebears, that the recession would lift and the future would bring ample opportunities for new growth in Selkirk.

Aerial View of Selkirk, 1964

MANITOBA ARCHIVES



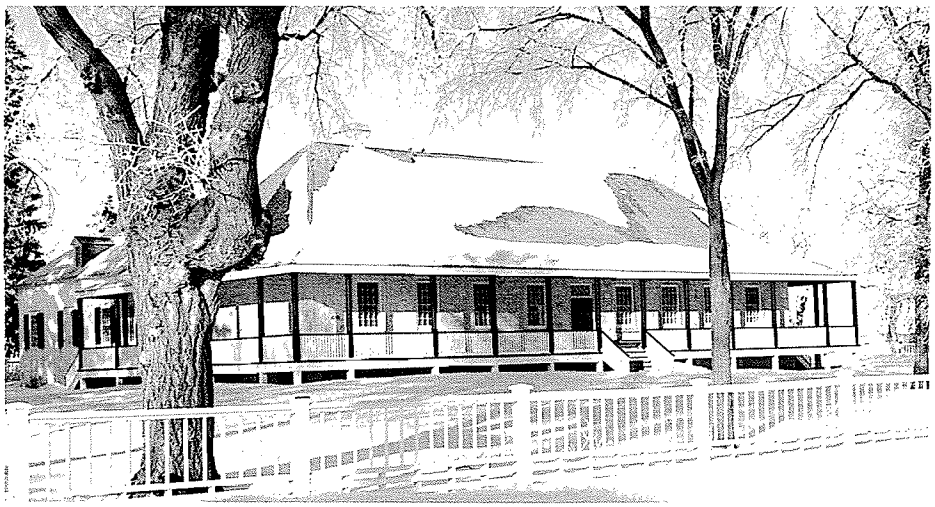
Selkirk Today

ROBERT WATSON PHOTOGRAPHY

The following color section depicts Selkirk today as viewed by residents and visitors alike.
The pictures are but a few of:

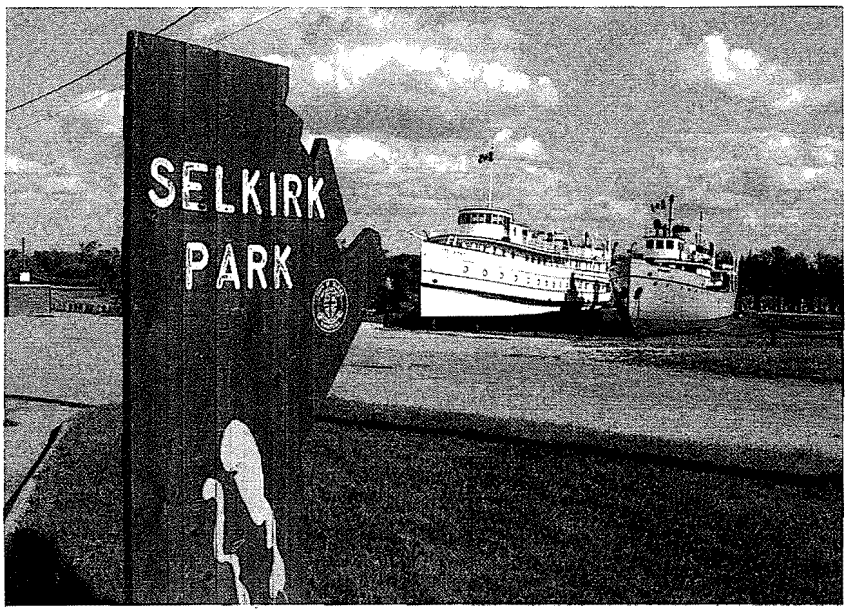
1) the local scenic nature views
2) the people, faces and activities of the annual fair and rodeo
3) various familair landmarks
4) a sprinkling of buildings, homes, industries, institutions and churches of Selkirk today.

GORD HENRIKSON



GORD HENRIKSON

R. S. OLIVER



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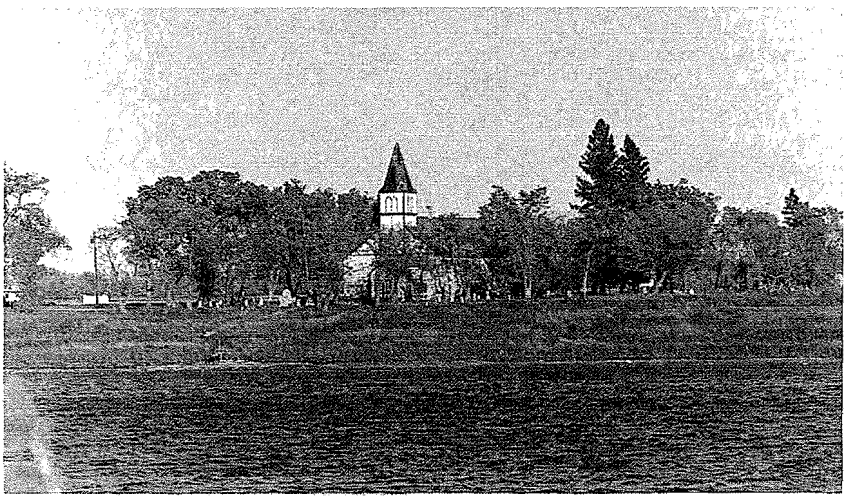

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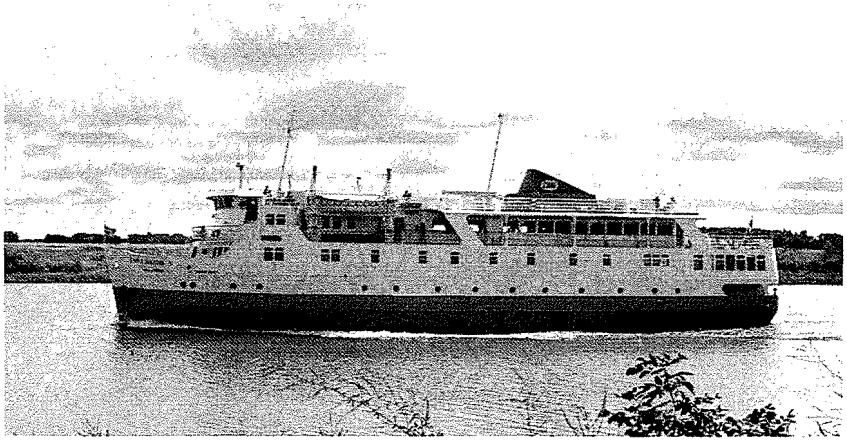
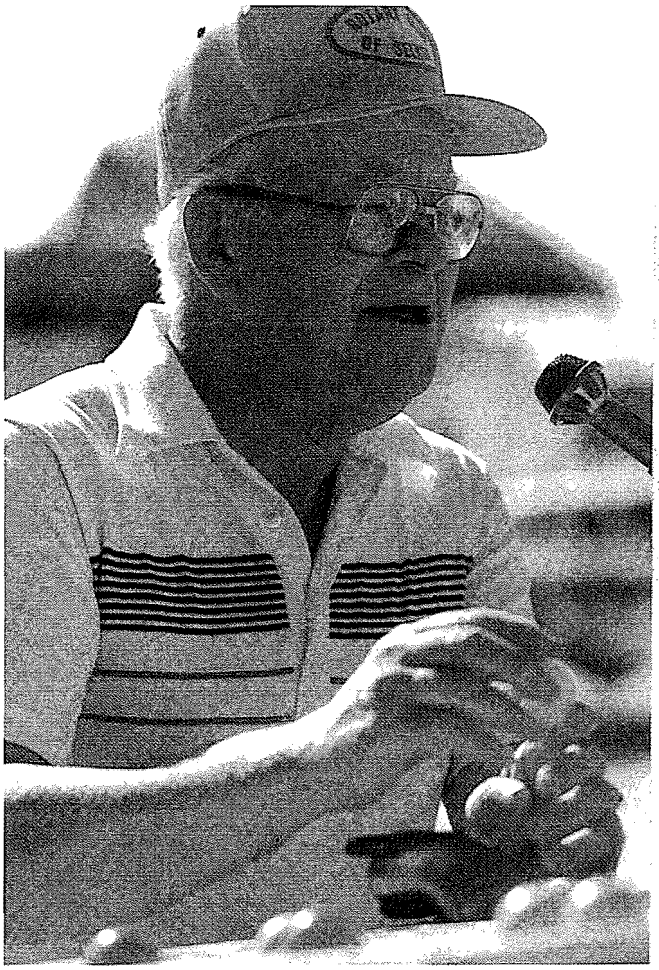


TED PURVIS

PRAIRIE SIGHT & SOUND

PRAIRIE SIGHT & SOUND



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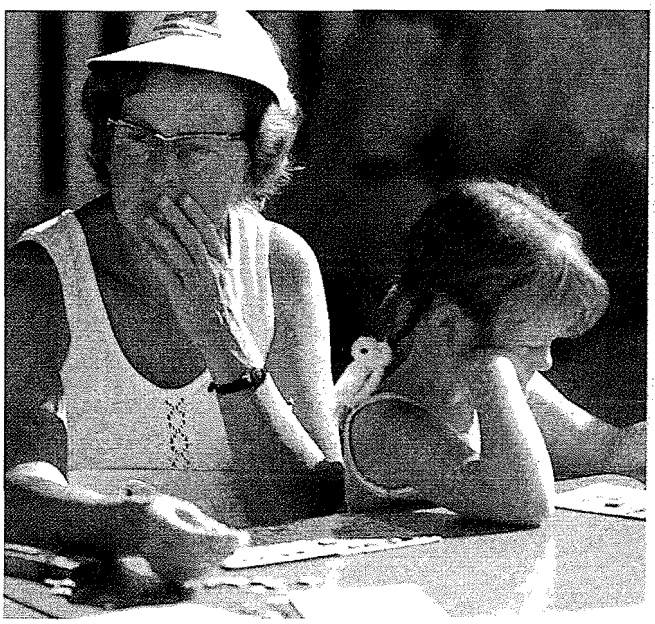

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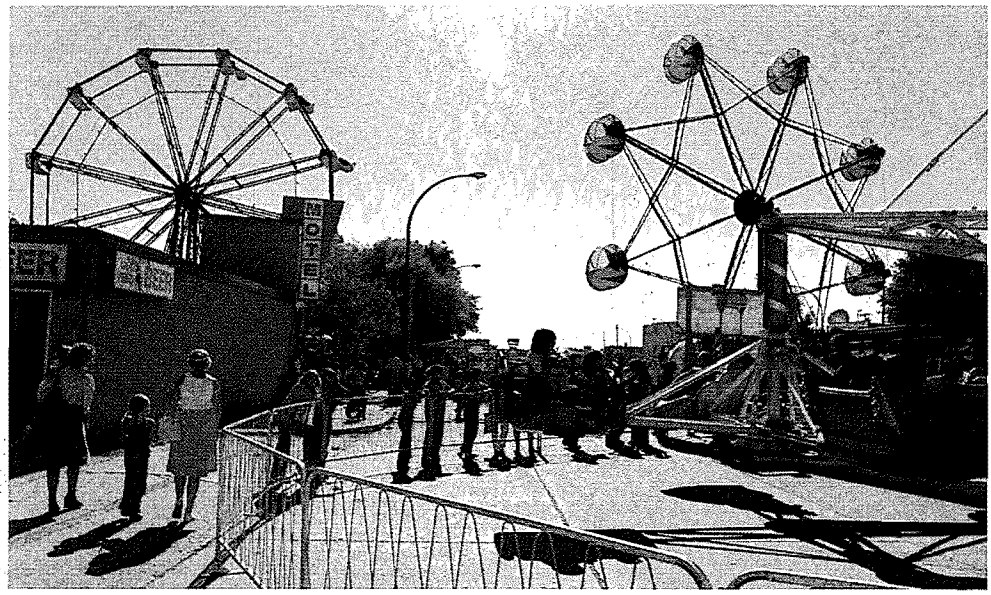

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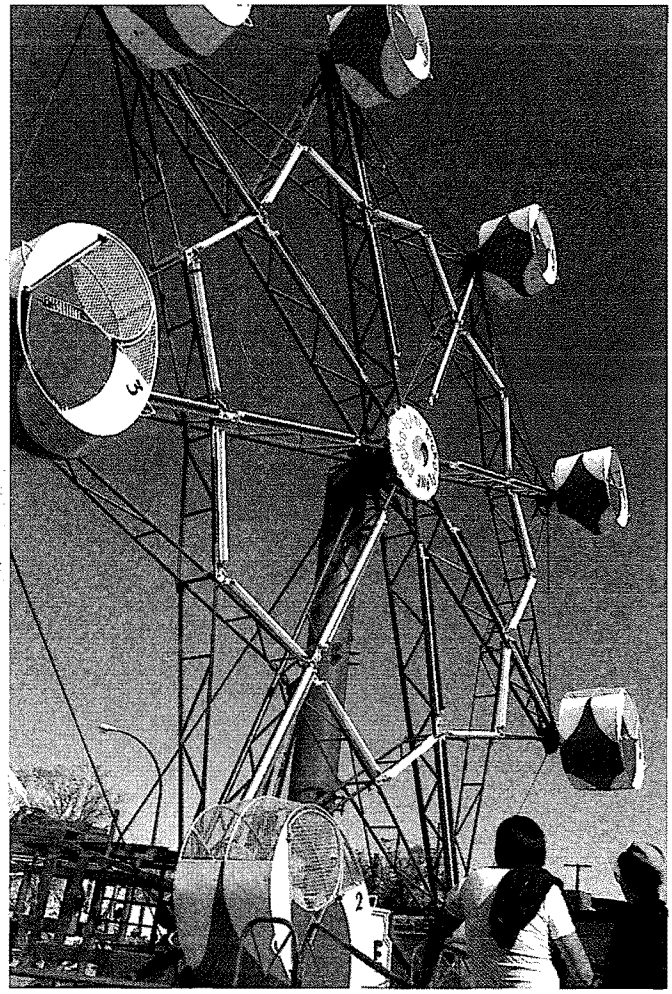

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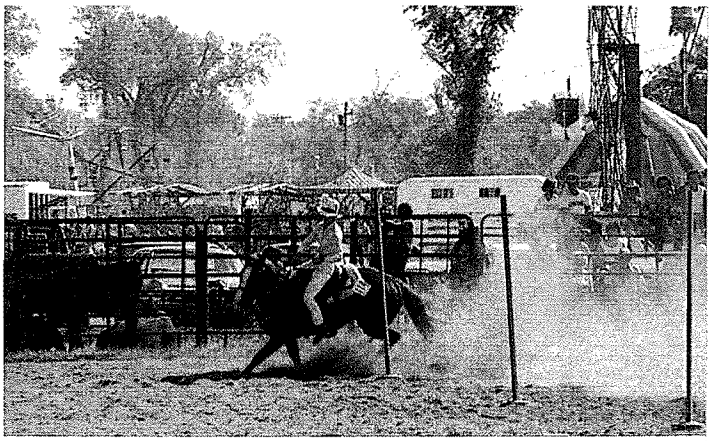

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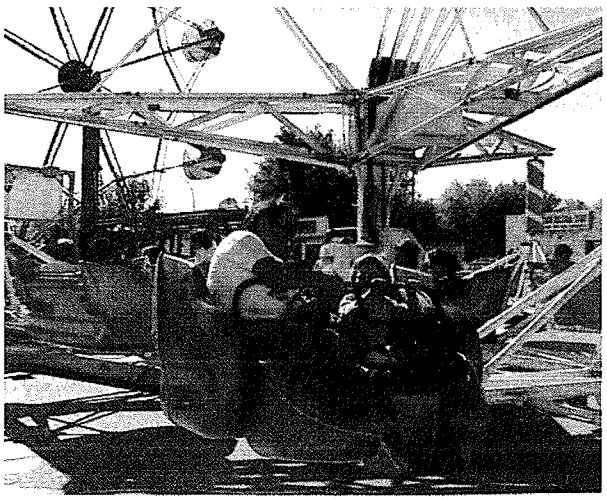

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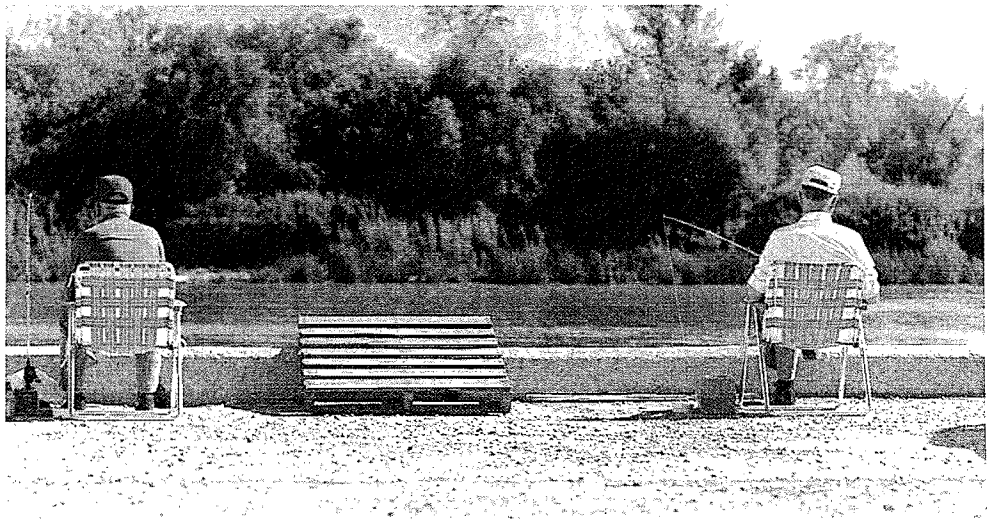

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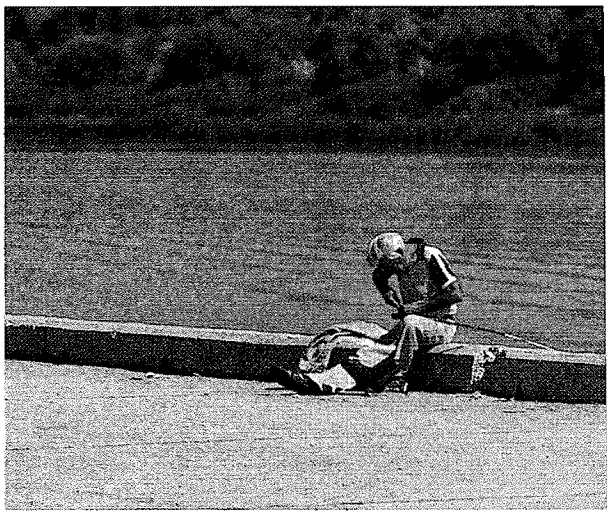

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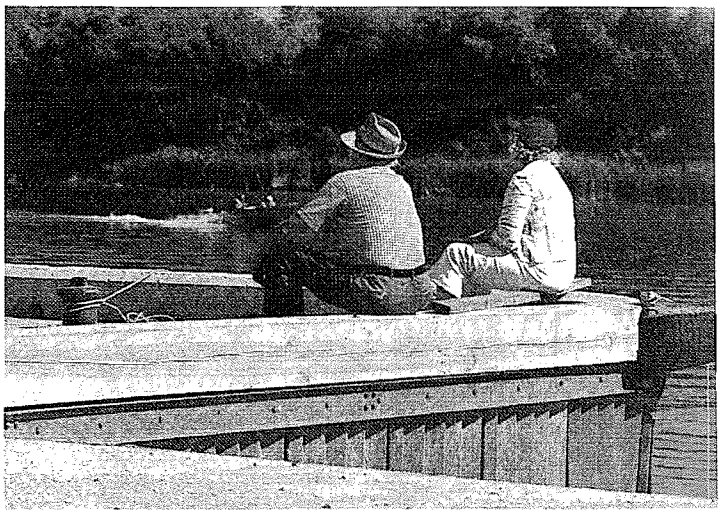

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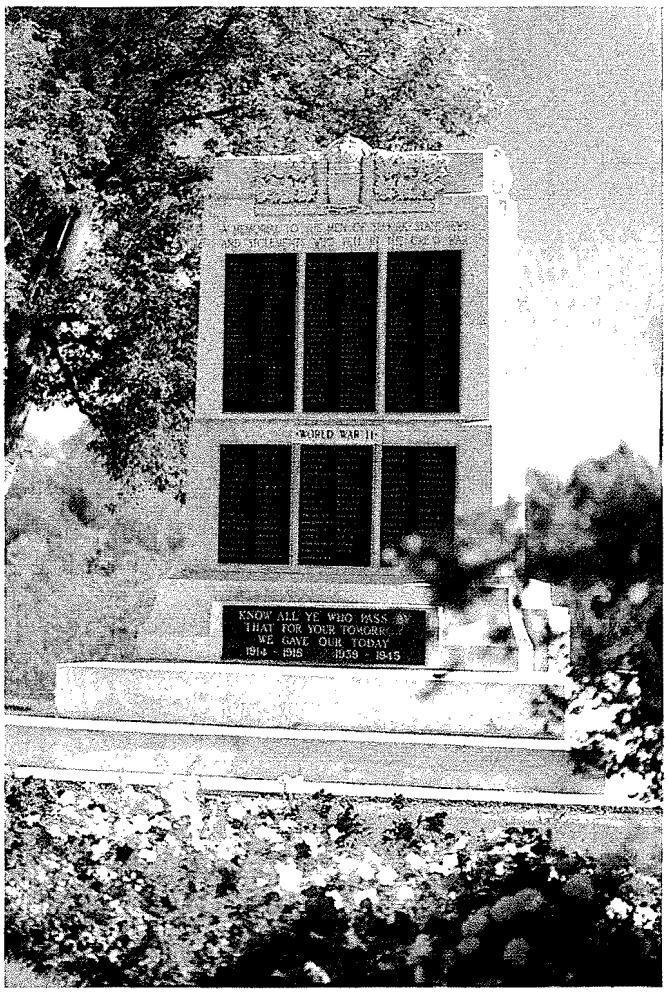

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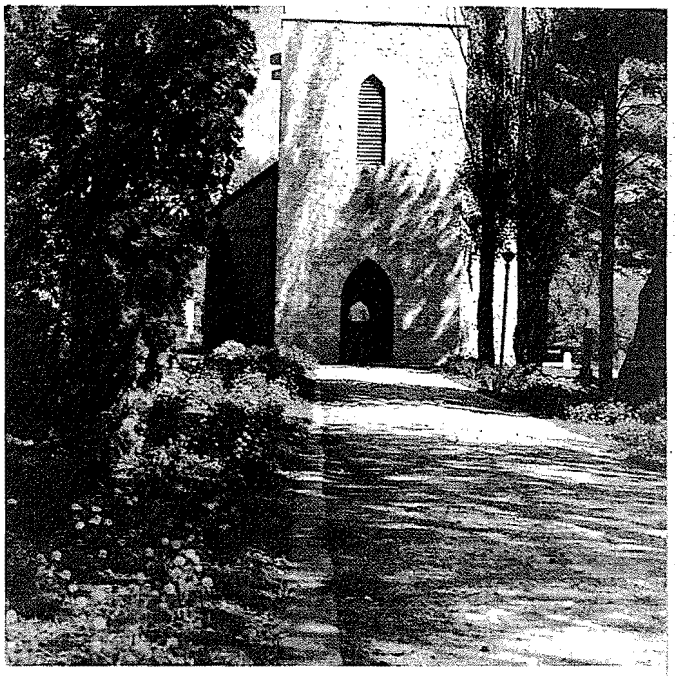

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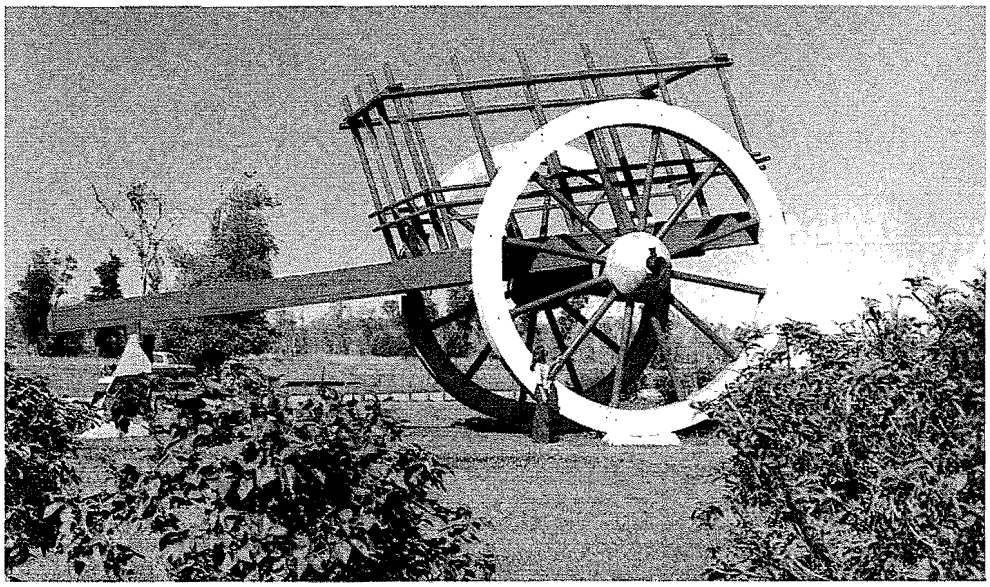

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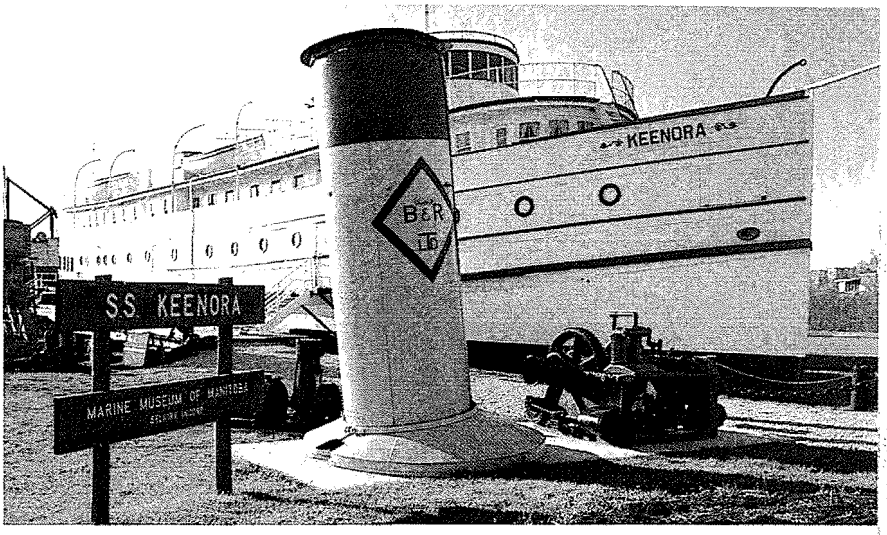

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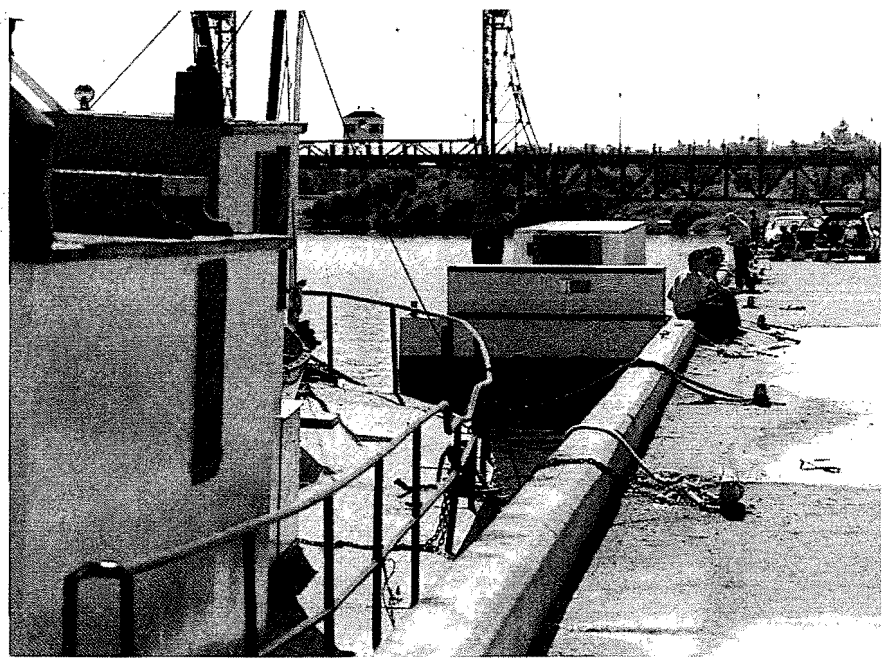

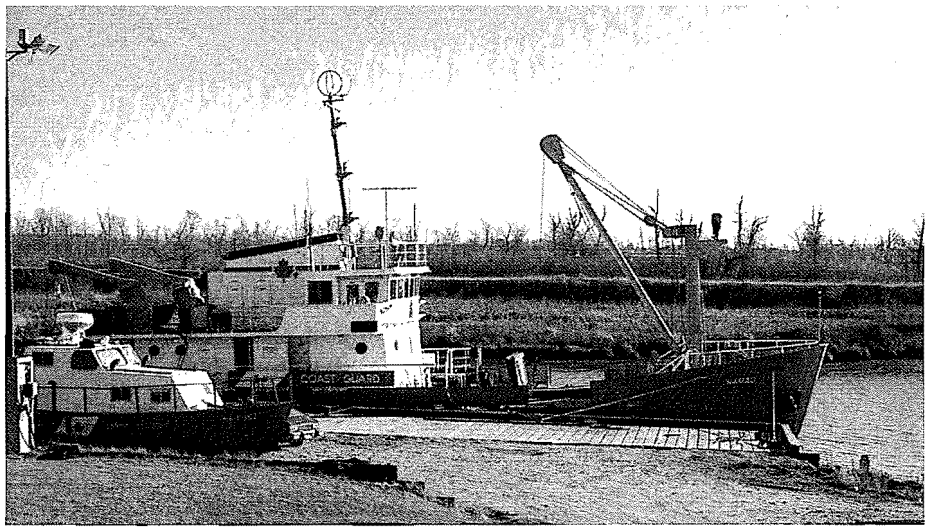

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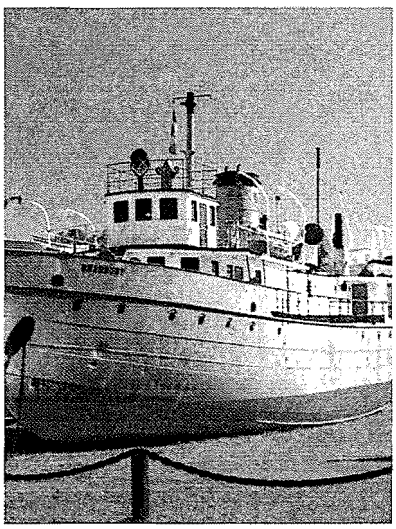

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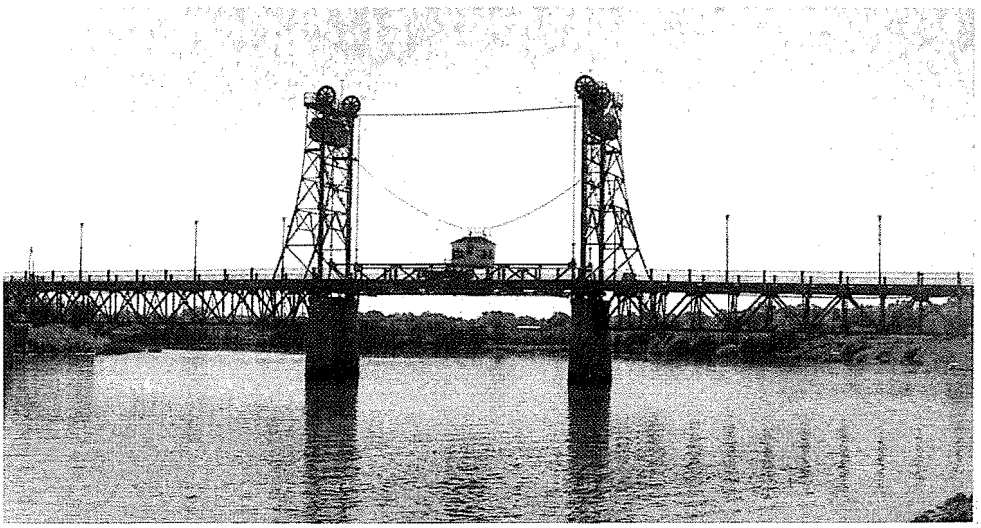

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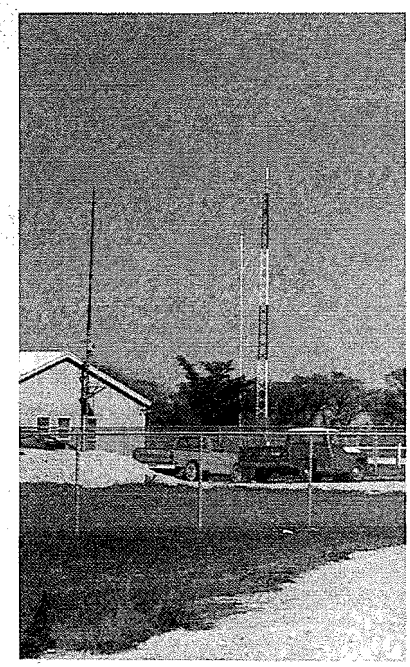

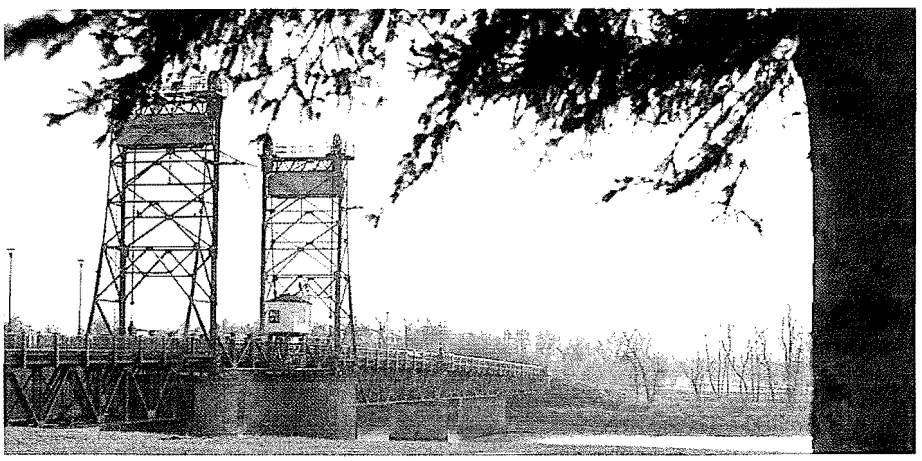

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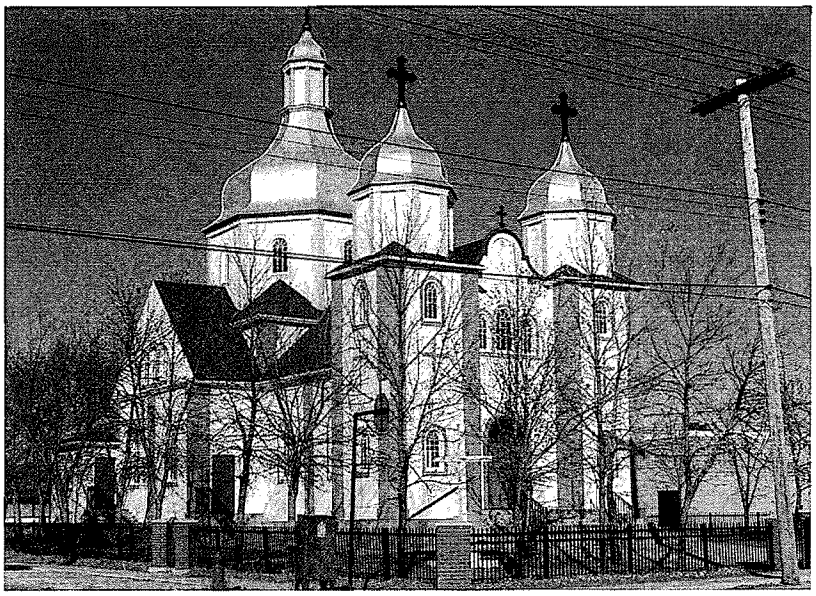

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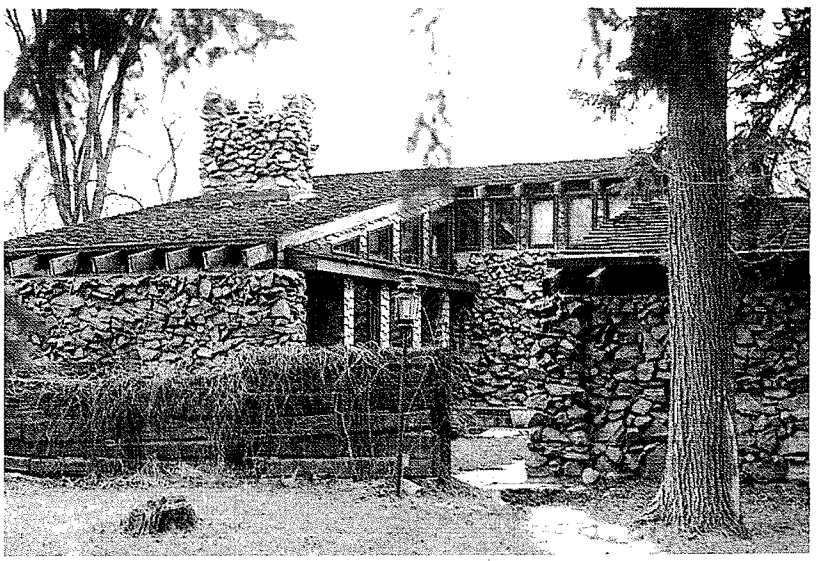

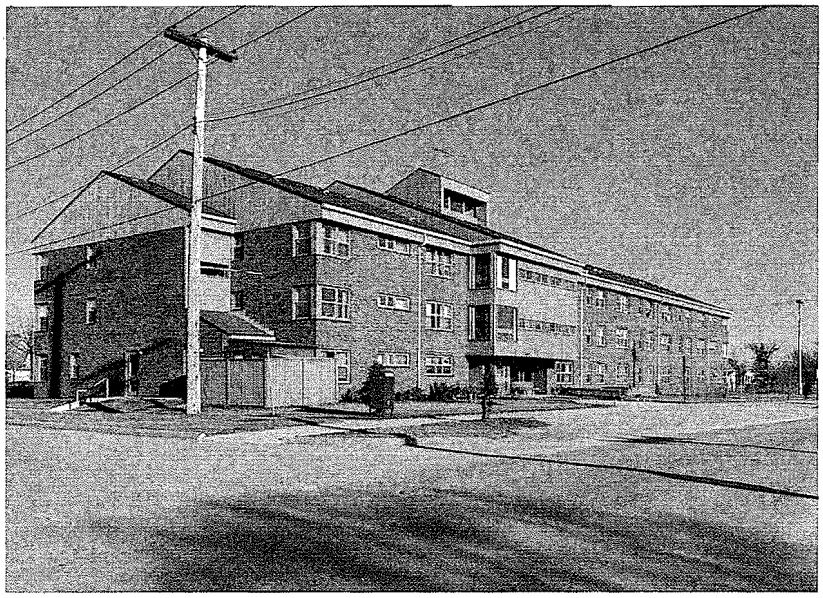

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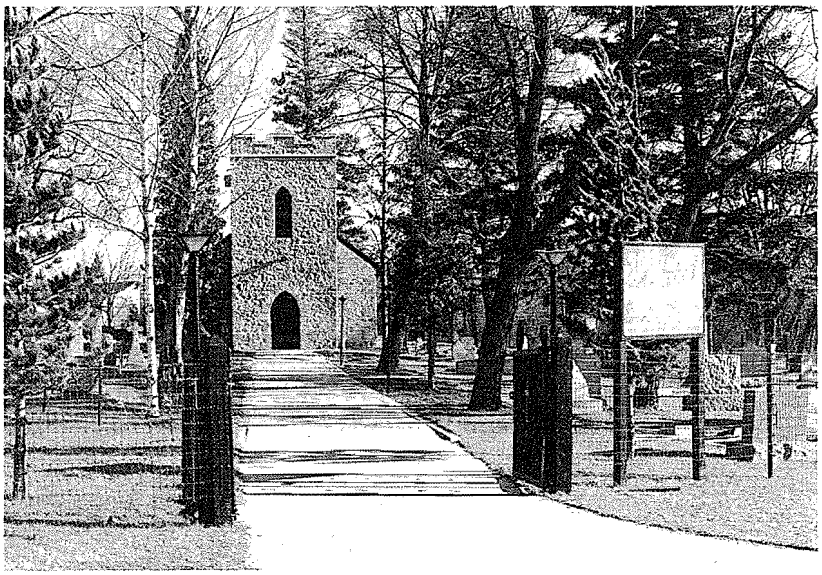

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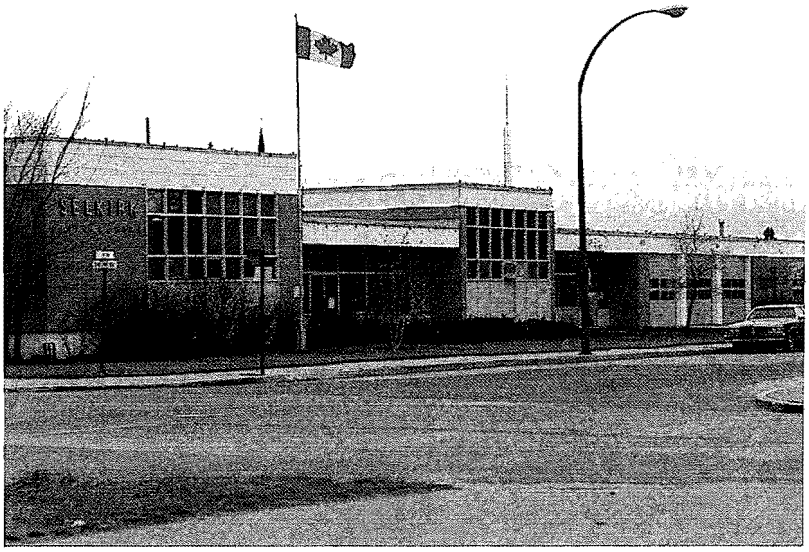

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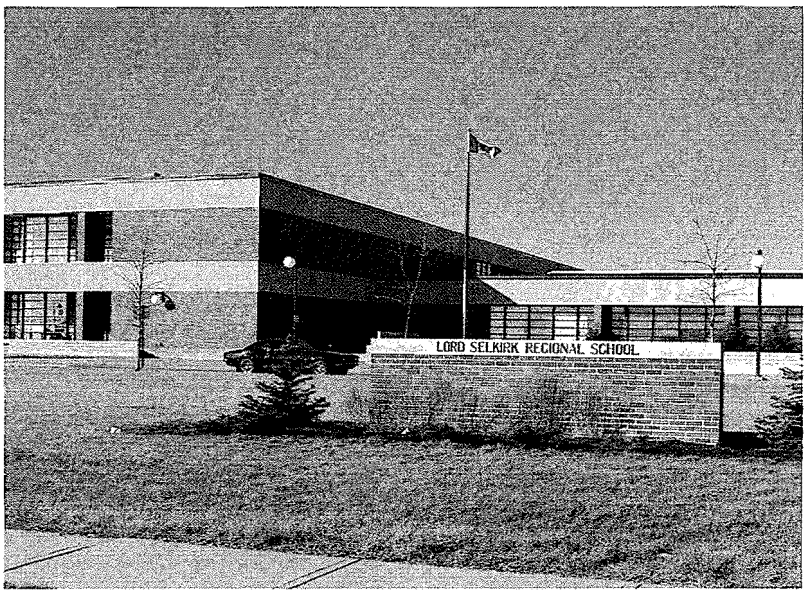

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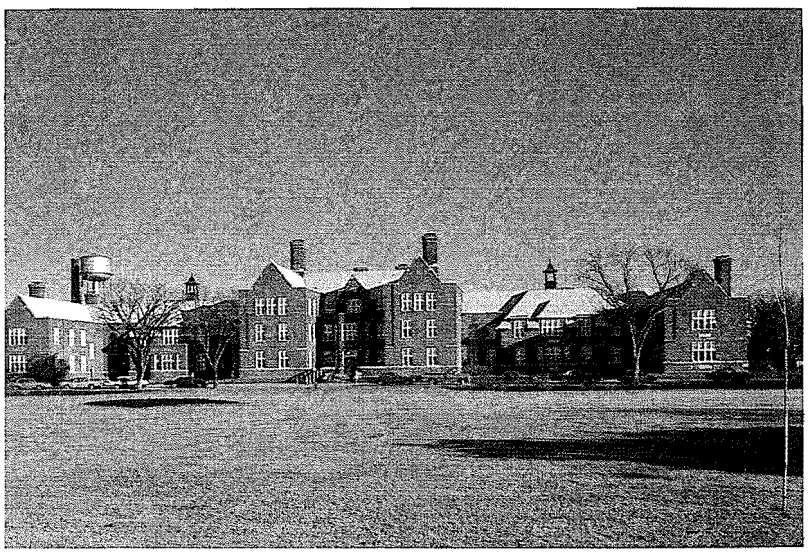

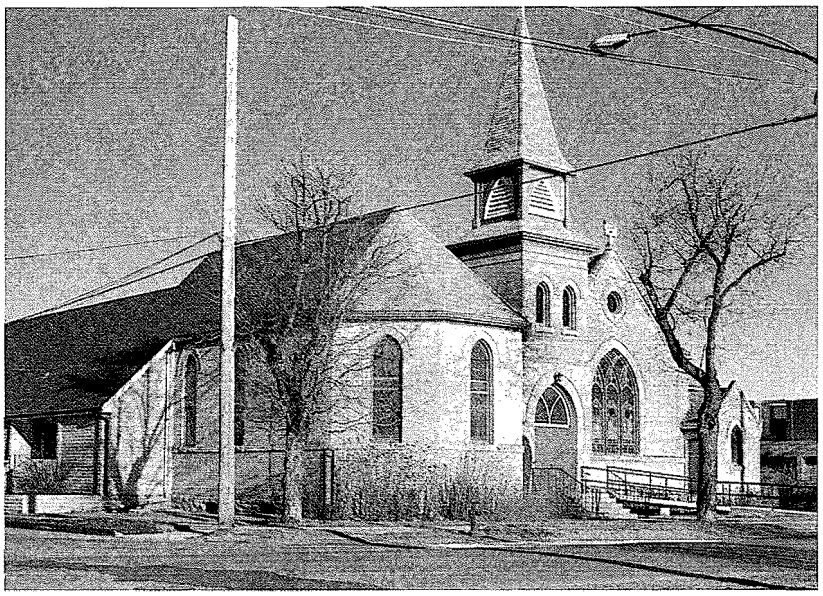

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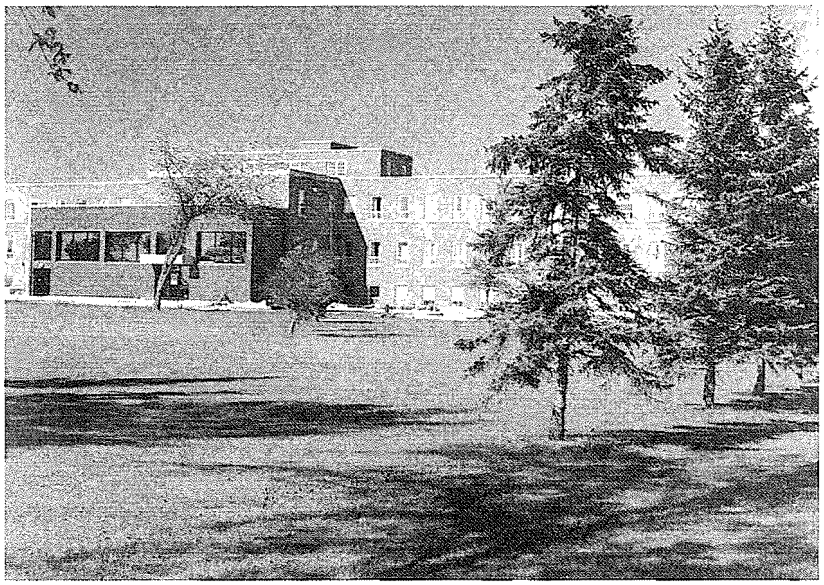

PRAIRIE SIGHT & SOUND

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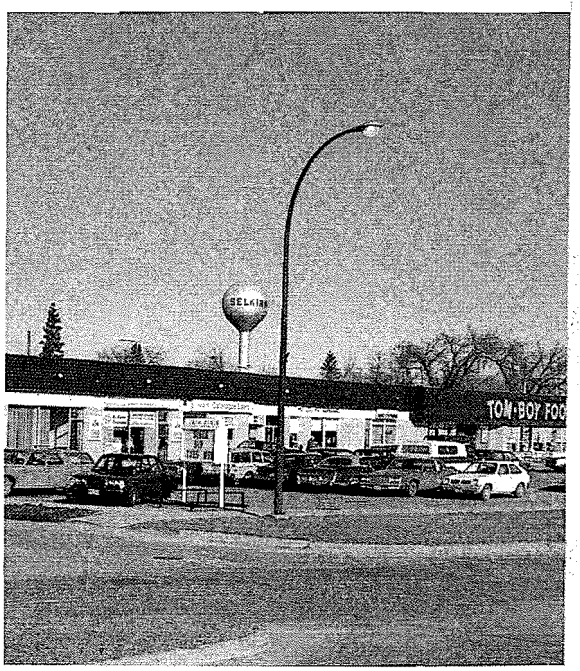

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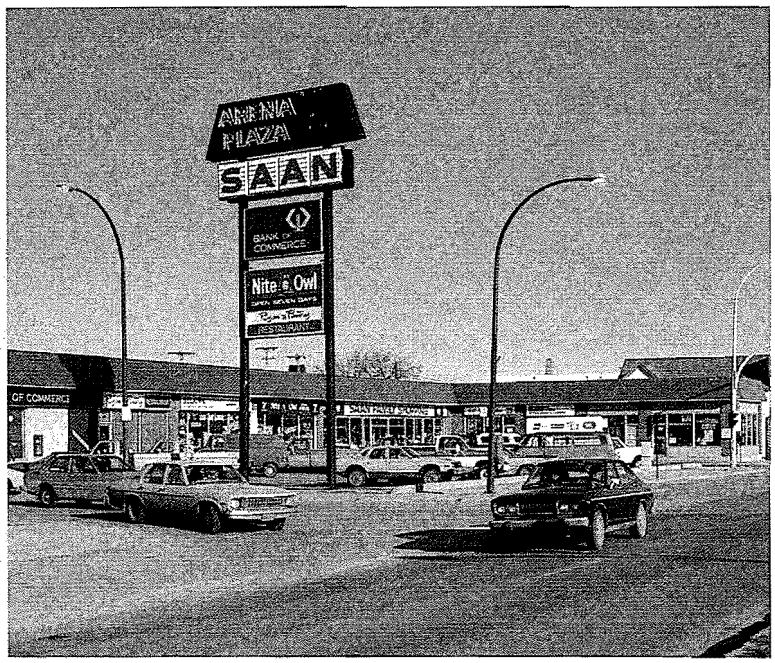

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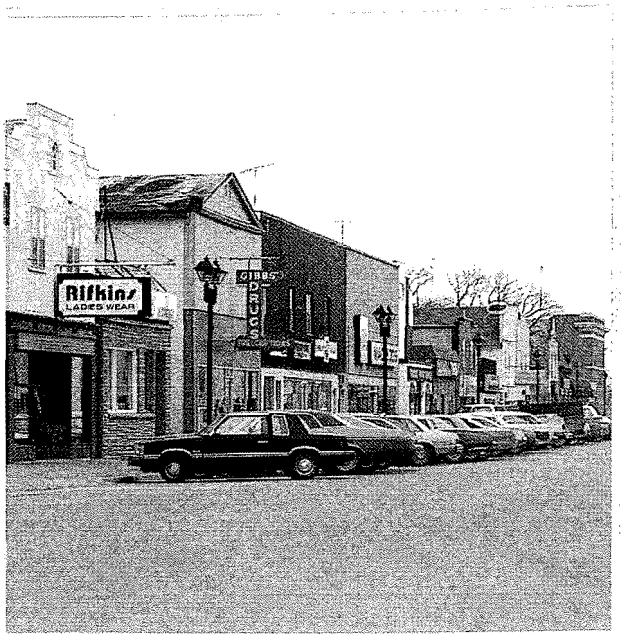

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PRAIRIE SIGHT & SOUND

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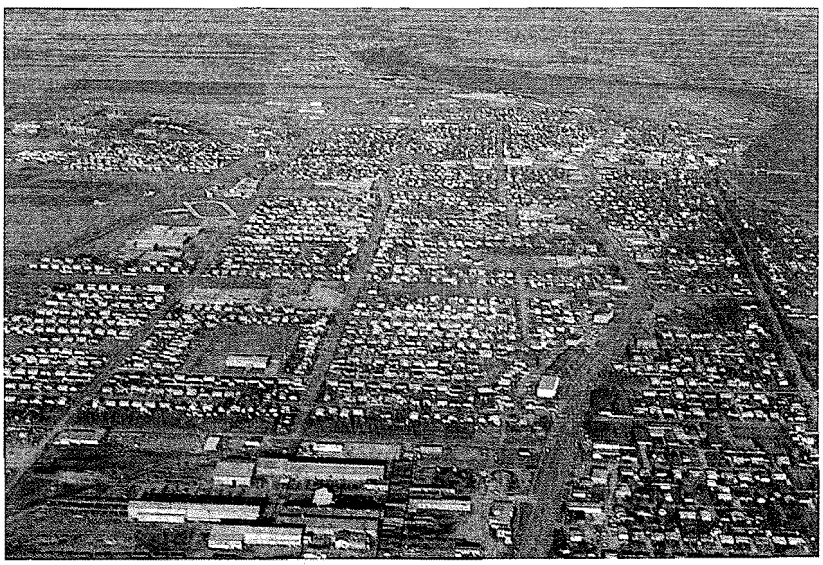

ENDNOTES

Chapter One: The Politics of Railway Building, 1875-1883

1 Provincial Archives of Manitoba. MG14, B57, James Colcleugh Papers. Box 6, "Telephone and Telegraph File", Undated manuscript [circa 1912.]

2 Public Archives of Canada. RG10, Department of Indian Affairs, Black Series, Vol. 1020, "Commission on Indian Lands at St. Peter's Reserve, Manitoba," Transcript of Hearings, 1907., pp. 6-7 and p. 261.

3 Selkirk *Weekly Record*, 22 January 1911.

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6 Sandford Fleming, *Report and Documents in Reference to the Canadian Pacific Railway, 1880*. (Ottawa, 1880), p. 384.

7 Colcleugh Papers, *op. cit.*, Box 6, Autobiography of James Colcleugh, 1917, and Provincial Library of Manitoba, Biographical Scrapbooks, B7, p. 16.

8 Alexander Morris, *The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories, including the negotiations on which they were based, and other information relating thereto*. (Toronto, 1880), text of Treaty One.

9 Public Archives of Canada, "Commission on Indian Lands at St. Peter's Reserve, Manitoba." *op. cit.*, p. 19.

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12 Public Archives of Canada, RG10, Vol. 3643, File 7776 (microfilm C10113), "Complaints by members of St. Peter's band against their chief, Henry Prince," 1877.

13 Provincial Archives of Manitoba, Church Missionary Society, A103, C1/0, Report by Abraham Cowley, 1 August 1879.

14 Public Archives of Canada, RG10, Vol. 3617, File 4646 (microfilm C10107), "List of those who purchased land at St. Peter's after Treaty and before 26 May 1874."

15 Colcleugh Papers, *op. cit.*, James Colcleugh to W. F. Colcleugh, 20 March 1876.

10 W. L. Morton, *Manitoba: A History*, (Toronto, 1970), p. 110.

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18 *Manitoba Weekly Free Press*, 25 September 1875.

19 John Macoun, *Manitoba and the Great North-West*. (Guelph, 1882), pp. 480-1.

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21 *Ibid.*, Box 3, James Colcleugh to Mr. Crawford, 10 April 1876.

22 *Ibid.*, Box 3, James Colcleugh to W. J. Calder, 4 March 1876.

23 *Manitoba Weekly Free Press*, 18 September 1875.

24 *Ibid.*, 20 October 1877.

25 Colcleugh Papers, *op. cit.*, Box 3, James Colcleugh to William Colcleugh, 6 March 1876.

26 F. H. Schofield, *The Story of Manitoba*. (Winnipeg, 1913), Vol. II., p. 384; Selkirk *Weekly Record*, 10 July 1930.

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28 *Ibid.*, Box 3, James Colcleugh to Malcolm Martin, 17 January 1881.

29 *Ibid.*, Box 3, James Colcleugh to W. J. Calder, 4 March 1876.

30 *Ibid.*, Box 3, James Colcleugh to Mr. Watt, 2 April 1876.

31 *Ibid.*

32 *Manitoba Weekly Free Press*, 23 September 1876.

33 Colcleugh Papers, *op. cit.*, Box 3, James Colcleugh to "Bob", 29 March 1878.

34 *Manitoba Weekly Free Press*. 17 June 1876.

35 Colcleugh Papers. *op. cit.*. James Colcleugh to John Idington. 23 February 1878.

36 For a detailed discussion of Winnipeg efforts to influence Ottawa, see Randolph R. Rostecki. "The Growth of Winnipeg, 1870-1886." Unpublished M.A. thesis. University of Manitoba. 1980. My account closely follows that of Rostecki. See also Ruben Bellan. "Rails Across the Red – Selkirk or Winnipeg." Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba. *Transactions*. Series III. No. 18 (1961-2). pp. 69-77.

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39 *Ibid.*. Box 1/7. Diary Entry of 23 March 1878.

40 *Ibid.*. Box 6. James Colcleugh to John Idington. 23 February 1878.

41 *Ibid.*. Box 3. James Colcleugh to "Bob". 29 March 1878.

42 *Ibid.*. Box 1/7. Diary Entry of 11 May 1878.

43 *Ibid.*. Box 3. James Colcleugh to his father. 2 June 1878.

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45 Colcleugh Papers. *op. cit.*. Box 1/7. Diary Entry of 17 September 1878.

46 *Ibid.*. Box 3. James Colcleugh to Malcolm Colcleugh. 22 September 1878.

47 *Ibid.*. Box 3. James Colcleugh to John Idington. 12 February 1879.

48 *Manitoba Weekly Free Press*. 12 March 1879.

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50 *Ibid.*. Box 3. James Colcleugh to his father. 28 November 1880.

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52 *Ibid.*. Box 3. James Colcleugh to Willie Colcleugh. 22 September 1881.

53 *Ibid.*. Box 3. James Colcleugh to Willie Colcleugh. July 1882.

54 *Manitoba Weekly Free Press*. 5 June 1882.

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56 *Ibid.*. Box 3. James Colcleugh to "Bruce". 20 May 1883.

Chapter Two: Head of Inland Navigation, 1883-1910

1 Selkirk *Herald*. 17 November 1882.

2 C. B. Johnson. "A History of Mental Health Care in Manitoba: A Local Manifestation of an International Social Movement." Unpublished M.A. thesis. University of Manitoba. 1980.

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6 Manitoba. *Sessional Papers*. Annual Report of the Minister of Public Works for 1883. p. 31.

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8 Johnson. *op. cit.*. p. 38.

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13 Colcleugh Papers. *op. cit.*. Box 3. James Colcleugh to A. W. Ross. 11 March 1883.

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15 Selkirk *Herald*. 2 March 1883.

16 Canada. *Sessional Papers*. Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for 1886. "Report on the Clandeboye Agency."

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18 Selkirk *Weekly Record*. 17 March 1905.

19 Roger Letourneau. *Manitoba's Railways*.

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20 Ruth Rutherford, "A Trip to Grand Rapids." *Town Topics*. I: 11 (27 August 1898).

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28 Canada. *Sessional Papers*. Annual Report of the Department of Fisheries for 1886.

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32 Canada. *Sessional Papers*. Annual Report of the Department of Fisheries for 1887.

33 Canada. *Journal of the House of Commons Debates*. 13 May 1909.

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35 *Debates*. *op. cit.*

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40 *Ibid.*

41 *Ibid.*, 1902.

42 *Ibid.*, 1907.

43 Selkirk *Record*. 19 March 1909.

44 *Ibid.*, 9 June 1938. These are reminiscences of life in the fishing camps on Lake Winnipeg in 1894.

45 Winnipeg *Saturday Post*. 29 June 1912.

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48 Selkirk *Record*. 28 August 1908.

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50 *Ibid.*, 11 September 1908.

51 *Ibid.*, 11 March 1887 and 1 April 1887.

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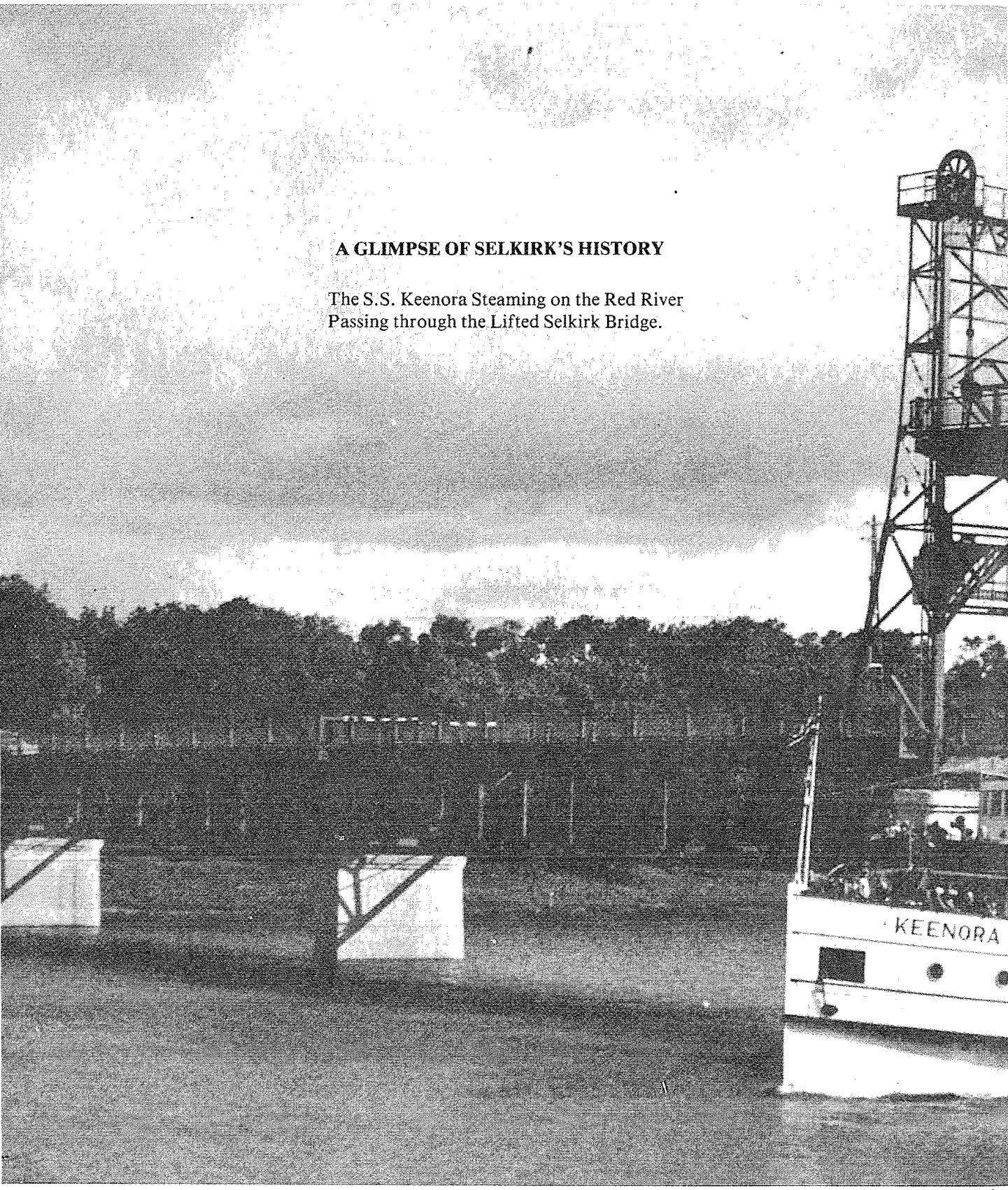

A GLIMPSE OF SELKIRK'S HISTORY

The S.S. Keenora Steaming on the Red River
Passing through the Lifted Selkirk Bridge.