

Turtle Mountain & The Souris Plains



An Overview of Our History

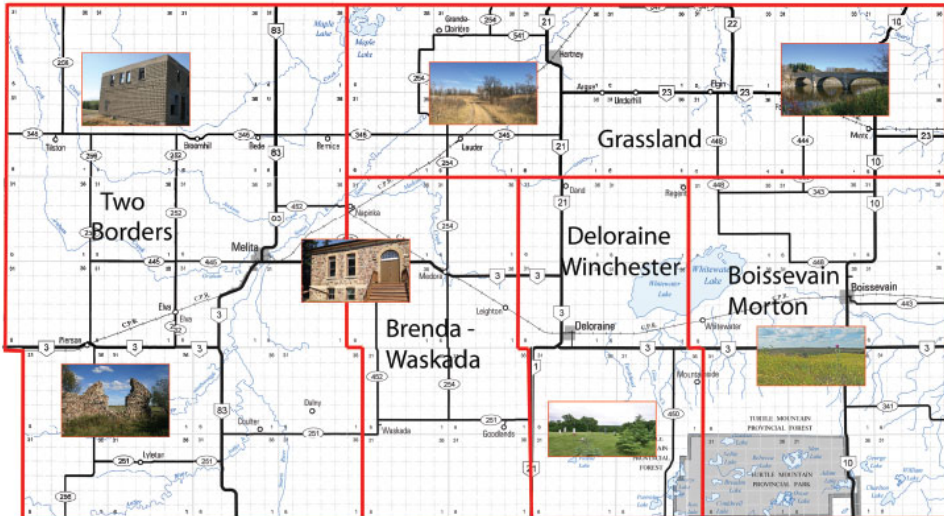
Manitoba 



A Vantage Points Publication
The Turtle Mountain-Souris Plains Heritage Association

The Turtle Mountain - Souris Plains Heritage Association

The Turtle Mountain – Souris Plains Heritage Association (TM-SPHA) takes a regional approach to heritage by involving a collection of towns, municipalities, Métis Association locals and concerned citizens. We are working towards having this culturally and environmentally diverse region broadly recognized for its dynamic history, marvelous beauty and spirited cooperation.



We have published four booklets called Vantage Points, collections of local stories.

This volume is intended as a foundation document - a resource that teachers and researchers across southwestern Manitoba can turn to when they need an overview of the general history of the communities in our region.

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www.vantagepoints.ca

Additional Features online at:

<http://www.virtualmanitoba.com/TMSP/index.html>

An Overview of Our History

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Chapter 1: The Land

The features that shape it

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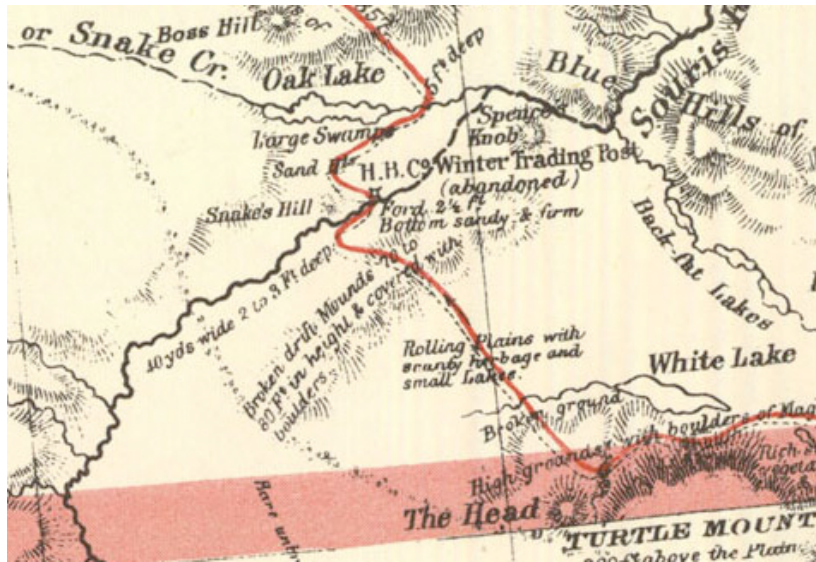
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The Land in 1860



The dominant features of southwestern Manitoba were well known before the era of European settlement.

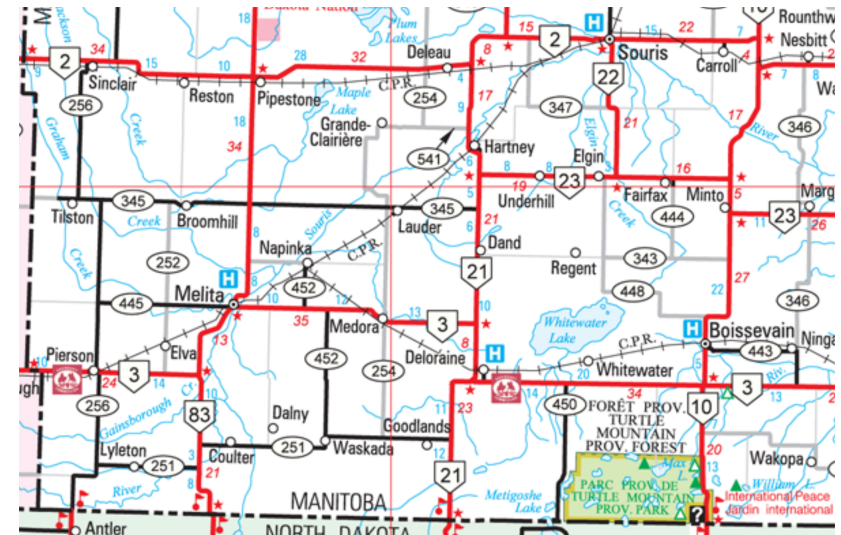
The first European fur traders and explorers created maps based on their observations and information they received from the Aboriginal people who lived here. The Hudson's Bay and Northwest Companies employed cartographers to map the region.

In the 1850 and 60's the governments of Canada and Great Britain sent expeditions to the west, hoping to prove that this land was suitable for agriculture. This map from about 1860 was produced by one of those expeditions.

Details of the features of Turtle Mountain, the Souris River and Whitewater Lake were shown.

Find Oak Lake – just under it is the notation “Sand Hills”, indicating the range of sand hills that stretch south to the Souris River.

The Land Today



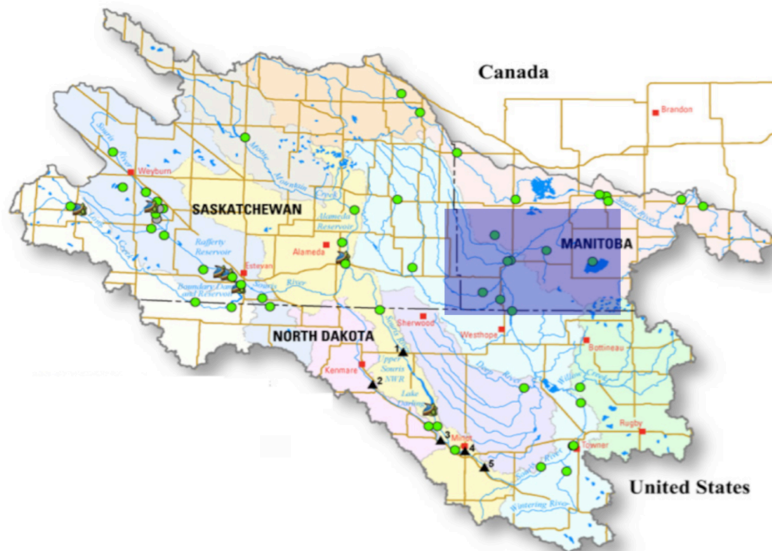
After 150 years some of the names have changed – some remain. Some of the creeks flowing into the Souris River have been re-named. But the main features remain.

In between the time of the “old” map on the previous page, and this modern map, many towns and villages have been created – some of those have disappeared. Many railway lines have been built – most of those have also been removed.

And of course thousands of kilometres of roads have been built – only the main ones appear on most highway maps

The Souris River

A traveller to the Southwest Corner can see Turtle Mountain from quite a distance. Another important feature of the region, the Souris River is often hidden in a deep valley and might not be noticed until you were overlooking it.



The full extent of the Souris River Basin is shown here.

The Turtle Mountain Souris Plains Region (Shaded) is a small part of the drainage area.

Here in Manitoba we see only about a quarter of the Souris River drainage basin. It begins north of Weyburn, Saskatchewan. It then travels through southeastern Saskatchewan and northern North Dakota where it makes a giant U-turn (known as the Souris Loop) before entering

Manitoba south of Melita. From the border to Souris the stream is gentle as it twists and turns its way through rolling hills. It then drops 480 meters in elevation by the time it empties into the Assiniboine River, picking up speed as it passes through a deep valley.

On these wide-open dry plains, the river valley offered wood, water and shelter. Plains hunters camped on the banks. They trapped and hunted the animals that also took shelter there.



In recent years, several dams have been built in an attempt to control the flooding tendencies of the Souris River but it has proven tough to control. In recent years floods have caused a great deal of damage and expense. The Souris River is a commanding feature of southwestern Manitoba. Whether flowing mildly between its banks, or rising to threaten land and livelihood, it continues to be a central feature in the lives of those who live alongside it.

Turtle Mountain

About a hundred million years ago Southwestern Manitoba was part of the Western Interior Seaway. The climate was a lot warmer than today, and huge reptiles called mosasaurs were the toughest beasts around. Then, about 66 million years ago an asteroid crashed into southern Mexico. The blast was so strong that the dust and debris blocked the sun and slowly cooled the climate. In a short period 75 percent of all species became extinct, including most of the dinosaurs.

About two million years ago we entered a series of Ice Ages. Giant glaciers covered the land, and then melted off. It was a long process and it created the landscape we know today

There were long periods between the visits of the glaciers. We're in one of them now.



The view from a Lookout Tower on Turtle's Head.

As the ice melted, material that was carried by the glaciers was deposited over Turtle Mountain. By about 12,800 years ago Turtle Mountain was free of ice. As the last glacier retreated it carved many shallow lakes and wetlands and shaped the hills. Many steep ravines were shaped by streams of run-off waters flowing from the high ground to the low plains.

Turtle Mountain, surrounded by the flat prairie of the Souris Plains, was one of the first things travellers to this region noticed. What is known as the Turtle's Head at the western end of Turtle Mountain is the second highest point in all of Manitoba.



William Lake, with The Turtle's Head in the distance.

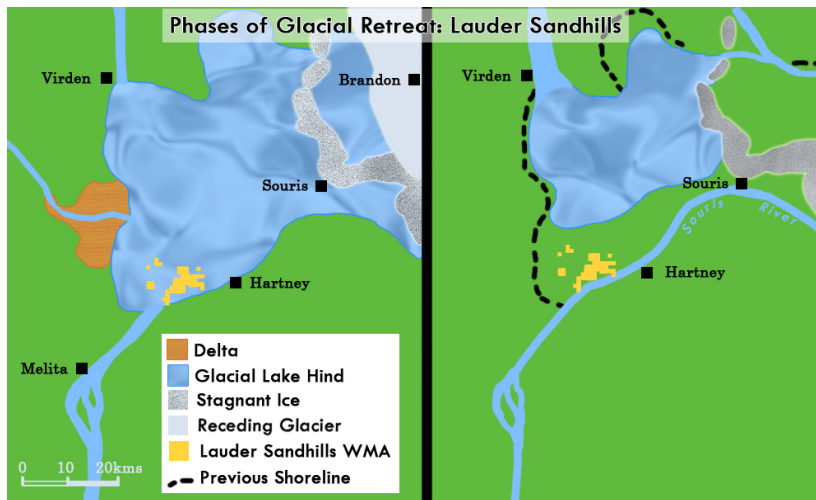
The wood, shelter, water and game that it provided were important, to the aboriginal hunters, to explorers, fur traders, and the first European farmers who settled here. The wood, shelter, water and game that it provided were important, to the aboriginal hunters, to explorers, fur traders, and the first European farmers who settled here.



This map from 1860 shows the features of Turtle Mountain

The Lauder Sandhills

About 10,000 years ago, when the glaciers from the last ice age were melting, huge lakes were formed. Glacial Lake Hind covered the area around present-day Hartney. Huge deposits of sand formed a delta where a river ran into the still body of Lake Hind. Today they are the Lauder Sandhills.



As the climate kept changing, the land was at times marshes, lakes and sloughs, and at times, sand dunes. The nearby Souris River and surrounding grasslands made the hills a good place for the buffalo and for hunters



Over time trees and vegetation made this an attractive place to live.



The Lauder Sandhills Wildlife Management Area was established in 1971, originally to protect the winter habitat of the white-tailed deer.

Whitewater Lake

When the glaciers that once covered all of Canada began to disappear about 12,000 years ago they left huge lakes and rivers. Most of those lakes have disappeared but Whitewater Lake is the last evidence of Lake Souris, which once covered the region between Turtle Mountain and the Souris River.



It is large, about 20 kilometres long, but shallow. It is fed by creeks from Turtle Mountain during heavy rains and the spring run-off.

Because it is shallow, a dry spell, or a few dry years, can really affect its size. It has gone dry on several occasions. In 1913 the lake dried up, and government engineers surveyed the land, reporting that it should be sold as farmland. But by the next spring it was a lake again!

During the “Dirty Thirties” and the 1980’s the lake also disappeared and trails led across it as people made short-cuts.

The plains around Whitewater Lake were well-known to the Nakota, and later, the Métis as a good place to find buffalo. The last buffalo anyone saw in the Turtle Mountain area was spotted just to the east of Whitewater Lake in 1883. Fur-bearing animals, such as mink and muskrat, attracted trappers and traders to the region. The muskrat furs that came from Whitewater Lake were of especially good quality and fetched a good price.

With the arrival of homesteaders the frozen lake served as a road. Teams of horses transported loads of grain from farms on the north side of the lake to Whitewater village on the southern shore. Firewood from Turtle Mountain was hauled in caravans of sleighs to homes north of the lake, and the road across the ice often became a very busy highway.

Bird Sanctuary

Whitewater Lake was the traditional nesting grounds for the whooping cranes until their near extinction around 1880. Though the number of birds on the lake in modern times does not come close to the numbers found during settler days, it remains an important stopping place during migrations. A sanctuary on the southern shore is a popular spot among birders.

Grassland

Grassland is the name of a municipality formed in 2015 when the Town of Hartney joined the Municipalities of Cameron and Whitewater. The name refers to the large prairie, between the Souris River and Turtle Mountain that is another important geographic feature of Southwestern Manitoba.

These plains were a vital resource to Aboriginal people, to Metis hunters and traders, to pioneer homesteaders, and now to modern and large-scale farmers.



A grassland is a region where the average annual precipitation is enough to support grasses, but has few trees. Grasses can survive fires because they grow from the bottom instead of the top. Their stems can grow again after being burned off.

Manitoba's Mixed-Grass Prairie

This landscape developed from years of low precipitation and regular prairie fires. Fires kept trees from growing except along rivers and streams and allowed for the wide areas of prairie grasses that fed the huge buffalo herds. These herds provided the plains people with nearly everything they needed for a good life.

With the arrival of the European traders, the buffalo served an additional purpose trade.

Breadbasket to the World

The land that was perfect for the buffalo was also good for growing grain and feeding livestock. The soil is deep and dark. The upper layers are the most fertile because of the buildup of many layers of dead branching stems and roots.



Harvesting in the good old days.

Farmers were able to adapt the land for agriculture.

A Home for the Birds



A Manitoba Grassland Birding Trail near Lyleton.

The grasslands of Southwestern Manitoba are known for their variety of birds. Trails and Wildlife Management Areas have been developed and visitors come from all over the world.



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2. The First People

Who they were, where they came from and how they lived.

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The First Hunters

After the most recent retreat of the glaciers that covered this land, humans, who had populated other parts of the world, made their way to Turtle Mountain. It was the first place in the region to be free of ice. It was soon home to both the hunter and the hunted.

The Clovis Culture

The first to arrive were a group we call the Clovis Culture. That was about 12000 years ago.



They came from the south, around New Mexico and Arizona, and would have moved north slowly as the climate warmed and the ice disappeared. We know little about them, but can identify them by the tools they left behind, especially the stone points they crafted for the tips of their weapons.

Clovis points that have been found in Southwestern Manitoba were made of Knife River flint from southern North Dakota, and crafted into sharp points shaped like a willow leaf. Attached to sturdy spears, these points could be used to take down even the huge woolly mammoth.

Taking down a mammoth would take skill, teamwork, courage and the best weapon you could get. These spear points would have been very valuable.



The next “settlers” were the Folsom people. Their spear points were smaller and thinner than the Clovis points. This may have been because they were hunting smaller animals. Mammoths had slowly become extinct. It was pre-historic buffalo that the Folsom hunters hunted.

From about 10000 to 70000 years ago the Plano people hunted buffalo and pronghorn here. Pronghorn are the only large mammals in North America to survive the coming of man. But buffalo were becoming the most important prey.

By about 6000 years ago, agriculture, which developed far to the south, had appeared in Manitoba.



The Pronghorn now prefers the wide-open spaces of Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Big Game



There was a time when mastodons, mammoths, camels, horses, and huge long-haired bison roamed the Souris Plains and sought shelter on Turtle Mountain.

Traces of them start to disappear at about the end of the last ice age – about 12000 BC, and by 6000 BC two-thirds of the species of North American mammals that weighed more than 60 kilograms at maturity had become extinct.

Could it have been that the climate was getting warmer and drier? The animals that travelled in large herds may have not been able to adapt.

Or the warmer temperatures may have disrupted breeding cycles.

If climate was the problem, why were the animals not able to move to a more suitable region?

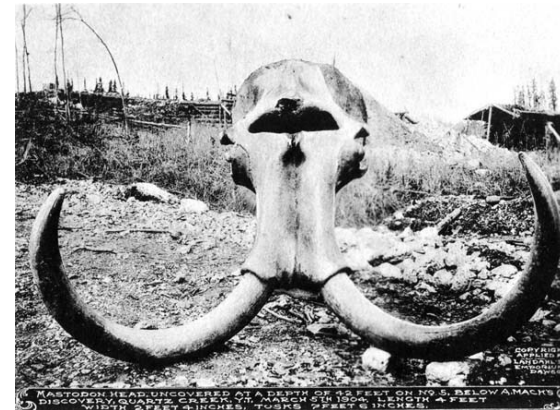
Another possibility is that these large mammals faced a new threat – humans.

As the ice retreated, human hunters spread across the continent, continually improving and adapting their hunting practices. These humans, unlike the other predators, were able to organize and improvise. They were deadly enemies.

Perhaps the climate may have weakened the populations and the humans finished them off.



A mammoth tusk found in Southern Manitoba, on display at the Moncur Gallery in Boissevain



A mammoth skull

The Buffalo People

By about 4500 years ago the climate was similar to what we have today. In Southwestern Manitoba a series of cultures developed great skill in hunting and using the buffalo.

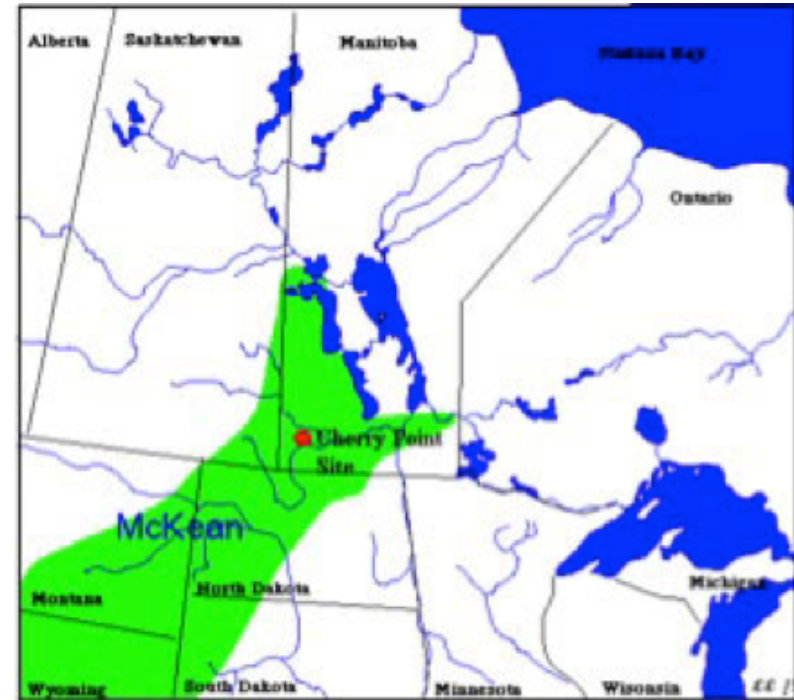
When the first European traders and explorers came to this land they found that the people here depended on the buffalo for nearly everything. It was their main food. The hides gave them shelter and clothing. Tools were made from the bones and sinews.

By drying the meat in strips and pounding in fat and berries they made pemmican – a food that was nutritious and would last nearly forever without spoiling.

The lifestyle was developed over hundreds of years.

The Oxbow culture were perhaps the first to stew or boil their meat by placing heated stones in a lined pit full of water, meat and bones. It was an especially good way of removing the rich marrow from cracked bison bones. They also left the first tepee rings, and they were the first to bury their dead. They lived in the region for a long time.

The McKean people continued to perfect methods for killing, processing, and using the buffalo. A well-known buffalo kill and butchering site at Cherry Point on Oak Lake has yielded important artifacts left there over 2000 years ago. They would drive small herds into the marsh at the edge of the lake where some would get bogged down where hunters could kill them with spears.



The Pelican Lake People may have been the first to think of killing buffalo by driving herds over steep cliffs. They also seem to have perfected the use of the Buffalo Pound – herding animals into a fenced enclosure where they could kill them with spears. They traded widely to the south and east, and crafted ornaments from the shells and copper they obtained.

The Besant-Sonata Culture was also a trading culture. Remains of their pottery have been found in dozens of sites throughout southern Manitoba, including sites along the Souris River, and at Clay Banks Buffalo Jump site near Cartwright.

The Buffalo Lifestyle



The buffalo you might see in a zoo today would weigh no more than 1,500 kg and have a maximum height of 1.80 metres.

But its ancestors, who roamed the Souris Plains about 10000 years ago, were much bigger. *Bison latifrons* it was called. It was 2.5 meters high and his head held an antler more than 2.5 meters long.



An artist has imagined what the modern and the Ice-Age animals might look like side by side.

About 5000 years ago the buffalo cultures became the main residents of the plains. Vegetation and climate stabilized, evolving to what we know today.

Hunting practices probably evolved along with the buffalo.

From 1000 to 2000 years ago southwestern Manitoba was home to many seasonal camp and bison kill sites for hunter-gatherers.

Elsewhere in North America during those times Inca, Mayan and Aztec civilizations of Central and South America had erected large cities. The Anasazi, or Ancient Pueblo Peoples were building cliff dwellings in Utah, Colorado, Arizona and New Mexico. To the east the Iroquois and Huron civilizations flourished in their large villages.

The north-central plains were one spot in North America where agriculture wasn't important. The climate wasn't suitable and the huge bison herds provided nearly everything the people needed.

This region was home to several cultures that were very good at using the buffalo.

Of course they took advantage of other available large game, they trapped small animals, and foraged for seeds and vegetables.

They adapted to their surrounding.

The hunter / gatherer lifestyle was the logical choice for the time and place. In other places, and at other times, other strategies were needed.

The Hunt

Over centuries the Plains People found hunting methods that worked for them in their region. If there were steep cliffs or valleys, they might create a buffalo jump, by herding the animals over the edge.

If there were no hills they might build a buffalo pound – a fenced in area - and trap the animals inside where they could be shot by arrows.



The Pelican Lake people used Buffalo Jumps and perfected the use of the Buffalo Pound. They traded widely to the south and east and crafted ornaments from the shells and copper they obtained.

The Brockinton Site along the Souris River near Melita, has been carefully examined and is one of many buffalo kill sites in Southwestern Manitoba.

The site was occupied by three different cultures over the last 1600 years. These occupations left behind valuable evidence about how the people lived. For instance, things like the type of pottery they used and the type of material they used for arrowheads tell us about where they traded, and how far they might have travelled.



Buffalo bones can easily be found today along the banks of the Souris River



This marshy shoreline along Oak Lake was a favorite kill site over 1000 years ago. The McKean People would drive buffalo into the marsh where they could more easily kill them with spears.

Weapons & Tools



The Awesome Atlatl

The spear is used all across the world. The bow and arrow was created in Africa and the first people to arrive in North America brought them along.

They also brought along the atlatl - a powerful weapon capable of sending a projectile over 120 yards and killing a wooly mammoth.

It was the first complex weapon system developed by humans. It originated in Europe over 30,000 years ago and spread wherever humans lived.

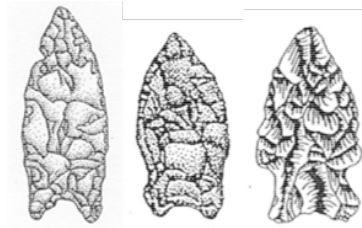
The atlatl consists of two parts: the atlatl itself and the dart. The atlatl is held in the hand, and acts as a lever to propel the dart with more force. The atlatl can be made completely of wood, bone, or both and some may incorporate weights made from stone or shell.

Projectile Points

Numerous detachable tips that were used on weapons such as arrows or spears have been collected. Stone points may be **unifacial** (one cutting edge) or **bifacial** and may be manufactured by flaking or grinding.

Projectile points are particularly useful time markers for the archaeologist because of members of a culture, often kept to a particular style.

For example, three styles of projectile points are associated with the McKean culture: McKean, Duncan and Hanna. The McKean has a concave base with no side notching, the Duncan has a similar base but includes side-notching. The Hanna point has wider corner notches.



McKean | *Duncan* | *Hanna*

Scrapers

Scrapers were also generally made of stone. They were used to scrape hides to remove hair and fat, and to soften skin. They were also used for cutting skin.



Scrapers are typically formed by chipping the end of a flake of stone in order to create one sharp side and to keep the rest of the sides dull so you could hang on to them.

The First Nations

The Turtle Mountain – Souris Plains area has been home to many cultures, and on trading routes that connected those cultures to others far distant from here. In the past 2000 years the people living here increased their dependence on immense herds of buffalo.

The herds were always on the move and roamed a huge territory. To make use of them the hunters had to move with them. Permanent villages were not helpful.

By the 1700's when explorers from New France began showing an interest in this region, it was often visited by hunters from Nakota (Assiniboine), Dakota (Sioux), Cree, and Ojibway people.

It was the Nakota, whom LaVerendrye encountered on his trips in 1838 and afterwards.

Over the centuries various cultures developed better weapons and sharper tools. They learned to use all parts of a buffalo carcass to provide food, clothing, shelter and tools. They developed hunting methods, relying on stealth, marksmanship, camouflage, and finally the mass killing fields allowed by pounds and jumps. They got really good at harvesting and using the most readily available resource on the plains.

A successful society is able to offer its people a fair chance at health and happiness. They were successful The Plains People were originally from the east where they had lived in villages, and existed by hunting, gathering and growing crops.

When they moved to the plains they had to be able to move with the buffalo. They developed portable houses called teepees.

Today we refer to descendants of these groups of people as First Nations. Their ancestors have a long history in this land.

Campsite and Villages

The Souris River and its valley had resources that both animals and humans need. It offered a reliable source of fresh water, shelter, game, wood and wild fruit.

The river had been witness to the activities of the large-game hunting societies of the Clovis and Folsom people who closely followed the receding glaciers. These and later peoples left evidence of their travels and habitations in the area – tipi rings, fireplaces, medicine wheels, surface graves and stone circles are only some of the impressions that remain.

Turtle Mountain also afforded shelter and resources for campsites, both short and long term.

The Assiniboine (Nakota)



Assiniboine (Nakota) Camp, Manitoba, July 17, 1874

In the summer of 1738 a group of about 100 Assiniboine lodges camped beside Cherry Creek (near present-day Boissevain) had an interesting visitor. A group of French traders led by Sieur de la Verendrye came to them with a request.

He was looking for a route to what he referred to as a Western Sea. He knew of a tribe he called the Mandans who lived somewhere to the south. He wanted help in finding them.

Several of the Assiniboine agreed to travel with him to show him the way to the Mandan villages on the Missouri River.

The Assiniboine were good partners to the Europeans. They gained new trade goods, which made their work easier. In turn, the Assiniboine helped Europeans traders as middlemen, excellent horsemen, and providers of food to trading posts.

From the Lake of the Woods region, the Assiniboine moved west sometime before 1680. It was here on the prairies that the Assiniboine discovered the buffalo.

They wintered in places like Turtle Mountain where shelter and wildlife were plentiful.

In the long run, the relationship with European traders had a devastating effect on the Assiniboine. Along with trade goods the newcomers brought whiskey, guns and disease – the guns proved useful but the whiskey and disease caused great damage.

One-half to two-thirds of the population died in the smallpox epidemic of 1780-81, before being cut in half again in the 1819-20 epidemic of measles and whooping cough.

By 1865, the Assiniboine were reduced to about one-tenth their original number. They migrated west and this once dominant nation were placed on reserves in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Montana. Manitoba has no Assiniboine reserves, only individual members living off-reserve.

Only a few hundred remain today and are known by their original name - "Stoney".

The Dakota



The Turtle Mountain Dakota. Chief H'Damani is seen here third from the right, 1870's.

The Dakota people have deep roots in the Turtle Mountain – Souris Plains Region.

In the 1600 and 1700's the Dakota lived in territory that is now Ontario, Quebec and the north-eastern US states.

In 1851 the Dakota were forced to sign a treaty with the powerful American government. They were forced to surrender all of their land and move west.

In the summer of 1862 a minor confrontation led to a widespread armed revolt as some of the more desperate

leaders tried to reclaim their lands, their lives, and a different future for their children.

The uprising failed, and soon after, about 1000 Dakota came to Manitoba. They arrived claiming that they had an historic right to be on British soil; that these lands were in fact part of their traditional territory.

The Canadian government allowed the Dakota to stay but never did sign a Treaty with them.

Turtle Mountain Reserve (IR#60)

In 1862 a Dakota Santee band led by Chief H'damani claimed to have bought the land referred to as "Turtle Mountain" from the Ojibway and requested a reserve for his people.

At first the Manitoba Government declined, but H'Damani was determined to provide for his people. When he refused to move to the Oak Lake Reserve when it opened in 1877, the government finally gave in and the Turtle Mountain Reserve was established. It became the smallest reserve in Canada, measuring only one square mile.

Later H'damani and a few others turned down a \$200 government pay-off to relocate to a reserve near Pipestone. By 1909, only H'damani, his grandson Chaske (later known as Sitting Eagle) and a few others remained.



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3. The Fur Trade Era

Trading Posts & Metis Hunters

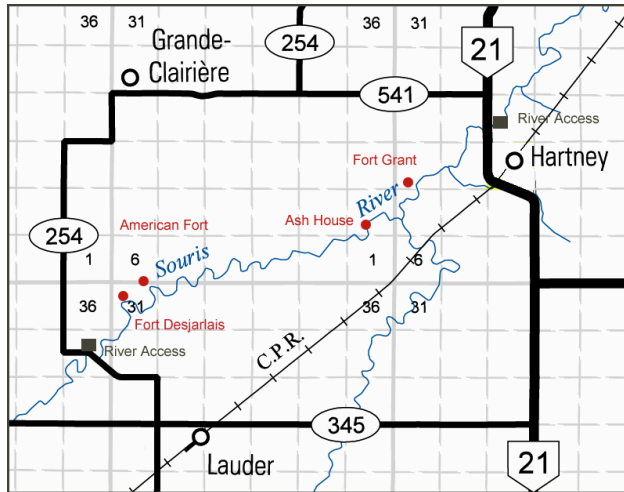
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Posts

Page 22: The Metis Hunting Grounds

The Hartney – Lauder Posts



The fur trade in Manitoba began with the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670, and for nearly a century Aboriginal traders made the long trip to the shores of Hudson's Bay to exchange furs for European trade goods shipped in from Britain.

In the 1870's independent traders, and the Northwest Company from Montreal, started to trade in what used to be HBC territory. The HBC had to move out from Hudson's Bay to compete.

For a time, Souris Mouth, where the Souris River empties into the Assiniboine, was an important centre with up to five trading posts operating within a few kilometres.

Starting in 1795, traders were building trading posts farther west, along the Souris River. Between Hartney and Lauder, four important posts have been identified. These posts were along the river and close to the grazing grounds of the buffalo.

The production and supply of pemmican, was a big part of their business.

Fort Ash (Fort de la Freniere)

The first fur post established on the river was Fort Ash.

Canadian explorer David Thompson spent about two days in the region in December of 1797, on his way south to Mandan country. He recalled passing by "the old trading post called the Ash House from the plenty of those fine trees. It had to be given up from it being too open to the incursions of the Sioux."

The American Fort

On the north bank of the Souris, almost straight north of Lauder, is a site locals referred to as the American Fort, likely built by the American Fur Company in about 1810. The size of its chimney mounds indicates that it was in operation for some time, but few records have been found to tell us more.

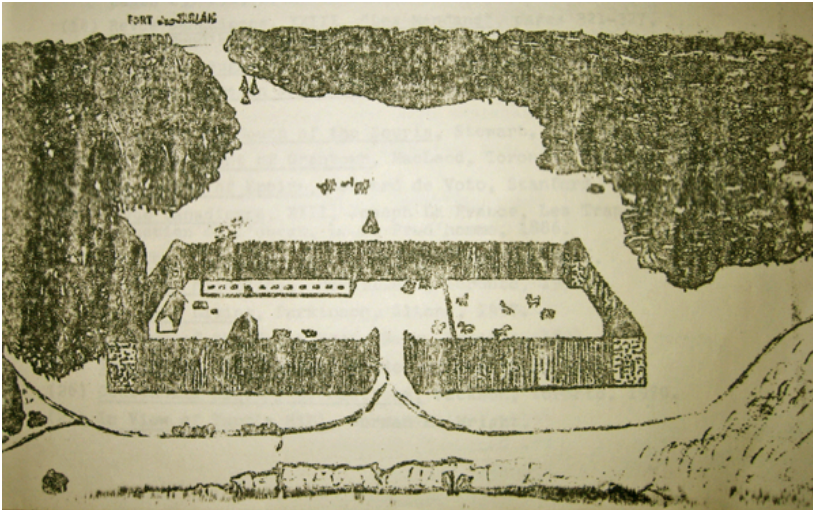
Fort Mr. Grant

In 1824 Cuthbert Grant built Fort Grant on the Souris River, about two miles south west of Hartney. He was encouraged in this venture by HBC boss, Governor Simpson, who expected Grant to keep American and independent traders out of the Souris Valley.

It is on the north bank of the river, perhaps fifty yards from the water. The cellars and chimney mounds were still visible in 1948.

Fort Grant operated from 1824-1861, part of this time as a winter fort only.

Fort Desjarlais



A sketch from the "Souris Valley Plains" by Hartney teacher and historian Larry Clarke

Fort Desjarlais, built in 1836 by Joseph Desjarlais, was located on the north bank of the Souris, north of Lauder and very close to the American Fort.

It featured a sturdy oak palisade surrounding a long log building and several smaller ones. The Souris River ran past the south wall. As the site was in the territory frequented by Dakota war parties it was well protected. At its peak there would often be over seventy men at the fort. It operated for about twenty years, and was likely destroyed in the great prairie fire that swept the region in 1856.

The fort was serviced mainly by Red River carts using the Yellow Quill Trail, which ran from near Fort Garry (Winnipeg), up the Assiniboine and Souris Rivers.

It is believed that Desjarlais and his men were also buffalo hunters - trading buffalo robes and selling pemmican to the Hudson Bay Company.

A Changing Economy

Around 1850 the fur trade was becoming a less important part of the economy of our country.

By 1874 the boundary between Canada and the United States was marked and both countries began surveying the land and dividing it into the section-township-range system – for use as farms.



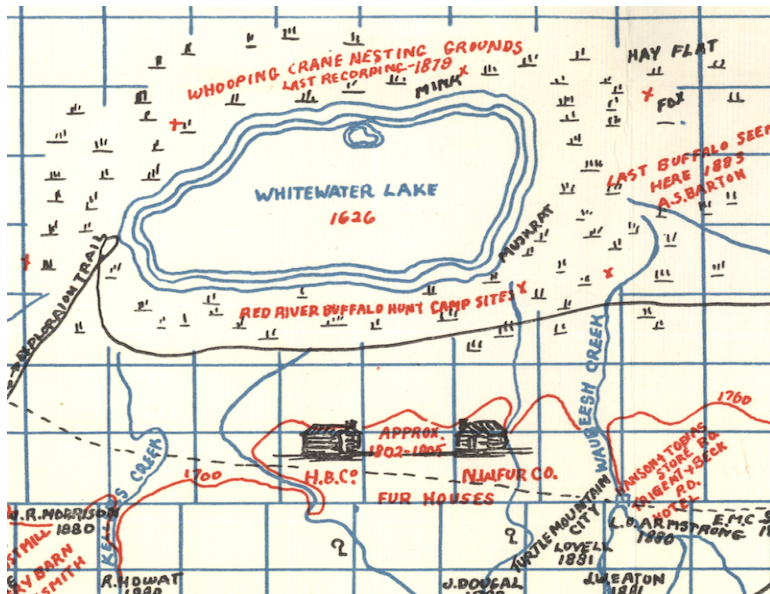
The Desjarlais site in 2016.

The Turtle Mountain & Souris River Posts

In addition to the clusters of posts at Souris Mouth and in the Hartney-Lauder area, there were several other attempts to reach out to suppliers.

Lena House

In the fall of 1801, John McKay of Brandon House sent Henry Lena with seven men and supplies to Turtle Mountain along with instructions to “cut off every independent” fur trader in that area.



Lena House is one of two fur trading posts located near Turtle Mountain. It was close to the southeastern shore of Whitewater Lake and some distance east of Turtlehead Creek. It operated from about 1801 until 1802 but was not very successful in its aim of closing down rival trade in the area.

The XY Company set up a trading post about a kilometre away, placing themselves directly on the path that the Assiniboine First Nations would take were they to cross Turtle Mountain to trade.

In 1846, Governor Simpson of the HBC informed the Company head office in London that a new post was being established on Turtle Mountain. This fort seems to have operated from 1846 to 1855.

Lena House wasn't a big success. It did survive long enough, though, to provide the name for one of southwestern Manitoba's small hamlets. Although there is little left of Lena the village, it is also the name of an international port of entry south of Killarney.

Sourisford Area

A total of 18 posts grew and faded from the Souris River between present-day Souris, Manitoba and Minot, North Dakota. Almost all traces have been erased and few records remain, but we do know that an American Fur Company Trading Post was located near where North Antler Creek enters the Souris.

There is also a record of a post near Melita operated by Peter Garrioch, established in 1843, and at least one other independent operation in the Melita – Napinka area.

The Metis Hunting Grounds



Metis Hunting Camp on the Souris Plains

Beginning around 1820, large hunting expeditions from the Red River Settlement set out twice a year to supply the settlers and the Hudson's Bay Company with pemmican and hides.

The hunt was very important to the food supply of the HBC and the settlers at Red River (now known as Winnipeg). The hunt got bigger each year until about 1840, when 1,210 carts were used. The larger hunt took place in summer and a smaller one in autumn.

Wintering Communities

In some cases Metis hunting communities located on the plains in temporary villages. Some were only several families large, while others could have 1000 people. The villages were made up of roughly-built sturdy huts. It often took no longer than a day or two to construct such a hut with the aid of a single axe and a knife.

A wintering community generally consisted of hunters, their families and a few fur traders.



The general locations of the some of the wintering communities that existed in southwest Manitoba.

Buildings were usually constructed in late fall in preparation for winter and abandoned in early spring. Sites of past communities were not generally returned to year after year because of changes in buffalo wintering ranges, and also due to the fact that rival First Nations would often burn the buildings to the ground as soon as they were unoccupied.

As the bison disappeared in the late 1870s, wintering communities were not needed and most of them simply disappeared from the prairies. Some Métis hunters and their families did stay and become the first homesteaders in the region.



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4. Transition

Preparing to Re-Settle the Prairies

Page 24: Preparing the Way

Page 25: Treaties

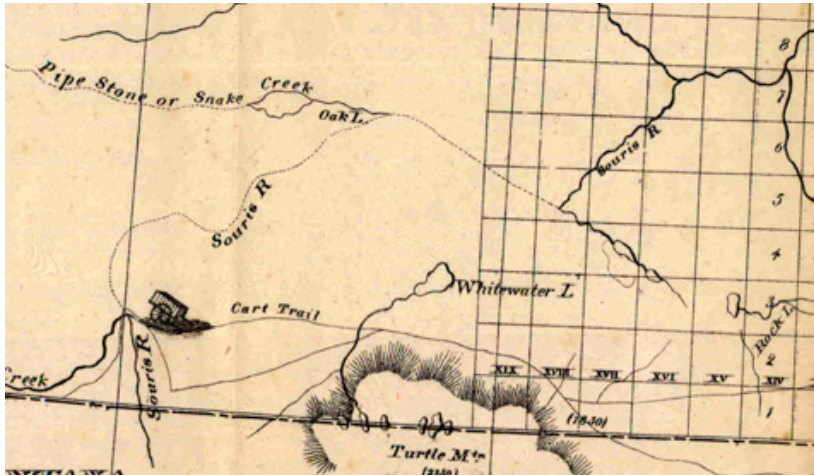
Page 26: The Metis Claim

Page 27: Farming on The Prairies

Page 28: Transportation

Page 29: Why They Came

Preparing the Way



In 1876 the territory west of Boissevain wasn't surveyed.

In 1870 Canada made a deal with the Hudson's Bay Company, and gained control of territory that included most of what today is Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta. The era of the Fur Trade was over. The plan was to open up this huge new territory for farming.

Before that could happen there were several questions to answer.

First: Who really owned this land? Canada purchased it from the Hudson's Bay Company – but what about the First Nations people, the Ojibway, the Cree, and the Nakota and Dakota who had been living on this land for centuries? Wasn't it really their land?

Second: Were these dry open lands in the west even suitable for agriculture? Some thought it was too dry and that the growing season was too short. Others felt that it would be

perfect for growing wheat – the most important crop of the time. No one was really sure how farming would work here.

Third: How were these thousands of new farmers going to get there – across the thousands of kilometres of the rocky terrain of the Canadian Shield? In 1870 it was a difficult journey of several weeks. And even if they got here and grew crops, how would they get those crops back east where they could be sold?

Fourth: Would Ontario and British settlers really want to come to this cold and unknown land? It would mean leaving family and friends behind. It would mean taking a big chance.

Treaties

Who owned the Prairies? The Government of Canada bought this huge parcel of land from the Hudson's Bay Company. The HBC had been granted the use of the land by the British Government in 1670 for the purpose of trading in furs.

But what about the Aboriginal people who had been living here for centuries?

The solution was to make deals called Treaties.

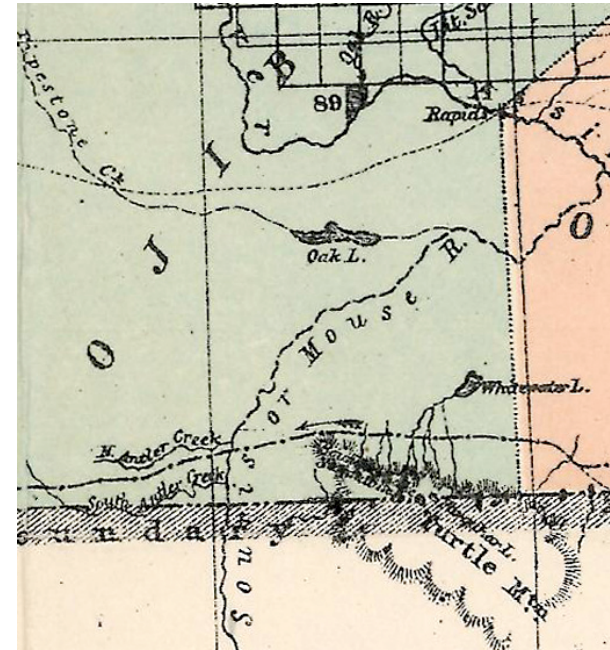
The First Nations communities knew that their old way of life was gone. The buffalo herds were gone. They were interested in securing a more certain future for themselves and generations to come.

Treaty 1 which covered the central and eastern parts of Manitoba, was signed on August 3rd 1871.

In exchange for certain payments and guarantees of services, the First Nations agreed to give up the use of all of their land except for reserves. They pledged that they and their people would "maintain peace between themselves and Her Majesty's white subjects, and not interfere with the property or in any way molest the persons of Her Majesty's subjects."

Treaty 2, which included almost all of the Turtle Mountain – Souris Plains Region was signed on the 21st of August 1871. Two other separate arrangements were made with the Dakota in the region. A small reserve (IR #60) was set aside on Turtle Mountain for a group of Dakota families.

Today most people would agree that the deals made with both the First Nations and Metis communities were not fair, and that the First Nations didn't have a lot of choice in the matter.



The boundary between Treaty 1 and Treaty 2 land is close to where Boissevain is today.

The Numbered Treaties, in addition to the passage of the Indian Act in 1876, marked the beginning of a new relationship between western First Nations and the Canadian government.

Questions about whether the deals were fair and whether the Government of Canada kept its promises are still important topics today.

The Metis Claim

In 1869, the area we now call Manitoba would likely have become part of the District of Assiniboia – a large district that would include present day Saskatchewan and Alberta as well. It would have been administered by a Governor and Council, it might well been some time before it became a province. Alberta and Saskatchewan had to wait until 1905.

What the government overlooked was that there were already people here. The Metis people who had lived here for decades in well-established communities, quite naturally objected when surveyors arrived who seemed determined to re-draw the maps as if they weren't even there.

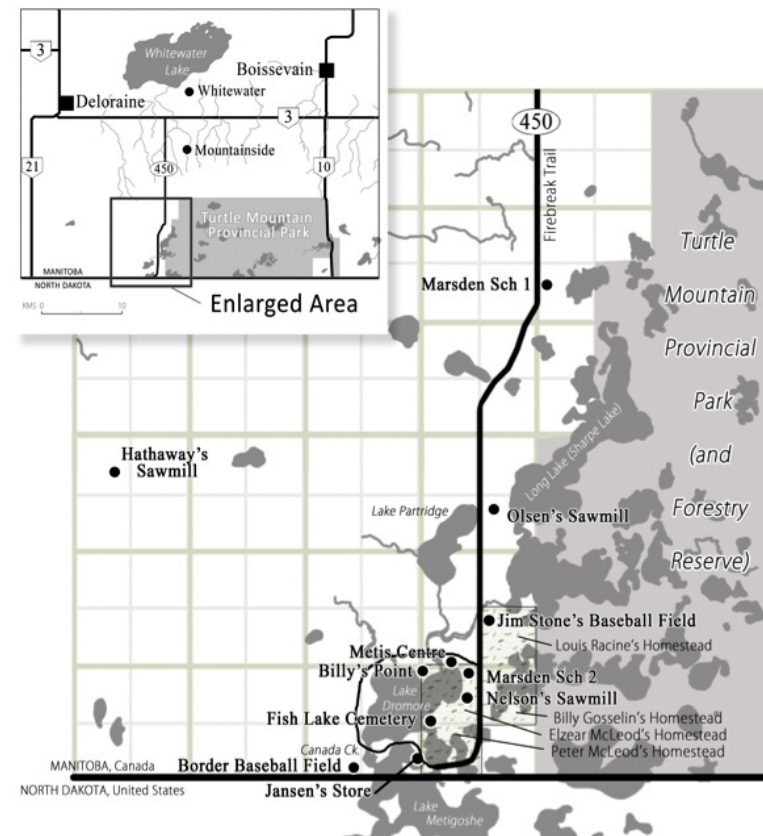
For several generations the Metis made up the majority of the population in Red River. The Resistance in 1869 and the North West Resistance of 1885 uprooted Métis families from their homesteads and scattered them in all directions.

The Government promised that each Metis family would get a farm, but the way it was done has caused disagreements to this day, and many people feel that promises were not kept.

The Turtle Mountain Connection

The Métis have a long history of interaction with the landform known as Turtle Mountain. Turtle Mountain and Whitewater Lake to the north were prime hunting grounds. During the summer and fall hunting seasons the Métis grew familiar with the plains surrounding Turtle Mountain.

Turtle Mountain provided resources from which temporary winter camps could be built: construction materials for simple cabins, firewood, and shelter from the stiff winter winds.



Farming on The Prairies



It is a common perception that most plains Aboriginal peoples were all nomadic wanderers who existed without the use of agriculture.

Though this was true of some First Nations, we know that agricultural activities in Southwestern Manitoba did not begin with European settlers. However the constant movement of the buffalo hunting societies made agriculture difficult, and the abundance provided by those animals made it unnecessary.



Several sites, such as the Snyder The first European “settlements” or communities in western Manitoba were fur

trade posts. We also know that they tried to supplement their provisions with some form of agriculture – and reported some success.

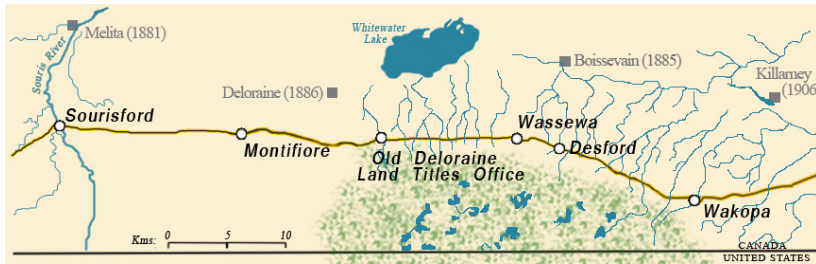
But could people make a living on these plains through farming alone?

The Canadian government sent Professor Henry Youle Hind, a Toronto geologist, to explore the region and answer that question. During the summer of 1859 he and his party of 13 men explored southwestern Manitoba. They noted the lack of timber, but found what they were looking for - fertile land.

In 1859 a British expeditions by Capt. Palliser also explored the Northwest Territories to examine the suitability of the region for agricultural settlement. He was impressed with the parkland along the Saskatchewan River but defined the large area south of that, including much of southwestern Manitoba as near-desert, unsuited for settlement.

His opinion was contradicted by a later report by John Macoun that essentially predicted that the prairie grassland would be the breadbasket to the world.

Transportation



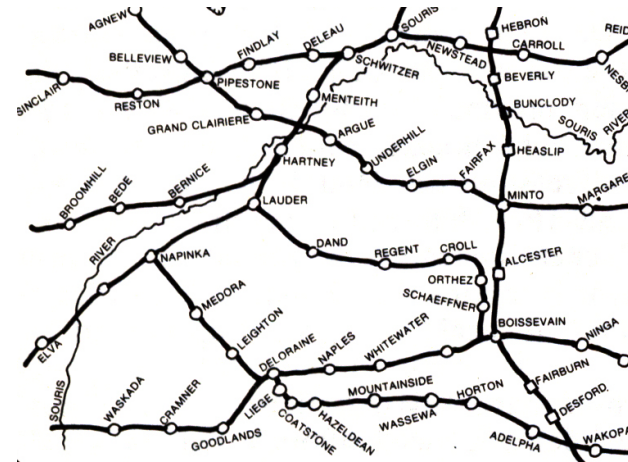
The first highway to Southwestern Manitoba

The Boundary Commission Trail



Crossing the Souris River at Sourisford, 1874

In 1873, the British and United States Boundary Commissioners followed a route along the 49th Parallel as they marked the boundary between the U.S. and Canada.



By 1920 rail lines crossed southern Manitoba.

The National Dream

The Conservative government led by John A. MacDonald had a long-time dream of building a railway that would span the country from coast to coast.

The settling of the west and the establishment of farms would depend on having this modern fast method of travel.

Why They Came



For the first settlers, it was a long slow journey.

The Government of Canada negotiated Treaties with the First Nations. They had reason to believe that this land was suitable for farming, and had arranged a transportation system that would get people here and get farm produce to market.

One issue remained. Would the settlers come? Would large numbers of people leave their home and travel to an unknown land?

There were reasons to believe that many would take the step,

There were circumstances in Europe and Upper Canada that might cause people to want to leave their communities and consider Manitoba as an option.

Poor employment opportunities and shortage of good farm land might cause some settlers to leave established communities like those in Ontario.

In other parts of the world these reasons might also apply, while famine, war, disease, and a desire for political change might also be good reason to leave a place.

Some might just have had an “adventurous spirit” or ambition. **I’m Hearing Good Reports...**

There were also some good reports from people who had visited and thought the place was great.

The most famous of those was “The Great Lone Land”

How could one resist the land described as follows?

“The great ocean itself does not present more infinite variety than does the prairie ocean of which we speak. In winter, a dazzling surface of purest snow; in early summer, a vast expanse of grass and pale pink roses; in autumn, too often a wild sea of raging fire. No ocean of water in the world can vie with its gorgeous sunsets; no solitude can equal the loneliness of a night-shadowed prairie: one feels the stillness and hears the silence, the wail of the prowling wolf makes the voice of solitude audible, the stars look down through infinite silence upon a silence almost as intense...”

William Francis Butler had visited in 1870 and he was impressed. Many people in Ontario and in Britain read his book.

Others writing in newspapers gave first hand accounts of the great opportunities available in the new west.



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5.The Early Re-Settlement Era

A Lifestyle Experiment

Page 31:The Mooneys Come West

Page 32: Mrs. Weightman Makes a Fresh Start

Page 33: How to Build a “Soddy”.

Page 34: The Half-Way House

Page 35: The Mailman

A Good Decision - The Mooneys Come West

In 1880 John and Letitia Mooney and their family came west to a farm near Wawanesa. Their six-year old daughter, whom we now know as Nellie McClung, wrote a good account of her family's journey from their comfortable Ontario farmhouse to the Manitoba frontier.



This photo of Nellie Mooney was taken the day before her family left Ontario for their new home in Manitoba.

Why did they come here?

It started when their son Will told the family about a book he read called "The Great Lone Land" which told tales of the adventure and the beauty to be found in the west.

The family also saw newspaper stories that spoke of the wide-open spaces out west. A visitor who had been to the west told of, "wild strawberries ... so thick that they stained the feet of the oxen red."

It sounded great.

The Mooneys were a large family and only had a small farm. There was no future where they lived. Nellie remembers her mom saying, "We have to go somewhere, John. There's nothing here for our three boys. What can we do with one hundred and fifty stony acres? The boys will be hired men all their lives, or clerks in a store."

Will knew people who had been west and talked of, "a plain a hundred miles wide, and not a tree or stone in sight." Stones and trees had made establishing these Ontario farms quite an effort. The bald prairie would be easy to plow.

Of course they also wondered if it was all too good to be true. John wondered about the cold, about whether apple trees would grow, about mosquitoes and stories about the Aboriginal people who lived there. Would it be dangerous? Would they miss the comforts of their home?

They decided to give it a try.

The Trip

The Mooneys' trip also followed a well-known pattern.

The quickest, easiest way to Manitoba in 1880 was by boat across the Great Lakes to Duluth, by train to Winnipeg. From there settlers had the option of riverboat or ox-cart trail depending on their destination. Often there was a stay in Winnipeg while the husband or son scouted for a suitable homestead. Then on the trail there would often be a stop - perhaps at Portage for supplies. Almost all accounts mention both hospitality and hardship as swamps, creeks, mud roads and equipment failure and other mishaps made the trip interesting.

Mrs. Weightman Makes a Fresh Start

Mrs. Elizabeth Weightman, a widow from northern England, and her children, arrived at their homestead in the spring of 1882 after a fifty-six day journey from Edinburgh, Scotland.

They crossed the ocean on a crowded ship, then took the train to Lake Huron, where they caught a steamboat to Duluth, and another train to Brandon. At Brandon they bought the usual homestead supplies: oxen, a wagon, a plow, a tin stove, a tent and two cows.

They decided to search for land and headed south of Brandon with a few other newcomers. On the second day out, news reached the party about land recently opened for homesteading, so a delegation sped ahead on a horse-drawn wagon towards the Land Titles Office in Deloraine. The rest continued with the oxen and supplies. High creeks and wet ground slowed them down – on a particularly bad day they travelled just five kilometers.

The reward came when the group returned from the Land Titles Office with the papers entitling them each to a homestead. Two long days later the Weightmans found their plot of land. They were home.

As quickly as possible they broke some land and planted a few acres of oats and some potatoes. A sod barn was erected and a modest frame house was built – not quite finished for the coming of the first blizzard, but quite an improvement over the tents that had provided their only shelter up until this point.



The Weightman home became a “Stopping House” and the first Post Office in the region. They called it “West Hall” after their farm home in England.



A school, also called West Hall was built on the Weightman property. Their original farm yard is not occupied, but visible in the background.

How to Build a “Soddy”

Most of the first settlers started their homesteading life in a sod hut. Trees were scarce and wood was expensive. Getting that first crop planted was the priority. “Soddies” as they were called, provided quick shelter until a better house could be built.

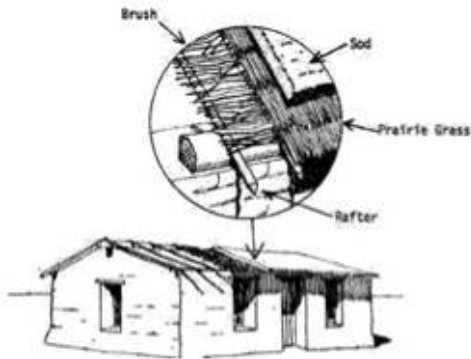
Here’s how to build one:

Pick a little rise of land with good drainage to build your home.

Find a bit of lower land, a soggy slough bottom perhaps, where the grass roots are thick and tough - that’s where to find the best sod.

Use a plow to cut a smooth furrow 30 or 40 cm wide, then cut the sod into 50 cm lengths.

Start by laying two tiers of sod side by side, making sure the ends aren’t lined up. , Then lay a second course crossways, this hold it all wall together.



Try to include a few windows and a door by using planks as frames, when the wall reaches the proper height. One door is plenty and glass for windows might be hard to come by.

The Roof

Place strong poles down the centre of the building to support a ridge pole.

Place rafters of poles from the ridge pole to the walls.

Start with a layer of willow (hay could be used if necessary), then top with sod.

If lumber is available, a wood floor is nice, if not, packed dirt will have to do for now.

Interior walls can be smoothed and even coated with whitewash or plastered with clay.

Heavy cotton can be stretched over ceilings and wall to give it that cozy, finished look.



The finished product

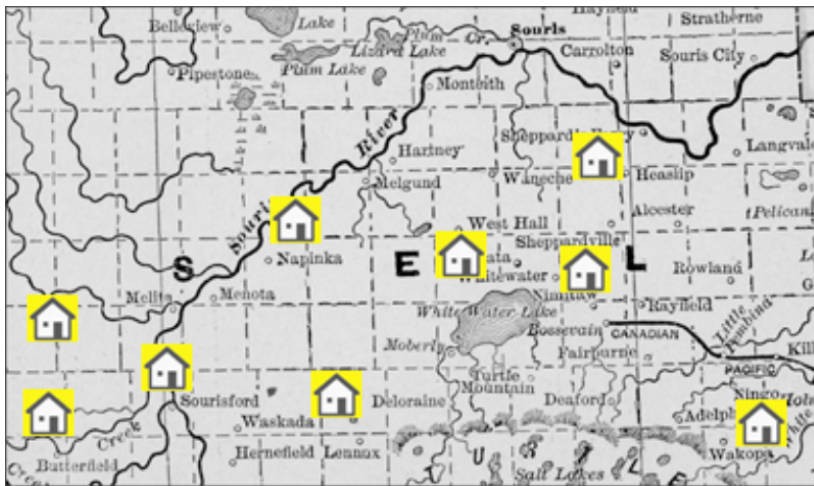
Most people used their sod huts for just a few years before upgrading to wood.

The Half-Way House

Today a trip from Hartney to Brandon takes less than an hour. In 1882 it could take over a day. Travellers needed places to stop for the night. There were no towns and no hotels, so some settlers who happened to be on well-travelled trails would turn their home into a Stopping Place or Halfway House.

Mrs. E. Weightman, near Dand must have noticed that she was about half way between Brandon and the busy Land Titles Office at Deloraine. It was a natural place for a Halfway House.

Often regular travellers to Brandon would plan their trips around the location of the stopping houses.



Halfway Houses or Stopping Places were conveniently located on major routes.

Even after decades had passed, an early resident of Deloraine remembered Mrs. Fox's stopping house on the trail from Emerson to Boissevain as having especially good food.

Reservations were not required and there was always a way to squeeze one more in – even if the hayloft had to be used.

Halfway Houses were a combination; restaurant, motel, and livery stable. It was like a bed and breakfast with an extra meal thrown in – plus a gas station to fuel up your horse!

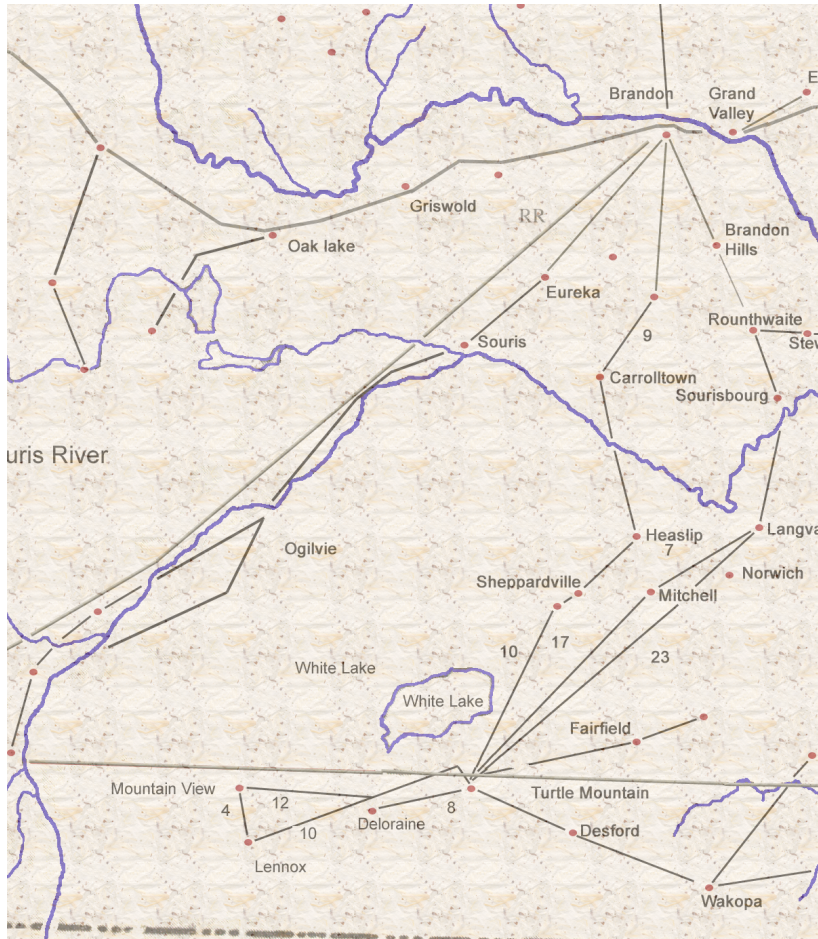
The first stopping place known to operate in southwestern Manitoba was at “Old Wakopa” where Bernard LaRiviere had set up shop in an abandoned Boundary Commission building. The shack erected by Elliott and Gould, the first settlers at Sourisford (further west along that Boundary Commission Trail), was soon recognized as a stopping place, as was the home of William Walker in the Lyleton district.

The John Renton home, within a mile of the Land Titles Office, was a natural place for a stopping place. It was also a natural place to hold church services – guests arriving on a Saturday night would likely have appreciated that.

The earliest stopping houses also acted as informal postal outlets until a proper post office could be applied for and established.

They had everything the traveller needed.

The Mailman



Postal Routes - 1884

In the early 1880's the main road from Old Deloraine to Brandon was the Heaslip Trail named for Sam Heaslip who established the trail and used it to deliver the mail.

Each week he picked up the mail in Brandon. His first stop after crossing the Souris River would be his own home, the site of a post office named after him. The home also served as a stopping house and store.

Sheppardville owned by Robert Sheppard was the next stop. From there it was on to Nimitaw where Mr. James Rae was Postmaster.

Turtle Mountain, the main settlement in what would become the RM of Morton would be the next stop – a busy one at that.

Heaslip's route ended at Old Deloraine where mail for more distant spots was picked up by others. Some called the service a stagecoach, which probably meant Sam didn't mind taking along a passenger or two.

The other main mail route ran from Souris, along the Souris River to Butterfield, stopping at Melgund, Napinka, Menota on the way. Few of these stops were even the beginnings of villages – just farm homes that had a post office.



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6. New Communities

False Starts and Forward Steps

Page 37: Wakopa - The first “Stopping Place”

Page 38: “Old” Desford.

Page 39: The Cheese King

Page 40: Turtle Mountain City & Waubeesh

Page 41: Old Deloraine

Page 42: Melgund & Hartney

Page 43: Grande Clairiere

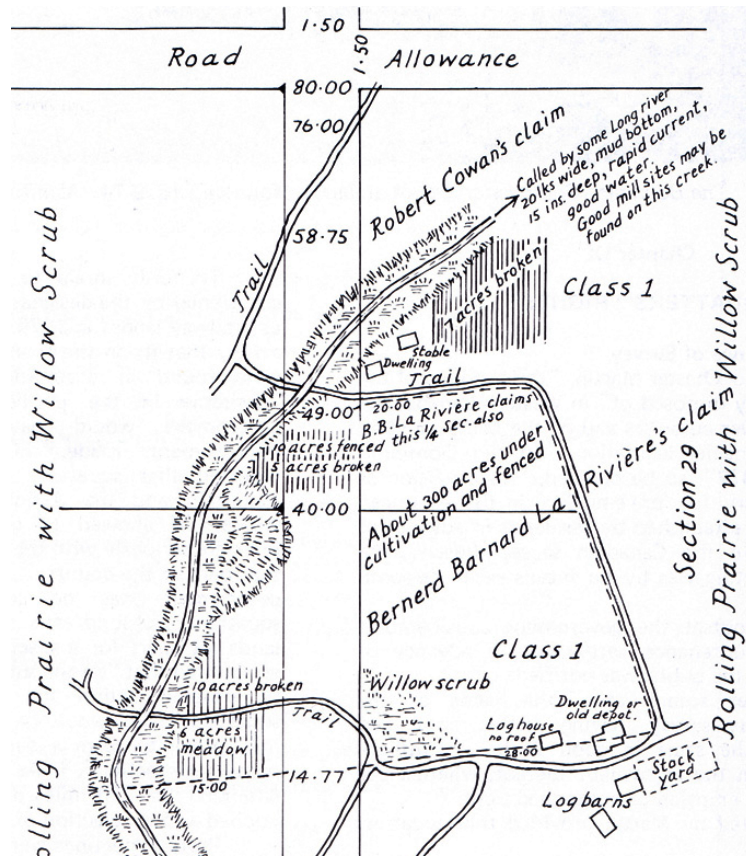
Page 44: Sourisford

Page 45: Manchester to Melita

Page 46: Dobbyn City

Page 47: Butterfield

Wakopa - The first "Stopping Place" for settlers heading west.



Wakopa was the first of the villages that were to pop up in the first few years of European settlement – before the arrival of the railway.

B. B. LaRiviere

The community began as a trading post. Bernard B. LaRiviere a fur trader from Minnesota was on a hunting trip to Turtle Mountain in 1876, when he got the idea to set up a store for new settlers who would soon be coming. They would need supplies.

On the Boundary Commission Trail near the eastern edge of Turtle Mountain, he found a place that the Commission had used as Depot He bought it along with some remaining supplies and by late spring of 1877 he was in business. The Boundary Commission Trail became the main street of the very first settlement village in the southwest.

By the spring of 1880, several settlers joined him. They had a grist mill and saw mill in operation as well as a boarding house and livery barn. Two blacksmith shops were set up.

The first church services were held in LaRiviere's home, but later the schoolhouse was used. The school, built in 1882, was the first school in all of the Turtle Mountain-Souris Plains area.

The village became a busy centre with the addition of a post office, another store and several log and sod houses.

Wakopa was the site if the first Municipal Meetings, the first Mounted Police Depot, and the site of the formation of the "Wakopa Branch of the Manitoba and Northwest Farmer's Union."

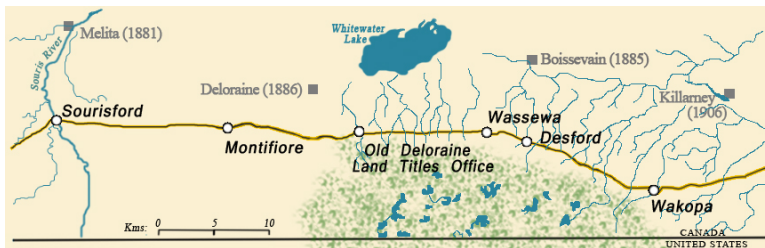
This well established community seemed ready to become an important regional centre, until the arrival of the railway changed everything.

“Old” Desford

An Englishman named Barneby did a tour of the North American in 1883. He passed through Brandon and then went south. In the book he published he mentioned one of little villages that came and went in those early days.

“On our route we passed a store named Desford, where we watered our horses; but the water was bad. A road comes in here from Brandon. The Turtle Mountains are still to the south.”

That’s about all he had to say.



Desford - on the Boundary Commission Trail.

The Desford community began in the late 1870's along the Old Commission Trail about 12 kilometres south-southwest of Boissevain, and was, like Wakopa, one of the first trading centres in the area.

People living where Boissevain would soon be located would do their shopping at Desford. Sunday Church service was held at a local home.

Sunday Church service was held at a local home. Fox’s sawmill served the district in the early 1880’s and produced most of the lumber that was used for the first buildings in the region.

Like nearby Wakopa, Desford seemed ready to become an important town if only the railway would pass through.

That didn’t happen. The railway passed to the north and the town of Boissevain became the centre of the region.

But the Desford story wasn’t over.

In 1906 the Great Northern Railway was put down through the area and a small village, also called Desford, sprang to life.

In 1908 the hamlet consisted of the water tower for the trains, the Railway Station, elevator, section house, bunkhouse, the Methodist Church, the blacksmith shop, a Community Hall, a General Store and a few houses.



All traces of Desford, once located in this field, are gone. This sign, placed in 1970, is left to remind us.

The Cheese King

ANOTHER BIG PROPOSAL.

The Scheme Which Mr. George Morton Has Submitted to the Government.

The Kingston *Whig*, of the 29th ult., contains the following:—

Mr. George Morton has submitted to the Government an application for a grant of a portion of two townships, and twenty sections adjoining one of them, in the North-West Territory, as per plans which he has forwarded to the Department of the Interior.

In 1881 George Morton from Kingston Ontario applied to the government for a huge land grant on the north side of Whitewater Lake under the condition that he settle at least 75 families on the land. His plan was to create 108 dairy farms, 36 stock farms and cheddar cheese factory.

By 1882 The Morton Dairy Farming and Colonization Company, had about fifty men employed on the farm and everything was said to be progressing as planned

He acquired a sawmill recently established at Max Lake, and built a store at the new community of Waubeesh. Before long equipment and cattle were making their way westward.

Mr. Morton had a very good plan – on paper.

As so often happened throughout the west, the railway didn't come through with its promise; it actually built south of the lake, and not until 1885. By that time the dairy operation was

long gone, for the first harsh winter killed most of his stock, and it was downhill from there.

The city newspapers which had devoted so many paragraphs to the great plans, summed up the end result in one sentence.

**The Morton Dairy and Colonization Co.,
at Turtle Mountain City, are out of business.**

From the Winnipeg Daily Sun – May 5, 1883



George Morton and the store he built in Whitewater.

Mr. Morton however proceeded with his other businesses (stores, sawmills, and elevators) and did very well. The Municipality of Morton is named after him.

Turtle Mountain City & Waubeesh

<p>Turtle Mountain City, Whitewater Lake</p> <p>This is the Banner Town of the far-famed Turtle Mountain country, and is the business centre of the best settlement in the great North-West.</p> <p>Being on the lines of the Manitoba Southwestern Railway and Syndicate Southwestern Branch,</p> <p>It will be a competing point for these railways. Merchants and others should secure lots there as soon as they are placed upon the market. Section 3, Tp. 3, Range 21 West. " 32, " 2, " 21 "</p>	<p>Ads like this one ran in Winnipeg newspapers regularly in 1881 and 1882.</p> <p>It was a time called the Manitoba Boom. Everyone wanted to get rich by buying land and hoping that the price would keep going up. Then they could sell at a big profit.</p> <p>These "cities" had several things in common. They all claimed they were going to be the main town of a region.</p>
<p><i>Winnipeg Times January 7, 1881</i></p>	

They all claimed that the railways would pass nearby. They all simply lied about what was there.

An early settler was quick to have one such city surveyed on his land. He called it "Turtle Mountain City" and claimed it was "The Banner town of the far-famed Turtle Mountain country"

Turtle Mountain City actually consisted of a store, a post office and a Stopping Place.



The railway passed to the north and the new town of Whitewater was created.

Waubeesh

Nearby an actual village called Waubeesh had been started with stores, a blacksmith shop and even a church. But even with those services, it couldn't survive when the railway passed it by.

George Morton had a store there, and as soon as the railway came to Boissevain he moved it to the new town.

Old Deloraine

In 1880 the Dominion government established a Land Titles Office south of Turtle Mountain along the Commission Trail. It was a considerable convenience to settlers and a sure sign that many settlers were expected. George Newcombe came to establish the office, bringing with him his family, a governess, and the first piano to find its way into the area. Before long, in February of 1881, he was father to the first white baby (Louise) to be born there.

Today we call the location Newcombe's Hollow.



All that remains of "Old Deloraine" is this stone bank vault. The rest of the village's buildings were quickly moved to the new rail line a few kilometres away.

But the CPR changed its plans and built the line a bit to the north.

The arrival of the first mixed train into what was called "Track End" on November 8, 1886, meant the end of the original Deloraine. Merchants, implement dealers, blacksmiths and millers all moved to take lots on the new townsite. But they did decide to keep the same name



James Cavers was the first Postmaster in both "Old" and "New" Deloraine. He named the village after his old home in Scotland.



The Deloraine Pioneer Cemetery – still in use

Melgund & Hartney



Southwest of Hartney on Melgund Road, there is a small cemetery at a crossroads. Established in 1887, it was the first graveyard in the region. Across the road, a cairn helps to mark the spot that was home for many people over many years.

Early in 1881 Samuel Long and John Fee came from Ontario to this area. The sod shack they erected that first season, soon known as “The Shanty” or “The Orphan’s Home”, was a stopping place and temporary home to many settlers over the next two years.

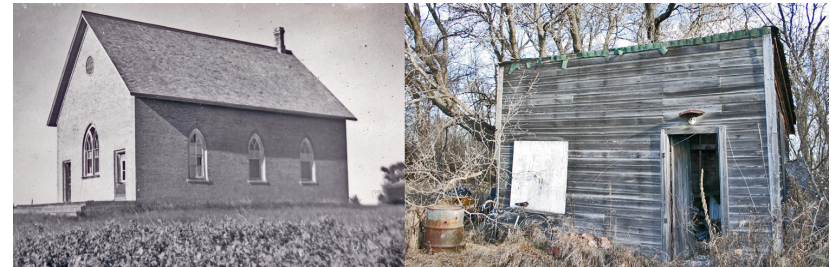


Both Melgund and Hartney appear on this map from 1887. There were no towns as yet – the map shows post office locations.

It would be nine years before the railway entered the district and the town of Hartney would be created.

In the meantime it was Melgund that seemed to be where things were happening.

The name Melgund first appears as a Post Office opened in 1882 in the home of W.J. Higgins. Rose School opened in, 1884, one of the first in the area. It was also used as a church before the Melgund Methodist Church was built across the road.



The photo of the Melgund Methodist Church was taken in 1946. The small building on the right served as the Melgund Post Office – and likely as a residence for a time as well.

When the first settlers arrived they had to build some shelter, break some sod, and plant some grain and vegetables.

Before long they would get together and build a school. They might build a church, and then, perhaps, a general store or a blacksmith shop might open for business.

But most such settlements never did become towns as we know them, with rows of houses and a main street for stores and shops.

Grande Clairiere



In 1885, a 30-year-old priest named Jean Gaire decided to leave France for Canada and help others move to this new country.

By 1888, homesteaders from Eastern Canada, Great Britain and Europe had settled much of the land along the Souris River. Father Gaire, arrived at Oak Lake Parish on July 10, 1888 and set off in a southwesterly direction, in search of a suitable location to start a new community.

They found a large clearing that pleased the young priest. A few Metis families lived nearby, so he decided to settle and called the place "Grande Clairiere."

Father Gaire applied for a homestead.

He described his first church service in his memoirs: *"At 9 o'clock my three Metis families were there - 6 adults and 10 children. I have neither choir nor children to serve Mass; I say a low Mass, all the time admiring the simple, open piety of these brave people."*

Soon his new community had a few more Metis families and some settlers from Loire in France. The population tripled in three months!

By April 1889 settlers began to arrive.

There were now 43 homes and close to 150 people!!

During the winter of 1889-1890, Father Gaire returned to France for a month as "Immigration Agent" for the Canadian Government. On March 23, 1890, forty French and Belgian immigrants came to Grande Clairiere.

By 1893, the community had a post office, a church and rectory; and had started building a school.

Father Gaire's dream was to have more than an ordinary school; he wanted a boarding school where children from distant missions, that had no educational facilities, could be accommodated.



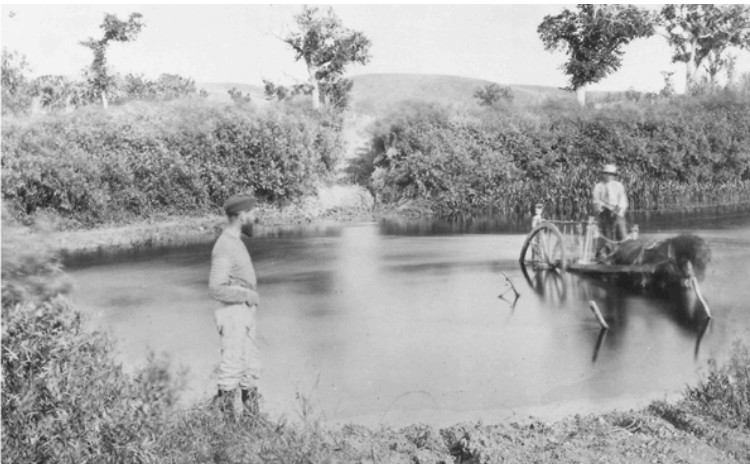
In the spring of 1898, construction began on the first convent. The sisters arrived in Grande Clairiere on August 11, and the school opened on August 18 with 20 pupils registered.

In 1903, his dreams in Grande Clairiere fulfilled, Father Gaire requested a transfer to a new mission in **Wauchope**, Saskatchewan.

Sourisford

It all started with a river crossing.

About ten kilometers north of where the Souris River crosses the US border, a gravel ridge in the river bed forms a natural crossing that has been used for centuries. Bison herds in their yearly migrations, Aboriginal Peoples on their hunting trips, fur traders and Metis pemmican brigades, each used the site.



The Boundary Commission Trail

Modern use of the trail began in 1873. The British and United States Boundary Commissioners followed a route along the 49th Parallel in their trek across the plains to mark the boundary between the U.S. and Canada.

Sourisford

The crossing at Sourisford was the obvious place for a village. Soon T.B. Gerry set up a blacksmith shop – a necessity for a farming community. The Gould – Elliot Stopping House, was

also a store and post office. Another store was operated briefly out of a tent by Warren & Snider. R. N. Graham, already established in Melita, established a branch store at Sourisford.

If the railway line that connected Brandon with southeastern Saskatchewan in 1890 had crossed the Souris River here instead of Melita, a major town would have grown here and Melita would have faded.

But Sourisford became a rural community with just a post office and store rather than a full village. In 1901 when another CPR branch stretched westward from Waskada and established Coulter a few kilometres away, Sourisford became one of dozens of Westman communities that had served its purpose and was no longer needed as a commercial centre.



Manchester to Melita

MANCHESTER!
Wednesday & Thursday
FEB. 1ST AND 2ND.
AT THE
Golden Sale Room!
MANCHESTER,
THE FUTURE
Great Manufacturing Town of the North-west
The Entrepot of the Great Souris Valley Iron and Coal Fields,
Magnificout Water Power within the limits of the town site!
Manchester, at the Crossing of the Great Sonis River by the S. W. R.R.
500 LOTS 500.

Melita is one of many Manitoba towns that had its original location abandoned when a nearby site was chosen by a railway company. In this case, the town of Melita had only a short way to travel.

By 1882 three identifiable communities developed within a few miles of the current site of Melita. Sourisford at the old Boundary Commission Crossing, Menota, a store & post office to the east of where Melita would later be, and Manchester just west of the current town.

In 1881, homesteader Dr. Sinclair had a quarter section of his land on the west side of the Souris River surveyed as a town site. Lots were sold to buyers as far away as Winnipeg. In 1883 R. N. Graham started a store, which was quickly followed by another one, a blacksmith shop, an implement agency and a public school.

The problem was the name they had chosen, "Manchester". In 1884 when the townsfolk put together a petition to open a post office, they were informed that Manchester had already been adopted by a settlement in Ontario. They got together and chose Melita.

And so the town was born, and as usual the business owners and residents were content to move a kilometre or so east to be alongside the new rail line when it arrived.



Melita pioneer James Duncan started his first Blacksmith Shop in Manchester. He quickly moved to the new location when the railway arrived nearby

Dobbyn City

The “Manitoba Boom” hits the Southwest Corner



John Dobbyn – Melita Pioneer and Businessman

Pioneer John Dobbyn had selected a homestead along the Souris River near where Melita would later be located. He, and many of the other settlers expected that a railway line would pass nearby, and that his land would be a good spot for a town. If that happened the land would be valuable.

Across the province there were many people speculating in land. They hoped to buy land that was now empty, but would later be a town, and be worth much more. They hoped to get rich. Knowing this, Mr. Dobbyn had “Dobbyn City” surveyed and marketed.

It was a typical example of the paper city. It was just believable enough to be sold and also full of wishful thinking and outright lies.

Apparently the ads worked... for a while. In March of 1882, The Winnipeg Daily Sun reported the sale of 80 lots at an average of \$30 each. How much, if any, of that money made its way into Mr. Dobbyn’s hands, no one knows.

Have a look at the ad from the Winnipeg Daily Sun, March 9, 1882. People in Winnipeg or back east had no way of knowing

that no railway would be built for another eight years, or that no real businesses or houses yet existed in Dobbyn City. It didn’t matter - they just hoped it would happen and their \$30 lots would be worth ten times that much.

DOBBYN CITY!

The future great manufacturing city of the

Souris District !!

MAGNIFICENT WATER POWER

And illimitable supply of coal and iron, is situated on Sec. 32 Tp. 3, Range 26 West. The centre of Souris River County in Southwestern Manitoba, at the point where the Manitoba Southwestern Railway crosses the Great Souris River.

The whole country surrounding Dobbyn City is acknowledged by all to be the actual Garden of Manitoba, and every available foot of land for miles and miles around, is settled.

Mr. Dobbyn, after whom the city is called, having colonized five townships himself, with wealthy farmers from Western Ontario.

Dobbyn City!

Is to be made the

COUNTY TOWN

OF

Souris River County

Being opposite Bismarck, it is here that connection will be made with the Northern Pacific.

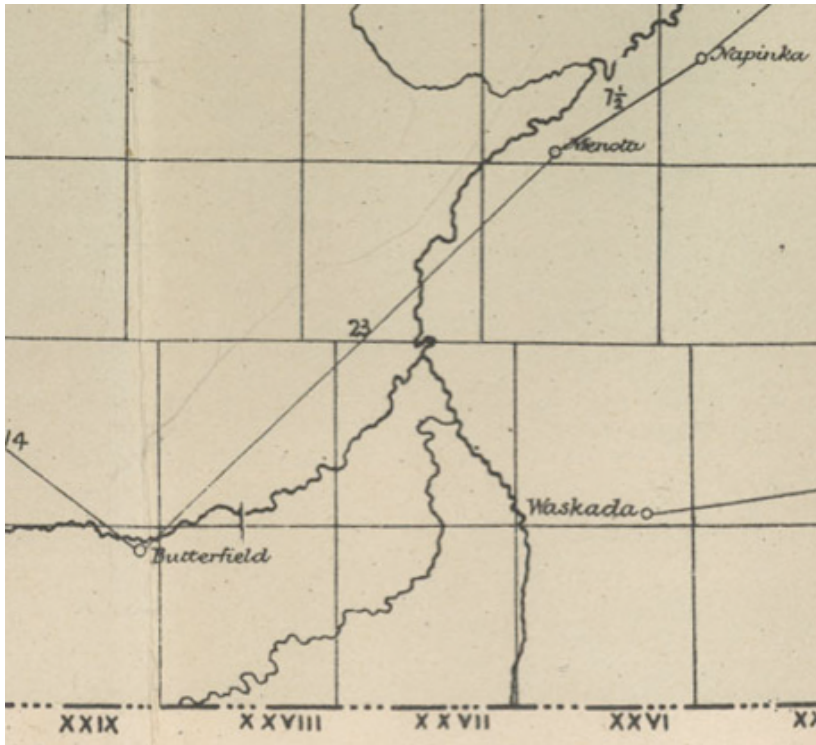
A company is now being formed to build a line of railroad from Dobbyn City by way of Qu'Appelle to Edmonton.

Building is now going on to the extent of \$25,000.

▲ Large Mill is being Erected

The railway did eventually come in 1890, but Dobbyn City was long forgotten and the river was crossed about a mile further downstream. Mr. Dobbyn had long since focused on his farm, and became a leading citizen of the new town of Melita.

Butterfield



Butterfield, a Post Office and Stopping Place on the Boundary Commission Trail, was one of the first "places" in the southwest corner to appear on any map.

Until recently, in a pasture a few kilometres southwest of Pierson, one could still see the remains of an old sod building by an old rutted trail.

Before the railway arrived in the southwestern tip of Manitoba, before Pierson was established, the mail came to Butterfield. The first post office was in a sod hut built by Dr. Joseph Dann, on his farm along the Boundary Commission Trail, and

operated by his brother Henry's family

As often happened the Post Office was a likely spot for a Stopping Place and being on the well-used trail made the location even more convenient.

Before the post office was opened in 1884, one of the settlers near Sourisford used to go to Brandon with an ox team about twice a month for everyone's mail and supplies.

Butterfield received its mail by stage coach.

The exact location of the buildings is hard to find now, and the trails have been worn away by time.



The name Butterfield lives on as the name of the school built nearby.



Turtle Mountain and the Souris Plains
- An Overview of Our History

7. Railway Towns

Patterns Emerge

Page 49: Boissevain

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Boissevain

When the line approached the spot then known as Cherry Creek, the CPR announced that they would erect a station there and a town appeared almost overnight.



Within a few short years the new town of Boissevain grew into the town we would recognize today.

Local businessman George Morton, quickly moved his general store from the earlier location of Wabeesh, in the Whitewater area, to the new town of Boissevain, where other buildings, stores and houses, were springing up.



The Boissevain CPR Station

The railway line that now serves Boissevain was put into operation on January 3, 1886.

Three churches, St. Andrew's Presbyterian (1887), St. Matthew's Anglican (1889), and St. Paul's Methodist (1893) survive today.

Preston and McKay built a large Flour Mill in 1889, which proved to be an important boost to the local economy.



In 1906 the Brandon, Saskatchewan and Hudson Bay Railway, which linked Brandon with the Great Northern Railway system in the United States provided competition for the CPR and additional service. The CPR also provided additional service when it completed its Boissevain-Lauder extension in 1913.



The Boissevain Great Northern Station

Whitewater Village

In 1886, the new CPR line bypassed the established community of Waubeesh and created the new village of Whitewater.

The boxcar railroad station that had been established to service Waubeesh became the beginning of Whitewater village. Pioneer businessman George Morton built an elevator in 1888 along with a large general store and boarding house, using lumber cut by the Lake Max Sawmill.

The elevator was the first of five that came to spring up in the town, making Whitewater a very important grain-handling centre.



Until 1894, the children of Whitewater attended Mountainside School, which was about 7.5 km to the south. In 1894 a schoolroom was set up above the general store in Whitewater. Petersburg School was built the following spring at the south end of the community.

A brickyard started up in the late 1880s about a mile northeast of Whitewater which employed between 30 and 40 men. The bricks made from Whitewater Lake clay were of very high quality, and they were used for many buildings in the nearby town, including the Petersburg School at the south end of the community.



By the early 1900s the village had a butcher shop, harness-making shop, livery, carpenter, and draftsman. There was also an open-air skating rink complete with a warm-up shack. Rail service was provided regularly by the CPR, with daily passenger and mail traffic.

Deloraine



When the first pioneers came and selected homesteads and village sites they considered several factors. Available wood and water and suitable drainage were important. The railway companies were often more interested in finding a good level route. Towns were located based on the distance between stations.

In 1885, the railroad reached Cherry Creek (Boissevain) and began the last stretch of the line. Instead of angling southwards towards the bustling community of Deloraine they headed almost straight west. The route across flat prairie was certainly easier to build than the path through the hills and valleys where Deloraine was located.

So a “new” Deloraine was created.



Deloraine immediately replaced Boissevain as the grain shipping centre of the Southwestern plains, receiving wheat for the next four years from as far as Pierson and Hartney. The sites that pioneers chose near water and trees were often quite scenic.

But the railway often selected sites on a treeless prairie. In Deloraine it was Dr. Thornton, whose love of nature, and wide knowledge of horticulture, made him perfectly suited to the task of planting trees and creating parks.

Both the Presbyterian and Methodist Congregations built fine large churches.

However in 1917 they united their congregations and only need one building.

Both were still standing in 2017 with the Presbyterian Church having served many other purposes.

Hartney

The railway companies usually put towns wherever they needed them. But in 1889 local farmers heard that the CPR was going to build a town to the northeast of where Hartney is today, settlers protested. They insisted that the new town should be near where James Hartney had established a post office and store on his farm.

Mr. Hartney moved to the area in 1882 with his family. He imported a carload of Red Fife wheat from Minnesota and soon had a good wheat crop. This gave the district a reputation as a first-class wheat producing area. His success attracted more settlers and Hartney's farm became the centre of a new community. The post office, which he named after himself, and a store, were first operated out of his home. He brought men into the community to operate this business as well as a blacksmith shop that he later established.



Hartney grew quickly on each side of the new railway track. The Mill and Elevators were important services.

When the surveyors did appear they selected a spot within a mile of the Hartney farm and, the settlers, were happy. When the C.P.R named the town Airdrie they made another request. They wanted the new place named Hartney already in use for the post office. Once again, the CPR made the change.

As the town grew, two brickyards, a flour mill, and a sash & door factory contributed to the economy. In 1902 A.E. Hill built the two-story brick block that still stands on the corner of Poplar and East Railway.



The A.E. Hill store.

A second railway, the Canadian Northern connected Hartney to Virden to the west in 1900. By 1904, in addition to being the home of eight operating elevators and 10 clergy members, 51 businesses were listed in the town newspaper.

Lauder

Until the railway passed through Hartney on a path to Melita, Melgund was where residents in the Lauder area got their mail. It had a school and church as well.

With the railway came the new towns of Lauder and Napinka. As soon as town sites were laid out there were people on hand eager to set up places of business and Lauder was no exception.

Before the end of 1892 there were numerous buildings and businesses. In 1893 records for the town show seven married couples, fifteen boys and ten girls, with ten children in school.



As was common in all too many of these new towns, there were setbacks.

A fire in 1894 did a lot of damage.

The residents didn't waste any time – they rebuilt.

By 1895 the town layout was firmly established. It had a rink and tennis courts, and its curlers and tennis players were well known in neighboring towns as were its baseball and hockey teams. There was a literary society and a bicycle club. Dances were held in Hamelin's hall.

Another typical business venture in many new towns was the "Cheese Factory".

In 1895 the farmers of the area met to make plans. General approval was received and the factory was located just north of town. The rise in the road at this point was known for years as the "Cheese Factory Hill".

The milk was gathered daily in large barrels and the whey returned to the farmers for feeding pigs. Henderson Directory 1897 lists W. Bridgen as manager.

It did not last too long - probably not more than year.



Other enterprises included a mill and a lime kiln just north of Grand Bend School.

Napinka

In 1892 Napinka was a boom town located at the junction of two busy CPR branch lines.

The first building appeared in July of 1891 before the tracks were laid through the area, and before the townsite had even been surveyed.

A year later after the first railway line (from Brandon to Pierson) created the town, the line from Deloraine was finished to Napinka. Nearby Melita, had sent a delegation to Winnipeg to argue for the junction to be placed in their town but Napinka won.



Trains came in every day from Brandon, Winnipeg, Estevan and the many small towns along the line. To service the trains, the CRP built a water tower and pumped water from behind a dam the railway built on the Souris River.

A coal dock, tool shop, roundhouse and bunkhouse were also built to serve the CPR. The passengers and crew on the trips that stopped overnight in Napinka used the hotels and stores built along Railway Avenue. In 1892, an article in the Brandon Sun mentioned Napinka having "...two general stores, three hardware stores, two butcher shops, one flour and feed store, one watchmaker, two dressmakers, builders, coal and wood

dealers, one elevator, two lumber yards, a drug store and a barber shop..."

It also had boarding houses, two hotels, two banks, a blacksmith, doctors, a Massey-Harris dealership, and eventually, with the arrival of the automobile, two garages.

A beautiful two-story stone school now a designated Heritage Site, was built in 1900.



Sports teams, social clubs, and women's organizations were set up. An open air skating and curling rink was built in 1896, while a newer curling facility was built in 1906, and curlers from Napinka achieved great success in bonspiels across Manitoba.

Melita

By the time the current town of Melita appeared in 1890, the region itself had a long and interesting history. Three communities existed within a few kilometres. Sourisford lives on as a location and a part of our heritage. Dobbyn City never really got started, and the district of Menota lives on as a school site.

Manchester, renamed Melita, moved to be along a new rail line, and became the commercial centre of the region.

Before the first train whistle sounded, Mr. G.L.Dodds had moved his Hardware & General Store to the site of the new town and everyone else followed.



More buildings were built quickly from materials readily available via the new rail line. Within a few years they were replaced by more ambitious structures such as the Northern Bank, the I.O.O.F Hall and the Crerar Law Office; all of which are still in use.

By 1892 numerous business blocks lined Main and Front Streets.

As early as 1892, sidewalks were to be laid on Main Street. By 1898 Melita had a population of over 500 people.

1905 saw street lighting by gasoline lamps.

In 1916 permission was granted to R. N. Wyatt to place gasoline tanks at business on Front Street. Garages were replacing Livery Stables.

As the town grew, its selection of businesses attracted customers from some distance



Melita School

Elva

One of the first homesteaders in what came to be known as the district of Elva was H. J. Archibald and his family. They settled northwest of where Elva was later built. Archibald established a post office out of his home, which received the mail once a week from Brandon.



The view down Elva's Railway Avenue in 1940.

In 1891 James Skelton agreed to sell some of his land to the Canadian Pacific Railway, which was looking to continue the line west from Melita. An unincorporated village grew on a corner of Skelton's land. The community was later named after the first baby to be born in the district: Elva, the daughter of James Modeland and his wife.

Elva continued to grow, and by 1904 it had a population of 100 people. Four years later the numbers had grown to 150 people.

Elva seemed to be on the road to becoming a very important town—its elevators serviced farmers as far south as the United States boundary.



This elevator in Elva was the oldest still standing in Canada until it was destroyed in 2022.

The Lake of the Woods elevator was built sometime between 1892 and 1899. Before the turn of the century, the Lake of the Woods Milling Co was one of Manitoba's top companies in the grain industry. Their elevator shared the business with three other elevators, all built near the turn of the century and operated by different companies.

Pierson

The CPR laid tracks through what would be the village of Pierson in 1891 and surveyed a town site. Merchants Alfred Gould and David Elliot from Sourisford were the first to buy lots. They established Pierson's first business, a grocery store

Pierson quickly became the service centre for the southwest corner.

February of 1892 saw the first train rumble down the tracks. In short order, three grain elevators were built beside the tracks by different companies. In 1900 this number had risen to four.



The usual assortment of services followed in a building boom that provided the shops and businesses necessary to make the community flourish: a blacksmith shop, millinery shop, wheelwright, livery barn, butcher shop, lumberyard, drug store, jewellery store, bank, barbershop, and café, among others.

Around 1900, the businessmen of Pierson, especially J. F. Dandy, saw a need for more accommodations for the travelling public. Dandy owned the first hardware, furniture and lumber businesses. In 1900 Dandy financed the building of the Leland

Hotel, which catered to travelling businessmen, doctors, dentists and incoming settlers.



In the fall of 1891 Sherriff's and Company built a large warehouse, with the lower part housing machinery, sleighs, cream separators, parts and feed and the upper part was used as a hall.



The Pierson train station in 1915

8. Railway Expansion

Peak Rail

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Turtle Mountain and the Souris Plains
- An Overview of Our History

Medora

Postal records show a Post Office named Medora, operated by William Cosgrove, and located in the neighbourhood in 1887, several years before the survey that established the town.

Medora was one of those many towns that grew quickly, served its purpose, then evolved from a busy rural service centre, to a quiet collection of homes adjacent to the highway.



Medora – buildings came first... trees a bit later.

The first train made its way westward from Deloraine in July 1892. Surveyors had selected a spot for a station about midway between Deloraine and Napinka and an empty stretch of prairie farmland was transformed.

Empty is perhaps not the right word. As elsewhere in the pre-railroad days, communities existed before the towns sprang up.

About a mile from the corner of Road 452 and Road 15N a seemingly abandoned cemetery bears the sign “Brenda Memorial Garden.” Locals know it as the “Old Medora Cemetery.” It is close to where the first Medora Post Office was located. The first recorded burial was in 1886.

The post offices, like schools, were here before the railway and before the towns. They were in farm homes and locations changed as postmasters resigned or moved on.

In fact three post offices, with five different names served the Medora region in the early days. This first one was opened in 1887. To avoid confusion it was re-named Menota when the “town” of Medora was created. The second post office, called Emerald Hill, was located south of the town in 1890. It was later moved in to the new village and re-named Medora Station and then Medora.

Once the railway settled on the location, the Medora story followed an established pattern. The first elevator was in operation by 1895, followed by three more within ten years. Baptist and Methodist Churches were built in 1903 and a cemetery established soon after. A rural school called Burns a few kilometres outside of town was moved into town and renamed Medora.

Growth continued. The telephone service came to Medora in about 1905. Sports and cultural activities thrived. The Medora football team was started in 1904 and continued until 1908. The team won five trophies, the trophy being a silver cup.

Minto

Minto got its start when the Canadian Northern Railway came through in 1898 and it grew quickly.



Farmers were now able to ship their grain and livestock closer to home instead of hauling to Boissevain or Hartney.

The town soon had all the shops that a community needed to thrive. These shops included everything from a butcher shop to a Chinese laundry.

In 1906 a second rail line from the North Dakota to Brandon made Minto an even busier place.

On October 14, 1930, this booming town met a harsh reality that many communities had to face in those days. A huge fire swept through the business section and razed everything in its path.



Like all small towns in the 1930's, some of the businesses that had been very important in the early days, were no longer needed. People could take their cars to nearby larger towns to shop. So many of the businesses didn't rebuild and Minto's "downtown" was no longer as busy. It did however keep its basic services and continues to serve the local people today.



Railway excursion to Brandon Fair on the Great Northern.

Highway 23

Fairfax



In 1899, after the railway was built, a survey was made of the village of Fairfax and building lots were sold.

The first general store was built in 1900 was operated by Mr. J. L. Hettle, who also became postmaster and Justice of the Peace. Three grain companies were quick to build elevators.

Fairfax school was established in August 1902. It became the Fairfax consolidated school in 1913 when it merged with Crown, St. Luke, and Plainville schools.

Underhill

The ghost community of Underhill took its name from Mr. John Underhill who arrived during the rush of settlement to this part of the prairies in the early 1880s.

Three elevators were swiftly erected with the arrival of the railway. Mr. A. E. Hill, who operated a store in nearby Hartney, opened a general store in Underhill in 1897.

The first school in the area was called the Berber School and was constructed over a kilometre south of the village in 1886. In 1909 it was moved into the village where it stood until 1928.

A new school was built on the same site and used until the district consolidated into the Souris Valley School Division.



Underhill in 2014

The school building was always a social centre for the district. Activities such as amateur plays, Sunday School, card games and dances were held.

Passenger service to the Underhill station was discontinued in 1954. Soon the railway line was abandoned and rural schools were consolidated further, shifting the focus from the small community to the larger surrounding centres.

Argue

Argue was known as the “Trackend” for a year as it was the most westerly station on the Winnipeg-Cameron-Hartney Branch of the Canadian National Railway until 1900 when the line continued to Hartney and Virden.



The community was named after pioneer John Argue.

Elgin



Elgin is another story of rapid growth. In 1898 when the railway came through, there was not a building on the present site. By 1900 the population of the village was about 400, and there were many more families in the district than at present. By 1913, as progress continued, Elgin had a school, four churches, an active band, and 34 places of business.



Built in 1904 this Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce building, to the left in the previous photo, was originally two stories high, providing accommodation for the bank manager. The second level was removed in the 1950s. After the bank closed in 1995, it became the Elgin and District Museum.



The Hotel was a busy place.



Churches in Elgin

In 1912, Elgin Consolidated School was formed when the local school, started in 1884, joined with Alice, Gilead, Maguire, and Millerway Schools. In 1951 a new modern school was built. That school closed in 1986 and a monument now commemorates it.

Grande Clairiere

The Grande Clairiere community, which was established in 1888, got a new look when the Canadian Northern line from Hartney to Virden passed through in 1906.



The three-story convent in Grande Clairiere was built in 1906.

The train brought better mail service and better delivery of supplies.

Already known for its large church, and convent, it now became a village with stores, garages and even a bank.

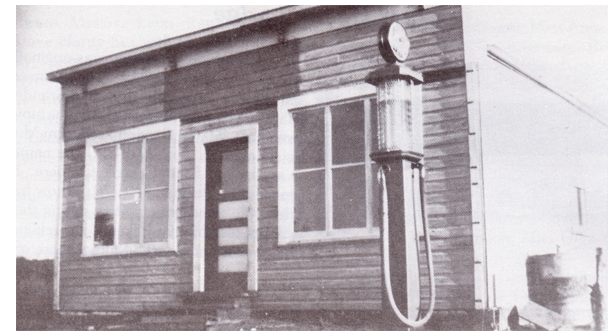


The Bank of Hochelaga has been preserved on a local farm.



Store operated by Claude Rey and Marcel Martine.

The Bank of Hochelaga opened as “la Banque Nationale” by Father Pierquin and originally located in the Rectory. Later changed to La Banque d’Hochelaga.

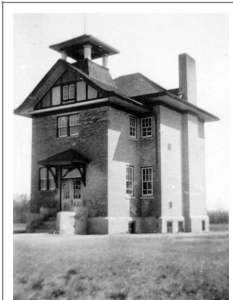


The gas station

Goodlands

During the summer of 1899 the C.P.R. built a number of branch lines throughout Manitoba and Saskatchewan. Among these was a line starting out from Deloraine in a southerly direction, with its terminus at Waskada. A letter from the railway company to the Goodland Brothers, who at this time were farming in the area told them about the new projected line and also that there would be a station somewhere on the Goodland farm. If they were agreeable, a townsite would be surveyed. "Goodlands" was the obvious name to use.

Like so many instant railway towns, everything happened quickly. A field of green oats soon became a main street with stores, a lumberyard, butcher shop, poolroom and barber shop.



The local school was called Lennox School – it had existed long before the town was created.

The Coal Mines

A few kilometres east of Goodlands is the site of Manitoba's only commercially viable coal mines. They operated during the 1930's and provided both employment for depression era farmers and cheaper coal for consumers.



The Nestibo Mine

Cranmer Siding

When the new rail line was between Deloraine and Goodlands, farmers who still had some distance to haul their grain started wondering if perhaps service couldn't be better.

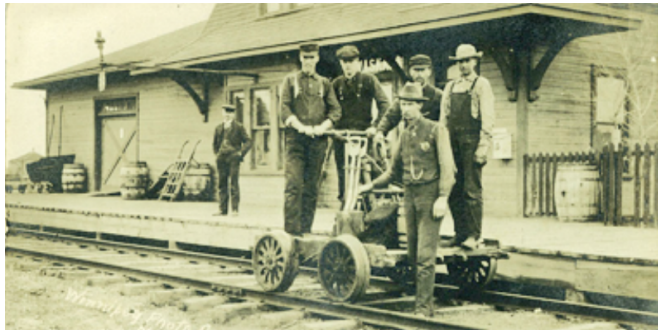
In 1906 Cranmer siding, was built, at about the midway point.

In 1928 Cranmer made the news when one of its elevators collapsed. Workers had heard the building creaking and groaning and evacuated in time. No one was hurt.

Waskada

A Post Office named Waskada was opened in 1883 a few kilometres south of where the town is today.

When it was confirmed in 1899 that a rail line was coming nearby and that a new town to be was being surveyed they decided to keep the name.



Until this time businesses such as stores, post offices, blacksmith shops and gristmills were operated on the individual properties of homesteaders. The railway brought the creation of towns, and towns then became the most logical place to do business.

When Charles Sankey arrived in Waskada in the fall of October 1899, the townsite was bare prairie. Sankey was a dedicated community worker, and in fact appointed by the municipality to look after general public interests in the town.

On a walk south of the townsite one day, a vision presented itself to Sankey: a recreational park, surrounded by trees, with space for sports activities and community events. From this initial dream, a combination of hard work, determination and good luck brought the Waskada Park into being.



Waskada quickly became the commercial centre for the region.

Over the next two years funds were being gathered for the purchase of trees. In the meantime Chambers planted potatoes and other vegetables in the strips of land. He did an excellent job, and left the soil in good condition for receiving trees.



The first version of the blacksmith shop, now featured in the Waskada Museum is visible on the left side of this photo from around 1909.

Stops on the Lyleton Branch

Dalny

Dalny was the first stop after the train headed west out of Waskada. Soon two elevators were doing a thriving business and a third was added in 1925.



In 1908 Coulter blacksmith and inventor Hunt Ralston Large built a paddlewheel steamboat that served on the local stretch of the Souris River before being moved to Brandon for assorted duties. One of the paddlewheel rests at nearby Coulter Park



Coulter

Coulter was the next stop and it did become a busy little village with a school, a church and a large general store.

The Coulter School was built in 1915.



The General Store built by pioneer Alfred Gould.

The Empress of Ireland

Cameron



This elevator, now in the middle of a field is all that is left of Cameron Siding. There were once three elevators and a store here.

Lyleton



In 1902, when the railway branch finally arrived near the Lyleton Post Office, close to the US border south of Melita, another new town was created. In fact that was what they called it at first, "The New Town". The streets were placed on what had been a field of grain just two months before. Andrew Lyle's farm home was the first post office; because of this, the district had been known as Lyleton for some time. Soon the town took that name as well.

A comfortable station was provided by the Canadian Pacific Railroad. Before long the town was booming with all the stores and services the region needed.

The foundation of the new Presbyterian Church, which still existed in 2017, was laid and the main street was lined with businesses.

Fire was the enemy of these new towns, and Lyleton had its share. On August 19, 1904, the entire business section portion of Lyleton was wiped out by fire, caused by lightning.



And like other towns before – they set out to rebuild.



The Lyleton Home Bank

A visitor to Lyleton today might find it hard to believe that it once had a thriving bank and a busy hotel.

Fire was to strike Lyleton again in 1910 and again large portion of the business section was destroyed. The fire fighting equipment of the day could do very little to check its progress.

The improvement in transportation and communication brought large towns of Melita and Brandon closer. There was already less of a need for some businesses. The store, school, church, elevators, post office, garages and lumberyard continued to serve the village for some time.

West from Wakopa



In 1886 the CPR railroad reached Killarney and Boissevain, and Old Wakopa began to fade. Then in 1905 the Canadian Northern from the east gave it new life.



The village was relocated here when the “Wakopa Branch” of the C.P.R. was build from Greenway in 1904.

Adelpha

Adelpha originated as a post office in the home of an early homesteader, John A. Hurt who settled just to the north of the Turtle Mountain Forestry Reserve, right next to the Boundary Commission Trail.

In 1905, the Canadian National Railway built a rail line heading southwest from Greenway. The rail passed just to the

northwest of Hurt's home. Construction stopped there and the train station was named Adelpha.

Since Adelpha was the “end of the line”, it became busy place for a time. A “wye” was built at for turning trains around so that they could head back east. In 1914 the Canadian National Railways extended their Greenway Branch to reach Deloraine and other villages attracted the business.

Mountainside

In 2017, the Mountainside Store – now used as a house, stands as a reminder of the little village that once served the needs of the surrounding district. At one time, in addition to the store there were nine houses, the school and two elevators in town.



They had church in the school and there was also a public dancehall in the basement.



In 1906 the Brandon, Saskatchewan and Hudson's Bay Railway, a part of the Great Northern Railway from the U.S., began service from Brandon to the small North Dakota town of St. John's, where it made connections to destinations across the United States.

The line was important to several communities south of Brandon.

Anything that would reduce the length of those trips to the elevator was welcomed by farmers.



Bannerman

Of all the newly created villages along the line, the rise and fall of Bannerman was the most dramatic.

In 1905 it was a field. In 1906 it was a brand new village. Soon a hotel with large dining room and bar encouraged visitors. A feed and livery barn and a lumberyard were open for business. A poolroom and barbershop, a store and post office, a blacksmith shop, a harness and shoe repair shop, all were built. Soon a second grocery store and additional blacksmith shop were needed, along with two dealerships for the fast growing farm implement business.

Because it was the first stop in Canada it was an official Port of Entry with a Customs and Immigration Office.

When the railway line closed in 1936 Bannerman became a town without a purpose. There were several other towns nearby that still had rail lines. It faded away quickly and is now back to being a field.

A Ride on the Great Northern

The train departed from St. John's, North Dakota, just a few kilometers south on the Manitoba / US border.

Charlie Bryant, long time conductor, well-known to folks all along the line, was a man who wouldn't hesitate to make an unscheduled stop or other accommodation for a good customer.

Bannerman

Before long it reached the border and four kilometers past that was the new village of Bannerman.

North to Minto

Desford

In 1908 the hamlet of Desford consisted of the water tower for the trains, the Railway Station, elevator, section house, bunk house, the Methodist Church, the blacksmith shop, a Community Hall, a General Store and a few houses.

The population exploded to near thirty.



The Desford Store was moved to Boissevain

A few kilometres out of Desford is to Fairburn. These "sidings" as they were called were put in place to accommodate local farmers, and were never intended to become villages.

To us in modern times it may seem odd that a place like Fairburn was even on the map. It was just a lone elevator on the open prairie.

But although it had no stores or streets it was a community. A Post Office had existed nearby for many years.

Boissevain & Minto

By 1906 Boissevain and Minto were already well established and already each had one railway line. The new line gave them a direct route to Brandon and another elevator to choose from.



Eagerly awaiting the train at the Minto Great Northern Station for an excursion to Brandon Fair, 1917

Any town would welcome a new connection to the outside world.

It was exciting, as Sylvia Sprott indicates in her memoir in the Minto History; "A trip to Brandon on the Great Northern train was indeed an event to remember."

Railway Construction – Heaslip & Beyond

Heaslip & Beyond

Heaslip had existed as a post office since the earliest pioneer days. It got a big boost when the Great Northern began operations in 1906 and the Heaslip community developed into the beginnings of a village, with a station and general store.

A Big Project

Just past Heaslip, the line angled north-westward to Bunclody. Along the way it had to cross two deep ravines that ran into the river from the west.

They built temporary trestles and dumped in earth to create a road-level earth dam, complete with huge pipes designed to let the runoff through. The pipes soon had to be replaced with concrete tunnels two metres square - still quite visible today. Local childhood adventures often included a dare to go through these tunnels.



Crossing a ravine between Heaslip and Bunclody

The bridge over the Souris at Bunclody was the biggest undertaking.



The End of The Line

The line closed in 1936. It just wasn't needed. People travelled by cars and the mail and freight service could easily be handled by existing lines and by truck.

The line is credited with ending the rural isolation felt by many Westman settlers and offered them an important time-saving travel option. Daytime shopping trips to Brandon were a treat, and students at university could get home for weekends. But the car and the improved road conditions offered a new sense of freedom to rural residents, and the line, though remembered fondly by old-timers, was just not needed any longer.

West From Lauder - Bernice & Bede



Bernice



Bernice School

In 1902, the Canadian Pacific rail line from Lauder to Tilston was surveyed and in about 1905, the town site of Bernice was established.

In its prime, Bernice had a large general store with a basement hall in which fowl suppers and community gatherings were held. The store also contained the post office.

The town also had a lumber yard, a blacksmith's shop, implement agency and machine shop, a C.P.R. (boxcar) station, a section house, a railway water tank, an open air skating rink, a church, and at least three homes.

Bede



Bede School

The rail line continued from Bernice westward. The next siding that sprang up was named Ruth and it remained with that name until the Canadian Pacific changed it to Bede in 1925.



The village consisted of an elevator, a school, and a store. The elevator closed in the late forties.

The cemetery, along busy Highway #83, is still in use.

West From Lauder – Broomhill & Tilston

This large old concrete block building in Broomhill might make you wonder: Why such a large building in a tiny village?



Kilkenny's General Store – Broomhill, 2011 (Photo by Gordon Goldsborough)

Perhaps when local Postmaster William Kilkenny and his brother John built it in 1908, they expected the village to grow, or maybe they were just ahead of their time.

The Broomhill post office had been established in 1892 on the Kilkenny homestead. When the CPR arrived nearby they moved to the new townsite and build their store.

It was more than a store - more like a shopping centre with a post office, a garage, gas station, and even implement dealership.

Broomhill's other claim to fame was its importance as a Dog Training centre and as the host of the All American Field Trials for hunting dogs.

Tilston

The first settlers to the region had chosen a site roughly two miles east of the present village of Tilston and established a community they called Eagleton. When the C.P.R. brought the railway through in 1907, they established the town at the current location, and the new name was chosen.

Soon, more settlers arrived and among the early buildings was a boarding house, a hardware, a blacksmith shop, a small school building, and a box car for a station.



Railway Avenue, Tilston



This small building is the former R.M. of Albert Municipal Office. Tilston is now in the Municipality of Two Borders.

The Boissevain – Lauder Branch



In November 1913 the first train followed the route from Boissevain through stations at Sanger, Schaffner, Orthez, Croll, Regent, Hathaway and Dand before reaching Lauder.

The Blue Flea, as it was called, ran a passenger service connected small communities with the big passenger trains out of Winnipeg. The trains also transported hay, grain, milk or whatever was needed.

Sanger, Schaffner, Orthez and Westhall were sidings with elevators and they never did become villages.

Croll had just an elevator and a store while Regent and Dand had a few other services.



The Dand site is home to the Dand Station Wildlife Habitat. The sign stands alongside the former railway line.



The site of Regent School

The End of the Line

After the railway stopped in the early 1960's, the communities lost much of their purpose. Before long schools, churches, stores and grain elevators began to disappear.

Croll, Regent & Dand

Croll



Croll School wasn't in the village. It was over three kilometres away, where it had been for many years before the village was started.

Regent

Of the many small railway villages that came and went, Regent's just might be the only one that was named by mistake. The CPR bought the original homestead of John Riley for the town they were creating and proposed that Riley would be the name. Someone along the way made a mistake and Regent was the name used. As Riley was long gone, the locals appeared quite OK with that.

Soon a large store, Post Office, Imperial Oil Dealership, hardware store, blacksmith shop/garage, poolroom, and barber shop were open for business.

A Presbyterian congregation used the school for services and built a Manse for the Minister. Later, in 1957 a United Church was built in the village.



Back in 1912, it was important for farmers that they have an elevator nearby. Many were still using horse-drawn wagons to deliver grain and each trip took up valuable time. The railway and elevator companies tried to provide the service every 6 – 8 kilometres. There was no real need for towns at every stop. Places like Westhall / Hathaway, in between the village of Regent and Dand, just had one elevator and used an old railway car as a station.

Dand

The station at Dand was at first known as "Landmark" before it was renamed to honour the Dand family's role in getting the railway to come through the region.

Thomas Dand found hauling grain to the distant rail line was quite a job, often made worse by blizzards in winter and heat and mosquitoes in summer.

He asked his friends from his former employer, the CPR, to build a railway line that would connect Lauder with Boissevain and the CPR agreed. They were having trouble deciding exactly where to place the route so Mr. Dand, who had experience with railways, walked a line from Lauder to Boissevain and the CPR followed his path.



Turtle Mountain and the Souris Plains
- An Overview of Our History

10. Diversity

Except for Grand Clariere, of most of the new communities in Southwestern Manitoba were British in nature for the first twenty years.

After 1900, that began to change as people from other cultures were added to the mix.

Page 69: The Metigoshe Metis Community
Page 70: Belgian Community
Page 71: The Whitewater Mennonite Community
Page 72: Chinese Immigration

The Metigoshe Metis Community

The first permanent Métis settlers moved to Turtle Mountain in 1908. Descendants of the Red River Métis came from North Dakota and settled just north of the USA-Canada border on the western end of Turtle Mountain. The following decades saw more families move into the bush land surrounding Lake Metigoshe, Lake Dromore and Sharpe Lake. Some European settlers married into Métis families and the community grew.

The Metigoshe community was a tight-knit group of people. The relatively isolated location of the community meant that neighbours lived, worked and played together.

They pitched in and helped each other in times of need. They created a lifestyle that did not require much money, and many children grew up not knowing, or caring, that they weren't well off.

They made use of what the land provided, hunting, fishing, harvesting wood, trapping, gardening and farming.

The children of early Metis families around Lake Metigoshe were faced with a trip of up to eight kilometres to Marsden School, which had been established in 1908. In 1938 a second Marsden School, operated by the same board was built to accommodate them.

While children of European settlers living on the level farmland to the north attended Marsden No. 1, Marsden No. 2 served Métis children living closer to the border. The school, which also served as a community centre, helped local people affirm their heritage.



Student at Marsden School #2



Marsden School #2

The Belgian Community

The first immigrants from Belgium arrived in Southwestern Manitoba in the two decades before the First World War, reaching over 2000 a year by 1906. Lack of opportunity in their overcrowded European homeland, and the devastation of Belgium by the invading German armies in World War I caused many more to leave their homeland.



St. Paul's Catholic Church

Most of the settlers in Southwestern Manitoba were of Flemish descent, while the French-speaking Walloons were more likely to settle in Quebec or St. Boniface where they could continue to speak French. For the newly arrived immigrants, language was always an issue. Many of the men that arrived learned both English, and how to farm on the Canadian prairies, from already established farmers. The children of Belgian immigrants would be taught English in small, one-room schools that dotted

the landscape, most of which at the time had very few natural English speakers besides the teacher.

Many of the Belgian immigrants would become farmers in Southwestern Manitoba, and would become important members of the community, working with many organizations and community endeavors. They mostly settled around Deloraine and Medora



This recently erected sign marks the location.

In the spring of 1917 the Belgian community living on the slopes of Turtle Mountain and their priest, Father P. E. Halde decided to build themselves a church wherein they could pursue their worship of the Catholic faith. The spot they chose was high up on the mountain where it could be seen for miles and miles.

The Mennonite Community



Whitewater Mennonite Church Monument - located by the Cemetery

Mennonites are a pacifist group of Christians. Before World War One, the Mennonite colonies in Russia were quite well-to-do with beautiful homes and gardens, plentiful orchards, and rich land upon which they produced good crops.

After the war the Soviet Revolution brought imprisonment, plundering, mistreatment and murder upon the Mennonite people.

This was followed by famine and then the new communist government began to tax the Mennonites very heavily and further harass them.

Groups of refugees were eager to find new lives on the Canadian prairies.

Some came to southwest Manitoba near Whitewater Lake.

Many arrived with nothing but the clothes on their backs and Bibles in their hands. Though they had no money to speak of, they managed to secure tens of thousands of acres of land including essential start-up goods without making so much as a down payment. Instead, they promised half of their gross annual income until the purchase price and interest were covered.



Herman Lohrenz – a teacher from Russia, was one of the first Mennonites to arrive in the Whitewater District.

Schooling was very important and two schools in the region, Petersburg and Strathallan were soon filled with children who knew little English. It was a challenge to find teachers who were trained for such a situation.

In their new communities, the Mennonites took pains to preserve their own culture and religious heritage. Church was the hub of the Mennonite community.

Chinese Immigration

The Chinese were unlike any settlers the prairies had seen. They were single men who came into towns and villages in small numbers to run the local laundry or set up a restaurant. They spoke a markedly different language their customs were unfamiliar to the other settlers.



CPR Workers – 1883

When the Canadian Pacific Railway was being built between 1881 and 1885, Chinese men were encouraged to immigrate to work on the project. As soon as the railway was completed, however, the Canadian government wanted nothing more to do with them and moved to restrict Chinese immigration by imposing a \$50 head tax. No other group in the history of Canada has been forced to pay such a tax.

Chinese men continued to immigrate regardless of the head tax. They often faced poverty at home. China had too many people.

For many years the Chinese Immigration Act prevented men already living and working in Canada from bringing their families from China to live with them.

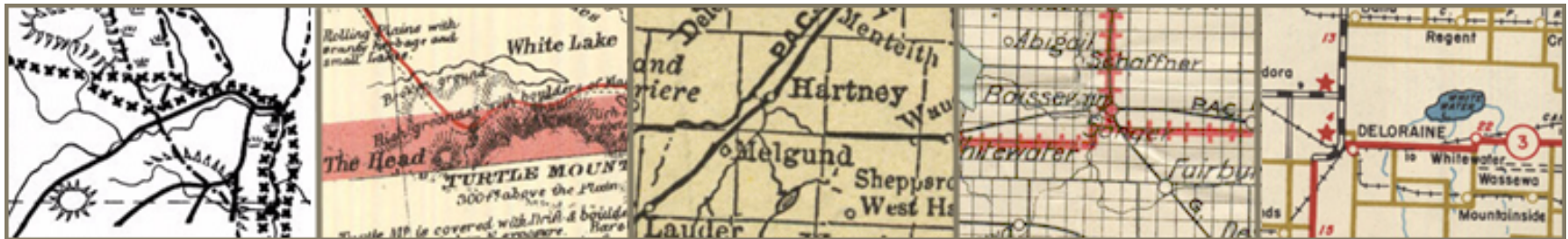
Chinese first began settling in Winnipeg around 1870. Soon afterwards Brandon and rural prairie towns saw Chinese men in their communities as well. Many worked in the laundry or restaurant business. Those with higher levels of education and better English skills could work as travelling salesmen

In rural Manitoba, the restaurant is most commonly associated with the Chinese as an occupation.

They learned English to make friends with their customers and others in the community. Yet the hard work and long hours made little time available for socializing.

Most towns in western Manitoba had a Chinese restaurant at least until the 1950s. They made important contributions to rural Manitoba and fostered fond feelings among their customers and neighbours.

Pivotal Events in The Turtle Mountain – Souris Plains Area



A Timeline

A timeline is a useful way to establish general patterns of history, and to note its highlights.

The dates and activities have been presented in a decade-by-decade format, which allows us to relive the past through the lens of the flow of time; but it is important to note that pivotal events can also be broadly grouped by major chronological periods in our history attached to primary activities of a given era.

1600 – 1699

International

British Colonies were established along the east coast of North America. These colonies would eventually become the “13 Colonies” that would break away from Britain to form the United States.

Canada

What we now know as Quebec was a French Colony known as New France. It was valuable because of its resources, mainly fish, timber and furs. The profits available through the Fur Trade would prompt westward exploration.

Manitoba

In 1670 the Hudson’s Bay Company received a monopoly to trade in the huge region that drained into Hudson’s Bay. What we now know as Manitoba was a vital part of the territory.

In the late 1690’s Henry Kelsey traveled southwest from Hudson Bay - he was the first European to reach the eastern edge of the Great Plains (somewhere west of The Pas), and the first to see buffalo.

Turtle Mountain – Souris Plains

When the first European settlers arrived in this region it was obvious to them that they were not the first inhabitants of this land. Evidence of past inhabitants was more visible in those days, be it in the form of burial mounds or prairie trails. Artifacts found in the several notable archaeological sites show that a succession of cultures called the region home or visited it regularly.

Although settlement by the Nakota (Assiniboine), Dakota, Ojibwa and Plains Cree people were often intermittent as befitted their dependence on the roving herds of bison, it was ongoing and substantial. Absence of any written record is of course a challenge as we try to understand the times, but thanks to archaeologists, we know the region was then, as it is now, a home. With that knowledge comes the understanding that the story of the first peoples is still unfolding, and that it bears some similarities to the story of all Canadians. They also migrated here, likely as not led by advanced scouting parties (explorers?), and they adapted to the land and took from it what they needed to survive and prosper.

The Assiniboines and Gros Ventres had semi-permanent homes along the Souris. The Gros Ventres had inhabited the area west of the Souris River from Oak Lake to the Moose Mountains and south into the Dakotas.

The people then called the Sioux, but who call themselves Dakota, often came north into this region, to hunt, and to make war with their traditional enemies, the Nakota (who the Europeans called Assiniboine.)

****Like most aboriginal groups, the people who lived on the prairies had two names; the name they called themselves, and the names they were called by the European visitors.**

1650

By about 1650, two tribes, Assiniboines and Gros Ventres had semi-permanent homes along the Souris River.

Around 1660 the Santee and Yankton Dakota from western Minnesota and central North Dakota begin moving into British Canada to fight the Cree, Ojibway and Assiniboines. Battles with the Assiniboines took place along the Souris and in the Turtle Mountain area.

1700 – 1799

International

In 1783 the United States of America gained independence from Britain after a long military struggle.

Canada

In 1759 the Battle of the Plains of Abraham effectively gave Britain control of the territory of New France. A treaty in 1763 formally ceded the territory.

Manitoba

In 1738 French Explorer, LaVerendrye, built Fort La Reine on the Assiniboine River (near present day Portage La Prairie.)

In the 1760's exploration of southern Manitoba was undertaken by both the Hudson Bay Co. and the Northwest Co. with the establishment of fur trade posts near Souris Mouth and Hartney beginning in the 1770's.

Turtle Mountain – Souris Plains

In 1738 a group of Nakota (Assiniboine) guided La Verendrye, through the Turtle Mountain – Souris Plains area toward the Mandan Villages of southern North Dakota.

David Thompson travelled along the Souris River on his visit to the Mandan Village in North Dakota in 1897 – 98 and left a good account of his trip in his diary.

The Assiniboines gained mobility on the plains when they obtained horses.

1738

La Verendrye passed through the region:

“On October 18, 1738 he left Fort La Reine traveling southwest along the Souris River. When he reached the Turtle Mountains, on the insistence of his Indian guides he turned northwest until he reached the Souris River. Here he met 102 lodges of Assiniboines. From this point he followed the Souris River southwest until he reached the Mandan Indian villages on the Missouri River.”

* The Souris Plains

1743

La Verendrye brought a priest, Father Coquart, to the Souris River. He taught the Assiniboines to say prayers. Forty years later French and English traders were astounded to hear the Assiniboine Indians reciting prayers they had memorized years before.

1748

The Dakota travelled up the Souris River to attack Fort La Reine.

1770

From 1770 to 1778 the Assiniboines often carried corn and furs from the Mandan Country up the Souris River to Fort La Reine, although they had been expressly warned by the Dakota not to traffic with the White Man.

1780

A trading alliance between the Mandans and the Assiniboines came to an end. Spurred on by the Dakota, the Mandan war parties moved northward and fought several battles with the Assiniboines just south of present day Melita.

1781

In the last half of the 18th century the Sioux, armed with Hudson Bay Company muskets roamed the Souris River attacking Assiniboines and traders alike. In 1781 they combined with the Mandans to attack the Assiniboine villages in the Turtle Mountains and continued these attacks along the Souris in 1786 and 1793.

1782

Assiniboines living along the Souris River suffered a great smallpox epidemic, but by 1784 they had recovered enough to resume trading operations.

1793

David Monin, acting for the Northwest Company led an expedition down the river. He established a fort in the Dakotas but on the return trip in the spring of 1794 with a load of furs, they were all killed by the Dakota. The Sioux continued to be active on the Souris and elsewhere in Manitoba. From 1785 to 1860 they made a determined effort to stop traders from entering the Souris-Missouri country

1795

The Northwest Company built Fort Ash on the Souris River about two miles south west of Hartney. It was evidently in operation for only two years. In the winter of 1797 the explorer David Thompson noted, "We find ourselves about three miles below Ash House where people resided two years ago".

The Dakota attacked McDonnell's House and Brandon House near the mouth of the Souris. One year later they advanced up the river to attack the Assiniboines who had established a village near present day Lauder.

1797

On November 26, 1797, David Thompson, the great explorer, began his journey down the Souris River.

"Leaving McDonnell's House near the Souris mouth, he headed southwest, skirting the Moose Head or Brandon Hills on the south. On November 29 it became so cold and stormy they made camp, probably along the river south of Nesbitt, Manitoba. On December 4, Thompson continued his journey crossing to the south side of the river and pitching camp near the present day town of Souris. The next day, December 5, he turned south following the Elgin Creek and then turned south west reaching a point somewhat to the west of Regent. He then turned north west back to the river which he reached near present day Hartney and continued up stream. His guide, Jursomme, now led him southwest along the river and shortly after they were joined by two Canadian trappers. It began to storm at this point but they kept on walking along the south bank of the river, reaching a wooded area at 7:00 p.m. This gave them some protection from the storm and they made camp. The next day, December 6, they rested as it was still storming, and hunted for provisions. An entry in Thompson's diary at this point reads, "We find ourselves about three miles below the Old House". They were obviously referring to Fort Ash (or Ash House), which by this time was abandoned, and this would put their camp about one mile north east of Hartney, Manitoba. On December 7, Thompson continued southwest along the river. At a point south west of Lauder, Manitoba, he crossed the river and turned toward the Turtle Mountains, which he reached on December 12. He now hired an Assiniboine Indian to guide him to the Mandan villages on the Missouri River, where he spent about three weeks."

* The Souris Plains

1800 – 1849

International

Between 1804 and 1806 Lewis and Clark led an expedition across North-western United States to the Pacific Ocean.

Canada

The War of 1812 – 14.

In what is essentially a war between The United States and Britain, Canada successfully repelled an American invasion with the help of native tribes. Many years later Dakota warriors, descendants of those who fought, still treasured medals given for service the British Crown.

Manitoba

In 1812 the agricultural settlement in Manitoba began with the arrival of Selkirk Settlers. This would eventually lead to the establishment of Winnipeg as the commercial centre of the region.

Turtle Mountain – Souris Plains

As the bison retreated from the Red River Valley Metis hunters established highly organized expeditions to seek out the herds. Their route took them through the Turtle Mountain-Souris Plains region. Wintering communities were sometimes established in the region.

The establishment of a succession of trading posts in the Hartney – Lauder region would eventually spur efforts at agriculture. There is evidence that, in the Hartney – Grande Clairiere district, some people involved in the fur trade made the transition to farming and stayed in the region when the fur trade ended. As an example, in the 1930's at least two Hartney area families could trace their roots back to Fort Desjarlais.

1800

The Assiniboine were 28,000 strong across Manitoba with more than 10,000 in the Turtle Mountain region alone.

A Northwest Company trader, Alexander Henry Jr., made his first trip down the Souris River from the Northwest Company Fort La Souris at the junction of the Souris and Assiniboine Rivers. He travelled down the river to about the present day town of Souris. From here he traveled across country to Fort La Bosse, near Virden, on the Assiniboine River where he engaged in the buffalo hunt.

1806

After about 1806 it appears that the Northwest Company lost interest in the Souris, but American traders and Independents soon took their place on that river.

Alexander Henry Jr. travelled across the Souris plains on his way south to the Mandan Villages.

He carried the usual trade goods, tobacco, beads, knives, muskets; and in his case, a good supply of liquor. On July 15th he stopped for the night at the Fort Ash site. During the trip upriver he mentioned passing several Assiniboine camps of about 70 tents, and after visiting Turtle Mountain he estimated the Assiniboine population at about 10,000. While passing

along the Souris, Henry was careful to put night guards on the horses as the Assiniboine had the reputation of being the greatest horse thieves on the prairies. Guards were also necessary as Henry was carrying guns and ammunition to the Missouri River tribes.

1807

Francois Jeanette was born on the Souris River near the present day city of Bottineau, North Dakota. His father, Justas, a French Canadian, was a trapper on the Souris River and had lost his first wife and son to the Gros Ventre raiders. He lived and worked in the Souris Valley until 1905.

1810

The American Fort, north of Lauder, was built about 1810. The size of its chimney mounds indicate that it was in operation for a considerable length of time so we can speculate that it operated until 1828 when Cuthbert Grant was appointed "Warden of the Plains" and instructed by the Hudson's Bay Company to clear out all opposition trading posts. These American posts were also used as a springboard to reach the Assiniboine and Qu'Appelle River regions and it is known that the Americans traded extensively on the Qu'Appelle.

1812

An American engineer, searching for a passage north from the Missouri River, found a large Gros Ventre village at the intersection of the Souris-Antler Rivers.

The following year warriors from this village scalped Francois Jeannottes' sister and he and his mother moved to Fort Garry. However, a few years later, Jeannotte returned to the Souris River and later worked in two trading posts above the 49th parallel.

It was about this time that the buffalo hunts began along the Souris River. They were small for the first few years, just a few tents, but by 1820 they would be large organized affairs.

1815

The Dakor wiped out the Gros Ventre Nations who were living at this time at the junction of the Souris and South Antler Rivers.

1820

A Dakota - Assiniboine battle took place just east of Whitewater Lake.

Maria, daughter of Cuthbert Grant, was born in 1820. She married Armand Breland who played an important part in the trading posts on the Souris River, and whose son, Thomas, would be one of the first homesteaders in Grande Clairiere.

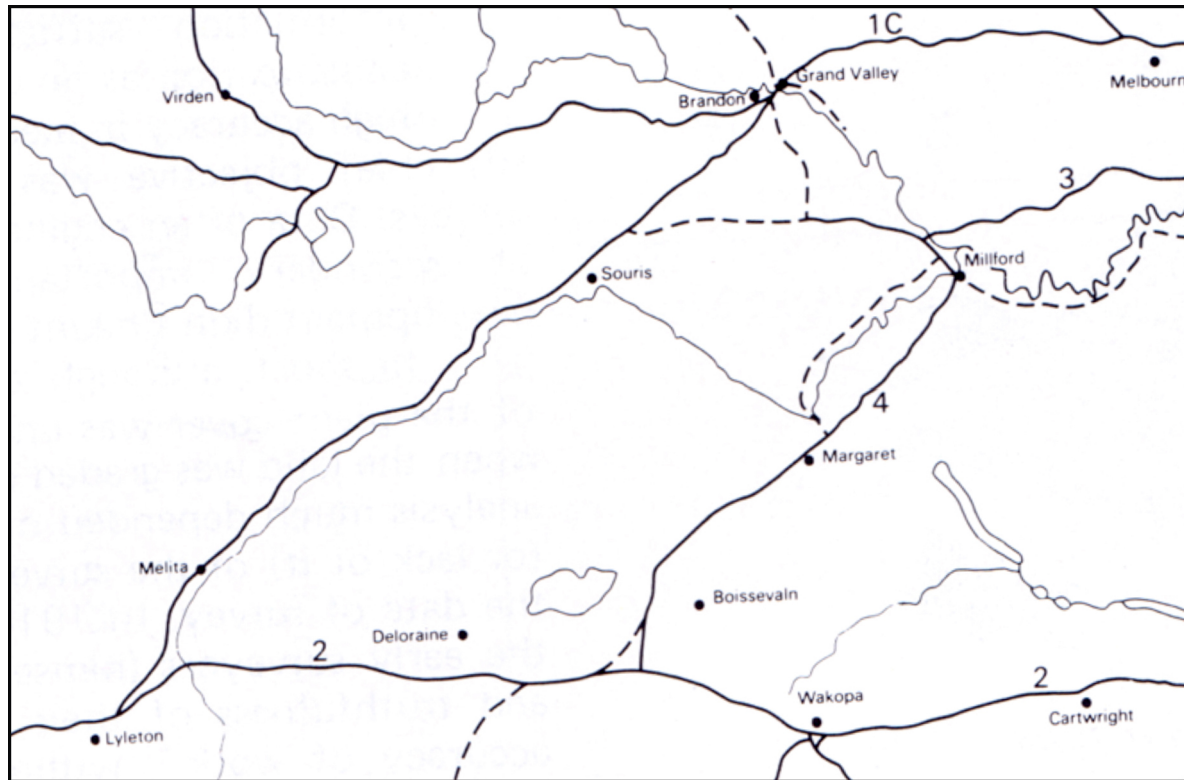
The first Metis buffalo brigade from Fort Garry crossed the Souris River near present day Melita.

1824

Cuthbert Grant established Fort Grant on the Souris River near Hartney in 1824.

1828

Cuthbert Grant was appointed "Warden of the Plains" and instructed by the Hudson's Bay Company to clear out all opposition trading posts.



By Section, Township & Range, Studies in Prairie Settlement, John Langton Tyman

Brandon University, 1972 P 18

1. C – Saskatchewan Trail – Southern Branch
2. Boundary Commission Trail
3. Yellow Quill Trail
4. Bang's Trail beyond Millford

1831

The Dakota returned an Assiniboine attack moving east down the Souris River into Manitoba. They turned north where they meet a Metis Buffalo Brigade returning from the Moose Mountains.

The buffalo hunters, as usual, formed a circle with their carts and held off the attackers. This attack took place to the west of Oak Lake. In the same year, Dakota war parties forced the forts at the mouth of the Souris to close.

1836

Fort Desjarlais was built in 1836 by Joseph Desjarlais, on the north bank of the Souris on Sec. 31, Tp. 5, Rge. 24, to the north west of Lauder. Downstream about one kilometre is the location of the older American Fort.



Site of Fort Desjarlais, 1999

1838

In 1838 smallpox once again struck the Assiniboines who were now reduced in numbers to less than 4,000 from the original 10,000.

1842

The Assiniboine population was greatly reduced by war and smallpox to about 3,000. A local resident of Hartney, Mrs. De Pevre, whose grandfather worked in the Souris River forts in the 1840's, stated that her grandfather observed two Assiniboine villages in 1842 where everyone was dead of smallpox.

1844

The Metis attacked the Dakota during a buffalo hunt in the Souris River area. Several Dakota are killed and they demanded compensation. A meeting between the two groups was held on the plains and as a result peace was declared. It lasted until about 1849.

1849

A Dakota - Assiniboine battle took place along the river in 1849. The site of this battle is SE Sec. 36, Tp. 5, Rge. 24. In the same year a trading post operated very close to the site of present day Melita.

1850 – 1869

International

1861-65: Civil War in the U.S.

1848-52: Potato blight caused extensive crop failures in Ireland.

Canada

1867: Confederation united four British Colonies to create Canada. From the outset, leaders like John. A. MacDonald envisioned a Canada that stretched westward across the Prairies to the Pacific.

Manitoba

1859: Expeditions by Capt. Palliser and Henry Youle Hind explored the Northwest Territories to examine the suitability of the region for agricultural settlement.

In 1869, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) sold Rupert's Land to the Dominion Government of Canada, increasing the government's land five-fold.

1869: Louis Riel led a group of Metis in the formation of a provisional government.

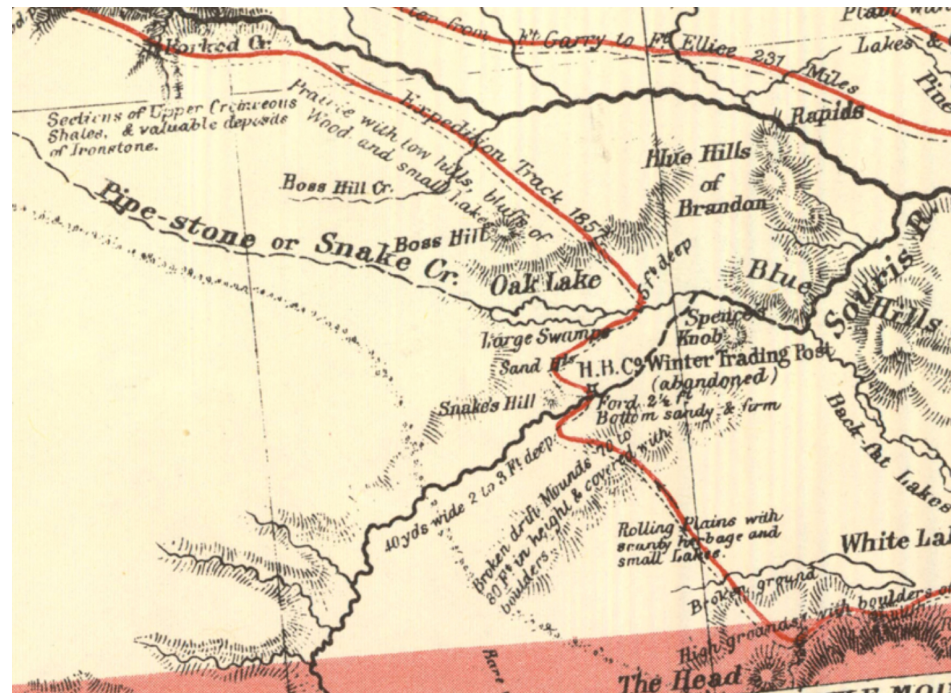
Turtle Mountain – Souris Plains

The Red River Metis on their annual bison hunt would often pass north of Turtle Mountain.

Settlement & Exploration

This map prepared by the Palliser Expedition shows the region about 1859.

The British North American Exploring Expedition, commonly called the Palliser Expedition, explored and surveyed the open prairies and rugged wilderness of western Canada from 1857 to 1860. One purpose was to assess the regions potential for agricultural settlement



1854

In 1854, Cuthbert Grant died and his fort was operated by relatives until 1861. One of these relatives was his grandson, Thomas Breland. By this time, business for the two remaining forts was greatly reduced and the Metis operating Fort Grant were now making an attempt to raise livestock and a few small crops. These were the first homesteaders in the area and included:

J. LEVEILLE - 34-6-24
A. BRELAND - 30-6-24
A. COUTEAN - 5-6-24
A CAUPHINAIS - 6-7-24

1856

Fort Desjarlais was burned to the ground, either by a prairie fire or the Dakota. Some of the people who worked in the fort continued to live in the region, taking up farming.

1862

In 1862, the Minnesota Uprising led by Yankton Sioux resulted in the death of more than 600 Minnesota settlers.

Chief Little Crow and his warriors camped in the Turtle Mountains in Dakota Territory. Here they were visited by Sitting Bull, a Hunkpapa Medicine Man.

1863

After participating in the Minnesota Uprising, the outlaw Chief Inkpaduta fled into Dakota Territory and on December 4th, 1863 he was driven north into Canada by General Sully. He made his headquarters on Turtle Mountain and from the Canadian side made repeated raids into the United States until 1868.

In the autumn of 1863, several hundred Dakota arrived at Turtle Mountain, along with their white prisoners. They were in a state of starvation, and failing to get much help from the Canadian Authorities, they made raids into the U.S. to hunt buffalo. Some settled along the Souris River. These villages lasted until about 1870 when the Dakota were restricted to an area about six miles west of Grande Clairiere and south to the Souris River. Later, when the European settlers began to arrive, this reservation was shifted to the north along the Pipestone Creek - thus the establishment of the present Sioux Valley.

The American authorities sent a priest, Father Andre, to a large Dakota camp on the Souris River (west of present day Lauder). His mission is to persuade this band of Dakota to return home. Father Andre reported that the Dakota did not seem to care whether they lived or died, but they refused to return to the United States.

1865

In 1865 according to a member of the Oak Lake reserve, the battle between the Cree and the Dakota took place in a group of sandhills to the north east of the village of Deleau and ended only when one of the chiefs was killed. However, in spite of great suffering the Dakotas tried to obey the laws of Grandmother's country (Canada) and eventually were given small reservations. In this regard the Canadian authorities refused to consider Dakota claims to land ownership north of the 49th parallel and this meant they would not receive treaty money from the Canadian government.

1868

An International Meeting of Indians was held in Turtle Mountain. The meeting was chaired by the Oglalla Chief, Crazy Horse, who pleaded for the unification of all tribes to defeat the whites. These pleas were rejected by the other tribes.

1869

In 1869, some of the Metis from the "Red River Rebellion" arrived in the Oak Lake - Grande Clairiere sandhills area. Along with the Metis living there, the Metis population was increased to about 20 families.

By this time, the Assiniboine had all migrated from the Souris. Their numbers greatly reduced by smallpox they followed the few remaining buffalo west. Eventually they were placed on reservations in the Moose Mountains and in the foothills of the Rockies. Of the 10,000 that Alexander Henry estimated in 1806, only a few hundred remained.

1870 – 1879

International

On June 25 and 26, 1876 at the Battle of Little Bighorn, June 25 and 26, a combined Lakota, Northern Cheyenne and Arapaho force , overwhelmed the 7th Cavalry Regiment of the United States.

In 1876 Alexander Graham Bell successfully transmitted the first bi-directional transmission of clear speech. An improved design for the “telephone” was patented the next year.

Canada

In 1874 the newly created Northwest Mounted Police marched west from Dufferin, Manitoba to southern Alberta

Manitoba

In 1870 the Province of Manitoba entered Confederation largely on terms put forward by Louis Riel and his Metis provisional Government.

On July 31, 1874 the first Russian Mennonites arrived at Winnipeg on the steamer International.

On December 4, 1878 the first freight by rail reached St. Boniface.

The late 1870's saw the first export of wheat from the prairies, the first grain elevator built in Niverville and steamboats service established on the Assiniboine between Winnipeg and Fort Ellice.

Turtle Mountain – Souris Plains

By 1870 the big Bison herds were gone from the region, and Metis hunters, who continued to be mainly based in the Red River settlement, were forced to take their annual hunt farther south and west. Only scattered itinerant groups of Assiniboine and some refugee Sioux from the U.S. remained in the area.

1873

The Boundary Commission was established and began creating a trail westward that was to be well used for the next next decade.

B.B. LaRiviere opened a trading post and stopping house at Wakopa on the trail that the Boundary Commission survey had established.

1875

A Dakota Reserve was established at the junction of the Assiniboine and Oak Rivers. This is the Oak River Reserve although it is often referred to as Sioux Valley. Today it has a population of around 1,000 people, most of whom are Santee.

1876

The Battle of Little Bighorn

The western Dakota, Oglallas and Hunkpapas, along with the Santee, realized by 1870 that the Americans intended to take their homeland regardless of the terms of the Laramie Treaties of 1851 and 1868. War with the U.S. Army followed with the Dakota winning two great victories against General Crook and General Custer. But then their fortunes changed and they began the long migration to Canada in 1876.

According to L.C. Lockwood, a civilian Scout and Custer's Troops in 1876, following the Custer Battle, one band of Dakota escaped to Turtle Mountain camping on the Canadian side beside Lake Flossie.

From there they sent raiding parties into the Dakotas to attack army units and American settlements. To counteract this, the U.S. 7th Cavalry was sent north to patrol the Canadian border along the Souris River and Turtle Mountain. These attacks continued for two years. In 1878, the U.S. Army still kept pickets at Fort Lincoln (present day Bismarck) on the Missouri River, as the Turtle Mountain Dakota had attacked the fort several times. It appears that this band, probably Hunkpapas, maintained this Turtle Mountain stronghold until 1885 and probably later.

By the end of 1876 more than 7,000 Dakota had crossed the Medicine line into Canada.

1877

The Santee Dakota residing near Turtle Mountain requested a reserve from the Manitoba Lieutenant-Governor. This was granted them on their promise not to aid the American Dakota, who were still at war with the American authorities, and in 1878 they received a reserve north of Pipestone near Oak Lake. Today this is called the Oak Lake Reserve (Canupawakpa).

In the same year a Turtle Mountain Reserve (IR#60) was established for a group of Wapeton Dakota and some Hunkpapas from Lake Flossie. This reserve operated until 1907 when its residents were moved to the Oak Lake Reserve. In 1908 then the Oak Lake Reserve included Wapetons, Santee, a few Hunkpapas and some descendants of Chief Inkpaduta (Santees outlawed before 1862 by the main Santee Nation).

1880

Some of the Manitoba Dakota joined one of the last Metis buffalo hunting parties, a group of 500 men, women and children. While hunting along the Souris River in Dakota they are attacked by General Miles and the American Cavalry. The Sioux were forced to withdraw to Canada but the Metis were taken prisoner. The American authorities then tried to settle the Metis permanently in Turtle Mountain and on the American side. This may have been the beginning of a Metis settlement that exists in Turtle Mountain today.

The settlement of the Boissevain area began in 1879 with the arrival of the Brondgeest and Livingstone families in the Whitewater area.

A group of Ontario settlers started the settlement of Old Deloraine to the north of Turtle Mountain.

Two settlements appeared on the Souris River. A Plum Creek settlement was started by Squire Sowden. It became the present town of Souris. Northeast of Hartney a small village called Malta began. Malta had a blacksmith shop, a boarding house and a store, but in 1889 when the C.P.R. built on the south side of the river, the residents all moved to form the village of Menteith.

A. Sharpe had settled in the Whitewater area operated what is said to be the first real farming operation in the region.

W.F. Thomas camped at Sourisford. After filing for a homestead, he established a ferry crossing on his property that was to be well used by the many settlers who soon followed.



Route For the CPR

By Section, Township & Range, *Studies in Prairie Settlement*, John Langton Tyman
 Brandon University, 1972 P 34

In 1877 the C.P.R. was planning a northern route and southwestern Manitoba had not yet been surveyed.

1880 – 1889

International

In 1882 Thomas Edison built the first power plant in New York.

In 1885 Karl Benz patented his first automobile.

In 1889 the Eiffel Tower opened in Paris.

Canada

In 1885, after long-standing grievances remained unaddressed, Louise Riel and Gabriel Dumont led an uprising of Metis in the Saskatchewan River Valley communities in the Prince Albert - Battleford regions. Subsequent actions by native groups led by Big Bear and Poundmaker created concern in Manitoba communities but relations between settlers and aboriginal people remained peaceful.

Manitoba

On March 2, 1881 – The Manitoba Boundaries Act was passed in Parliament, providing for an extension of the province's borders.

The town of Brandon was created in May of 1881 when the site was selected over Grand Valley as a crossing and divisional point on the C.P.R. Within a month it is a busy centre and many homesteaders passed through it on their way into the southwest region.

Homestead Regulations were eased to attract more settlers. Three options existed:

1. Three year's cultivation and residence – with the settler not absent for more than six months in any one year.
2. Taking up residence for two years and nine months within two miles of the homestead and then afterwards residing in a habitable house on homestead for three months at any time prior to applying for the patent. With 10 acres to be broken in the first year, 15 in the second, and 15 in the third.

3. A five year system that allowed the settler to live anywhere for the first two years as long as he began to cultivate the land within six months and build a habitable house.

Turtle Mountain – Souris Plains

1880

A group from Ontario settled near where Boissevain would later be located. Among these early settlers was George Morton.

In 1880 Mr. Bolton established a sawmill on the shore of Lake Max. The next year, entrepreneur George Morton bought the sawmill and used it to produce lumber for nearly every building in the then thriving village of Whitewater.

A Dominion Land Office opened on the Commission Trail.

Turtle Mountain Land District was the first administrative unit for the southwestern Manitoba. It was administered from the Turtle Mountain Land Office with George F. Newcombe as agent, and a Mr. W.H. Wood as assistant. The site, southeast of Deloraine became known as Newcombe's Hollow.

A group of Ontario settlers started the settlement now known as Old Deloraine just north of the Dominion Land Office.

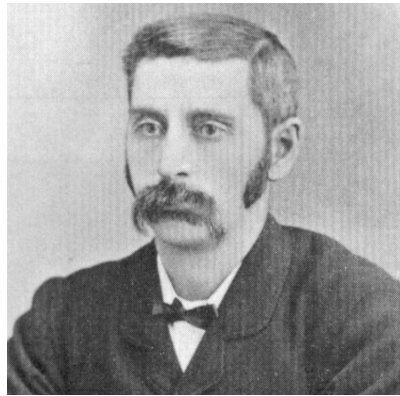
Alfred Gould arrived at Sourisford in May of 1880. He later built and operated a store.

The site the pioneers referred to as Old Desford was one of the first stopping places on the Boundary Commission Trail. It started as general store and post office owned by E. Nichol and Son. For some time, along with Wakopa and (Old) Deloraine, it was one of the few places for pioneers to get supplies.

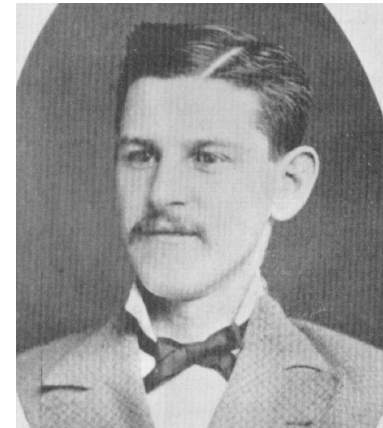
It was also the site of one the first sawmills. Lumber from Fox's mill was used to build the first houses and business places in Boissevain.

1881

In June of 1881 John Fee & Samuel Long were the first settlers to reach the Hartney district. They were able to break some land before winter when they left to find work, John in Brandon and Sam in Winnipeg.



Samuel Long



John Fee

William Roper, with sons Benjamin & James are the first to spend winter in the Hartney area.

James Hartney



James Hartney purchased a farm from the CPR (9-6-23) in 1881.

In June of 1881 the Reverend L. O. Armstrong from Emerson, Manitoba, put up a store and stopping place where the Boiler Trail fords Waubeesh Creek just south of Whitewater Lake. In 1882 the Turtle Mountain City post office was established on this site.

Homesteaders in the Melita area included Edward Sterling, John Dobbyn with son Richard John.

A large display ad in the Winnipeg Daily Sun offered lots for sale in Manchester, the “Great Manufacturing Town of the North-West”

1882

By July of 1882 George Morton had begun operations at his Dairy Farm on the northeast corner of Whitewater Lake and his sawmill at Max Lake

In 1882 the federal government, without notice, withdrew even numbered sections south of the main CPR line from eligibility for homesteads and preemptions. This surprised many who arrived at the Turtle Mountain Land Office, and caused many to go south into the U.S.

Rev. A.D. Wheeler conducted the first Church Service in the Melita district in Alf Gould's house on the first Sunday in August, 1882.

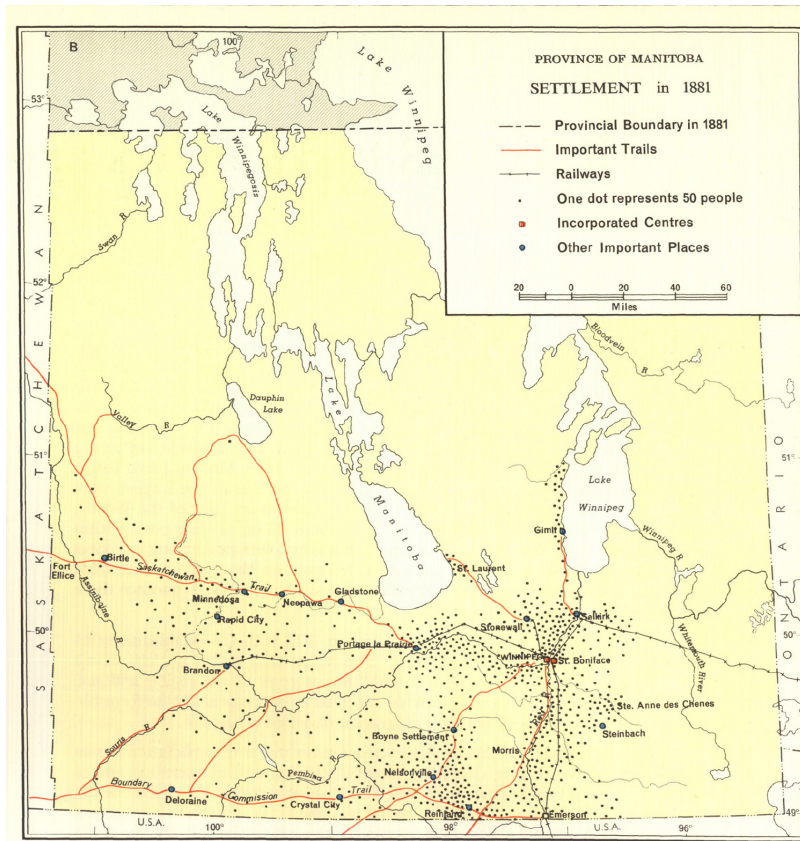
A Post Office established at Sourisford in 1882 remained operational until the railway arrived at Coulter in 1903.

The first Sourisford Pioneer Picnic was held.

Dobbyn City, a bit east of the current town of Melita at (32-3-26), was promoted by owner John Dobbyn, and lots are offered to speculators. It was one of dozens of speculative townsites in Manitoba during the Manitoba Boom of 1881-82. Ads offering lots appeared in Winnipeg papers in March of 1882.

The Manchester Town plan was registered. Plan #2 – Souris River Registry, March 28, 1882. It had to be re-named as that name was taken, then moved about two kilometres to be on the new rail line. We know it as Melita.

In 1882 Sam Heaslip received a contract for mail delivery from Brandon, to points south in the Turtle Mountain region. His home became the site of a stopping house and store with post office named after him.



This 1881 map shows that the region was just beginning to attract settlement in 1881.
 Weir, Thomas R. [Settlement 1870-1921] [map]. 1:3,041,280. In: Thomas R. Weir. *Economic Atlas of Manitoba*. Winnipeg: Manitoba Dept. of Industry and Commerce, 1960, p. 13.

(Warkentin and Ruggles. Historical Atlas of Manitoba. map 153, p. 332

1883

Most of the desirable sections in the Hartney area were taken

R. Graham opened a store and Post Office in Manchester.

Powers were given allowed municipalities to bonus industries and railways by cash donation and by tax exemptions for a number of years.

The Land Office moved from Deloraine to "Souris" a would-be town located on NW 26-2-27. The Office was later moved to NW 34-2-27 and then to Melita in 1891.

1884

James Hartney made an application for a Post Office at his farm. A separate building was put up which soon housed a store as well. His farm became the centre of the community. Hartney became the name for district long before a village was established.

The Dann family operated the Butterfield Post Office and Stopping House on the Boundary Commission Trail southwest of Pierson.

1885

In 1885 when the Manitoba and North Western Railway approached Cherry Creek and announced that they would erect a station at that point, a town site appeared almost overnight.

George Morton moved his general store from the earlier location of Wabeesh, in the Whitewater area, to the new town site of Boissevain, where other buildings, both commercial and residential were springing up.

1886

The Pembina Branch of the C.P.R. reached Deloraine.

Several prairie fires marked the fall season

A large buffalo was spotted near Menota (Melita area) and chased by would be hunters.

The Village of Whitewater was established.

1887

Deloraine was established on the CPR line. Buildings from the previous settlement were moved to the new location.

H'damani and a few followers refused to move to the Oak Lake Reserve when it opened in 1877, so the government finally gave in and the Turtle Mountain Reserve (#60) was established. It was the smallest reserve in Canada, measuring only one square mile.

1888

A.M. Campbell, a photographer, was elected Member of Legislature for the Arthur area.

The Livingston Ferry was established on Dr. Livingston's farm just east of Melita

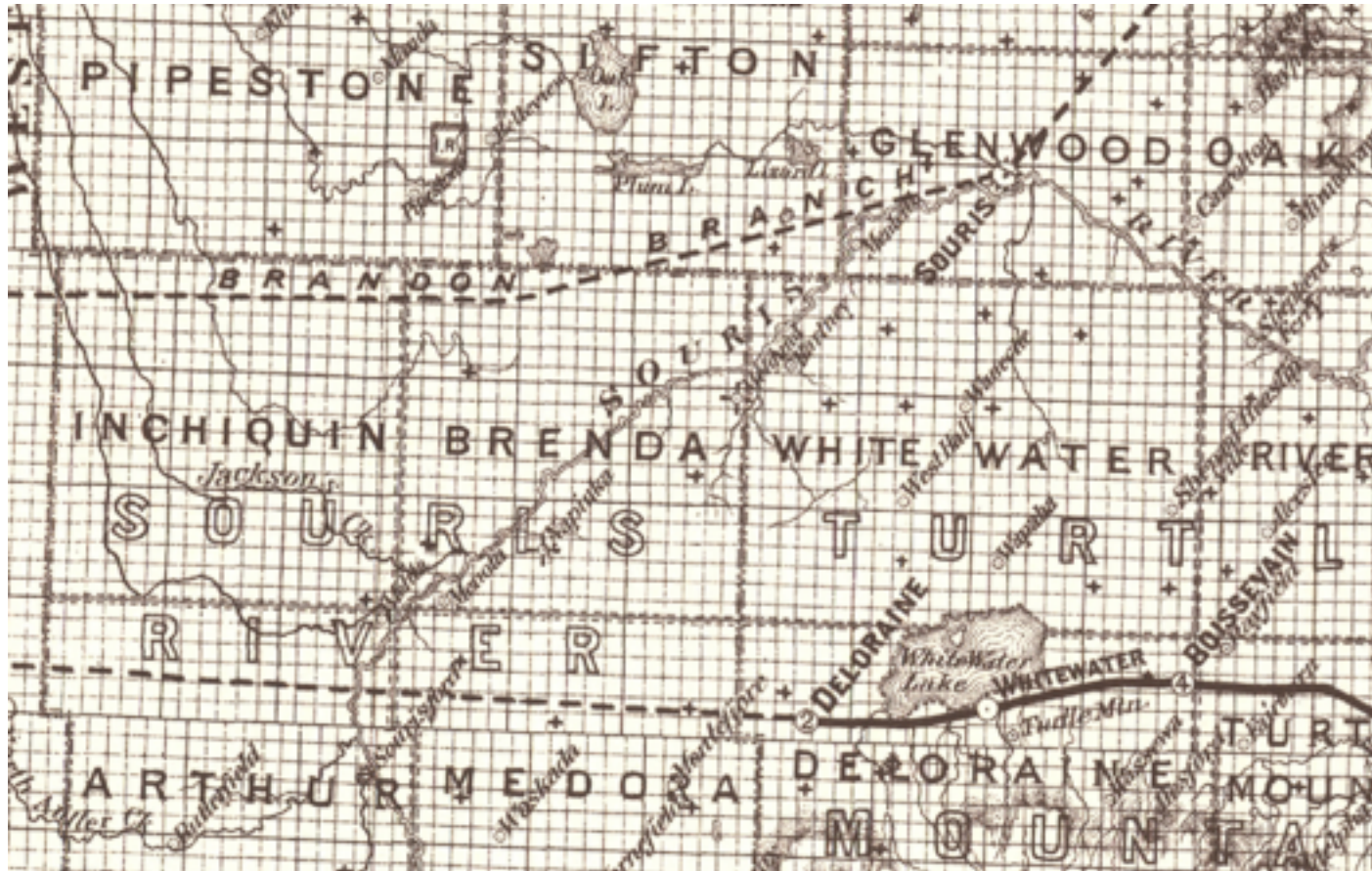
The Parrish of Grande Clairiere was established by Father Gaire.

1889

In Boissevain Preston and McKay built a substantial four-story Flour Mill of local limestone which proved to be an important boost to the local economy.

A Pioneer Association was formed at Sourisford with Alfred Gould as President.

Mr. Ducker of the CPR visited Melita to examine the site for a new town.



Canadian Pacific Railway Company. Manitoba and the Northwest Territories of Canada.

Image Courtesy of University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections

This maps showing actual and proposed rail lines illustrated the situation in 1887. Settlers in the Hartney region have been promised a rail line and are waiting patiently. Note that in the 1887 map Hartney is to be bypassed.

1890 – 1899

International

The World's Columbia Exposition (World Fair) opened in Chicago in 1893 – to commemorate the 400th Anniversary of Columbus's arrival in the new world (1492). Featured prominently are exhibits highlighting the possibilities of electricity.

Canada

1891 was the end of the John A. McDonald era.

In 1896, gold discovered in the Klondike.

Manitoba

The Manitoba Schools Question divided the nation as governments decided on the future of French Language instruction in schools.

The Manitoba Government authorized the formation of local Farmer's Institutes and provided some grants. The goal was to improve farming practices.

Turtle Mountain – Souris Plains

A decade of Growth

1890

William McDonald moved his blacksmith shop from the Hartney farm into town.

The first C.P.R. train from Brandon reached Hartney Dec. 25, 1890 – the town was already well on its way to becoming the commercial centre of the district

The name Airdrie was assigned to the new station. Local residents protested and the name was changed to Hartney

Methodist Church built

1891

DELORAIN AND HARTNEY STAGE LINE.

A. M. HERRON, PROP.

Every Friday a stage leaves Deloraine, connecting at Hartney in time for the train going north.

A general passenger and parcel business transacted.

Patronage solicited and satisfaction assured.

91.01.29 Brandon Sun

The Dominion Land Office was moved from the Sourisford area to Melita
The first Bridge over the Souris River at Melita was built.
The first Circus came to Melita - Oct 5

The village of Elva was established.

The village of Pierson was established.

1892

The first regular passenger train came to Pierson February 19, 1892. Settlers coming to fulfill their homestead commitment were offered special rates for shipping their effects on the Canadian Pacific Railway.

A stone church, St. George's Anglican Church, Copley, was built in 1892.

A post office called Broomhill was established in 1892, on the homestead of Mr. and Mrs. Will Kilkenny. In the year 1905, the railroad on the Lauder-Alida branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway arrived. The name was applied to the village that was established on the line.

The Diana region, north of Tilston, was settled by Icelandic settlers, beginning in 1892. Some came from the R.M. of Argyle. The Diana Icelandic Cemetery in a farm field about one-third of a mile from the nearest road, contains the graves of several people from that community.

1893

The Hartney Farmers' Institute was established. It served as a forum for farmers. They met monthly – exchanged ideas took turns making presentations on area of expertise.

H.C. Pierce established a Pump Factory in Hartney

1894

Alice and Ida Edwards established a thriving dress-making business in Hartney. They had moved to the community from Melita by 1893.



The Edwards Sisters

Hammond and Leckie began construction of a Flour Mill in Hartney



Prairie fires were in the news.

1895

In Hartney a big fire wiped out the main business block. Both hotels were lost in the fire.

1896

In Hartney Harry Payne began making brick west of town.

An Orange Lodge was established in Hartney

1897

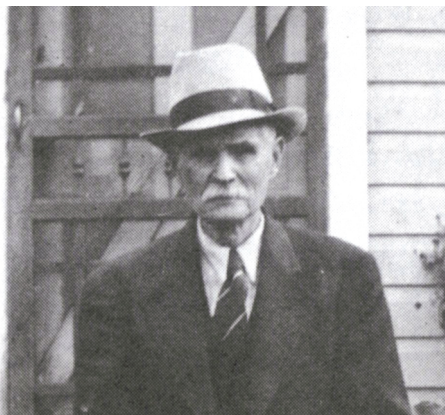
The New R.M. of Cameron was established from part of the R.M. of Winchester

The first Sourisford bridge was built.

Coultervale Cemetery was surveyed on NW corner 22-1-27

1898

William Sackville discovered good clay on the NE corner of the section on which the town of Hartney was built. William Kirkland, an experienced brickmaker worked with him to create a large enterprise.



William Kirkland came to make bricks and became a long-term Hartney citizen

In 1898 the Canadian Northern Railway established the town of Minto

1899

The Hartney Star reported 25 threshing outfits and 150 men off excursion trains.

A.E. Thompson, who had moved to Melita in 1889 to operate a Butcher shop and deal in cattle and horses, was elected to Mb. Legislature in 1899 and again 1903.

The Village of Waskada was established.

1900 – 1909

International

1901: Queen Victoria died, Jan. 22. Edward the VII became King

1901: Marconi sent the first radio signal across the Atlantic.

1903: The Ford Motor Co. was established.

Canada

May 15, 1909: An Earthquake was felt across the prairies.

Manitoba

1901: Manitoba's first Hydro-electric plant opened on the Little Saskatchewan River northwest of Brandon.

1906: Manitoba farmers organized the "Grain Growers' Grain Company" with shares available at \$25 for any farmer wanting to join.

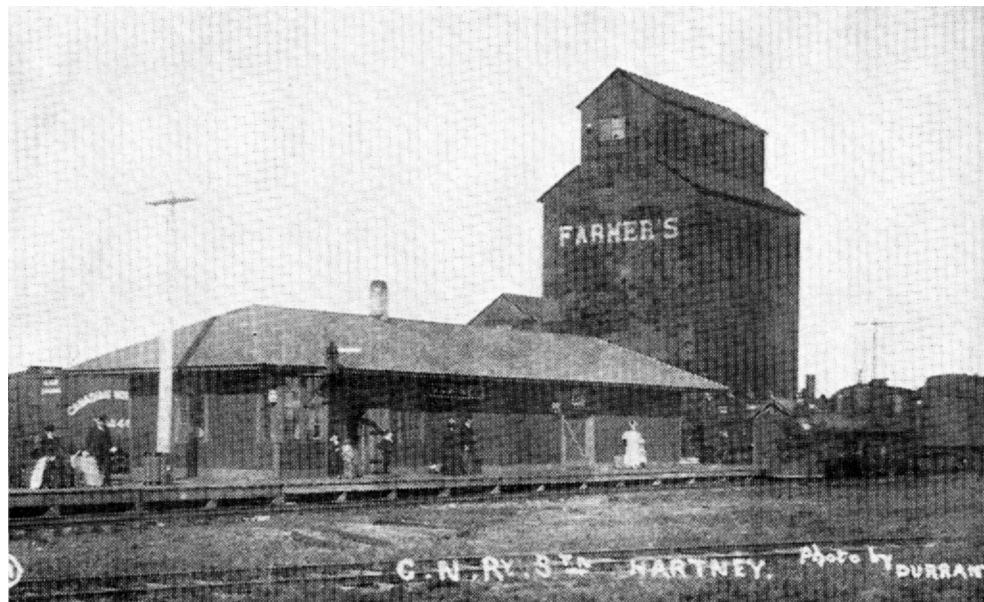
1908: Manitoba Government Telephones took over the telephone services.

Turtle Mountain – Souris Plains

The communities in the Turtle Mountain-Souris Plains region reached what is termed the consolidation era (following the pioneer and establishment eras). Services were in place, village layouts had been established, and transportation lines were in use. The initial spurts of growth had settled. Hastily erected frame buildings were replaced with more substantial houses and stores. Recreational and cultural options were being explored.

1900

The railway line from Elgin, reached Hartney – eventually linking to Grande Clairiere and Virden.



Alex Mains, with his brother, started a planing mill, which soon became a sash and door factory, and eventually (1904) The Hartney Manufacturing Company.

A stagecoach between Hartney and Meglund ran two days a week; and between Hartney and West Hall on Fridays.

A Canada Customs Office was established in Melita.

1901

A smallpox outbreak spread to Hartney with the arrival of a Harvest Train bringing workers from the east.

A Bell Telephone line connected Morden, Napinka , Hartney, Souris, Brandon

The village of Coulter was established.

Influential Women....

Margaret Woodhull - Hartney



Margaret apprenticed with her brother and in 1901 became the first woman graduate in pharmacy in Manitoba. She took over the pharmacy in Hartney in 1920 – lived there until her death.

1902

The A.E. Hill Co. built their store in Hartney

Farm wages were discussed at the Farmers' Institute - \$200/year with board and lodging was the going rate.

The Village of Lyleton was established.

1903

Edward Briggs was elected as Conservative M.L.A. for the Deloraine Constituency in 1903.

In Hartney, Fred Alamas purchased the Hopkins Store from Mr. Hamelin and converted it to a 30 – room hotel – with a Liquor License – but a local vote overturned that license.

1904

The first telephone was installed in the Alma Hotel in Hartney

1905

Hartney was incorporated as a town.

CNR extended to from Hartney to Virden, through Grande Clairiere.

Isabey's "democrat" was equipped with an engine, to become Hartney's first "car".

The Municipality of Arthur was divided into three municipalities Albert, Edward & Arthur.

Local telephone service began in Melita.

1906

The Brandon, Saskatchewan and Hudson Bay Railway, which linked Brandon with the extensive Great Northern Railway system in the Northwestern United States, entered Boissevain in 1906. This north-south link provided competition for the C.P.R. and additional service to citizens for 30 years.

Telephones were installed throughout Hartney.

The Hartney Star predicted that: "Men will not use automated vehicles"

The Melita Brick & Tile Co. was established in 1905 after 80 year old pioneer John Dobbyn discovered a clay deposit west of the river and south of Highway #3. His son R.J. Dobbyn was the first manager.

A village called Broomhill was established on Lauder-Alida branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

A station of the **Canadian Pacific Railway**, named Bernice, existed at NE14-5-26 from 1906 to 1952.

With the arrival of the Great Northern Line nearby, a village called Desford grew along the rail line several kilometres east of its original site. Mr. Davis moved his store from Adelpha. An elevator, two churches, a blacksmith shop, a garage and community hall, were established. At one time the population was about thirty. The village declined with the closing of the GNR in 1936, and the site was deserted by 1970.

1907

The town of Tilston was established (originally Eagleton) when the CPR line from Lauder was extended westward.

1908

The first factory-built automobile in Hartney was purchased by W.E. Crawford. (Ford)

1909

A car trip from Hartney to Winnipeg was big news – Edward Briggs and J.J. Sheppard, with Ed's sons, Joel and Delmar, leave at 9:00 in morning and arrive in the city at 7:00 that evening.

The Empress of Ireland, built by "Captain" Rolston Large, was launched on the Souris River. The intention was to offer service from Napinka to Scotia N.D. Tickets for the 1910 season exist. It was moved to Brandon later that year.

Bede Siding was established.

1910 – 1919

International

1912: The Titanic sank after hitting an iceberg on its first voyage.

1914: WW 1 – 1914 – 18

1917: The Russian Revolution brings the beginning of Communist rule.

Canada

Conscription Crisis

Manitoba

1916: Manitoba was the first province to give women the vote.

1919: Widespread drought. Winnipeg General Strike.

Turtle Mountain – Souris Plains

All Manitoba communities were profoundly affected by the World War, and all Manitoba communities were proud of efforts on behalf of “King & Country”.

1911

Miss Annie Playfair bought the Hartney Star from Walpole Murdoch.



Annie Playfair

IR #60 was sold by public auction

1912

An economic downturn in Manitoba affected local industry in smaller communities.

The Manitoba Government took over Municipal phones.
An Agricultural College was established in Winnipeg.

The C.P.R. Company developed a Demonstration farm in Pierson.

1913

The first Garage in Hartney – solely for the sale and repair of automobiles was established by Delmar Scharf. Fords, Reos, Hupmobiles, McLaughlins, and Oldsmobiles became common sights.

The Melita Demonstration Farm was located near Melita.

Villages of Croll, Regent and Dand formed on the CPR line from Boissevain to Lauder.

1914

World War 1

A Patriotic Society was formed in Manitoba.

Hartney area farm worker, Thomas Hill, was murdered by his co-worker Harry Green.

Mr. Green was held in Hartney Jail until the inquest in Hartney. The trial was in Brandon and his execution took place in 1915

CHARGED WITH MURDER ; HARRY GREEN TO HAVE HEARING AT HARTNEY

Many people in Brandon are under the impression that Harry Green, who is charged with the murder of Tom Hill at Hartney, will have his preliminary trial in Brandon. This is not the case, and according to Crown Prosecutor Matheson, Green will be taken to Hartney on Wednesday and will appear at 7:30 p.m., before the local magistrate. Green was charged with the murder, on an information sworn to by provincial police Constable Adam Ross, and brought before the Hartney magistrate at the close of the inquest. Without being asked to plead, the accused was formally remanded to 76 p.m. on Wednesday at Hartney.

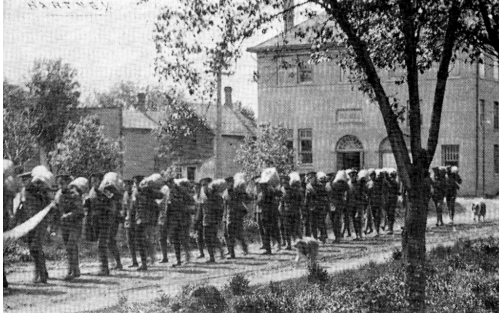
Brandon Sun, 1914

1915

September – a Home Guard was formed in Hartney.
Reports of War Casualties continued.

1916

There were calls to conserve food.
Wheat sold for \$ 2.40 a bushel – there were good prices in general.



Hartney Platoon of 222nd Battalion marching to the C.P.R. station en route to Camp Hughes and Europe, 1916.

1917

Manitoba Women were given the right to vote – thanks to the efforts of women such as former Hartney residents. Francis and Lillian Beynon who, with activist Nellie McClung, had campaigned relentlessly for the change.

1918

Nov 11 – An Armistice ended World War 1
The Spanish Flu Epidemic started in late fall of 1918

1919

On the 29th of May a Banquet in Hartney honoured returned soldiers – 500 people attended.

1920 – 1929

International

The conditions imposed upon Germany after WW1 helped trigger an economic collapse and political turmoil that leads to the rise of Adolph Hitler and his Nazi Party.

1927: Charles Lindberg flew solo from New York to Paris.

1929: The Stock Market crash signaled the beginning of the Great Depression.

Canada

Post-War adjustments were difficult. The “Roaring Twenties” though fondly remembered, most correctly apply to the latter part of the decade.

Manitoba

1920: The Manitoba Grain Growers’ Association became “The United Farmers of Manitoba.” It turned its attention to progressive farm legislation.

Turtle Mountain – Souris Plains

Some General Trends in the 1920's

Throughout the prairies communities erected various memorials commemorating the sacrifice and service of those who participated in the “Great War.”

On farms and in businesses trucks were replacing horses for everyday tasks.

Commercial travelers now use cars making them more flexibly mobile. This trend eventually led to the decline in demand for hotel rooms and of course a decline in rail passenger traffic.

Many communities reached the peak of business expansion in the pre-war years. We see stores changing hands, closing - the same decline is seen in housing, again communities had expanded to the natural capacity.

The adoption of a car-based transportation economy saw the expansion of car-based service – gas stations, auto repair shops

In recreation, tennis and cricket declined. Hockey continued to grow, as did curling.

Radio helped connect remote households to the rest of the world.

Between the Wars

The excitement of the War years, the re-aligning of values in the light of the necessity for personal survival on the battlefields and for national victory, had a disrupting effect on the puritanical taboos by which Manitoba servicemen were influenced before enlistment.

As the home folk sang with the returning men "How ya goin' to keep 'em down on the farm after they've seen Paree?" they realized that, if this were to be accomplished, they must not be too critical of the changed and more flexible attitudes their sons had acquired in Europe, among which was a lesser willingness to attend Sunday services and adhere to the rigid

Sabbath customs of pre-war days, a tendency to mingle oftener with dancing crowds, a less sterilized vocabulary and a continued restlessness and dissatisfaction with things in general. This restlessness was imparted to the youth of the following years and brought about a sophistication and a swing away from old manners, customs and morals, that was the more pronounced because of the rigid restraints of the pre-war years.

1922

Radio broadcasts reached the region.

The Union Bank of Canada at Melita was robbed on Sept. 23, 1922. \$7700 in cash and about \$90000 in securities was taken. Dynamite was used, shots were fired and Thomas Trottier, the night engineer at the power plant was bound and gagged to prevent him from turning on the town lights. No arrests were made.

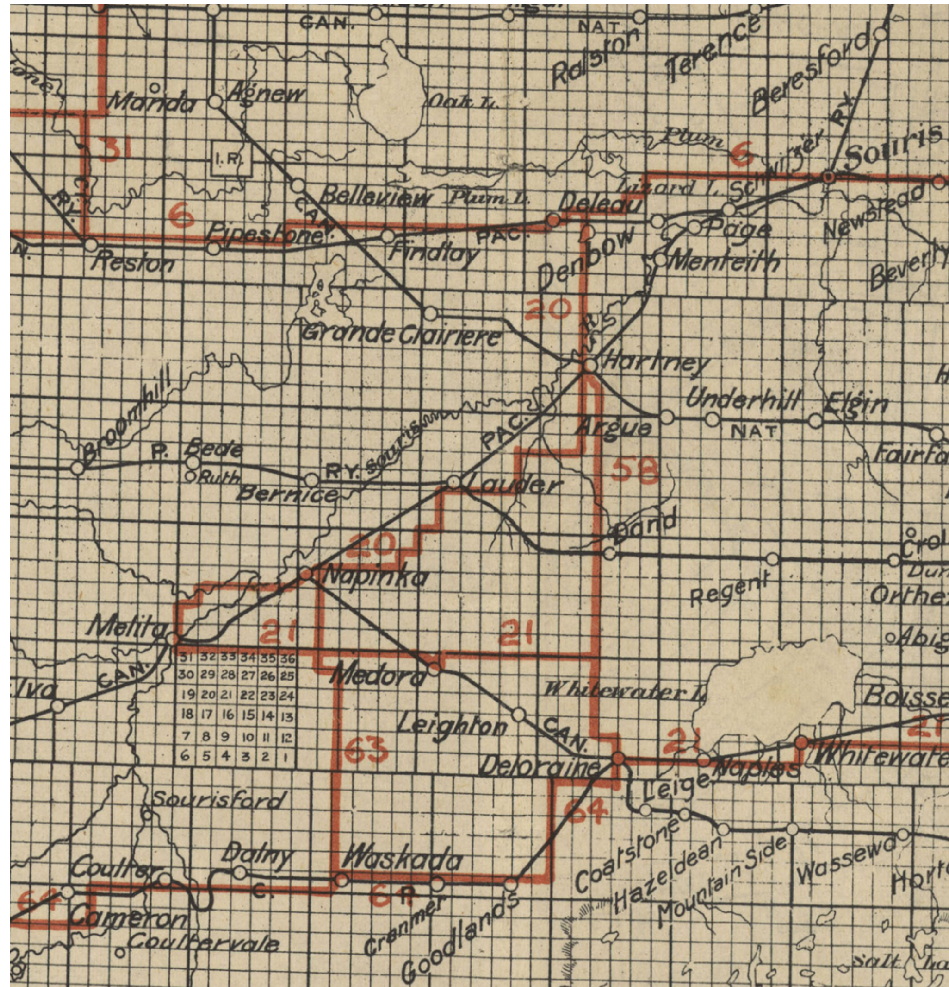
1923

The Home Bank which had a branch in Lyleton, failed on August 18, 1923, and the Federal Government agreed to pay \$5450000 to depositors who had lost money, basically admitting to some culpability in the matter. This was unprecedented but the amount offered didn't cover all the losses incurred across the land.

1924

During the twenties a "Little Theatre" group is formed. One successful production is the one-act play, "Jim Barber's Spite Fence" was written by Lillian Beynon Thomas who spent her early years in Hartney.

Gas deposits were located near Melita by T. Jamieson



Automobile Road Map of Manitoba (1924)
 Winnipeg: Stovel Company Ltd., 1924.
 Image Courtesy of University of Manitoba Archives & Special Collections
 (Morris Block fonds, MSS 207, A.05-43)

1925

A National Union of Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches formalized the many informal unions that had been taking place across the prairies.

The Union Bank merged with the Royal under the name Royal Bank.

1926

Mr. Thomas J. Jamieson opened an office in Melita for the purpose of furthering oil and gas exploration.

1929

The MB Association of Poultry Producers had its origins in Hartney.

1930 – 1939

International

The depression set off by the stock market collapse in late 1929 was felt across North America and Europe.
Sept. 1, 1939: Germany invaded Poland, setting off World War 2.

Canada

The effect of the world-wide economic depression was compounded in Western Canada by an extended drought.
In 1936 the Federal Government cancelled debt for feed and wrote off many advances to the drought areas.

Manitoba

The effects of the drought on the prairies were felt most acutely in the southwest corner of the province.
The Farmer's Creditors Arrangement Act – aimed to reduce farm debt loads.

Turtle Mountain – Souris Plains

The depression and the drought affected the region much as they affected other Manitoba communities. The expansion of the role and scope of schools, the influence of radio, and the changing technology in transportation all had an effect on life.

1931

Low rainfall – crop yield was less than half the national average

Municipalities undertook programs of road building and repair in conjunction with the provincial government as a relief measure.

John Nestibo discovered coal on the Henderson farm. The discovery led to the creation of the Manitoba's most successful coal mines.

1932

Some rain fell but a plague of grasshoppers destroyed crops.

1933

Many farmers had run out of credit and assets. Municipality and provincial governments struggled to provide relief where needed.

1934

Low snowfalls, soil erosion and dust storms became a serious problem.

1935

Dominion Chatauquas, with headquarters in Calgary, brought a three-day program of music, plays and lectures to small towns.

A Reclamation Station was established near Melita under the provisions of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act to investigate the effects of wind erosion in the Souris River Basin.

The Government of Canada launched the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act (PFRA). The following year two Lyleton locals, Baird and Will Murray, petitioned the PFRA to establish the Lyleton Shelterbelt Association. The PFRA provided \$5 per mile of planted trees, with an additional \$20 per mile, per year for the following three years of maintenance.

1936

A Federal Drought Relief Program was established.

1937

Spring rain led to an improved harvest.

1938

Abundant crops

1939

World War II

1940 – 1949

International

December, 1941: The United States entered the war after Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour.

Canada

Aug. 19, 1942: Nearly 1000 Canadians died and 2000 were taken prisoner in the failed raid on Dieppe.

Manitoba

Rationing and consumer goods shortages became a way of life.
Manitoba Power Commission decided to extend service to more rural areas.

Turtle Mountain – Souris Plains

Record harvests in 1940 began a period of relative prosperity to rural Manitoba. The Red Cross Society and other war-related charities and association became active. Good crops help donations to the war effort.

1942

As part of the sir training program an auxiliary airfield was constructed south of Hartney.

1943

Winnipeg Grain Exchange suspended trading. A Compulsory Wheat Board was set up by the federal government. “Mutual Aid” to Great Britain and allies was a priority.

The Credit Union Federation of MB was formed.

1944

Summer rationing continued. The shortage of farm help prompted farm women and girls to help with harvest. More efficient combine harvesters began to appear.

1948

Manitoba Hydro was completing the task of providing electricity to all rural customers.

148 acres west of Melita was declared an Upland Game preserve. It was later (1974) designated as the Gerald W. Malaher Wildlife Management Area.

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Turtle Mountain & The Souris Plains



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