

At the Butterfield Post Office

The Butterfield Post Office was the first on the map of the Southwest corner. These isolated post offices served communities for a short time in that interval between the arrival of the first European settlers and the development of the network of rail and roads that would once again transform the population patterns and re-draw the map.

Brothers Henry and Dr. Joseph Dann and their families immigrated to Ontario from Tipperary, Ireland. In the early 1880's both families came west and homesteaded west of Lyleton on land bordering North Antler Creek along the Boundary Commission Trail.

At that time, mail service was provided by a settler from Sourisford, who used to go to Brandon with an ox team about twice a month for everyone's mail and supplies.

Dr. Dann applied for a post office. It was approved with the name Butterfield and operated by Henry and his family. For some years it was the only mail delivery point south and west of Melita. Until recently one could still see the remains of an old sod building by the old rutted trail, home to this first postal service until a better house was built.

Because they were located right on what was essentially the main highway heading west, they turned their new

home into a Stopping Place, offering food and lodging to weary travellers.

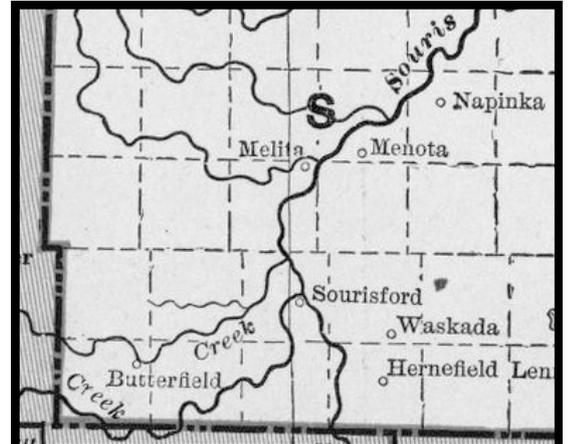
This gave Butterfield the distinction of being, quite literally, the first place on the map in the southwestern tip of Manitoba.

It retained its prominence for nearly a decade. In 1891 the arrival of the CPR branch line from Brandon created the new town of Pierson, a boomtown with stores, hotels and other services. While Pierson quickly became the focus of economic and social activity, it was ten kilometres away. That was still a bit of a trip, so the Butterfield community remained necessary and vital. The post office stayed open until 1904. The beautiful new stone Copley Church was built nearby, and a school of the same name served the area.

It retained its prominence for nearly a decade



► The Henry Dann family – Butterfield pioneers and operators of the Butterfield Post Office.



▲ Butterfield was the first place name southwest of Melita to appear on any map. Of all the names on this map, only Melita could be termed a village.

When the Post Office closed, the Butterfield name might well have faded away. But when growing families prompted the need for a new school it was natural to call it Butterfield.

The Butterfield School District was opened in 1905, and served until 1943. As with all rural schools it was more than a school: it was a meeting hall, a social centre, a polling place at election time, a dance hall when need be. It was the heart of the Butterfield District. As of 2017, the building still stands on the privately-owned site and is used for storage.

Source:
Edward History Book Committee.
Harvests of Time. Altona.
Friesen Printers, 2003.