

# The Pierson CPR Demonstration Farm

One of 13 established on the prairies

The transformation of the Canadian prairie from the wide-open domain of the buffalo, hunter, and fur trader, to a territory defined by orderly rows of privately owned farms, was totally dependent on the establishment of the railway. The ongoing success of the settlement enterprise was essential. Simply put, the railway needed the farmer, and the farmer needed the railway.

Trains were the sole carrier of vital incoming materials as well as the outbound agricultural products the area produced.

The CPR believed it saw a difference between land selling and colonizing. Their land policy indicated, "when a parcel of land had been sold, the company's interest in the transaction would not cease with the sale. In fact, it only commenced". The railway company was interested in the success of every individual purchaser. It was

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good for their business.

To that end the CPR established thirteen Demonstration Farms across the prairies. In 1912, Pierson was selected as one of the three Manitoba sites.

Agricultural methods that travelled with settlers from Ontario, Britain, and Europe were inadequate to the challenge of farming the colder, semi-arid regions of the prairies. The need for science-based innovation was becoming obvious.

The Pierson site included a full line of modern buildings, including a two-story four bedroom house. The barn had the typical loft above, with the centre of the main level as a storage space. On the west and east side were lean-tos with the mangers along the outside of the middle hay shed. A barn with similar features still exists on what was once the Bob



▲ The house built for the manager followed the typical pattern for Demonstration Farms. It later became Mrs. Daniel's Nursing Home.

Dandy farm near Pierson, so perhaps the model had some influence.

The farm was a showplace promoting the region's agricultural potential. Like others across the prairies it served a dual purpose. Along with its research function it produced supplies for the railway's dining cars, stations and hotels.

#### Sources:

Edward History Book Committee. *Harvests of Time*. Altona. Friesen Printers, 2003.  
Historical Society of Alberta. "The CPR demonstration and supply farm: 1908-1944." The Free Library. 2011. <https://www.thefreelibrary.com/The+CPR+demonstration+and+supply+farm+%3A+1908-1944.-a0272362716>.

▼ Modern farm buildings have been added to the former site of the Pierson CPR Demonstration Farm.



▼ A manger in the barn on the Bob Dandy farm.

