

# A Thousand Words

## Collections



South of Bunclody, on the Great Northern Line, there are two deep ravines to cross.

The railway engineers crossed these steep narrow gorges by building temporary trestle bridges and then dumping fill to create a road-level earthen dam, complete with huge pipes designed to let the runoff through. The pipes soon broke and had to be replaced with concrete tunnels two metres square - still quite visible today. Area residents have told me about boyhood adventures that included a dare to go through the tunnel.

Today a marked trail follows the abandoned railway bed and a short walk takes you right there.

We don't know who created this image, but we do know the names of two collectors responsible for the fact that we have it today. Gilford Copeland grew up in the Bunclody area and acquired this photo and several others. Another Bunclody resident, Allan Rose later acquired the images.

Photo enthusiasts, often photographers themselves, are the people responsible for the fine record we have of photography in days gone by.

We present here two collections of particular value to Historians in the Southwest Corner.

## The James Wall Collection

S.J. McKee Archives, Brandon University

In 2004 a collection of photos of Baldur and region were donated to the S.J. McKee Archives at Brandon University. The origin of the photos is unclear, but they were acquired by James Douglas Wall in his capacity as President of the Southwest Branch of the Manitoba Genealogical Society.

Identification on the frames indicates that the prints were the work of at least three different photography operations:

“E.L. Lane Glenboro, Man”

“J.G. Macdonald, Moosomin, Assa.” (Assiniboia – Saskatchewan was not yet a province)

“Steel Co. Limited, Winnipeg & Calgary”.

Of course they could have originally been taken by a single photographer and processed or framed by these businesses. We know that Baldur had at least two professional photographers during that era. Walter Jackson and S. Frederickson had a studio above Fowler’s Shoe Store in 1905, but, as yet, we have no evidence linking them to these photos.

The prints, though marked with age, are of a very high quality and when blown up give us a good look at both architectural detail and facial expression. Many are unidentified except for a few penciled observations, but comparison with other existing photos has brought a few facts to light. Alterations to the original included some digital cleaning of background (skies) in outdoor photos and a slight alteration of the sepia tones.

Here we present some samples with brief descriptions when appropriate. Several of these photos serve as example in other sections of this project.

The entire collection is available online at:

<http://www.virtualmanitoba.com/argyleheritage/photos/p6wall.html>

## A Heritage Mystery

One interesting challenge is finding an old photo that doesn't correspond to a known site. The James Wall Collection in the S.J. McKee Archives is such a find.

It is in a group of photos of Baldur and area, all taken around 1904. Most of the photos in the collection are views of the town.



While it is unfortunate that we only see a small part of the building, the part we do see is quite revealing. It was a substantial building – the kind that was built after the pioneer era when people were getting established. It had a centred front entrance without a porch. The distinctive windows and the trim on the eaves are the notable details.

The most readily identifiable element might be the location with a prominent hillside in the background. It doesn't appear to be in a town but one can't say that for sure. In general, it is a location one might remember. The various excellent Argyle histories show no similar church. The histories of neighbouring municipalities have yielded no obvious matches.

It could well be that this photo is nowhere near Baldur and was included in this collection for some other reason, or by mistake, but the location looks like a site we might find in the Tiger Hills – or is it in a valley?

So far – mystery unsolved!

Highlights from the James Wall Collection



Methodist Church Construction



Methodist Church



Curtis Block



Fowler Block



Alex Fowler



Mildred Bateman



CN Station

## The Brandon, Saskatchewan & Hudson's Bay Railway

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The Brandon, Saskatchewan and Hudson's Bay Railway, a subsidiary of the Great Northern Railway from the U.S. was completed in 1906. It offered service from Brandon to the small town of St. John's, North Dakota where it made connections on the Great Northern lines south to Minneapolis, east to Duluth, and west through Montana to the coast.

Gilford Copland who grew up in the area, collected photos of the railway, including these of the construction process in 1905 & 1906. No historical account of the building of the railway would be complete without them. Gilford was born in 1906, so we know he wasn't the photographer for these early photos, although some of the ones taken in the 1930's and beyond may well be his.



The surveyors for the Great Northern had rejected a crossing straight south of Minto where the valley is both deep and wide, and had selected a site near the hamlet of Bunclody where the southern lip of the valley, although steep, brushed right up against the stream, while the gentle slope on the north side could be crossed with a modest embankment. To get there, the line bends westward at Heaslip, following the curve of the river and crossing a series of deep cuts where ravines enter the valley. After the crossing it drifts even a bit farther west to avoid the Brandon Hill, before curving back towards Brandon.



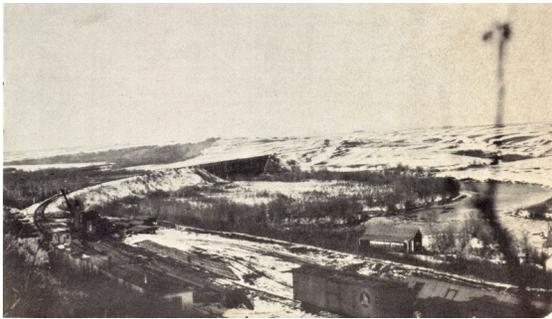
Bunclody was the major construction site of the whole project



The bridge over the Souris was the biggest undertaking. The span was 132 metres long and 26 metres high.



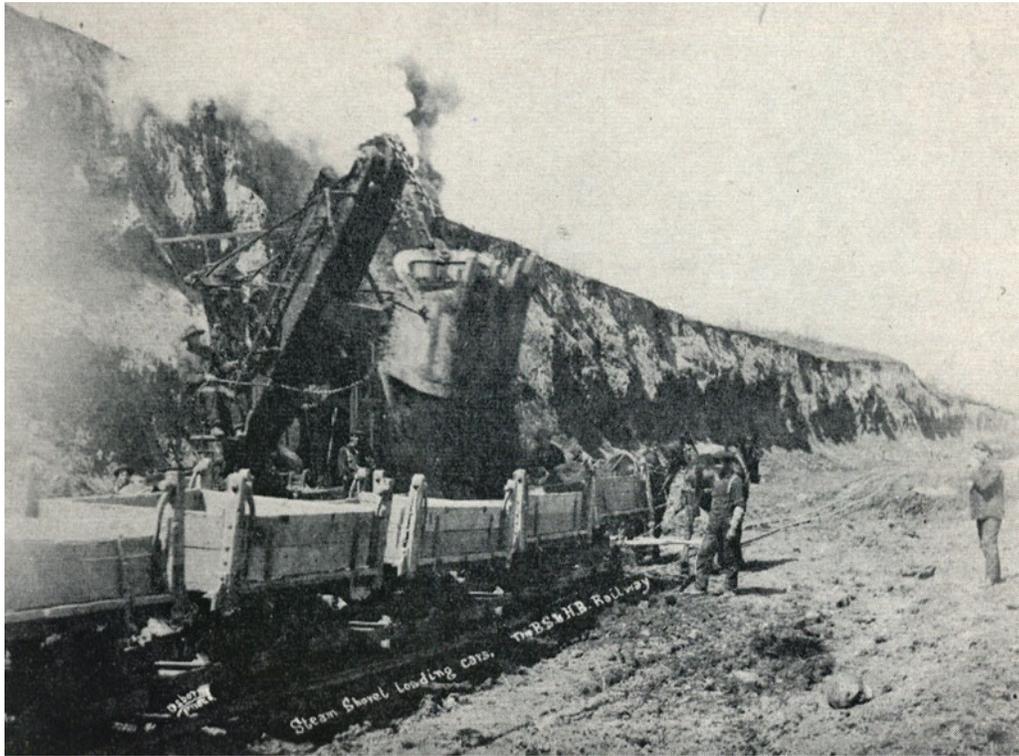
This photo from 2001 shows that the site is still recognizable. The small "island" in the river to the left was the footing for the central pillar – visible in the photo on the previous page.



The completed bridge – in use



Each camp had a steam shovel, modern technology not available a mere 25 years earlier when the CPR crossed Manitoba.



This is the only print with a photographer's mark. In this case Osborne of Boissevain is identified, in his usual fashion – note the message along the edge of the rails.

**“Steamshovel loading cars. The BS&MbB Railway”**