

the store on their way northwest.

Meanwhile, back on Monday, March 15, 1880 many Selkirk people had met to discuss the railway and bridge situation. James Walkley chaired the meeting with James Weidman as Secretary. The chairman briefly stated the object of the meeting and then addresses were given by Mr. E.H.G.G. Hay, MPP for St. Clements, F.W. Colcleugh of Selkirk, J.W. Sifton of Selkirk and Jas. Taylor of St. Andrews. Three motions were passed.

All of them were in favor of a bridge over the Red River "at the point determined by the government" and recommended a petition be sent to the Minister of Railways and Canals, "urging early construction of that link of the CPR westward from Selkirk to where it connects with the Winnipeg Branch" as soon as possible. This motion carried. Then another motion moved by Mr. Hay seconded by F.W. Colcleugh "that as J. Ryan, M.P. and other members of the House of Commons dispute the opinions of the Chief Engineer and staff, as to suitability of a location at Selkirk as a Railway Crossing, be it resolved that in the opinion of this meeting, the Engineer and Staff are correct in their views." This motion carried, as well. The third motion was moved by Mr. Sifton, seconded by Mr. Colcleugh, that resolutions be forwarded at once to the Minister and represent our views on the matter of "Bridging the Red", carried.

The following men were to prepare the petition: Mr. E.H.G.G. Hay, James Taylor, F.W. Colcleugh, F.J. Bowles, R. Bullock, L.S. Vaughan, Joseph Monkman Sr., James Walkley, and J.W. Sifton.

Meanwhile, construction of the railway had progressed very slowly under Alexander Mackenzie (Prime Minister from 1873 to 1878) who believed the railway construction should be only as fast as government funds would allow. By 1878 as mentioned, there had been built only a short line, the Pembina Branch from Selkirk down to the American border to connect with the US railway system, a few miles of track east from Selkirk, and a few miles west from Fort William. After 3 years of construction, only 76 miles had been laid.

While a bridge across the Red to its west bank was projected at Selkirk, it had not yet been built. The Pembina branch ran down the east side of the Red River, passed through St. Boniface where a station and freight sheds were built. It was not too convenient for Winnipeg who had to have their freight and passengers carried by ferry, barge and boat across the Red River from St. Boniface to Winnipeg.

It should be mentioned that during all this railway activity, the City of Winnipeg, had not been idle. They had been very upset over the government's decision to cross the Red River at Selkirk and follow a northerly route. The line would be passing well north of most existing settlements, and its construction was to be directed from Selkirk upon completion of the road. Selkirk, then, would be the point of entry to the west from Eastern Canada, and not Winnipeg.

The City watched in 1875 as the little town north of them really came in to existence in anticipation of its importance as a railway centre. They saw much activity and building going on in 1876 and the town had the

availability of easy building material close at hand. Stores and hotels were being erected with alarming speed.

Winnipeg delegations were formed to wait on the Prime Minister urging him to change the route further south to Winnipeg but he refused saying national interest took precedence over local concerns. Crossing the Red at Winnipeg would mean 30 more miles of roads and rails and besides Winnipeg was flood prone. The Winnipeg petitioners very reluctantly accepted the decision, but probably were more determined than ever to find a way to urge the route south.



As mentioned, from 1875 to 1878 only 76 miles of rails had been laid from East Selkirk east and Fort William west. Winnipeg watched the slowness with much interest. This delay was what Winnipeg needed in order to further their own interests. They organized a mass meeting in Feb. 1877 and passed a resolution calling upon the City to pay a cash subsidy of \$200,000 to any company who would build a railway from the City to the Western boundary of the province.

Then in Nov. 1878 the City proposed a \$300,000 bonus toward the construction of a bridge across the Red River from St. Boniface and the desired railway to the western boundary of the province. A group comprised chiefly of Winnipeg citizens accordingly organized the "Manitoba and South Western Railway Company," to build the desired road and earn the proffered bonus.

The year 1878 had been an important turning point for Winnipeggers for another reason, because, that is the year that John A. Macdonald and his conservative party were returned to office. During the election campaign, many hints had been expressed promising, if elected, they would pass the transcontinental through Winnipeg rather than Selkirk. Selkirk was not too alarmed, it was thought this would be just another unfulfilled political promise. Besides, the government was about to build a large enginehouse and other railway construction at Selkirk.

In April 1879, Macdonald had announced that the Prairie Section of the railway would be built along a more southerly route than had been projected by the Mackenzie Government. He also further stated that in so far as possible, the road would be built through existing centres of population.

That is all the City of Winnipeg needed to spur them on. In view of this development the City of Winnipeg Council unanimously approved the following resolution: "That whereas the Council having been informed that the Dominion Government intends to change the route of the Pacific Railway to the South of Lake Manitoba, and whereas the people of Winnipeg, in mass meeting assembled, have pledged the City to a vote of \$300,000, if necessary toward the construction of a bridge across the

Red River, and western railroad extension; Therefore, be it resolved that the Council pledge the City to pay the cost of construction of a railroad bridge across the Red River provided that the Dominion Government will construct the Canadian Pacific Railway from Winnipeg westward."

A Winnipeg delegation hastily proceeded to Ottawa to interview Sir Charles Tupper, Federal Minister of Railways and Canals, to urge this gift upon him. Sir Charles promised the delegates that if the City built the bridge, the Government would build a branch line from Selkirk, and that a branch line out of Winnipeg would in fact be built *before* the main line out of Selkirk. This occurred in May, 1879.

The City of Winnipeg Council promptly prepared a by-law requesting permission of ratepayers for issue of debentures to finance construction of a railway bridge, with stipulation that it be made available to the Manitoba and South Western Railway as well as a branch line to be built by the government. *Even before* the by-law was passed in July 1879, the federal government had called for tenders for the construction of 100 miles of railway west of Winnipeg and let out the contract in Aug. 1879 to be completed in 12 months time.

Considerable confusion prevailed in the fall of 1879 regarding the colonization Railway because four different routes were being surveyed out of Winnipeg at the same time.

There was still no clear indication whether the line would be a branch line (as originally planned) or if it would become a part of the main line as Winnipeg wanted.

Confusion was compounded by the fact that a civil engineer had journeyed to Selkirk in May, 1879 to survey the proposed main line west of the town.

Meanwhile, a word about the Hudson Bay Company. This Company played a key role in the struggle to draw the railway through Winnipeg. The Hudson Bay Company owned 1750 acres of land in the city by virtue of the 1869 agreement, whereby it had surrendered to Canada its claim to the western territories but had been permitted to retain blocks of land in the vicinity of its trading post.

On Dec. 8, 1879, Sanford Fleming, Engineer in Chief of the CPR recommended to the Minister of Railways that the Government not accede to Winnipeg's request that the Government construct a railway bridge across the Red River at Winnipeg, owing to the flood prone land there.

Mr. C.J. Brydges, Land Commissioner of the Hudson Bay Company, instructed the Winnipeg Agent for the Hudson Bay Company to obtain testimony of local Hudson Bay Company employees regarding the behavior of the river. The agent produced letters from five employees, all of which testified that the Red River had not flooded in the recent past to the extent reported by other sources. Sanford Fleming had commented critically on these letters, and pointed out that, "any benefit to property from the establishment of the bridge at that place (Winnipeg) would accrue to individuals, and mainly the Hudson Bay Company where they have 1750 acres. (Feb. 10, 1880).

In the fall of 1879 Macdonald had led a cabinet mission to Britain to solicit more money for the railway project, but in vain.

In early 1880 the Canadian Government had commenced negotiations with the Canadian group headed by Donald A. Smith. An agreement was reached by Sept. 1880 and formerly announced to Parliament in Dec. 1880 as the "Canadian Pacific Railway Act," embodying the agreement. It became law on Feb. 17, 1881.

We should mention here that when Sir Charles Tupper had visited Winnipeg in Nov. 1880, that the City of Winnipeg Council had presented a memorial to him that promised in addition to the one million dollars spent in 1879, they were willing to grant railway buildings and grounds tax free exemption for an extended number of years if they would build their workshops and depots in Winnipeg. Tupper told them at that time that it was up to the Syndicate, but he would support Winnipeg as the location.

The City Council took no chances, they hastily despatched a delegation south to interview members of the Syndicate and urge them to locate the depot and workshops in Winnipeg. By June 1881 the CPR Company formerly offered to locate its workshops in Winnipeg and to build the desired railway southwest providing Winnipeg granted the Company \$200,000 bonus, land for a station, and exemption of its property from civic taxation in perpetuity. By an overwhelming vote (130 to 1) the local ratepayers approved (July 1881) a by-law framed along the lines demanded by the CPR. The CPR, at once, started construction of workshops, freight shed and passenger station in the City of Winnipeg.

The people of Selkirk continued to hope that the main line would pass through their town, as originally planned. Only a bridge and a dozen miles of road were lacking to complete the connection between Selkirk and Victoria Junction, from which point the branch out of Winnipeg proceeded in a westerly direction. From an engineering standpoint, the construction of a bridge and the short stretch of track was an obvious requirement, since they were links in the most direct route from east to west, with a crossing of the Red River, that would be immune from flooding, etc., etc., etc. It would appear that Selkirk had not kept up with all the changes that were transpiring south of them.

Then a CPR representative informed the people of Selkirk that the company did not consider it necessary to build a line from Selkirk to Stonewall (an integral link in the originally-planned main line). However, if the local municipality would provide a bonus of \$125,000 the CPR would send an engineer to locate a bridge over the Red River at Selkirk, together with the connection to Stonewall. If they failed to do this, the CPR would straighten out the line from Whitemouth to Winnipeg leaving Selkirk off the main line altogether. The money was never raised. In the latter part of 1881 the CPR with the consent of the federal government built a new line directly from Winnipeg to Portage la Prairie shortening the rail distance by about 17 miles. A private group was organized in 1882 to build a railway from Selkirk to Poplar Point, there to effect a junction with the line out

of Winnipeg but the attempt came to naught. Winnipeg's economic and political strength had proven superior to Selkirk's nautical advantages. The threat to leave Selkirk off the main line altogether did indeed occur, but at a later date.

To recap at this point, the final decision to build the railway through Winnipeg and not Selkirk was not the result of a logical consideration of the merits of the two locations. Rather, the greater resources of Winnipeg, the fully established centre, were brought to bear. In 1881 Winnipeg made concessions, as mentioned, to the CPR interests in the form of \$200,000 bonus, a free right of way worth about \$20,000 and exemption from taxation in perpetuity of CPR holdings within the City, and the building of a \$250,000 bridge over the Red River. In return, Winnipeg was guaranteed not only a position on the main line, but also that the CPR maintenance shops for its western operation would be located there.

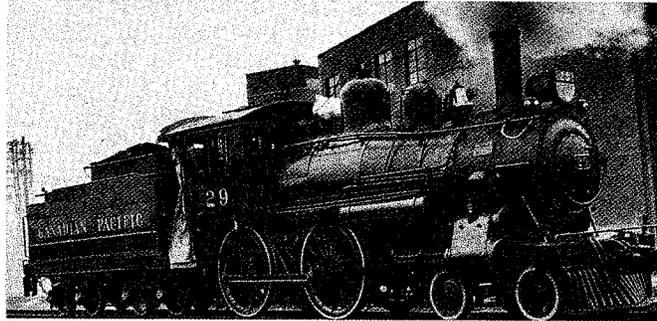
Selkirk to the north had remained a potential rival until the CPR had demanded \$125,000 for the building of a bridge at Selkirk and the construction of a connection to the main line west of Selkirk and east. The alternative, the CPR representative told Selkirk, was the straightening of the route east of Red River so that the mainline would pass exclusively through Winnipeg. The CPR official waited a period of time, knowing Sanford Fleming's arguments were valid as to the desirability and geographic location making Selkirk a genuine choice -- Winnipeg at this point was doubtful from being flood prone -- but Selkirk failed to raise the bonus and meet the railway demands, and at this point, ceased to present any serious competition to the organized agreements formed in Winnipeg.

One item during research which I found most interesting was that the contractors in Winnipeg had been out to Selkirk and obtained permission from the Government to quarry stone on the eastern town plot. By mid-June 1880 they had about 25 men at work in the East Selkirk Quarry. This was the same stone that had built the large Selkirk Roundhouse (Enginehouse) for the railroad under the Government of Canada Public Works contract. There was also mention of lime also being shipped in large quantities from Selkirk to be used in Winnipeg for the mason work on the bridge. By July, stone was being rushed out of the quarry at the rate of 30 yards per day for the Louise Bridge.

By Feb. 1881 the government allowed the creation of the CPR and transferred all railway lines built by the government to the new private company. By the fall of 1881 William C. Van Horne was on the payroll of the new company and looking over the line north and west of Superior, the old precambrian country. It is stated he was military like in his speech and decisions, ruthless and single-minded in any cause he served, and he was out to complete a railroad with a deadline to meet. He was paid \$15,000 a year and started work in earnest in 1882. They say the gentleman enjoyed a good challenge and Van Horne had reason to be impressed, he had a new railway to build, the longest in the world. The CPR turned the first prairie sod in 1881 and by June 1882 Van Horne had launched his record-breaking push across the prairies, and had completed the rail crossing at Winnipeg over the

Red River with the completion of the Louise Bridge.

Winnipeg in the spring of 1882 was turned into a giant railway depot. Van Horne contractors needed 3000 men



*CPR Engine 29, a 4-4-0 type built in 1882.*

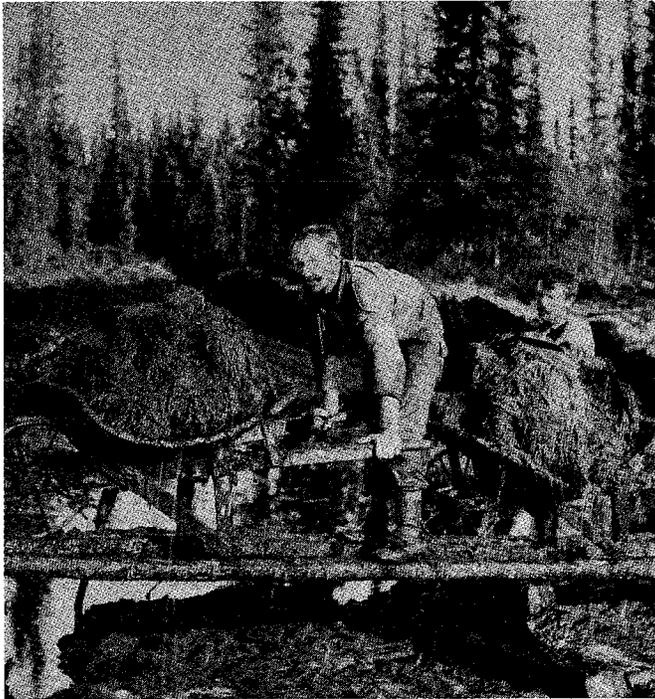
and 4000 horses and they needed provisions and food for 7600 men. The floods came in April 1882, and in May they were hit by blizzards. The line from St. Boniface to East Selkirk going east finally met up with the line coming west from the Lakehead at Rat Portage. The rails between Rat Portage and Port Arthur were actually connected on June 19, 1882, making, in theory, a through line of railway between the Lakehead and Winnipeg. However, more than a year was to elapse before problems of alignment and levelling, particularly over the muskegs and the many bodies of water, were overcome sufficiently to allow the passage of trains with reasonable dependability.

This was the area of the infamous contracts 41 and 42, which later would form the subject of a Royal Commission of Enquiry.

With the work on the CPR built section east from the Lakehead scheduled to begin in the spring of 1883, it was imperative that the Canadian Pacific Company should have control of the whole Lakehead to Winnipeg track by that time. Ultimately, the line in an incomplete state was placed in Canadian Pacific's custody by May, 1883. The eastern limit at Lake Superior was considered the eastern extremity of the Western Division.



This Thunder Bay line was different than those areas west of the Red River, in fact, different from probably any other rail line. Private individuals living along the line had been in the habit for quite some time of using their own handcars and velocipedes to travel along back and forth over the lines at their will. This practice had been tolerated by the various contractors because most of the people concerned were employed in the actual construction or else in some related trade of supplying the workers or contractors. Once the CPR scheduled operations were started, this unauthorized traffic would have to be stopped, as it was a menace to regular trains.



*Railway Builders.*

Besides the problem of unscheduled use of rails by merchants, labour foremen and supply teams, we also had land that wouldn't take kindly to track laying. In some of the more serious muskegs, the embankment had to be laid on a "Mattress" of tree trunks, roots and branches. It was some time before roadbeds laid in this way were stabilized. It is said that, at one location, seven complete sets of tracks disappeared into the muskeg. There are many recorded instances where the track disappeared below the surface of the water after the passage of each train, necessitating more ballast to bring the rails above the water again. In some cases, it was necessary to repeat this procedure for weeks before the embankment became firm.

Alcohol was also a great social problem during the building of the railroad. Those who did not use it themselves, often catered to those who did.

Mr. John M. Egan was appointed General Supt. of the West Division and took over the contract to build the CPR starting in Jan. 1882. His appointment terminated

on Sept. 1, 1886 and he was replaced by William Whyte at that time.

Work stoppage of 3,500 men (locomotive and firemen) started on Dec. 11, 1883 when they refused to work in Thunder Bay to Calgary. Work was halted on the completed portions. The hardest hit was the partially-operated service from Thunder Bay on. Cause of the disruption was the company's attempt to reduce engineers' salaries by \$6 per month. So the Engineers went on strike and the firemen went off to work in sympathy.

The strike only lasted for 8 days. The CPR's attempt to reduce wages stemmed from a financial dilemma and near bankruptcy. Construction costs during the summer of 1883 had drained the company's capital. At the beginning of Dec. 1883 the CPR stock had reached its lowest ebb and 1883 proved to be a year of recession in the Canadian Northwest.



*Bunk Cars for railway construction workers.*

The strikers complaints (besides reduction of wages) were basically the high cost of meals and poor sleeping quarters at divisional points, overcrowded and sometimes they had to sleep in the engines. The meals cost 75 cents each and at 2 meals per day, this meant \$1.50 to eat and they only made \$3.50 per day. Long working hours sometimes totalled about 51 1/2 days at 12 hours per day just to make from about \$135 to \$204. Another worker could work 26 days at 12 hours per day just to produce \$95 per month. The men complained that any wage reduction was unacceptable. A wage increase with reduced working hours would be more to their liking. The Strike, while it lasted, was bitter. The engineers from the Lakehead cabled Headquarters in Winnipeg that men were indignant about railway action and could hold the fort, "till the grass grows green."

However, Van Horne wired Egan that he had recruited



*Ukrainian workers.*



*At East Selkirk.*

replacements for the strikers from Chicago and they arrived on Dec. 18, 1883 and the document officially ending the strike was signed on Dec. 19, 1883. However, the railway and craft unions continued to organize and strike during the next year.

By Feb. 1884, the CPR received a government loan of some \$22,500,000.

To the Indians and Metis of the Red River and Northwest Territories, the railroad became the symbol of the end of the good old days. Another resistance was forming in the northwest and open rebellion broke out in 1885. Louis Riel, who had gone into exile after the 1869/70 resistance, had come out of exile in the US to set up two more provisional governments for Saskatchewan and Alberta. Only this time it was called Treason, because Canada was an organized nation.

Meanwhile, financial problems reached a peak for the CPR in Feb. 1885 and to compound it, B.C. was passing an anti-Chinese immigration bill, which affected the labour force of the railway. By March, 1885 the BC authorities stopped all landed Chinese immigrants. Riots in the railway camps became common due to no pay for the workers, strikes occurred and the NWMP were called in. However, the NWMP couldn't spare many men because most of them had been attending the North West Rebellion.

Van Horne took advantage of the situation and promised the government he could get troops, arms and provisions over the route to the rebellion area. This was quite a promise considering there were still four unfinished sections and 86 miles yet to complete. However, he did it, he transported 8000 troops by rail to the scene of the conflict and it was soon over.

The rails linking east with west was met and linked on Eagle Pass at a site called "Craigellachie". The last spike was driven by Donald A. Smith on Nov. 8, 1885 with Sanford Fleming, Van Horne and Major Rogers and John Egan in close attendance.

Nine days after the last spike was driven, Louis Riel was hanged in Regina.

The first through passenger train of the new CPR left Montreal for the Pacific on June 28, 1886 and arrived in Winnipeg crossing the Louise Bridge on July 1, 1886 and

arrived at the BC Terminal at one minute to noon hour on July 4, 1886 heading for the Pacific.

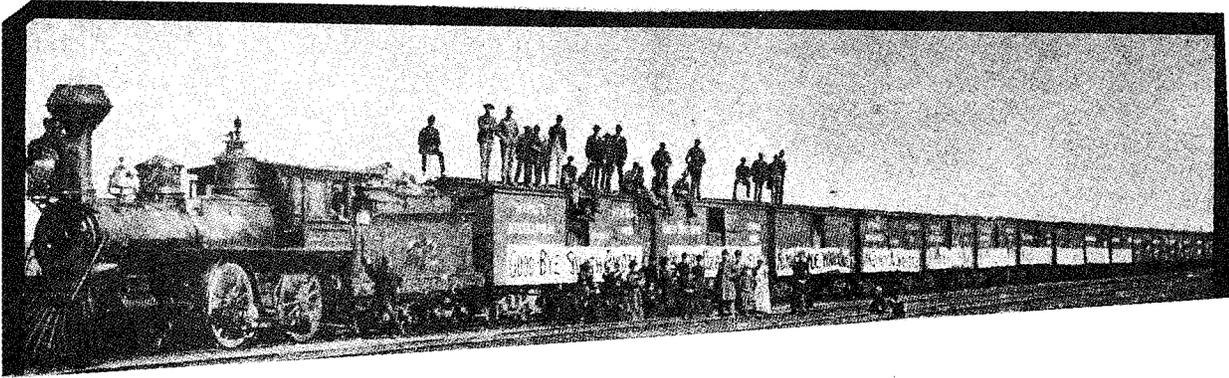
The dream for a transcontinental railroad was finally realized, 15 years after it was approved to commence and 23 years after Sanford Fleming had placed his plans on paper. Sanford Fleming's prediction of 25 years was not far off the mark.

The completion of the CPR spurred settlement all along its lines and the big move from eastern Canada was really on. Thereafter, people came from eastern Canada, the United States, Great Britain and Central and Eastern Europe to settle in the west.

To recap the East Selkirk/CPR connection. It was decided to cross the Red River at Selkirk in 1871, the town was mapped out by 1875/76 and construction under way. The Railway bridge across Cooks Creek was built in 1878 and the Roundhouse was constructed in 1878/79 and handed over to the government in Jan. 1880. The railway reached East Selkirk in Dec. 1877 but was delayed until Cooks Creek Bridge was completed in 1878. During 1880 the railroad was using the roundhouse as a supply depot and after May when the turntable was installed, was an engine repair depot. Also in May 1880, the 2 mile spur line was being constructed to Colville Landing at the east slough, and was completed by mid July 1880. The Hudson Bay Company "floating warehouse" was placed at Colville by 1880. Also in 1880, East Selkirk was shipping large quantities of stone and lime for the building of the Louise Bridge in Winnipeg.

Between 1878 and 1881 the government worked the railway building and in Feb. 1881 the CPR were incorporated and the government built lines were transferred to the new CPR on May 1, 1881. This included the section from St. Boniface, through East Selkirk to Telford near the Ontario/Manitoba boundary. This line eventually met up with the line coming west from the Lakehead in 1882.

In May 1881 the large Hudson Bay Company store at Colville was almost completed and Colville Landing was booming during the next few navigation seasons and by 1883/84 was all but abandoned. The spur line track leading to Colville was removed prior to the summer of 1887.



In 1883 all the brickyards save one were operating, the quarries were running and the roundhouse was building and repairing cars. That was when the Town of Selkirk on the west bank, incorporated in 1882, started to systematically entice business over to the west side from the east bank. The Northwest Lumbering Company and others were moved over during 1883 and buildings skidded during 1884.

By 1898 when the conversion of the Roundhouse was commenced to convert same to an Immigration Shed, East Selkirk was almost a ghost town. Things hummed only a bit during the immigration hall days from 1898 until it was closed up in 1907.

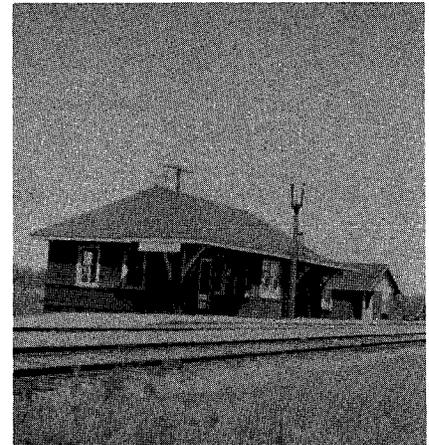
The threat by the CPR to leave Selkirk off the main line altogether was realized in 1907 when the CPR built a new section from Molson to Winnipeg thereby shortening the main line route by 10 miles. Henceforth all transcontinental traffic moved over the new section, and the original line to Selkirk and thence east was used only for local traffic.

The CPR Station which was completely remodelled and renovated in late 1905 was removed about 1/2 mile east of the old site by the end of 1906.

Meanwhile, the railway branch running on the west side of the river from Winnipeg to the Town of Selkirk was constructed by the CPR and was opened for service at the end of the year 1883. It was extended to Winnipeg Beach in 1903, Gimli in 1906 and Riverton in 1914.

In conclusion, it would appear that Winnipeg was not the only interest working against East Selkirk becoming the main railway centre for the east-west traffic. Much of the blame lies much closer to home. However, much of the documentation to substantiate certain statements in this relation are not yet placed in proper chronological order. Therefore, we end the story here, for time does not allow us to properly interpret the research gathered.

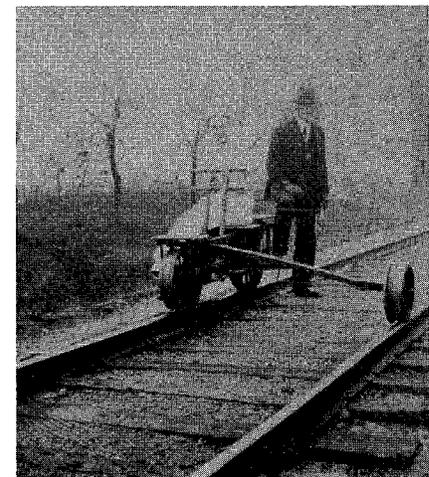
We hope you enjoy the photographs that have been gathered depicting early CPR days. Many of the views were shot by Mrs. Smiley who was the daughter of a railroad man. Besides being an amateur photographer, she also had her own "dark-room" and did her own developing. Her hobby allows us the privilege of retaining early scenes of East Selkirk that otherwise might have been lost. Her son, Jake Smiley, submitted her album for your enjoyment.



*East Selkirk  
CPR Station.*



*Mrs. Larson by the  
CPR Water tank.*



*Mr. Larson*

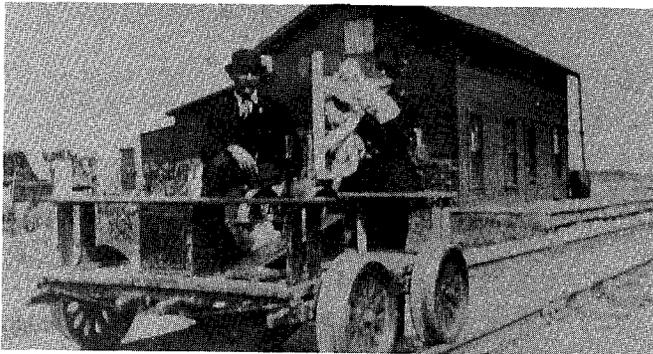
# MRS. SMILEY'S ALBUM



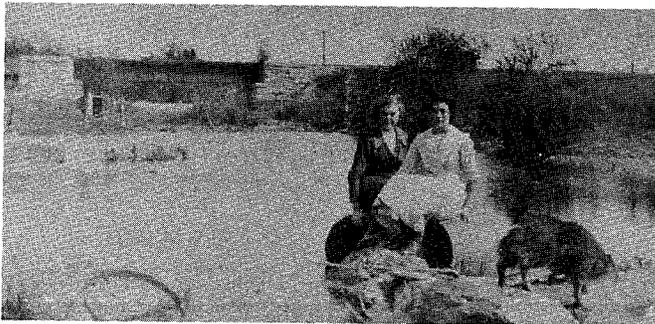
*Mr. Larson on Velocipede.*



*Harry Baldwin - Engineer CPR.*



*CPR Section House - East Selkirk.*



*Mrs. Baldwin - CPR Bridge over Cooks Creek.*



*Jim Potter going for dairy cows - Martin Field - 1928.*



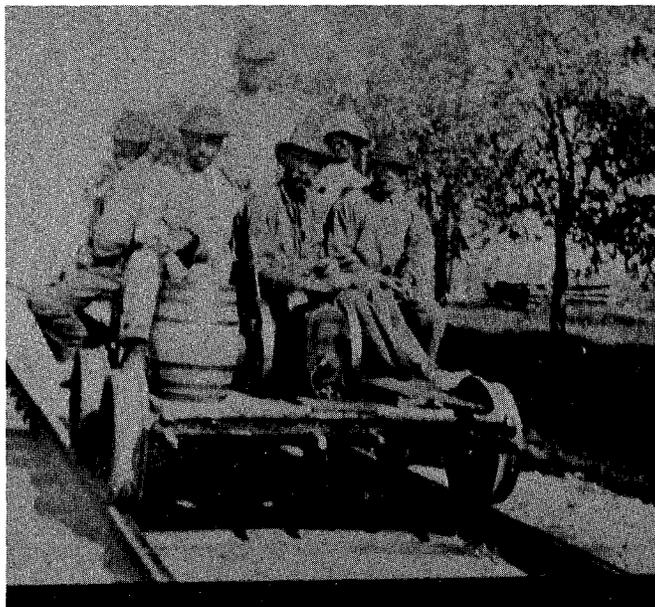
*Arthur Baldwin - Station Agent CPR.*



*Hans Larson - Section House CPR.*



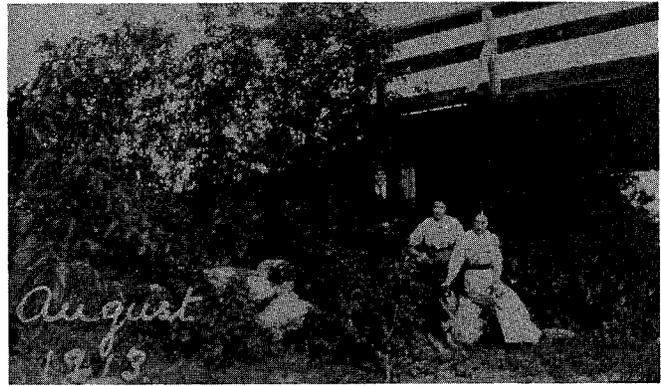
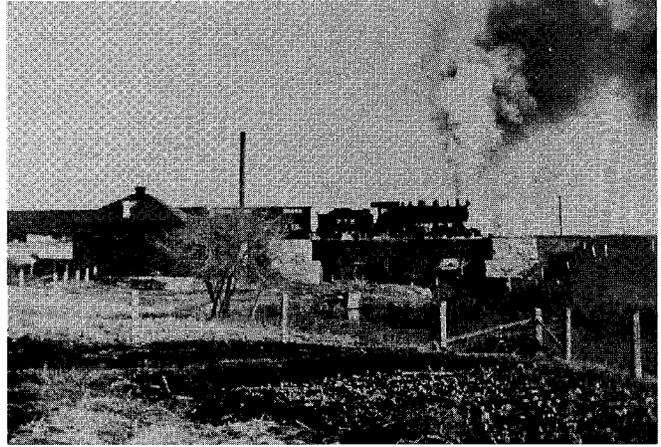
*CPR Bridge, Water Tank and Pump House.*



*Section Gang, CPR.*



*Mr. Larson on right.*



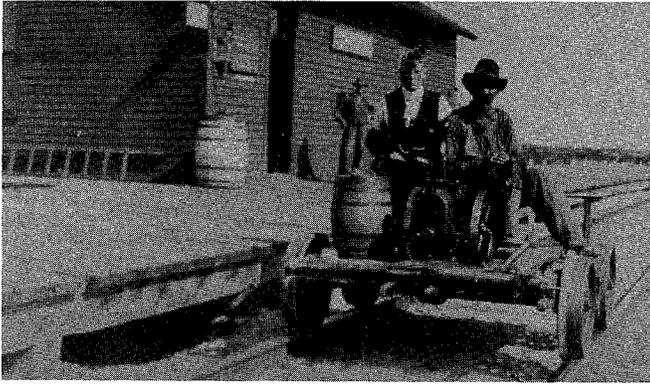
*Annie Larson - CPR Near Section House.*

*Cooks Creek Bridge - 1913.*

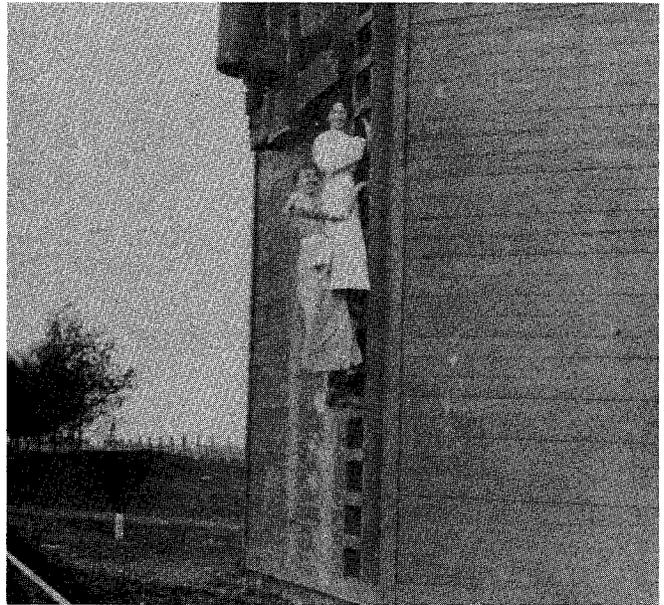


*CPR Line - Lake of the Woods East Selkirk.*

*Pump House and Water Tank at Cooks Creek.*



*CPR "Jigger" - East Selkirk station.*



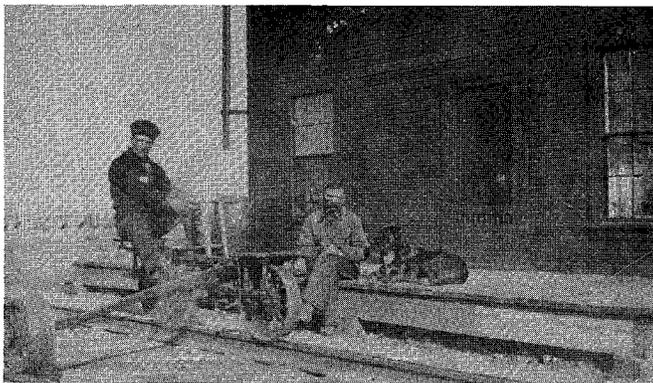
*Daring Ladies on the Water Tank.*



*Eva Baldwin and Friends near Water Tank.*



*The Baldwin family seeing Arthur off during W.W.I.*



*Mr. Larson and Section Hand.*

