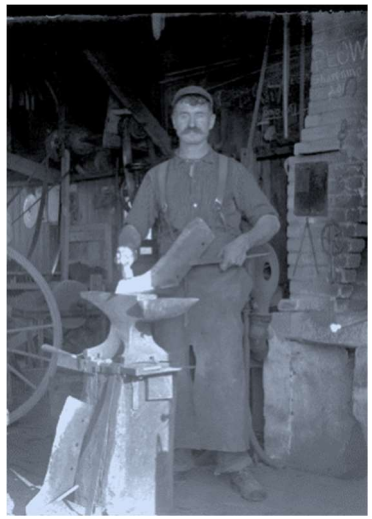
PIONEER WORK



The Types of Work that Shaped the R.M. of St. Clements
1880-1940

A Project of the St. Clements Heritage Committee

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the support of Manitoba Sport, Culture and Heritage
in the development of this initiative,
through a grant from the Heritage Grants Program,
and through ongoing guidance and support of the
Historic Resources Branch.

2018

PIONEER WORK

The Types of Work that Shaped the R.M. of St. Clements
1880-1940

PIONEER WORK

This project is about work. It is specifically about work in the Rural Municipality of St. Clements during its formative years – 1880-1940. It is about work because it's mostly what we do, even now, and because the work we do shapes and forms the communities in which we live. And in any community's early years, work takes on special significance – for it was often the very thing that "made" the community.

This project has been developed based on suggestions and models proposed to Manitoba communities by the Province's Historic Resources Branch (HRB). The primary initiative is called "Notable People," and several communities besides St. Clements have undertaken such projects over the past several years.

As noted in the branch's introductory notes on this kind of project: "A community's historical evolution is defined by a series of events—the arrival of the first settlers, the construction of the first store, the arrival of the railway, the development of an industry—and by the actions of the people living there. These activities, ranging from the humble day-to-day routines that define any life, to the inspiring and dramatic acts that altered or informed the course of history, are at the very core of a community's past and of its character.

"However, the lives and stories of the hundreds, even thousands, of individuals that together define any community, are too complex to put into a meaningful and cogent story. For heritage purposes this kind of challenge is usually met by identifying a few key people that can be shown to sum up significant aspects of local history. These people are the ones that can most effectively stand in for the others, whose lives and stories can be said to define important qualities and themes of the whole community. And these stories are never just the grand and memorable (important as they are); they are also the small and modest, the lives that often add the subtle colours and fill in the gaps for a more complete expression of a community's past."

This particular project, "Pioneer Work," has also followed HRB recommendations regarding the kinds of research, analysis and communication that help define the list of individuals whose work lives are presented here. That work began with a careful review of our major local history, *The East Side of the Red*, with particular attention to the 337 entries in the family history section. Through the methodical analytical and evaluation processes that HRB

designed, the current project builds on that earlier inventory. Anyone interested in those preliminary materials should consult the St. Clements Heritage Group.

Some of the occupations encountered on the following pages do not exist anymore. Others have been transformed by new technologies. All are interesting. The goal of this project is to bring these old occupations and avocations to life. This has been accomplished by using the very texts developed by descendants for *The East Side of the Red*, with an eye to those that contain useful information and even delightful anecdotes and character observations – these people after all were not just their jobs; they were living, breathing individuals. We have also tried as much as possible to include images of the people, so that their stories can be made even richer with a real sense of the person at hand. And, finally, where it seems necessary or relevant, we have developed additional textual asides that provide more detail about how certain of the occupations and avocations were undertaken – via "A Day in the Life" sidebar.

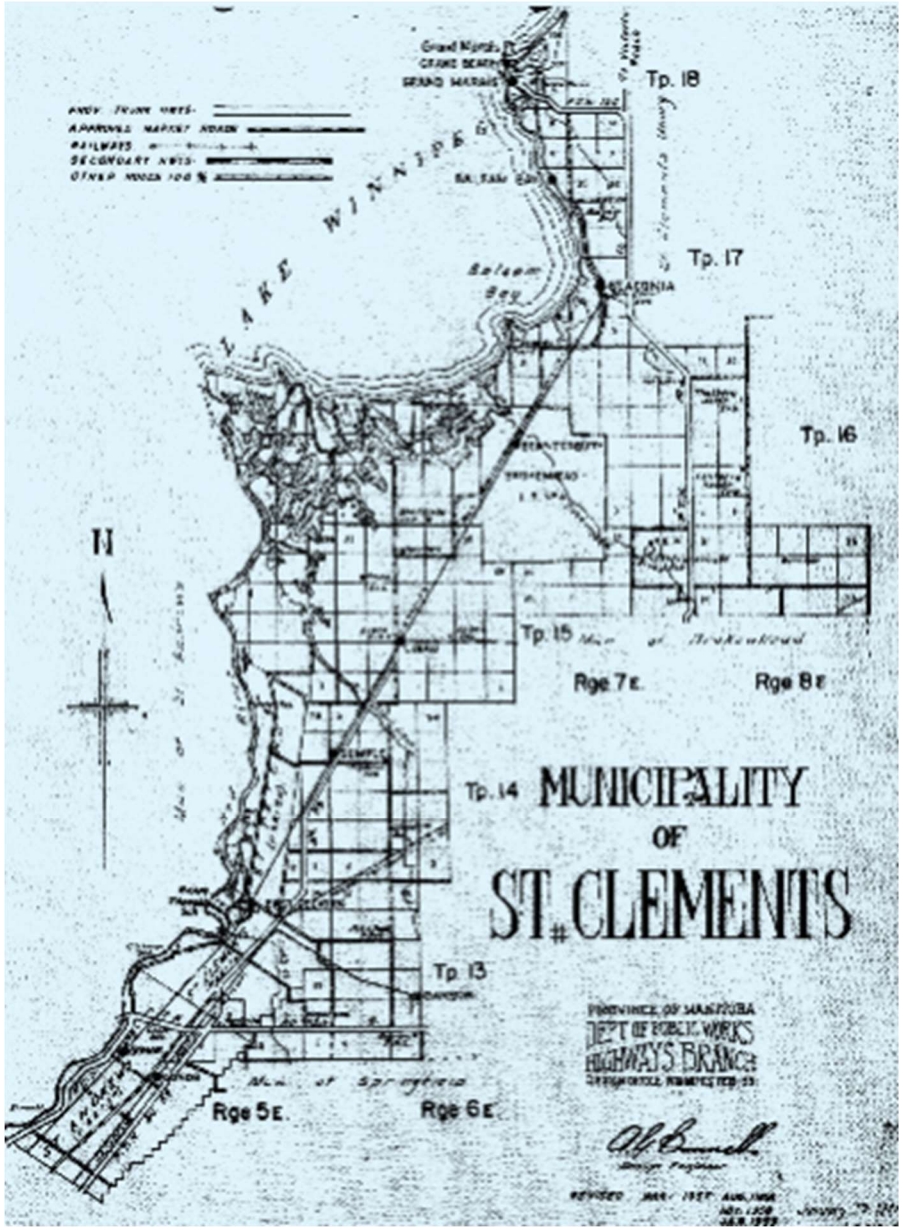
There are 33 entries that follow, providing a good cross-section of work life in St. Clements nearly 100 years ago. Selections are presented in a slight chronological order, so that readers can get a sense of the changing work world of the community. In a few instances we have been able to add, via a sidebar, another individual who shared a particular occupation, which can add another sensibility to that story. We have also endeavoured to highlight women, whose occupations and hobbies were often overlooked in the historical record. Additional care in the selections ensures that nearly all of the communities that make up St. Clements are represented in the selections: East Selkirk, Gonor and Narol, Libau, Walkleyburg, Poplar Point, Grand Marais and Lockport. Please see the following map for locations.

Before exploring the individual entries, there are three important contextual pieces to present first. These will provide some additional background that will make many of the individual texts more meaningful:

- Aboriginal Peoples of St. Clements
- Places of Work
- The Pioneer Life

List of Subjects

Thomas Bunn
Kenyon Copperthwaite
Alec Anderson
James Peter Paulson
J.J. Gunn
Alexander Rowley
Arni Anderson
Henry Nelson
Murdoch McLeod
Holubowich Family
J.J. Erskine
James Oastler
Gordon Barron Burnett
George Gowrilu
Peter Pewarchuk
Diengot Recksiedler
John Bunio
John Rokosh
Agnes Monkman
Julius Block
Ada (Brooke) Rowley
Emil Greening
John Machewski
Morris Sharp
Mary Gunn
Reinhard Schneider
Clifford Sawchuk
Catherine Kolmatiski
John Chorney
George Koterla
Mabel Davis
Joseph Blackner
Lieutenant-Colonel Sullivan



This map of the R.M. of St. Clements, from 1951, shows the main outline of the municipality, stretching from Lockport at the south to Grand Maris at the north. The Red River and Lake Winnipeg mark the western edges of the municipal boundary.

Aboriginal Peoples of St. Clements

The Province of Manitoba passed the necessary legislation granting the formation of the Municipality of St. Clements on July 7, 1883, and proclaimed the legislation effective on December 22, 1883. The first elections in St. Clements were held in early January 1884, with the first Council being made up of Reeve Robert Hay and councillors Louis Vandal, R. McDonald, A. McDonald, John Clouston, Claude Macfie and Robert Cowan.

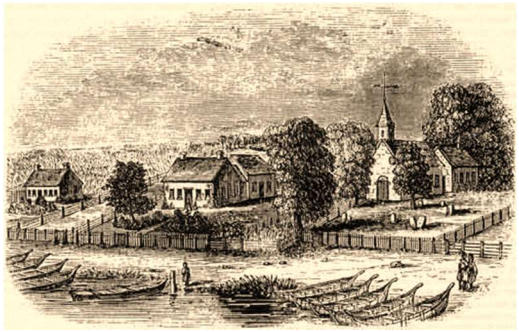
Thus legally we mark 1884 as the birth date of the municipality. And so rightly mark that date on our calendars.

But it is essential to note that the date of 1884 does not actually mark the origins of this area as a settled place. It does not acknowledge the Aboriginal peoples who lived here for many centuries before that date. And it certainly does not suggest the fate of those people, for whom 1884 might be seen as the beginning of the end of their own distinctly productive period of activity in the St. Clements/St. Andrews region. This following brief overview provides that context.

Aboriginal peoples—thought mainly to be Saulteaux and Cree—made the St. Clements/St. Andrews area a major part of their seasonal hunting territory for centuries. The abundant fish in the Red River and Lake Winnipeg, the ready access to berries and fruits, and the bountiful wild game—ducks, geese, deer, moose—made this area a prime destination for periodic occupation. Of special interest is the recent discovery of a distinct Aboriginal farming history at Lockport, at this point the only Manitoba example of this important "economic" activity.

It is known through archaeological evidence that several thousand years before the arrival of European immigrants, many Aboriginal nations in North America had developed sophisticated farming methods. Four centuries before Europeans settled beside the Red River, Aboriginal peoples were agricultural pioneers in the valley. Recent archaeological digs reveal a thriving Aboriginal farming site on the east bank of the Red at Lockport, with a focus on the production or corn, or maize.

It made sense to locate farm gardens near the river. The Lockport site had a nutrient-rich layer of new soil left behind by receding flood waters each spring. Clearing the land of tall, prairie grasses, trees, and brush required the quarrying and fashioning of stone knives and axes.



"Indian Settlement at Red River," from G. J. Mountain's journal of 1846. An idealized view of the Aboriginal settlement at St. Peter's. (Courtesy Archives of Manitoba)

An Aboriginal farmer with his team of oxen, likely at St. Peter's Settlement. (Courtesy Archives of Manitoba) By 1850 there were about 500 residents with 230 acres under cultivation at St. Peter's.

Wooden digging tools were used to break up the soil. Hoes made of wood and the shoulder blade of the bison were used to till the soil. Corn was planted in small hillocks and arranged in rows one metre apart. Beans, squash, and flowers may also have been grown. The Aboriginal farmers at Lockport developed a strain of corn that could mature in the typical 100-day growing season. The adaptation of corn to the long-day, short-season environment of the Red River Valley testifies to the selective plant breeding skills of these first farmers.

St. Peter's Reserve

So, by the time that the first European agricultural settlers arrived in Western Canada—the Selkirk Settlers, at what is now Winnipeg, in 1812—the Aboriginal community at St. Clements/St. Andrews was well established, and highly successful. So successful in fact that the chief at the time, Peguis, was able to provide sustenance to the newcomers to ensure their survival in this new and inhospitable land.

It would seem that Chief Peguis recognized the profound changes that were about to alter his tribe's way of life, and so in 1817 signed a treaty granting his people the land running north from Sugar Point. This became the area of St. Peter's Reserve.

Soon, Anglican missionaries were taking an interest in the affairs of this "new" Aboriginal settlement. The first, Reverend William Cockran, persuaded Chief Peguis to engage in the first permanent Aboriginal agricultural settlement at Netley Creek, in 1832. And by 1834, with the main community moved to the mouth of Cook's Creek, a church, school, and several farms were established. A windmill was even added to the local agricultural infrastructure.

During the 1860s the Aboriginal community at St. Peter's began to fear for the security of their land titles, given the pressure from an ever-growing influx of European settlers to the south, as well as on the west side of the Red. Much of the St. Peter's Reserve was still undeveloped, and it wasn't long before the members of the settlement were being enticed to sell their land at bargain prices, by one method or another.

By the early 1880s St. Peter's Reserve was nearly surrounded by settlers, business and industry. In April of 1905, the St. Peters community was putting up many miles of wire fencing to prevent trespassers from intruding and to protect their haylands. But the advance of European settlement was inexorable. And so by 1907 all of the St. Peter's original landholdings were as good as taken away – including all the valuable farms. Any hope of

The community erected a fine stone church, St. Peter's Dynevor Anglican, in 1852-1854. This church is now a designated Provincial Heritage Site.

retaining the land was finally lost in 1916, when the people of St. Peter's were relocated to new reserves further north – at Fisher River and Peguis.

Brokenhead Ojibway Nation

It is supposed that the Ojibway people who settled at Brokenhead, a First Nation community in the northern half of the R.M. of St. Clements (and under their own jurisdiction) were allied with those who followed Chief Peguis to this area in about 1792. It is said that the Brokenhead people wanted to be away from the white praying masters (missionaries) who were always telling them they were bad people and that their prayers and dances and all their old ways were not good. Finally, the families of two leading brothers who came from the east with Peguis canoed to the mouth of the river where they had camped the first night they arrived many years before. There the river was full of fish and all along the banks of the river grew the maple trees from which they made maple sugar. The bush was filled with berries and with all kinds of animals that were good for food. Many water birds nested close by. There were many marshes filled with muskrats and the river and many creeks were filled with beaver.

An Ojibway encampment.

Brokenhead Reserve No. 4 was formed in 1871 with the signing of Treaty No. 1 at Lower Fort Garry. The population at the time was 425 members, with 10,920 acres of land. The chief at that time was Na-sha-ke-penais.

Notable First Nations People

The approach used for this project, in which selections have been made from *The East Side of the Red*, does not allow for the inclusion of many First Nations peoples. Most of the people associated with Chief Peguis and the St. Peter's Reserve were gone by 1905, and so their descendants' stories are now more aligned with communities at Peguis First Nation and Fisher River First Nation. And the residents of Brokenhead Ojibway Nation are technically not part of the R.M. of St. Clements and so were not typically included in the local history book, whose focus is on the R.M.

But there are two individuals whose biographies are in *The East Side of the Red*, and so we are able to present those here: Peguis and Samuel Grisdale.

Peguis

Chief of the St. Clements Saulteaux

Peguis (also spelled Be-gwa-is/ Pegeois/ Pegouisse/ Picöis; which translated into English is the 'Destroyer of Beaver Lodges') was born around 1774, the son of a Saulteaux woman and a French-Canadian fur trader. Peguis's people were at that time living in the Sault Ste.-Marie area of what is now Ontario. In about 1792, at the age of about 18 years, Peguis led a band of about 200 people into what is now Manitoba, to the southern area of Lake Winnipeg.

Chief Peguis welcomed the first settlers brought to the Red River area by Lord Selkirk in 1812, and is given credit for aiding and defending them during their difficult first years. On 18 July 1817 Peguis was one of five Saulteaux and Cree chiefs who signed a treaty with Lord Selkirk to provide an area for European settlement purposes. In exchange, each tribe was to receive annual payments of 100 lbs. of tobacco. This land treaty was the first to be signed in western Canada. The treaty granted Peguis's people the land running north from Sugar Point, in an area that became St. Peter's Reserve.

Chief Peguis was described as short in stature, with a strong, well-knit frame, and the voice of an orator. His hair hung in two long plaits studded with brass ornaments, his breast decorated with medals.

Peguis welcomed Anglican missionaries to the Reserve in 1832, and encouraged his people to adopt European-style farming practices. The St. Peter's Settlement was an impressive example of Aboriginal farming settlement—with a fine church, school, windmill and many farmsites—but only endured for about 50 years. The unrelenting advance of European settlement ultimately resulted in the near-forcible removal of the tribe, to reserves further north.

Chief Peguis died in September of 1864, and was buried in the graveyard of St Peter's Anglican Church. In 1924 a monument honouring him was erected in Winnipeg's Kildonan Park.

Samuel Grisdale

Trapper, Chief of Brokenhead First Nation

Samuel (Sam) Grisdale was the son of John Grisdale and Marie Ann Raven. His grandfather was Thomas Grisdale, and his great-grandfather was Jacob Grisdale, the son of one of the original settlers in the area, who worked for the Hudson's Bay company for many years, hauling furs to outposts on Hudson's Bay. The first settlers on the Brokenhead Reserve were the Ravens, Cooks, Chiefs, Sinclairs and Grisdales.

Sam Grisdale received most of his education at St. Peter's at the old log school and for a few years at a second school built in 1928. He received much more education in the home taught him by his elders, especially the elder Ravens. Grandpa Raven was very talented and had his own organ, which he played with great zest and was in great demand.

Sam married Verna Smith, in 1943 and they had five sons. Sam started trapping in earnest when he was 12 years old. He worked hard in the winters and only attended school for part of the summer. He cut cordwood for Sam Wolfman. Wood was very cheap in those days, $3.50 a cord. Sam and his mates also cut wood to make fish crates and boxes for the fishing industry.

Sam enjoyed sitting at his kitchen table looking out the window where he could see the river and the old bridge. At the old Grisdale home you could hear the music of the water as it danced over the rapids. It was a magical sound that was both healing and soothing to the spirit.

Samuel Grisdale was elected Councillor of the Brokenhead Band for four years and became Chief for two years following that. His time on Council was during the years 1964 to 1970. Sam tried to improve the roads and concentrated on getting industry going on the Reserve during the term he held in office, with special attention on the wild rice industry.

A gathering of Ojibway people, ca, 1910.

Places of Work

Most of the people noted in *East Side of the Red* were farmers, and for many of them the financial rewards of farming often could not sustain the family, especially in the early years of settlement. And so for many farmers it was commonplace to undertake additional work off the farm to supplement their incomes. Thankfully there were a number of nearby industries, and two major infrastructure projects, that required their skills and labour. There are frequent references to these places in the following texts, and so it is useful to provide at least some background about these places.

To the east of the municipality there were two major sources of opportunity: at the Garson limestone quarries, about 12 miles (20k) east of Lockport); and in Beausejour (about 10 miles, 15 k further east of Lockport) at the Manitoba Glass Works. The two infrastructure projects were the development of the St. Andrews (later Lockport) Locks and Dam and the Selkirk Lift Bridge, both of which provided much-needed income to St. Clements farm families.

At the same time there four other local industrial activities that are rarely featured in the family histories of *East Side of the Red*, but which are also worth noting here given that they also likely provided occasional work for local people: the East Selkirk brick factories, stone quarries, Doidge's Pottery Works and the C.I.L Explosives Plant.

Sketch of a fired brick clamp kiln being unstacked. This is the kind of kiln technology that likely defined brick-making activity at East Selkirk. The whole clamp, the most rudimentary of kiln technologies in the brick-making industry, would have been dismantled after firing, and the bricks sorted for quality – under- or over-fired bricks would have been re-used (usually for the outside walls) when a new clamp was built up for the next firing. (Courtesy Wiki-Commons)

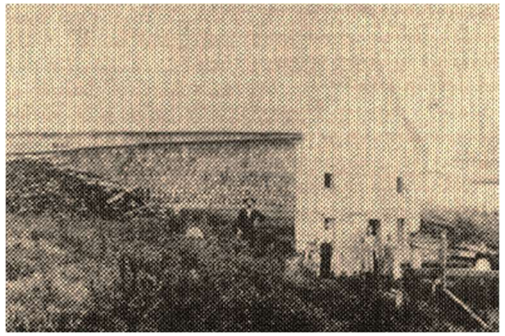
East Selkirk Brick Works

There were at one time several small brickyards operating in the East Selkirk area. These were west of Cooks Creek and apparently ran down as far as the Red River. The brick from these plants were used in the Towns of East and West Selkirk and also for the Roundhouse on the east side of the Red (built 1877-1879.). Three of the yards have been identified, although their production and operations are sketchy; all were active ca. 1885-1900: one yard was that of Isaac Thomas, c1889-c1892; another of James Wilson, c1890-c1893; and Hooker and Company, through the 1890s. The nature of brick-making at this time would suggest that skilled brick-makers and kiln-burners were brought in by the owners, but that local men would have been required for the enormous amount of labour attending brick production: digging out the clay and moving it to a mixing machine (pug mill), mixing the raw clay with water, transporting pressed brick to a rough "clamp" kiln, unloading the kiln and moving the finished bricks to wagons – a lot of hard (and dirty) work.

East Selkirk Stone Quarries

Limestone beds and outcrops were well known in the Red River Colony, and the majestic stone churches and houses of the era (St. Peter's Dynevor and the Bunn House are two major local examples) featured beautiful stone in their walls. The East Selkirk area was fairly well known, at least for several years, for its limestone quarries – which must have provided steady work for many local men. There were at least 15 operations that have been noted in the historical record:

The East Selkirk Quarry was a major site in the early 1880s, providing stone for the new CPR Roundhouse in Selkirk, as well as for the new Louise Bridge in Winnipeg. Reports at the time identified 25 men working at the site, and turning out 30 yards of stone a day – apparently a huge amount, considering the labour-intensive nature of the work at that time. Large quantities of lime were also being shipped from there to Winnipeg for the masons working on the bridge.



The only existing photograph of one of the limestone quarries and kilns near East Selkirk, ca. 1884.

There were two other quarries at East Selkirk that had been worked extensively for a number of years, one at each end of a large mound about half a mile in length, with most of the ornamental stone used in the City of Winnipeg at that time taken from these sites.

Other operations included the Galena Limestone Quarry, whose exact location is unknown, which operated in 1884. Three small quarries on and adjacent to land owned by Mrs. Nelson (Lot 70), operated for a few years. One of these was identified as the Notre Dame Investment Co. There was also a quarry opened briefly at the William Van Horne Farm.

An operation called Hicks Quarry, almost within the Village of East Selkirk, about a quarter of a mile from the CPR spur line, produced lime and rubble. The Malmstron Quarry was operating from 1889 to the late 1890s, but on a small scale. Another firm called Cutter, Little, Flett, and the Hazel Quarries were active in the early 1890s. And finally three little quarries produced some rough product in the late 1890s and even in 1905: the Sinclair, Mangar and Gerard quarries.

It is presumed that the nearly 20 years of quarrying in and around East Selkirk had depleted the limestone beds, which would have naturally resulted in a downturn in production. But it was also the development of the large operations at nearby Garson, just before the turn of the century, with their beautiful light-grey and fossil-encrusted limestone, that were to take over nearly all stone production in Manitoba.

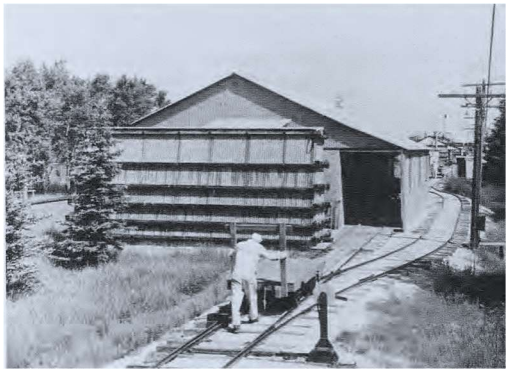
Doidge's Pottery Works

Arthur Doidge learned the pottery trade in Peterborough, Ontario, and when he came to East Selkirk in the 1870s, he inaugurated "Doidge's Pottery Works," with a large plant located about 150 yards south of where the old CPR right-of-way crossed Cooks Creek. The operation became "Doidge and Doidge" when his brother joined him in the management and operation of the plant. The firm turned out flower pots and sewer pipe. Richard Kingdon joined the firm in 1889, now called "Doidge and Kingdon of East Selkirk." During the fall of 1896 the Doidges and Kingdon expanded their pottery business and made several plant improvements and modernizations. They then started manufacturing a line of stoneware that the newspapers reported were "more equal to the imported articles." Richard Kingdon died in March 1897, and Arthur Doidge carried on with the pottery works until 1906, when he moved to B.C. It is not clear what kind of local labour might have been required in this kind of operation, but we must assume that the nearly 30 years of productivity must have involved the work of many local people.

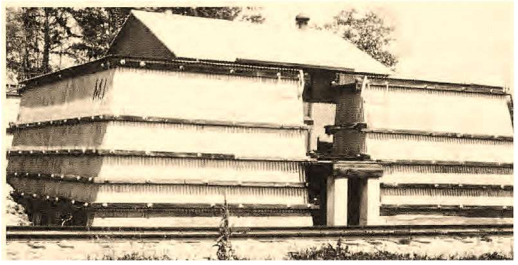
C.I.L. Brainerd Works

The C.I.L. explosives plant was an important employer for many St. Clements people from 1934 to 1970. The plant, which opened in 1934 was developed to manufacture commercial high explosives. The plant was named after Dr. Thomas Brainerd, a pioneer of powder manufacturers. There were 17 buildings that made up the complex. Men working in the explosive area were required to wear special clothing with no metal buckles or buttons, and no cuffs on the pants. The footwear worn inside could not be worn elsewhere. Visitors had to put on rubber footwear that had not been outside. This was a safeguard against grit or sand being tracked in that might cause friction.

The first high explosive manufactured at Brainerd was on December 10, 1934 and consisted of one 1,000 lb. mixing of 4090 Polar For cite Gelatin. In January of 1935 the company employed about 30 people, practically all residents of St. Clements. There were several women working at Brainerd at one time and their main duty was filling up shells, and placing them in 50 lb. crates ready for shipping. Manufacturing operations ceased in 1970, and most of the buildings were demolished or removed in 1982.



Moving material to a case house at the C.I.L. Explosives Plant.



An explosive storage bunker.

Garson Quarries

Around 1894, farmer John Gunn encountered a deposit of limestone while digging a well on his land. Gunn, and other area farmers, kept small quarries, but it is not clear whether they actually quarried themselves. It is known that Gunn did lease his land on royalty to other companies, and people in the area have suggested that Gunn was responsible for the building of the historic lime kilns still standing at the Gillis quarries in Garson.

William Garson opened the first large quarry in 1898. Even in its infancy, the quarry produced nearly 90% of the stone used by Manitoba's building industry. A small community of the stoneworkers and their families who settled in the area to work at the quarry gradually developed. The village ultimately was named Garson, after its employer. William Garson ran the quarry until his death in 1911. Peter Lyall took over the operation. By 1914, three large quarries were in operation in the Garson area: The Lyalls's Wallace Sandstone Company, which employed 250 workers, The G.W. Murray Quarry, which employed 60 workers, and the Tyndall Quarry Company, which had 62 workers. Another major concern started its operations in 1922 – Gillis Quarries. This is the firm that still quarries limestone at Garson. And it is also the firm that gave the name Tyndall Stone to the distinctive light-grey fossil-embossed limestone that is now famous.

Quarrying in the early days was hard, dirty and loud. Channeling machines run by steam boilers were used to cut the stone from the quarry beds. During channeling, the men sprayed water on the blades to keep the saws cool while also keeping the dust under control. The cut stone was lifted by crane, carted by horse cart onto a bench, measured, then cut to size with a diamond blade saw. Stone was also hand-carved by master carvers. "Roughers," as they were called, roughed in the general shape of the object with hammer and points, then the master carvers went to work with their chisels to add the delicate details. Once completed, the stone was carefully packed and loaded onto carts and then sent by small locomotives, or "dinkies," two miles east to the CPR depot in Tyndall for shipment. With the name Tyndall on the bills of lading, the stone shipped from Tyndall came to be known as Tyndall Stone.

Views of the Gillis Quarry at Garson.

Manitoba Glass Works

The Manitoba Glass Works in Beausejour was the site of the first glass container factory in Western Canada. Construction began in June 1906 by Joseph Keilbach and his partners Gustav Boehm, Edward Keilbach, and Carl Keilbach. The facility became operational in October 1906 and it was incorporated by January 1907. Glass-blowers from Poland and the United States, aided by local labour, used silica sand to produce bottles for breweries and soft drink companies in Winnipeg, serving the prairie market.

By 1907, the plant produced 15,000 to 20,000 bottles per week. Between 1909 and 1911 new semi-automated equipment was installed to enable the production of jars, and medicine and ink bottles. At its peak, the firm employed 350 workers.

The factory could not compete with larger manufacturers in Eastern Canada who held the exclusive license for fully automatic machines. The Manitoba Glass Company was purchased by a Montreal company which then relocated its operations to Redcliff, Alberta in response to an offer of free natural gas and land. The Beausejour works were closed by 1914.

Views of the Manitoba Glass Works factory at Beausejour.

St. Andrews Lock and Dam at Lockport

The development of the locks and dam at Lockport was a huge infrastructure project, and provided stable employment for scores of St. Clements-area men – driving trucks, excavating, and shoring of piers.

The project was developed to facilitate easy movement of shipping along the Red River, from Winnipeg to Lake Winnipeg, which before its construction was made impossible by the St. Andrews Rapids, whose rough waters extended a fall of some 15 feet over a course of a 10-mile distance. From the time of the first paddle steamers on the Red River it was the dream of river men to gain access to Lake Winnipeg by either blasting a channel through the rapids or building a dam so they could float their vessels over the rapids.

Completed in 1910, the project was a major piece of engineering, with a system comprised of three elements; a dam, a lock, and a bridge. The design employed a Camere style dam and, at 240 metres long, was the largest dam of this type ever built. The Camere-style dam used

moveable curtains consisting of horizontal sections of wood hinged together, which were raised or lowered to control water flows. Invented by French engineer M. Camere, this type of dam was popular in western Europe in the late nineteenth century.

Immediately after the opening of the locks and dam, freighter ships as large as the "Winnitoba," which could carry 2,000 passengers and 35 carloads of freight, could provide a viable link. These passenger and freighter ships ensured economically sustainable development of fisheries, farming, and mineral resources.

The project was clearly one of great sophistication. But it also required a lot of simple grunt labour. For example, during the last three weeks of January 1900, there were a number of men working to remove boulders from the river edge, and cutting an opening across the river eight-feet wide through the ice. By mid-February the crew had increased to 20 men and three teams of horses, and one month later it was reported that up to 35 men were removing boulders from the bed of the river. Equipment initially used were men with teams drawing dump wagons and slushers, as well as men supplying labour with picks, shovels and wheelbarrows. Labourers were paid 15 cents an hour for unskilled, 25 cents an hour for skilled, while men with teams were paid $2.50 per day, for a 12-hour day.

Towards the end of August 1907 the project was employing some 150 men and with this increase in manpower came accidents and labour disputes. Several men died of injuries or by drowning

The building of the lock, bridge piers and submerged dam really started in 1905 and continued through to 1908. The Canada Foundry Co. were the contractors for the movable dam, the steel service bridge as well as the repair shop, etc. The lock gates were fashioned and built by John Burns of Ottawa. Manitoba Bridge furnished the material and Brown Concrete did the construction of the main bridge in 1908 and completed their share in 1909. The removable part of the dam was supplied and erected by Canada Foundry, who placed the dam in operation by May 10, 1910, and handed it over to federal government personnel one week later.

On July 14, 1910 the St. Andrew's Locks were declared formally opened by Sir Wilfrid Laurier from the deck of the steamer "Winnitoba" in the hearing of some 3,000 people on board and an even greater crowd gathered by the Locks.

View of the St. Andrews Lock and Dam under construction.

St. Andrews Lock and Dam.

Selkirk Lift Bridge

During the Great Depression of the 1930s, a make-work construction project finally bridged the Red River at Selkirk, replacing the existing ferry, and making access between Selkirk and the R.M. of St. Clements nearly seamless. The lift-bridge design ensured that large boats navigating the river could easily pass underneath the bridge deck.

The project began in 1934, when the R.M. of St. Clements and the Town of Selkirk petitioned the federal government for funds from the Dominion Government Relief Program to build a suitable bridge. A total of $250,000 was awarded for the contract. By April of 1935, three piers of the bridge had been constructed. Two more years would pass before the bridge was formally opened for vehicular traffic, on May 3, 1937.

Construction of the bridge was a certainly a major engineering feat, requiring a great many skilled builders and craftsmen. But it also involved a great deal of earth-moving, and basic hard-muscle activity. And at the height of the Great Depression, the project ensured employment for scores of local people.

The contractors, Macaw and Macdonald, soon had the camp set up, and as soon as they were settled, the foreman was handed a list of St. Clements residents who were available and willing to work on the project: L. Rowley, Sam Romaniuk, David Muzichka, Harry Sokolowski, Frank Malazdrewicz, Joe Burdiak, John Michalishyn, P. Kosakewicz, Fred Sokolowski, Nick Chiboyko, N. Rozonick, John Seniuk and Pete Hornetski. The project also needed men and teams and the following names were quickly put forward: Arthur Macfie, John Korba, Joe Rokosh, Jack Martin, Mike Zarichney, John Rokosh and Tom Sul.

By March 13, 1935, Macaw and Macdonald was able to report they had 58 men at work on the bridge. Of this total, about seven were company men, experienced at bridge work, while about 20 were from St. Clements and 31 from elsewhere.

Views of the Selkirk Lift Bridge – at top with the main span lowered and below lifted to allow boats through.

The Pioneer Life

Pioneer Work has been designed so that interesting characters associated with key historic work practices are featured, and the details and attributes of that work are highlighted and explored. Given this approach, many of the family anecdotes and recollections that often attend an entry in our prime resource for the project, *The East Side of the Red*, have not been included.

One aspect that often features in many of these entries is the pioneer experience. Because this experience was shared by nearly all of the characters, these stories have also mostly been left out, in order to more clearly focus on "the work."

But the pioneer experience was so profound and pervasive that it really needs to be told, so that most of the following entries can be placed into that context. Several of the most compelling stories from *The East Side of the Red* are therefore featured here.

The following extracts are taken from the entry for the Sopko Family.

Building a Log House

The first houses were built of hewed poplar logs which were dovetailed at the corners. The bottom ring, or first log and joist, was red tamarac. This wood was very resistant to decay, and was on fieldstones at the corners and intermediate places along the wall. The walls were plastered with clay and whitewashed. The roof was rough sawed boards nailed clapboard fashion as they had no money to buy shingles. The floors were rough sawed planks. The beds were wooden frames with a jute bag filled with hay for a mattress. Every time it rained mother tied the bedding into a bundle and placed it in a spot where the roof didn't leak. The windows were frosted all over, single glazed, and leaked every time there was a thaw.

A Child's Viewpoint

Born on this farm in 1908, I remember how the land was cleared, that is the bush was removed and burned, trees were grabbed out with a mattock or grub hoe and axe,

View of a train and the old CPR roundhouse at East Selkirk, which was turned into an immigration shed in 1899. It is in this building that all new immigrants to the area were processed.

View of a family undertaking the annual re-plastering and whitewashing of the exterior log walls of the farm house.

land was broken with a walking plow and oxen. Seed grain was broadcast by hand, out with a sickle and scythe with a cradle, sheaves were tied by hand with a band made from the same grain, threshed with a flail on a platform made of rough hand sawn planks.

My father died in 1912, leaving mother with four children, Annie, myself, Mary, and Rose, who was born the day before father died. The following winter, mother hauled cordwood to Selkirk with a team to trade for food and necessities for survival.

When the time came to send the children to school, mother was hard up for clothes so she made them from hand-me-downs from city cousins. She made pants for me for my first day of school from an old navy-blue serge suit, but could not get enough cloth without patches, so she put the patched parts to the back, that way the front looked presentable. I went to school barefoot as I had no shoes. The lunch was mostly bread and butter sandwiches. There was no wrapping paper so we had to reuse it until it was worn out. We walked to school along wagon trails over ridges of higher land as the road allowances were not cleared of bush at that time.

The Land and the River and Their Bounty

The land near the river was very fertile and was used for growing crops and many kinds of vegetables which found a ready market in the growing City of Winnipeg only 15 minutes to the south. Away from the river there was hay land which furnished feed for the horses and cattle and at the east end of each farm were woods which supplied logs for building houses and firewood for heating and cooking. Gonor's principal industry was the growing of many kinds of vegetables, chiefly potatoes, which were hauled to Winnipeg by horses and wagon and sold either at the Farmer's Market located at Dufferin Avenue and Derby Street, or by peddling on the streets and back lanes in the north end of the City.

Oats, wheat, and barley were also raised mainly for feed for livestock and the flour used on farms. Wheat was ground into flour at local mills and other grains were used for feed for the livestock. In the late summer and fall the grain was cut and stocked or stacked in the field to dry for a short time and then the sheaves were hauled, piled into stacks in the farmyards for threshing.

Gull Lake pioneer Julius Schwark at work on a hand-made butter churn. Most pioneers made their own tools and implements.

One of the early steam threshing outfits was operated by a Mr. Johnston and Mr. Clouston from Cloverdale. The steam engine was drawn by a team of horses as it was not self-propelled. Later the thresher outfits became self-propelled except the one operated by Stanley Husarski which was powered by a gasoline engine. The noise of the machinery was overwhelming and in order to be heard you had to yell at the top of your voice, even from close by.

The name of Tom Sanders should not be omitted from our early history. A common sight along the road in winter was the sight of Tom and his enormous Clydesdales hauling and straining under a load of gravel from Clark's Pit, north of Gonor. He provided the gravel for nearly all the roads in and around Gonor. In the warm months he and his gigantic team of horses pulled a huge breaking plow to break the virgin land of the Gonor vicinity. Tom and his team also furnished the power to move houses and extra heavy loads. Alas, poor Tom did not get to enjoy his old age pension for very long as passed away in the early 1930's, only a few months after retiring.

Many Gonor residents on the river lots north of the Locks engaged in fishing for large catfish and bass by means of heavy nightlines which were weighted down to the river bottom and marked by a wooden float at the surface. Each line stretched about halfway across the river and had attached to it 40 or more hooks spaced about 3' apart which were baited each evening. Early in the morning the line would be raised and any fish removed, and fish buyers came with their trucks, very early in the morning, to buy the fish, usually offering about 5¢ per pound in those days. Some of the fishermen would stuff the large fish with pebbles or pieces of lead to increase its weight.

The Seasons

Easter was always a gay season. On Saturday night before Easter Sunday, a number of young men sat up all night huddled around a log fire in the Churchyard near the Bell Tower, keeping vigil. On Easter Sunday morning. we were in church before daybreak, because the procession commenced at sunrise.

Pioneer ploughing.

A pioneer farmsite.

We felt relieved to see the eastern sky turn bright. It was a happy time not only because we were celebrating Christ's Resurrection, but also because it was the spring of the year and that brought great joy to everyone, especially to see green patches of grass exposed by the melting snow of which we were sick and tired of by then.

In the early summers in Gonor, long ago, one could smell the smoke from the smudges which were being burned to keep away mosquitos from the cows during milking time. That is now a forgotten event because milk comes in plastic containers from the supermarket, and no milk cows are to be seen anywhere in Gonor now. I remember when Mother would be milking in the evening, and we boys stood waiting with our cups, for her to fill with fresh milk, direct from the cow. What a treat that was.

A pioneer farmhouse in winter.

Thomas Bunn

Lawyer, Politician, Farmer

Thomas Bunn was one of the early pioneers of St. Clements, and devoted much of his life to shaping the development of this part of the Red River Settlement. The son of a noted leader of the Red River Colony, Dr. John Bunn, Thomas was a farmer by occupation and in later years turned his attention to the political development of the colony as a representative on Louis Riel's first Provisional Government and then in the first Legislative Assembly for Manitoba.

Thomas Bunn was born on May 16, 1830, and was named after his grandfather who had come to Rupert's Land with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1797 from England. Thomas first farmed in the Kildonan area, but during the big floods of the 1850s, when they had to move to Birds Hill, he promised his wife that he would build her a house at a location where she would never have to worry about floods again. The house he built for her in 1862 still stands 70 feet above the Red and far above any flood waters ever recorded, at Lot 97 in the Parish of St. Clements. Wheat and some cattle were the primary produce raised on this farm.

Thomas Bunn was very active in the political life of the community. As his grandmother was of Native descent, he had sympathy for the treatment other Metis were receiving from Dominion Government surveyors. When Louis Riel declared the Provisional Government of Assiniboia, Thomas Bunn was elected in November 1869 as the English-speaking member for the parish of St. Clements and served as Secretary of State. When representatives of this government went to negotiate with Ottawa, their commissions were signed: "Thomas Boom, in the name of the President of the Provisional Government of Assiniboia in Council, a Seat of Government, Winnipeg Assiniboia."

Thomas Bunn was elected to represent the constituency of St. Clements and did so until he died on April 11, 1875. In June 1871 he was called to the Manitoba Bar and served in the judiciary until his death. Thomas Bunn had several children, the most noted one was his son Thomas who also was very involved in the political life of the community serving as Councillor for Ward 3 of the St. Clements Municipality from 1899-1906 and then as Secretary-Treasurer from 1906-1940.

Looking After Municipal Affairs

The Heaps

Lawyers and Municipal Advisors

James Heap was born in England on February 1, 1830 and came to Canada in 1854, settling in Ontario. In 1864 he married Miss Colcleugh. They remained in Ontario until 1887 at which time they moved west to Manitoba and made their home in Selkirk. James received his legal training in Ontario and practised law in the Town of Selkirk and surrounding area for over 22 years. James continued to deal in law and eventually his son Frederick joined in partnership with him. They carried on an impressive law firm representing many corporations, loan and railway organizations. James Heap passed away on February 18, 1909 and he was buried at Lindsay, Ontario. James and Fred Heap represented the Municipality of St. Clements at several court hearings and served as Municipal Solicitor from 1898 to 1909. The rate of remuneration during those years was about $35.00 per year for legal work. Fred attended the regular monthly meetings of council and aided members of council when transactions had to be handled or legal interpretation was needed. Over the years when researching court cases or viewing the newspaper articles of the Selkirk area it would be most unusual not to see mention of the Heap name in relation to legal matters. Also, they were most successful in winning judgement in the cases they represented.

Thomas Family

Municipal Officials

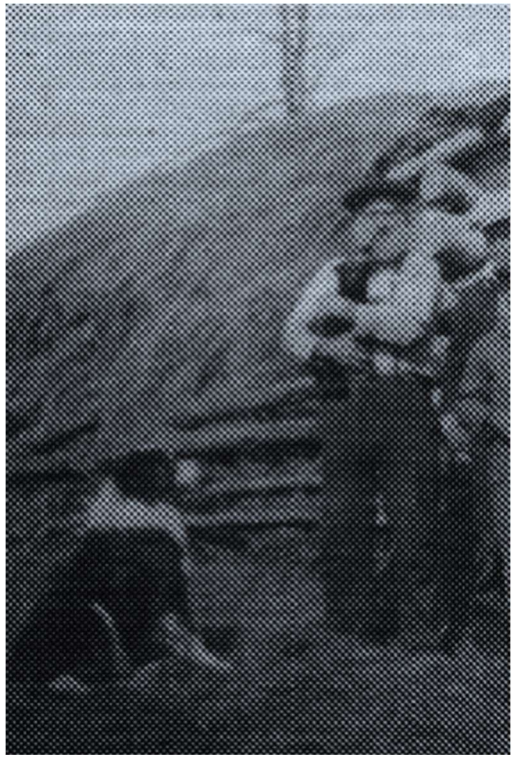
The Thomas family have served the public as councillors of Ward 6 in the R.M. of St. Clements. Henry Thomas started the ball rolling in 1899-1900, to be followed by his son Henry-George Thomas, who served from 1915 to 1918. Many years later Henry-George's son Reuben Thomas served the longest, from 1941 to 1950 and 1955 to 1966 for a total of 22 years. Three years later Reuben's son Earl was elected and served in 1969 and 1970 and he was re-elected for 1971 and 1972.

Views of the original Municipal Office Building (top) and of the Council Chambers (below), where major decisions about municipal activity and expenses were debated.

Kenyon Copperthwaite

Trapper and Guide

Kenyon "Dad" Copperthwaite came to Canada in 1853 from England when he was just a youngster of 14 years (born ca. 1839). Mr. Copperthwaite reached Manitoba on the first CPR train to steam into the province. Once the CPR reached Winnipeg he quit railroading and in 1881 became involved in trapping and hunting throughout the Hudson's Bay Company country. That year he started trapping in the James Bay area and later moved even further north. He would trap and hunt in winter and prospect during the summer.



Old "Dad" became famous for his marksmanship with a rifle and was in great demand as a guide during hunting season. He made his living hunting, trapping and guiding generally, and in later years especially guiding duck hunters. He knew the marshes like the back of his hand. When "Dad" Copperthwaite observed his 109th Birthday in 1948, be attributed his longevity to the rugged life he had led outdoors, a drink of scotch whiskey whenever it was available, and tobacco which was his constant guide, philosopher and friend. When he was 108 years old, he was still making a living as a guide for the duck hunters who visited his farm at Whittle's Point near Libau.

Manitoba's oldest man (at that time) entered the St. Boniface Home for the Aged and Infirm only after his extreme age left him a semi-invalid. Always patriotic, when he was 102 years old he expressed keen disappointment to his many friends because he was unable to join Canada's fighting forces in World War II. The last year of his life was spent in reminiscing about the old days and of how he sadly missed his hunting and camping days – especially the Libau Marsh.

Known by many as the "Hermit of Chesterfield Inlet" and one of Manitoba's oldest and most colorful pioneers, Kenyon Copperthwaite died at 110 years of age on Tuesday, February 8, 1949. Because there were no surviving relatives known to exist, St. Clements Municipality quietly arranged the funeral of their dear old friend.

A Fur Trade Heritage

The R.M. of St. Clements has a long and rich connection to the fur trade – the great economic engine that brought European explorers and traders into Western Canada. From 1680-1763 the English (Hudson's Bay Company) and the French (North West Company) competed for beaver pelts in the fur trade. The Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), with Cree and Assiniboine tribes as middlemen, brought the pelts to coastal ports. Later the HBC began establishing inland trading posts, the first being Cumberland House, near The Pas, built in 1774 by Samuel Hearne. In 1734 the famous French explorers and traders, the La Verendryes, established Fort Maurepas on a site approximately 15 miles upstream from the mouth of the Red River. The North West Company opened a post at Netley Creek in 1803, on the west bank of the Red River. The Netley Marsh area as of 1805 was the most northerly limit of native horticulture. Historians believe that corn was raised by the Saulteaux. They kept gardens on levees within Netley Marsh. One was located approximately 1.5 miles upstream from the Red River and Netley Creek Junction. In 1813 the HBC established a second post just north of the junction of Netley Creek and the Red River. Sixty horses were kept here to be used for transport of goods to Brandon House on the Assiniboine River.

Adelaide Thomas, a fur-trade pioneer (centre), seen here in front of her log cabin in 1947.

More Fur Trade Memories

Adelaide (Moran) Thomas

During an interview in March, 1955, on the occasion of her l08th birthday, the *Winnipeg Free Press* carried an article (slightly edited here): "A living reminder of Canada's frontier heritage has made history – then outlived it. This month at Traverse Bay, Mrs. Adelaide Thomas celebrated her 108th birthday. Mrs. Thomas was born March 15, 1847, at Ille La Crosse in the far northern part of Saskatchewan. The family moved to Brochet and there she met her future husband – George Thomas, who became Hudson's Bay Factor at Moose Factory. Adelaide and "Geordie" came south in 1895 and settled in the Balsam Bay area. Until about 1952, Adelaide lived alone in a house on the outskirts of her son Peter's homestead. As she did almost 100 years ago, Adelaide continued to live off the land. She netted fish when the water was open. She tapped nearby maple trees and boiled down the sap. The taste of pemmican "the life of the North" Adelaide said, "is still fresh in my mouth." Geordie Thomas died in 1927 at the age of 87 years. Adelaide Thomas lived to be 110 years old, and was laid to rest in the Roman Catholic Church of St. Margaret's Church at Traverse Bay.

Alec Anderson

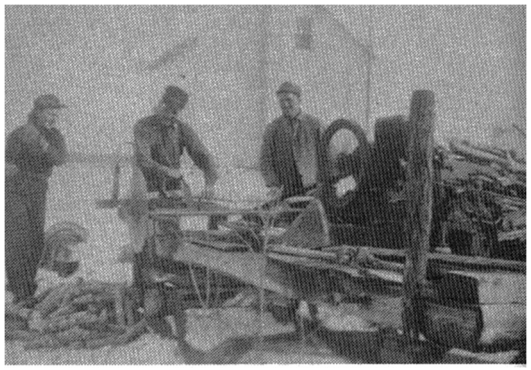
Fisherman, Boat Captain, Sawmill Operator

Alexander Anderson was the son of James Anderson and Elizabeth Isbister, daughter of John Isbister. They had 10 children. Alec was born at Norway House in 1865. He attended St. Paul's School, and at age 17 he moved to Balsam Bay, where he met and married Matilda Thomas, daughter of Richie and Mary Thomas, on February 12, 1883. Alec and Matilda had 12 children. In the early days, Alec did some fishing, then started buying fish from the fishermen at Victoria Beach, Fort Alexander, St. George, and all around the east side of the lake, and freighting it by horse and sleigh to Selkirk, taking groceries, and other goods on the trip back. In the summer, he made his trips by boat.

In 1910, Mr. Anderson moved his family to Victoria Beach to work for the Victoria Beach Company, as Victoria Beach was opening up as a summer resort. He was captain on the small passenger boat, *The Pilgrim*, which carried around 25 passengers. *The Pilgrim* ran from Winnipeg to Victoria Beach. Mr. and Mrs. Anderson lived in a large cottage owned by Charles Kennedy, which was one of the three cottages in Victoria Beach at the time. Mrs. Anderson boarded the people who came to holiday at Victoria Beach.

Mr. and Mrs. Anderson moved back to Balsam Bay, and Alec purchased a gas sawmill and sawed wood for the people around the country. Later he also bought a threshing machine and threshed grain for the small farmers in the area. Like most people in those times they kept a few animals for their own use. Mr. Anderson was constable for the area for a good number of years. He was postmaster at Balsam Bay from 1900-1910, Mr. Anderson then took the job of postmaster again until 1939. Marg Newman, Mr. Anderson's daughter, operated the post office until 1952. Mr. Anderson's granddaughter, Esther Thomas, operated it until 1958.

Looking backwards the family thinks of the day that Matilda Anderson, nee Thomas, stood beside Eugene Derby on the land that is now the Balsam Bay Cemetery, as the sun filtered through the huge evergreens and glistened on the waters of the bay she said "This place has not yet been named. What kind of trees are these?" Mr. Derby replied "Balsam trees," and Matilda suggested naming it Balsam Bay. Mr. Derby said "Balsam Bay it is." Matilda Anderson died December 3, 1934 and Alec Anderson died December 31, 1950.



Top: View of a basic St. Clements-area sawmill. Below: Workers at a typical small Manitoba sawmill operation.

James Peter Paulson

Merchant, Lighthouse Keeper

James Peter Paulson was the son of Pjetur Paulson. The elder Paulson had landed in Canada from Iceland in 1876. With him was his wife, Gudrun Johnsdotter, and their six children. The government offered property for settlement, situated between Gimli and the Icelandic River, and 250 Icelandic settlers arrived here. James Peter was among them. He was five years old at the time. One year later, 150 of the Icelandic group died of small-pox including Gudrun and four of her six children.

James left home and worked at Hookers Lumber Mill in Selkirk at the age of 11 years. He stayed for 21 years and left the company with the title of Head Engineer. James Peter Paulson married Elizabeth Anderson, daughter of Alex Anderson of Balsam Bay, in 1903. For this special event he rented a snappy team of horses from the Selkirk Livery Stable, complete with driver, for one week.

During the summer of 1903, James built a home in Balsam Bay, obtaining the lumber from Hookers Lumber Mill, which had a branch operation at Grand Marais. In the winter of that same year he moved the house over the ice to Victoria Beach, which was then in the municipality of St. Clements. He also lived in a house situated where the Victoria Beach Golf Course now stands. He also built another new home between 4th and 5th Avenues on Arthur Road, where he ran a General Store.

James Peter Paulson, apart from running the General Store, also looked after the Victoria Beach Municipal Public Works and the Government Lighthouse. In 1925, he sold the business and his property at Victoria Beach and moved to Balsam Bay, building a. new home there about 100 feet from where he had built his first home in 1903. He more or less retired. There he spent the rest of his life until the time of his death, in 1960.

James Peter Paulson and his wife Elizabeth.

J.J. Gunn

Farmer and Apiarist

John J. Gunn was born April 2, 1861 on the east side of the Red River, near where the Locks are now, about 15 miles north of Winnipeg. His father was John Gunn, M.P., and his mother was Emma Garrioch, both persons of culture and education. The home influence, the constant association with people of refinement, and a good library always at his hand influenced his whole life.

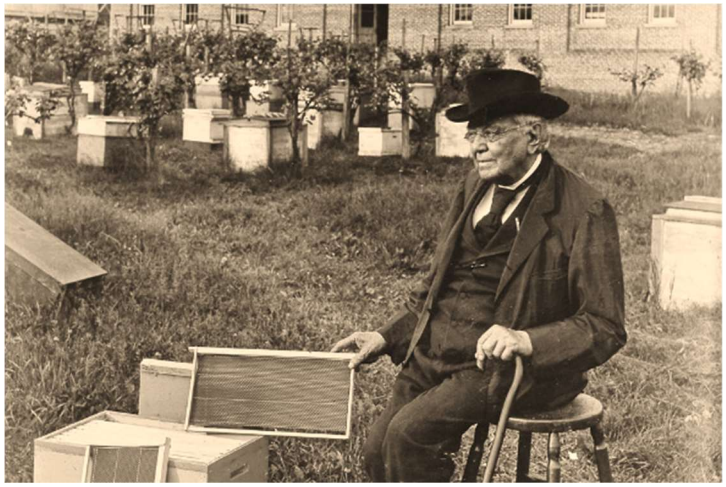
John's grandfather, the Hon. Donald Gunn, was a member of the first Legislative Council of Manitoba. a corresponding secretary to the Smithsonian Institution, and a writer of *History of Manitoba*. John saw exemplified in his grandfather what a man may become by self-improvement, so every spare minute was used for study. Though deprived of a college education, he became a well-educated man, conversant with the best English authors from the time of Chaucer. He mastered French, too, so that he could read the works of French authors.

John J. was a farmer and an apiarist with a minute and practical knowledge of insects, birds and flowers native to Manitoba. He was president of the Western Beekeeper's Association, and filled local positions as Postmaster and Justice of the Peace. In 1905 he married Eleanor Flanagan, a public-school teacher formerly of Bloomfield, Ontario. One son was born to this union, on May 11, 1907, but he died in infancy.

John J. was a man of pleasing personality and appearance, always courteous, with a fine sense of humour and an understanding heart. He was never too busy to extend the hand of friendship, nor the helping hand. His was a life of usefulness and integrity. He was trusted and loved by all who knew him. John J. Gunn served as Returning Officer in the Electoral Division of St. Andrews on several occasions. It was in November of 1905 that John J. bought the Hedley farm, two miles east of East Selkirk, for about $20.00 per acre. It was a good farm from all reports. In 1906 and 1907 while at East Selkirk, John J. carried off several first prizes at the Winnipeg Exhibition for his exhibits of honey, as he had in past years. His East Selkirk farm was becoming quite a showplace, and then on September 22, 1907 tragedy struck. It appears he was tying up a bull in the stable when the animal made an attack on him. Mrs. Gunn found him and very bravely pulled him to the house and called the doctor who pronounced him dead, instantly, by goring.

Beekeeping and the Apiarist

There are numerous references in *The East Side of the Red* to beekeeping, a reminder that this was a common practice for small farm operations – to ensure that the sweet honey could be available for cooking. Depictions of humans collecting honey from wild bees date to 10,000 years ago. Beekeeping in pottery vessels began about 9,000 years ago in North Africa. Domestication of bees is shown in Egyptian art from around 4,500 years ago. Simple hives and smoke were used and honey was stored in jars, some of which were found in the tombs of pharaohs such as Tutankhamun. It wasn't until the 18th century that European understanding of the colonies and biology of bees allowed the construction of the moveable comb-hive so that honey could be harvested without destroying the entire colony. At some point humans began to attempt to domesticate wild bees in artificial hives made from hollow logs, wooden boxes, pottery vessels, and woven straw baskets or "skeps." In North America, the American “Father of the Apiculture,” L.L. Langstroth was the first to develop a successful top-opened hive with movable frames. Many other hive designs are based on the principle of bee space first described by Mr. Langstroth. Many other apiarists (the technical term for a beekeeper) throughout Europe designed variations on this design, with the major advantage shared by the designs being that additional brood and honey storage space can be added via boxes of frames added to the hive. The design also simplified honey collection since an entire box of honey could be removed instead of removing one frame at a time.



Left: An apiarist with his collection of beehives. Top right: A beekeeper with his protective gear. Below right: A keeper with some examples of beehive designs.

Alexander Rowley

Farmer

Alexander Butler Rowley was born on November 12, 1855, at Penryth, Cumberland, England. He was among the volunteers who came to Canada to settle the North West Rebellion of 1885. On April 5, 1888 he married Margaret Ann McIvor. She was a very level person, educated at St. Mary's Academy for her higher education. Alex and Margaret started life together, north of East Selkirk, at Poplar Park. They didn't stay long as their home burnt down. They then bought a home near East Selkirk, where they raised a large family and they lived out their days there.

Alexander Rowley Family; Alex is at the far right holding a child.

They at first had a market garden. Mr. Rowley had never done any manual labour in his life. However, he soon showed how clever he was and with the help of a wonderful wife they made a success of it. He tile-drained at least 10 acres of land. He also dug a ditch two miles long and at least two feet deep. All this work was done by hand. He also tunneled under the road from the basement to have drainage. He also did the same for the root houses, so water never laid in those places.

He was called upon to use his legal ability by the Municipality of St. Clements, by the community at large and by many friends who, in legal trouble, turned to him. He was the solicitor for the municipality, as well as an auditor. He formed the School District of Kitchener at the request of the Department of Education. He formed municipalities at the request of the Manitoba Government. He named the East Selkirk's new school at that time: Happy Thought.

Mr. Rowley imported his horses from England and Scotland, mostly Clydesdales, as he needed the heavy horses to work the land. He also brought out purebred bulls and Shorthorns. He often showed his cattle at the Selkirk Fair.

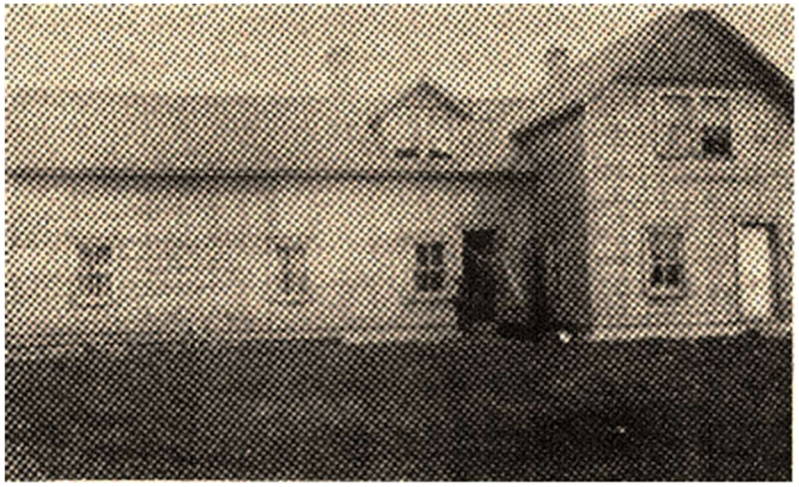
Alexander lived to 87 years of age, dying in May 1943. Margaret Ann lived to the age of 93, dying in 1962. They had a family of 13 children.

The Rowley Home – A Fine Farm House

When the Rowleys moved to their East Selkirk homestead, there was already a log house built there. Father enlarged the old log portion to became the kitchen. That's where we had all the dances and all the people from the district used to dance in there. I think there were three floors put in that kitchen – they literally danced them out. The house had six rooms upstairs and along hallway. In this hallway, one end had a big oak table, it was a wide hallway over 8 feet wide, and this table was always piled high with books. At this table we did our homework.

Downstairs we had a huge kitchen, another big hallway, a sitting room and my parent's bedroom. The house had brick chimneys, a huge kitchen range with a copper boiler for boiling water. In the hall was a large Quebec Heater lined with bricks. The living room had a long box stove. In the downstairs bedroom was a small Quebec Heater. The pipes from the stoves and heaters went upstairs to the four chimneys. The pipes through the floors had cement all around them, so they were safe from fire and safe for the children.

Rowley Farm House.



We had a pantry at one end of the kitchen, full length. Mother stored the goods we used every day. In the basement, which was a full stone basement, there was a huge room with plank shelves, where Mother stored her canning (wild fruits, cranberries, raspberries, wild strawberries, rhubarb, pumpkin jam, blueberries, etc.). She made pickles by the gallons, jar upon jar – we kids loved to eat, and by spring those preserves would be gone. Of course the basement was very cold, but it didn't freeze. If there was any doubt that it might freeze, they had kerosene heaters to protect the root crops from freezing.

Father built a beautiful barn and it had a big high loft. There was a kind of platform built on top and they had ventilators, little steeples, three of these on top of the barn and a ladder going to the top.

Arni Anderson

Blacksmith, Inventor, Farmer

Arni Andresson (Anderson), in the company of his wife Albina, arrived in Canada in 1876, to settle on a farm, which they named Arnastodurn, near Arnes. From there they moved on to Sandy River on the eastern shore of Lake Winnipeg. They stayed there for eight years where Ami fished, hunted and manufactured axe handles. In 1896, Ami moved his family to Poplar Park, where he had purchased a farm, an ideal location for raising cattle and sheep.

Arni was a handsome man of medium height, having dark hair and a long thick beard, accompanied by piercing blue eyes. A skilled craftsman, Arni ran his own smithy, where he performed a wide variety of tasks. He possessed an inquiring and inventive mind, and in addition to experiments, with perpetual motion, he constructed a windmill, which was used to power the homestead's butter churn.

His wife Albina, or Granny as she was affectionately known, as well as looking after her own family, went about the countryside nursing the sick and laying out the dead. She passed away in the spring of 1929 at the home of her daughter Etny in Husavick. Albina was laid to rest beside her husband Arni on the little hill on their farm.

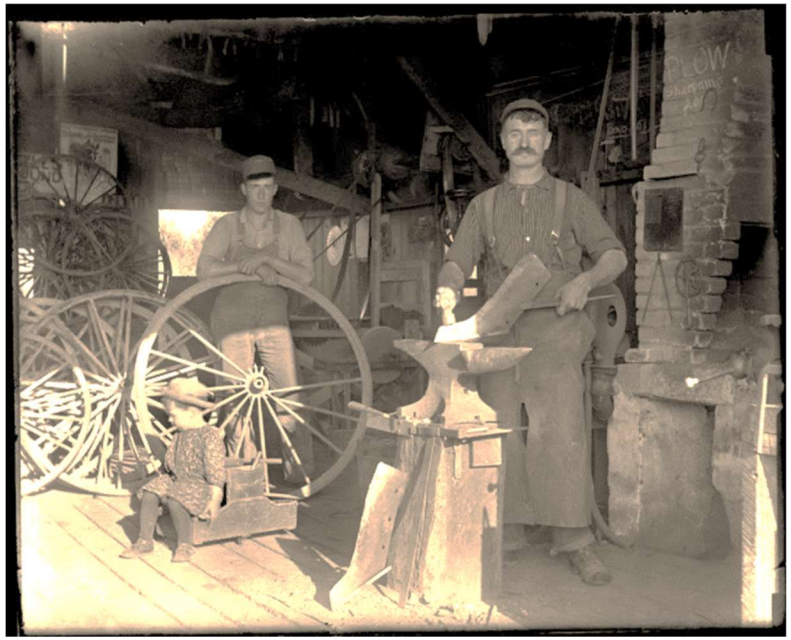
Arni and Albina' s son, Andres, taught school in Arnes, and with his wife Gudrun Hallgrimson (married in 1902), moved to Poplar Park where they lived with his parents and sister on the family farm. Like his father, Andres had many talents. He was an excellent mathematician and spoke several languages. He enjoyed writing songs and poems. He was a man of many visions and liked trying new ideas. Almost every piece of haymaking equipment at that time was on his farm. This included a hay-bailer which in those days was quite an uncommon implement. The farm had become quite successful during these days and employed many men and women. In 1921, Andrew built a large two-storey house. It was heated by a wood burning furnace, it also had a cistern which collected rainwater that was pumped up to the kitchen. It was the first house in the district that had electric lights supplied by a generator which also supplied lighting for the yard and ham. He also served the community as Councillor between 1908 and 1915. On April 14, 1927, Andrew died and was buried beside his parents and young daughter in the family plot, on the farm. Gudrun died in April, 1965 at the age of 88 and is buried in the St. James Anglican Churchyard in Poplar Park.

Albina and Arni Anderson.

A Day in the Life of a Blacksmith

The Domke Blacksmith Shop still stands in Libau.

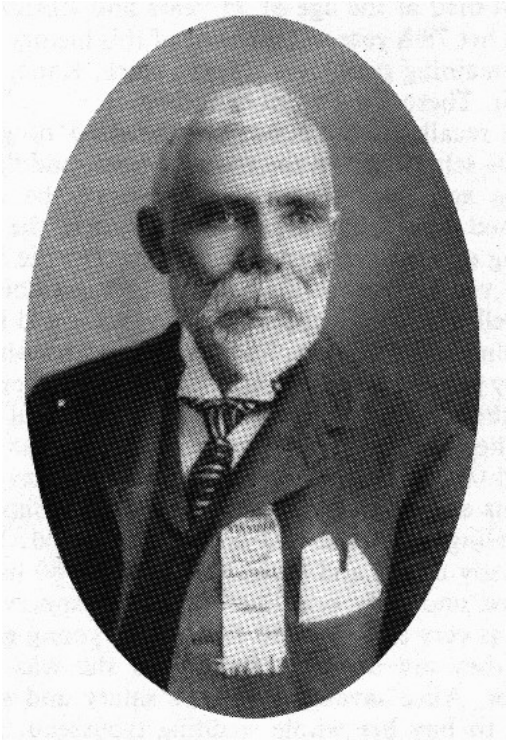
For the early settlers, the blacksmith was perhaps the most essential tradesman. Not only did he make the iron parts for the first farming implements, he also could repair all iron objects by hammering them by hand on an anvil. After heating the iron until white-hot, the blacksmith would then shape and wield a multitude of objects from it, including carriage bolts and wheels, iron work, cooking utensils, and most importantly, horseshoes. Blacksmiths who made horseshoes were called farriers, derived from the Latin word for iron. At a time when horses were the only means of transport, the blacksmith was important not only individual farmers and travelers, but also to merchants, whose businesses depended on transporting their goods to other places. Also, because they spent much of their time shoeing horses, blacksmiths gained a considerable amount of knowledge about equine diseases. The new industrial output of the late 1800s allowed the smith to improve his shop. With a small boiler, steam engine, and a system of overhead shafts, pulleys, and leather belts, the formerly hand operated shop equipment like the post drill, the blower, and other equipment could he easily powered. The small belt powered machines like the Little Giant trip hammer or its blacksmith-built counterpart took its place in many small shops. Later, the "steam" part of the steam driven leather belt systems were replaced with small gasoline engines or electric motors. In time, many power hammers were fitted with their own electric motors. Many blacksmiths were manufacturers as well. Wagon boxes, the setting of wagon and buggy tyres, lathe turned parts for spinning wheels, the making of sleigh runners, bolsters, bunks and tongues, and the custom manufacture of truck transfer boxes with cattle hauling equipment, were some of the items fabricated with finesse befitting the labours. Always, along with the aforesaid, there were the innumerable interruptions to repair broken machinery as is wont to happen in a mixed farming area.



Henry Nelson

Sportsman and Farmer

Henry (Harry) Nelson was born in 1856 in Thornhill, Dumfriershire, Scotland. Barbara Croy was born on March 1, 1857; in Kirkwall, Orkney Islands, Scotland. In the late 1870s, Harry emigrated to New York City, where he followed his trade as a stonemason. When he had the necessary funds, he sent for Barbara. She arrived in St. John, New Brunswick, and they married there in 1878.



Their adventurous spirit brought them to Winnipeg in 1882. Eight children were born to the Nelsons. Anxious to advance, Harry started a contracting business with Joe Bye of Spokane, Washington. Some of their contracts included the Winnipeg Post Office., the McIntyre Block, an Agricultural College Building and the Lake of the Woods Milling Company at Keewatin, Ontario. The need for a quarry to supply his contracting business brought the Nelsons to East Selkirk.

Harry continued his business in Winnipeg. He would walk to the "Halfway House" at Parkdale on Friday after work, stay overnight, and then very early Saturday morning he would walk to the farm. On Sunday, Margaret would drive him to the "Halfway House," and from there he would walk to Winnipeg, early on the Monday morning. In the winter, bricks were heated for the round trip to and from Parkdale.

Mrs. Nelson managed the farm and saw to the needs of her large family. She was the first lady member from St. Clements on the Board of the St. Andrews and St. Clements Agricultural Society. The family proudly showed their Clydesdale horses at neighbouring fairs. Son Gordon always entered the local plowing matches. Son Harold was a born mechanic, a great asset for a farming family. And, of course, Jean ("Topsy") played the organ for church services at the Mayfield School House, and for many years at MacBeth Presbyterian Church.

There seemed to be no end to the work. After seeding, haying and harvesting were finished, the grain had to be hauled to the elevator. Then, there was milking and churning. In the winter months, wood had to be cut, hauled home and readied for the furnace and stoves.

Harry Nelson was very influential in bringing the sport of curling to the East Selkirk area. He fashioned the first granite curling rocks, and all curling at that time was played on the Red River. He won many trophies for curling; one donated by Sir William Van Home was brought to East Selkirk by Harry Nelson's rink. He was appointed Branch Umpire on January 31, 1902 at a meeting of the Royal Caledonia Curling Association. At Mr. Nelson's death, in 1906, his wife received a sympathy letter from W. J. Black, President of the Agricultural College (now University of Manitoba). In 1934, the community honoured Mrs. Nelson at a large party at her home on the occasion of her 77th birthday.

Curling – The Roaring Game

Of all the organized sports played on the prairies, the "roaring game" of curling is certainly one of the oldest. The earliest curling games of the 1870s and 80s were often played on the frozen rivers and small lakes of Manitoba. Games were sometimes played under gaslight, with bell-shaped irons or iron-wrapped woods serving as curling stones. Rules were negotiable, teams were colourful and games were exciting but erratic. As noted above, the Van Horne Farm supported sports and recreation within the area. One trophy in particular was a prestigious cup in solid sterling silver. On the cup was engraved "The Van Horne Trophy - 1900" and it was presented to the curling rink winning that event. The base shield held the names of the annual winners. In 1900 the winning rink was skipped by R.E. Holloway and his curling mates: J. Walls, H.W. Beale and M. Moncrieff, while in 1901 the curling winners were: W. McIntyre, LT. Donaldson, R. Rennie and M. Moncrieff (skip). If Sir William didn't make it in person to present the trophy, his good friend, H.W. Nelson of East Selkirk, often performed the pleasant duty.

Murdoch McLeod

Grain Elevator Agent

Murdock McLeod was born in Scotland, on the Isle of Lewis. He married Hanna Munro of Rothshire, Goose Bay, in Labrador. They lived in the Highland Glen area, near Melrose. Murdoch and Hanna had seven children.

Mr. McLeod was the Elevator Agent at East Selkirk for over 30 years.

After moving to Selkirk, Mr. McLeod captained the freighter “Newton,” plying between Selkirk and Warren’s Landing. He later became a Captain’s Mate on the S.S. Keenora. Their daughter recalls that Mr. and Mrs. McLeod were avid curlers, and that Mr. McLeod played the bagpipes and wore the “Kilt."

Given that grain, and the grain elevators that were the key part of the distribution system, were such an important part of the Western Canadian economy in the early 20th century, the local grain elevator agent would have been a major local figure. He would have to be friendly and accessible, part diplomat but also part hard-nosed businessman. He would certainly have to be trusted, by local farmers and by the grain companies that employed him.

Some of the responsibilities of a grain elevator agent included checking the quality of the products, maintaining that quality throughout the entirety of the time that the grain was in the elevator, promoting the selling of the grain, managing the prices of the market and finally shipping the grain on the way to a destination.

The Lake of the Woods Grain Elevator at East Selkirk.

Holubowich Family

Artists, Craftspeople, Farmers

Emil Holubowich married Genivieve Slawpic in Poland and they came to Canada in 1901. When they departed from their homeland they brought their three children with them. Emil had been a skilled machinist in the Old Country and also farmed the land. They decided on property in the Libau area. The children were able to attend school at Libau East. Emil did some mixed farming, but there was not enough money in this to support the family, so he was forced to leave the home and work in St. Boniface at a brick plant. Emil lived a long life and passed away in his 88th year. Genivieve held the home together, worked hard and was an excellent gardener and cook. She died at age 98.

Son Marion was the artist in the family and his great gift and talent was discovered early in life and recognized when he was attending the Libau East School. He went on to study at the Manitoba Art School and attended the Minneapolis Institute of Art in Minnesota to complete his education. Marion's painting was in demand and he did beautiful scenery as backdrops for stages and theatrical productions. Marion painted a large scenery curtain for the Poplar Park Hall as well as the Ukrainian Society in the south end of the municipality in Narol. He also did the murals for the Ukrainian Labor Temple in Winnipeg, as well as several theatres including the Playhouse.

Daughter Stella was an excellent seamstress and worked at this trade for Genivieve for many years. Fred was a machinist for the CPR. John (Kasimir) was the musician in the family and his violin could be heard at schools, concerts, socials and weddings. He loved to play a tune. John farmed with his parents and finally bought a farm of his own, just east of his parent's homestead, where he did mixed farming.

John, Genivieve and Stella Holubowich.

J.J. Erskine

Station Agent

J.J. Erskine was born in Ontario and very early on made railroading his career. He came west in 1883 and worked on the eastern section of the CPR until 1887. That year he was appointed to take charge of the East Selkirk CPR Station. He remained at that post until December of 1900, at which time the CPR transferred him further west. However, a largely-signed and strongly-worded petition was sent to the Superintendent of the CPR and by April of 1901 he was once again returned to supervise the East Selkirk area. The people on the east side were jubilant and a "welcome home" party was in progress shortly after his arrival.

Mr. Erskine was a Mason and in the years 1891 and 1898 served as Worshipful Master of the Lisgar Lodge. He was also an ardent curler and many a night you could view his walking the three miles or so to the west side to take part in the games of the Selkirk Curling Club. During his years in East Selkirk, it was thought that he was a confirmed bachelor, and although he was very popular with the girls, he remained single for the duration of his stay. No amount of urging on behalf of his friends would make him give up his single bliss.

Then came the sad news in the winter of 1907 that the CPR actually was transferring him out west to Saskatchewan. There were a number of farewell parties staged in his honour. Then came a surprise announcement. Prior to his leaving Manitoba in early January of 1908, Mr. Erskine had slipped away to Winnipeg, and married.

Mr. Erskine took charge of the Lanigan, Saskatchewan CPR station in 1908 and then was transferred the next year to Guernsey, Saskatchewan. He kept up his acquaintance with many of the East Selkirk people and during time off and vacation often travelled here to visit and recall old times with his Manitoba friends. Then the sad news reached East Selkirk that on September 20, 1915, Mr. Erskine had passed away. His body was brought home by the CPR and with full Masonic rights he was laid at rest in the Churchyard Cemetery of St. Andrews. When the old timers talk about the CPR, they remember J.J. Erskine and his zeal for sports, his love of railroading and his gentlemanly, humorous character.

East Selkirk CPR Station.

East Selkirk Station.

The Station Manager

For incoming settlers, the railway station played a major role in their experience of arrival. The station offered them the first physical evidence, as they descended from the train, of the kind of community they were entering. The impressive architectural statement the station itself made on the open prairie provided a note of reassurance to the apprehensive, if not frightened, immigrants. According to Archie Warren, a local historian in Tyndall, the station agent himself had a definite social responsibility for these new arrivals. He and his family introduced the newcomers to the rest of the townspeople and often found them accommodation.

Edward McMurchy.

More RR Station Memories

Edward McMurchy

It was on April 26, 1883 that Edward McMurchy and his wife Margaret and their first child, Minnie, sailed from Glasgow, Scotland for Canada. After arriving in Quebec and getting his affairs settled, the family came west to East Selkirk. It was here that they lived for a few years in the CPR Section house, and Edward fulfilled the duties of Section Foreman working out of East Selkirk. Edward liked the area and decided to look around for a prime piece of property. Having saved sufficient funds, he purchased some land from a Mr. Smith. The land was situated some four miles south of East Selkirk in the community of Kirkness. Finally, in about 1886, Edward made a start on the building of a house for his growing family. In the meantime, Edward had got transferred from East Selkirk to the Gonor Station and the family made their home in the station building proper. Edward used to walk from the Gonor Station to Kirkness in order to continue the building of his new home. After about a year, Edward and Margaret moved into their new home, at Kirkness and Edward continued to walk to and from work at Gonor.

James Oastler

Farm Manager

James Oastler was born near Parry Sound, Ontario in 1871, his parents having immigrated from Scotland the previous year. He attended the one-room schoolhouse near the farmstead and later worked to put himself through the Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph. In 1897 he graduated with a degree of B.S.A., winning two Silver Medals. He came west that fall to attend the Manitoba Dairy School. For two years he was manager of the Crystal City Creamery; then he became stockman on the farm of the Hon. Thomas Greenway of Crystal City for two years, followed by the position of Livestock Manager at the Minnesota Experimental Station at Crookston for three years.

In 1905 he became the manager of Sir William Van Horne's farm in St. Andrews, New Brunswick. There he met and married Susan Beatrice Andrews in 1908. In 1912 he was transferred to East Selkirk, as manager of the Van Horne Farm here.

In 1924 he took up farming for himself on a section of land north of East Selkirk. James Oastler was always deeply interested in agriculture. He joined the St. Andrews and St. Clements Agricultural Society in 1913, was made Vice-President in 1927, and served as President from 1928-1931. The Board of Directors interested the community in the plowing matches, which alternated each year from one side of the Red River to the other, with the chief prize being a gold watch donated by the T. Eaton Co.

The Selkirk Fair was the highlight of the year, and had originated in 1875 developing into the showplace for the farmer's horses, cattle and other animals, the vegetables, the baked goods and preserves and the crafts and sewing, all preceded by a large parade. Mr. Oastler often commented on the work and worry involved in transporting the show animals the many miles and the crossing on the ferry before the advent of the truck and the bridge. He had a genuine interest in the opportunity to inspire the youthful farmers in good farming techniques. Not only was he interested in the advance of scientific knowledge concerning soil, weeds and good farming techniques, but also in the community as a whole. This lover of the good black loam of Manitoba died, aged 88, on November 3, 1959. His widow Beatrice then moved to Ottawa, where daughters, Helen and Marguerite resided.