



# INTERLAKE FLYER

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F.R.E.D. ADMINISTRATION, NORQUAY BUILDING, WINNIPEG



# *“Lifting the Nets”*



## Editor's Note

Let your mind go back--way back--to the time before people inhabited this strip of land between the two big lakes. It was about 8,000 years ago that the last glacier--the last ice age--retreated from Manitoba. Nobody lived in this part of the world.

However, between that time and the 1700's there have been several different nomadic groups who have lived in the region we now call Interlake. It's possible that some prehistoric native North American bands occupied the region for longer periods of time than all the present groups combined. Last summer, workmen in Selkirk uncovered an ancient Indian burial ground. Archeologists from the Manitoba Archeological Society have estimated that the site dates back approximately 500 years--that's 300 years before Chief Pequis brought the first "permanent settlers" to the area. We know that the Sioux, Plains Cree and other Plains Indians used parts of the Interlake for hunting grounds and seasonal lodging long before 1800.

The Interlake today is made up of over a dozen distinctly different groups of people. How did we all get here and why did we end up in the Interlake instead of somewhere else? To answer that question, start with a blank sheet of paper. Then list, in chronological order, the various groups who have come to call the Interlake their home today. Chart their movements, record the reasons for their actions and take careful note of how they have changed and in what way they have maintained their original identity. That's more or less what we have done. The end product we call the Ethnic and Historic INTERLAKE FLYER.

In putting this issue together, we dealt primarily with these groups that still maintain some cultural identity and also comprise a noticeable segment of the Interlake population.

We sincerely hope we didn't forget too many groups and we apologize to any Italian, Hungarian, Sioux, Chinese, American or other specific nationality that we may have left out. Some of our stories are not as complete as we would have wished and there may, in fact, be stories missing. Much of the information we desired simply wasn't available. Some of the nationalities represented have bigger stories, simply because of the abundance of historical information that is available about them.

A special thanks to those who helped us out on this project. Some of the major contributors have their names appear behind the stories they compiled while dozens of other people spent time and effort digging out information and making it available to the FLYER staff. Without their cooperation, this special Ethnic and Historic issue wouldn't have been possible. Our thanks also to the Manitoba Archives (Department of Tourism, Recreation and Cultural Affairs) for providing us with the historical photographs.

# Saulteaux 1700's

The Saulteaux Indian Band, now residing on the Chief Pequis Reserve, was one of the first groups to establish permanent residence in the area now called Interlake. The band is especially unique because of the fact that it is one of the few ethnic groups in the Interlake to have had its complete history published, in story form, for the public to read. "Chief Pequis and his Descendants", written by the late Chief Albert Edward Thompson, relates the history of that Saulteaux band from the 1790's when they first settled along Netley Creek up to the present day. The 80-page book not only makes fascinating reading but also presents a side of our history sometimes overlooked. The author is the great great grandson of Chief Pequis, the man who led the Saulteaux into the Interlake.



The Chief Pequis Medal is on display in the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature.

As white settlement on the eastern half of this continent increased in the 1700's, the Indian bands there felt growing pressure to move westward. As they moved toward the great lakes, they often created greater pressures on the hunting and fishing grounds of other "established" bands who, in turn, looked even farther in the direction of the setting sun. In the 1790's young Chief Pequis led his band from their home at Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario to the west where they hoped to find better fish, game and waterfowl. After travelling for weeks by canoe, they came to the mouth of what we now call Netley Creek. There, at the site of an abandoned Plains Cree camp, they set up their village. The area provided an abundance of wildlife, the ground was fertile so the corn they had brought with them from the east grew well and buffalo hunting on the nearby plains provided them with pemican for the winter. Other items that the band needed could be obtained from the Hudson's Bay Company Trading Post.

It wasn't until 1812 that the advance party of Scottish settlers, sent by Lord Selkirk, arrived and made the first attempts at setting up a white community in western Canada. Met with fierce opposition from the Northwest Company, as well as the natural elements, the Scottish settlers came to the Saulteaux Indians for assistance. In 1817 Lord Selkirk wrote of Chief Pequis, "Pequis has been a steady friend to the Settlement ever since its first establishment and has never deserted its cause in its greatest reverses. He has often exerted his influence to restore peace; and having rendered most essential services to the settlers in distress, deserves to be treated with favour and distinction. . . ."

It was in the early 1830's that William Cochran, a protestant Missionary, set up a school to teach some of the young Indian boys how to read and write in English as well as carry on a conversation and do business. He also taught the men of the band some of the advantages of more modern agricultural practices such as growing grain and harvesting hay so they could keep cattle over the winter months. It was during this time that log houses started to become more popular than the traditional shelters.

In 1841 Pequis, then in his 60's, heard of a missionary at Norway House who had invented a syllabic form of writing which made it possible for Indian people to read and write in their own language for the first time. The chief took a dozen of the most intelligent young men of his band and traveled up the entire length of Lake Winnipeg so they could learn the new system of writing. That system is still used today.

In September of 1864, Chief Pequis, age about ninety, died and was given a funeral usually accorded only to the highest dignitaries of the land. Today a monument stands over his grave in St. Peters' churchyard. A monument has also been erected in memory of the great leader at the Kildonan Park in Winnipeg.

When the Louis Riel rebellion occurred in 1869, the Saulteaux, under the leadership of Chief Henry Prince, offered Colonel S. Dennis 100 men to help suppress the uprising. Although he only utilized a dozen of the volunteers, the offer exemplified the close relationship between the band and the white settlers.

In 1871 when Treaty Number One was signed between the Indian bands and the Canadian government, the Saulteaux were officially recognized as being the sole residents on the 48,000 acre St. Peters' Indian Reserve. The reserve prospered and the people took pride in their schools, churches, roads, farms and numerous homes.

By 1907, pressure from white settlers in the area for more land was increasing and the government decided to open the reserve to non-Indian newcomers. Officials picked a new 75,000 acre site located a hundred miles to the north along the Fisher River. The government was anxious to open the St. Peters' reserve up for public sale. Some of the means used to persuade the members of the band to vote in favor of moving were perhaps dubious. A public meeting was called, with only two days notice, and the proposal to sell their land and move north was made in such a way that many of the people present couldn't understand the full implications of what was at stake.

When the band made the actual vote, the question was phrased in such a way that some people thought they were merely voting on whether or not they wanted a \$90 gift. No official poll was taken. Officials of the election quickly judged that the vote had gone in favor of selling the reserve.

The first families started leaving their homes and farms at St. Peters in 1909. Although the voyage to the new reserve was not difficult, what they found when they arrived was little better than what the band had originally found when they settled along the Red River over a century before. They had to start over again to clear the land, start farms, build schools and homes and make roads.

Both the North and South Pequis Schools were built in 1911 and the Central School in 1922. There were six churches on the reserve by 1925 as well as a post office and stores. Agriculture again took hold and today the livestock industry on the Pequis Reserve is becoming a significant factor. Individuals from the Pequis Reserve have received widespread recognition in both World Wars and in provincial politics. With the introduction of a clothing factory and an increase in other types of jobs, employment is on the upswing. The reserve has a new school and local initiative has also been vital in establishing a library and an indoor hockey arena.

The Pequis Dancers, organized four years ago, have performed native dances in most areas of Manitoba as well as Ottawa and some of the states. When the idea for a demonstration dance group first came up, only four elderly people on the reserve had any recollection of the old customs and dances. They recalled that 70 years ago the government and churches had forbidden native dances and practice of traditional customs. Many of the younger adults on the reserve thought it vital to preserve that knowledge and pass it on to the children while it's still available. Formation of the Pequis Dancers filled that need and also provided a means for Indian people to go to non-Indian communities and show what their culture is really all about. If you've ever seen the Pequis Dancers perform, you can probably feel a better appreciation of Indian culture in Manitoba.



The majority of the Interlake Saulteaux population live in the North-western corner of the region. Most sources indicate that the tribes were already established in the areas of Ashern and Gypsumville as early as 1800. Treaties number One and Two, signed in 1871, include the Lake Manitoba, Fairford, Little Saskatchewan and Lake St. Martin Reserves. Although the complete histories of those four bands isn't completely documented, some background information is available. This summer, OFY students from the area are interviewing elderly people on the reserves and compiling historical information about the Saulteaux in the Northwest Interlake.

The 500 Indians living on the Lake Manitoba Reserve are descendants of the "Little Big Ears" tribe that once lived along the lake shore near Oak Point. Prior to that time, most of the families had lived in areas north and west of Lake Manitoba. According to stories passed down through the generations, the Little Big Ears group defeated the Sioux in the last major battle that ever occurred between the Saulteaux and the Sioux. The battle took place in 1860 near the Saulteaux encampment at Oak point. A small plot of land near that site still belongs to the Lake Manitoba Band. Today, agriculture is the main occupation of the band.



Chief Wigamonskunk and his family at Lake St. Martin in 1888.

Indications are that the Saulteaux who established the Lake St. Martin Reserve were living on that site before any of the other Saulteaux groups moved into the area. It's also possible that groups from that original band broke off to form the basis for some of the other reserves. During the flooding of the early 1900's the Lake St. Martin Reserve population also grew as other Saulteaux living along Lake Winnipeg moved up the Dauphin River.

Agriculture, commercial fishing and boat building are three of the main occupations on the Lake St. Martin Reserve. Traditional wooden yawls built by craftsmen on the reserve are becoming known all over Manitoba for their sturdiness and quality.

The Fairford Band is comprised of families who had lived along that river since the early 1800's as well as some families that moved up from the Southwest shore of Lake Manitoba in the mid 1800's. One of the first missionaries to the area took note of the fact that the people were living in "wooden tents". In his dealings with the band, he changed that terminology to "Woodhouse" and the name still stands today as one of the surnames found on the reserve. The beef industry is growing on the reserve and a band-owned shopping centre, service station, restaurant and trucking company are only some of the first indications of the long range development plans that the Fairford Band has set.

The ancestors of the Little Saskatchewan Band were living on the site of the present day reserve approximately a century and a half ago. The band remained relatively small until the early 1900's, 30 years after the treaty had been signed. Shortly after the turn of the century, high water levels in the northern Interlake forced many of the families living north of Lake St. Martin to vacate their gardens, homes and hunting grounds and move to the Little Saskatchewan Reserve. Although some of the people eventually moved back to the Sturgeon Bay area, most remained and their descendants are now known as the Little Saskatchewan Band.

# Scottish 1812

Maureen Schwanke

The Scottish have been a distinctive part of the Interlake cultural mosaic for over 150 years. In 1825 John Pritchard, a former Nor'Wester who had joined the Red River colony, wrote of the Scottish community, "The settlement is wonderfully improved. (It) extends from the White Horse Plain almost to Netley Creek (in) a line of well built houses." (Manitoba, A History)

Thomas Douglas, fifth Earl of Selkirk, was a humanitarian who was deeply concerned with the pitiable state his people had been reduced to with the coming of the Industrial Revolution. Tenant farmers in Scotland as in Great Britain and Ireland were deprived of their small holdings so that the land might be used for sheep.



York boats were essential in transporting the Selkirk Settlers down from Hudson Bay. Boats like these were used to transport supplies in the north up until the late 1930's.

Selkirk's concern led him to fix on the idea of a settlement in a new land. He eventually chose the valleys of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers as the perfect location. There were Indian, Metis and fur traders' camps, fur trading posts and forts, but Selkirk's groups were the first effort to form an agricultural community in western Canada. Groups of settlers arrived at Red River in 1812, 1814 and 1815. It is a good thing these hardy pioneers were inured to the rough life in the hills of Scotland because their struggles in this new land were of epic proportions. Their first crops failed and they spent starving and frozen winters at Pembina. They also faced the hostility of the Nor'Westers and Metis who resented their intrusion. They had no sooner gained a precarious toe-hold than the Nor'Westers set fire to their homes and crops, destroying everything.

However, the settlers who arrived in 1814 and 1815 were Sutherland Scots from the parish of Kildonan. They were farmers and herdsmen and they strengthened the agricultural character and morale of the colony. Gaelic speaking and of the Presbyterian faith, they dominated the Scottish community and gave it their character. The cruelty of the evictions from their ancestral homes, and all the hardships of pioneering in a harsh and lawless land had not shaken their constancy or altered their purpose.

These Scottish settlers were the first white settlers of any kind within the boundaries of the Interlake as we know it today. Although they were doing well in 1825, 1826 brought disastrous flooding, forcing the colonists to flee to the high ridges to the east and west. "When the flood drained away they came back to the river lots; the persistent Scots and the Metis took up again the toil of the farm and the chase of the buffalo." (Manitoba, A History)

Before the year 1830 had passed, the colony was completely re-established and more promising and thriving than ever. No less than 204 new houses had been built, many enclosures made, barns erected, and favourable crops ensued. Orkneymen came, with their well known habits of frugality and industry. The settlement had taken definite shape. The Highlanders and Orkneymen were located on Point Douglas and northward through Middlechurch; officers of the Hudson's Bay Company were at Upper Fort Garry and later moved to Lower Fort Garry; the English halfbreeds were found at the Forks, south on the west bank of the Red and west on the Assiniboine -- at St. James, Headingly, St. Francis Xavier, Baie St. Paul, Poplar Point, High Bluff, and Portage la Prairie. Further Metis settlements appeared south on the Red at St. Norbert and Ste. Agathe on the Seine at Ste. Anne des Chenes, and on Lake Manitoba at St. Laurent.

The settlers continued on these river lots for many years, struggling with floods, grasshoppers, severe winters and clashes between Metis and Whites. Agricultural methods improved and the settlement slowly became more prosperous.

True homesteaders later began filling up parts of the municipality away from the Red River--many descendants or relatives of the Red River colonists and former Hudson's Bay Company employees. John and William Leask were brothers born in the Orkney Islands and both eventually farmed in the Clandeboye district. John had joined the Hudson's Bay Company at 18 and worked at Lower Fort Garry before taking up residence in the community. William arrived in 1882.

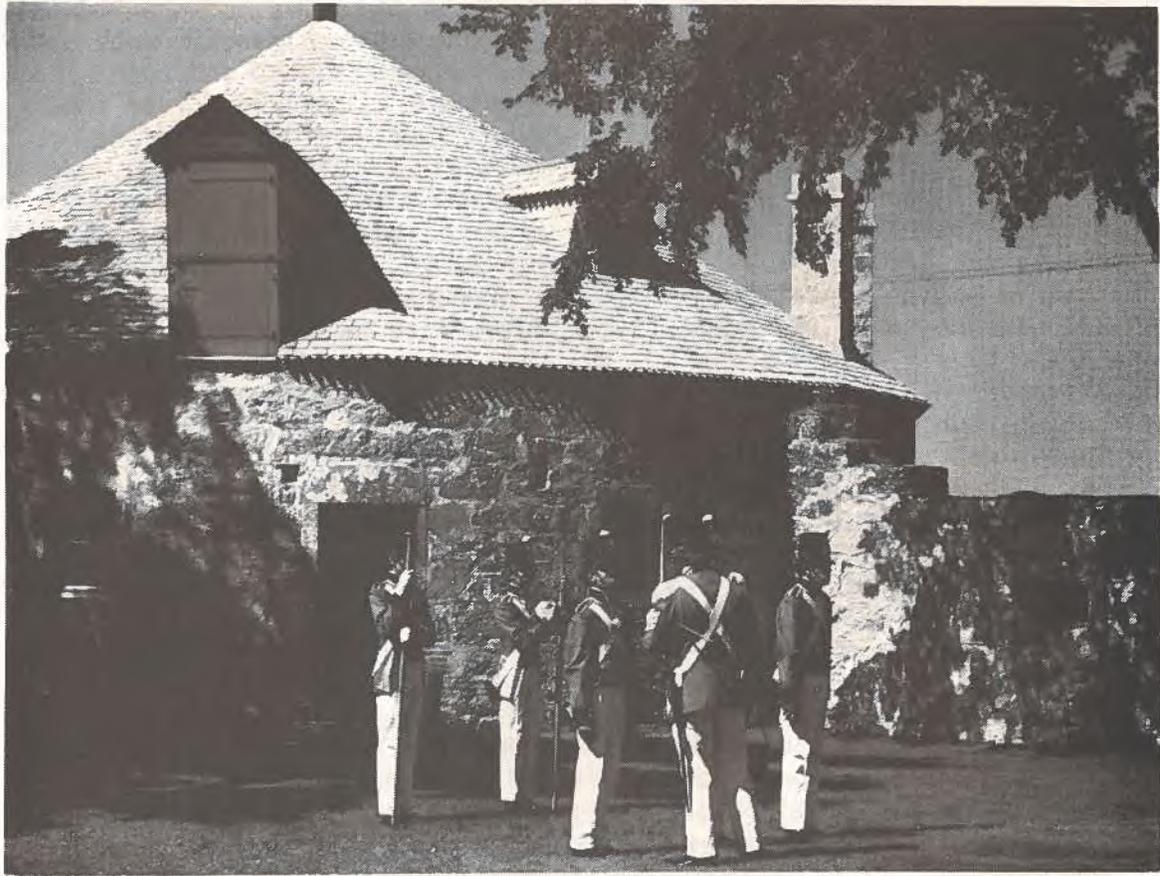
Nine of his children had the distinction of being born on a road allowance. After their house had been built, a land survey showed that it was not located on the Leask property but on the road allowance between two properties. One of the hazards of pioneering.

Alexander McRae was among the first settlers at Clandeboye. His father, Duncan, had come from the Orkney Islands in the 1830's. Duncan was the stonemason who constructed Upper and Lower Fort Garry, St. Andrew's Church, St. Clements' Church at Mapleton, St. Peter's Old Stone Church, St. John's Cathedral, Miss David Ladies' College (Late John Black Hall in Kildonan), and St. Peter's Church Rectory (now a part of St. John's Cathedral Boys' School).

In the south central Interlake, one of the first homesteaders was Robert Bell. He was born in Scotland and came to Canada in 1830 with his parents who settled in Ontario. He grew up and married there and in 1871 moved his wife and five children to Stony Mountain. Five more children were born there. In the summer of 1871, he built a small log house and stable for the horses and broke two acres of sod. One of their daughters, Clara, was the first person from Rockwood to obtain advanced education. She attended four terms at St. John's College for Ladies. In order to pay the tuition Mr. & Mrs. Robert Bell put a mortgage on the homestead. "Rockwood Echoes" recounts, "The mortgage, dated May 29, 1879, was for four hundred and fifty dollars payable at the end of three years with interest payable every six months at the rate of twelve percent per annum."

Apparently Gaelic speaking Scots people were not too common as "Rockwood Echoes" tells of settlers in 1872 in Greenwood Township (Rockwood Municipality) which included a "Real Scotch Family who talked Gaelic," They were Mr. & Mrs. Murdock McDonald and two sons, Donald and Colin.

James Barbour was born in Ayrshire, Scotland and moved with his wife to Ontario in 1854. He established a business but, seized with the urge to look for new land, came to homestead north of Stonewall. In 1878 a few neighbours got together to organize a school district and James Barbour was one of three trustees chosen. When the question of a name for the school came up, it was James Barbour who suggested Balmoral after Balmoral Castle in Scotland. The village that grew in the area remained Balmoral, and one of James' grandsons still lives there.



The fort that never saw a fight. Built in the 1830's to protect the Selkirk Settlers, Lower Fort Garry never did see military action. However, the stone fort has been the site of numerous historical happenings such as the Louis Riel provisional government, the Riel imprisonment and the signing of the Indian Treaties.

1871 saw the beginning of a massive immigration to Manitoba. The Scottish people were part of the waves of homesteaders from Ontario and the British Isles. A large proportion of Scots settled in what is now the Municipality of St. Andrews, joining the Orkney and Kildonan settlers already there and fairly well established.

One look at the history of the Town of Selkirk shows the concentration of Scottish immigrants even after 1870. For example the first town clerk was John McDougall from Kilbridge, Scotland. Samuel Taylor, after whom one of the streets of Selkirk is named, was born in the Orkney Islands and arrived at Red River in 1857.

He left diaries which show that long before anybody looked at the rest of the Interlake, some of the farmers along the Red were prosperous enough to have stone houses built. He was a stonemason himself and in 1862 he wrote, "John Clouston and Duncan McRae went down to commence Rev. A. Cowley's stone house. I have been for weeks now building at Mr. Bunn's stone house."

During the great boom in Manitoba around 1900, the Robertsons of Glasgow arrived in Manitoba on their honeymoon. A year later they bought 240 acres west of Rosser village. Only 20 acres were broken but there was a small house and a barn. One day in 1904 they and their three children spent a day in Rosser visiting and came home to find house and all possessions burned. They lived for weeks at various places while the neighbours got together and helped them build a larger home.

There was a Scotsman at Scotch Bay who must hold the record for longevity in the Interlake. Mr. John McNabb died in 1908 at the age of 108. Unfortunately his long and probably adventurous life is not recorded.

As with all early homesteaders, life was rough and required a great deal of endurance and sacrifice. Homes were humble (those in sod houses said that a three-day rain outside meant a five-day rain inside), most of the food and clothing had to be manufactured and there were no doctors. Usually one of the women in the neighbourhood was quite competent as a doctor, especially as a midwife. The story of Mrs. Dan Williams as related in "Rockwood Echoes" gives a good idea of the kind of services they performed.

"She was called to dozens of homes at all hours....Sometimes the settlers would come for her with a yoke of oxen on a sleigh on a cold winter's night and take her many miles. With her old Scotch plain shawl around her, she braved all kinds of weather.

"One time a settler took her to his home only a couple of miles from her own home, when his wife was in distress....After the baby arrived, she was able the same night about midnight to leave the new baby and mother in the care of the older girls of the family. She was anxious to get home because of sickness in her own family. She decided to return home on foot. The road was only a trail through the willows and bush and when she went around a water hole that was on the road, she lost her way back to the trail. She had to spend the rest of the night in the swamp where the mosquitoes were bad and only after daylight did she find her way home."

Because there were no doctors, people died of accidents, gangrene, diseases like diphtheria and whooping cough, blood poisoning and various other things that a shot of antibiotics would cure in no time today. Many women died during childbirth. However, the people who survived these things often lived into their 80's and 90's. There do not seem to be any reports of ulcers and heart attacks among the pioneers. Despite, or more likely because of, the extremely hard physical labour, and the food, which lacked variety and was not refined, treated, or sprayed, it must have been a healthy life. Many surviving pioneers and the children of homesteaders have said things to that effect.

"We didn't have much maybe, but we were happy and healthy."

# *Scottish Culture*

Maureen Schwanke

The Scottish heritage is unmistakable. Tartans, kilts and bagpipes are familiar to everyone. While English traditions have become diffused in the past century, Scottish traditions have remained highly distinctive and popular. This is significant because of the fact that immigrants from Scotland did not come in organized groups as some nationalities did nor did they settle in groups. They scattered all over mixing with English, Irish and other Europeans.

The focal point for Scottish activities is of course the Town of Selkirk. The first pipe band was organized in Selkirk by Claude Macfie in 1884. One of the outstanding pipers was Murdoch Reid who was from the Isle of Lewis. It was said, "When Murdoch Reid played his bagpipes on a summer's evening all the Scotchmen in town went running down to the Slough where the Reid house still stands." (Selkirk's 75th Anniversary Book)

Today there is again a pipe band in Selkirk. The Selkirk Kiwanis Pipe Band with 34 members is Manitoba's Junior Champion Pipe Band. It is often accompanied by the Selkirk Highland Dancers. The band was formed in 1967 and directed by the late Neil Sutherland of Winnipeg. It represents the Town of Selkirk, Clandeboye, Petersfield, Lockport and East Selkirk. First sponsored by the Kiwanis Club of Selkirk, the band is now largely self-supporting though it still maintains the Kiwanis name and receives some aid financially from them. This year the band will appear at the Kiwanis International Convention in Regina in August. The present manager, Stewart Davidson, has received several bookings for the band to appear at various fairs and parades around the province.

An annual event is Selkirk's Manitoba Highland Gathering, an event rapidly being recognized as one of the best in North America. Last year there were 16 bands and dance organizations from all over Canada. The competition is a three-day extravaganza of bagpipe playing and highland dancing. There are so many kilts and tartans you may go home seeing plaid. This year the Highland Gathering will be held July 13-14.

The Band Association sometimes throws a Scottish party, called a Ceilidh (kay-lee). The Selkirk Memorial Hall was filled to capacity for a Ceilidh held in May this year. The pipe band, highland dancers and the Royal Scottish Country Dancers (Winnipeg Branch) provided a program that was a "Scotsman's delight. The program included old favourites such as Bonnie Dundee and Scotland the Brave, several new competition tunes, a thrilling salute by the exceptionally fine drum corps....interspersed with vocal selections....and charming displays by both dancing groups."



Although the Selkirk area is the only part of the Interlake that organized traditional Scottish music and dance celebrations, the Scots have made quite a contribution to all communities in the sports department. That contribution is a game that everybody plays and which for some obscure reason is called curling. Curling was introduced probably for the first time in Manitoba or for that matter anywhere in Western Canada by James D. Barclay who was born and raised in Inverness, Scotland. He married and moved to the United States and then to Ontario where he settled in Guelph. He became Captain Barclay and had much to do with the formation of the first artillery in that city. When it was decided to build a penitentiary at Stony Mountain, Captain Barclay, was hired as the contractor. He moved with his family to Stony Mountain for the four years that it took to build the penitentiary and then he moved back to Guelph. It was during the winter of 1873-74 that he felt some diversion was necessary to break the monotony of isolation for his crew working on the building. He encouraged his men to curl using iron rocks. The first curling club in Winnipeg was not organized until 1876.

The first game of curling under cover in Manitoba took place on the Robert Bell land near Stony Mountain on December 12, 1876. A barrel of oatmeal was donated by the losers to the Winnipeg hospital as a penalty of defeat. In Stonewall the only sports organization that has functioned continuously through the years is the curling club which was organized in 1880.



Dancing is an important part of the Scottish Highland Games.

Robert Bell was also a good example of the Scottish immigrant's willingness to contribute to the life of the community. "Mr. and Mrs. Bell were great workers for the Methodist Church and would often put on a social gathering of some kind to help raise money for the church. At one of these gatherings, as an added attraction, they made a little curling rink in a nearby clearing. It was lighted with Chinese lanterns and a roaring game was indulged in by the old timers, which no doubt helped the church funds considerably. This was in the early 80's..." (Rockwood Echoes)

Some immigrants continued to yearn for a touch of the homeland. One Scottish homesteader created a touch of Scotland by turning his home into a castle. W. Stark was born in Lanark, Scotland where he became a qualified stonemason before moving to Canada to take up homesteading at Ashern in 1911. He built a log cabin. Shortly after 1930 he began removing each log individually and replacing it with stone, until in 1944 the whole thing was completed. The stone and colorful granite was collected from the surrounding countryside. It is not actually a castle but it is a masterpiece of stonework and it does have a round turreted tower.

# Metis 1820's

Murrey Sinclair

It's estimated that there are presently 9,000 Metis people in the Interlake region out of a total population of 55,000. The majority of these half-breed people are situated in communities such as St. Laurent, Selkirk, Riverton, Matheson Island, Pine Dock, Vogar, Red Rose, Inwood, Anama Bay and Oak Point.

The word Metis is of Spanish origin and refers to people of mixed blood, generally in reference to the mixture of Indian and European blood. The Metis people of Manitoba, once described as the New Nation under the leadership of such people as Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont, have since gone through a period of great change. Under Riel and Dumont, the Metis were considered the French half-breed of the Red River area who were famous for their buffalo hunts and their skills as traders, hunters and explorers.



Metis scouts in 1873 as they prepare to go on surveying assignment for the Boundary Commission.

Today, under the organization of the provincial body known as the Manitoba Metis Federation, the Metis encompasses not only the French half-breed descendents of the original Riel Metis, but also takes in the non-status Indian people who, for one reason or the other, have lost their treaty rights under the Federal Indian Act. The word Metis can also include a large number of people whose background at one time included Indian ancestry but now is predominantly Anglo-Saxon, Icelandic, Ukrainian or some other ethnic group.

The first half-breeds in Manitoba date back to the 1700's and the time of the original Voyageurs. However, it wasn't until after the turn of the century that the various Metis families organized themselves into formal, identifiable groups.

In the early 1800's, the French half-breeds found that it was easier to organize buffalo hunts, lay out their community lots and deal with the North West Company and other groups if they had strong leaders. Out of this need evolved a system of elected band leaders. It was under this very system that the Metis had their most significant impact, both politically and in terms of expanding the settled areas of the province. It's estimated that at the time Manitoba entered the Confederation, over 75 percent of the provinces population was of mixed Indian and European ancestry.

The majority of the Metis people in the Interlake today are found in Selkirk and St. Laurent. Selkirk, by it's very size, calls for a large percentage of the population to be related in some way to native origins and estimates in the past have put the number of Metis in Selkirk at approximately 2,000 out of the total 10,000. In St. Laurent, 70 percent of the 1,400 people closely identify with Metis backgrounds.

Leaders of native organizations point out that many people of native background cannot or will not identify with their Indian ancestry. The people of St. Laurent present an interesting sidelight into that aspect of the history of Metis in the Interlake. From the year of the Riel Rebellion of 1885 until the late 1960's many Metis people did not identify themselves in any way with their native background. However, the people of St. Laurent did not do this. In fact, the forerunner of the Manitoba Metis Federation, the Union Nationale de Metis, has had active support in the community since the early 1900's.

In other parts of the Interlake the history of the Metis is largely unrecorded. This is largely due to the oblivion that many of the Metis people allowed themselves to fall into after the Riel Rebellion of 1885 was put down. Many people of mixed blood did not identify with their Metis background because of a fear of the consequences that might befall them. It was during this period that Metis communities returned to more of a family oriented existence as opposed to the organized traveling bands that had previously been typical.

The period of dormancy is over and the Metis people of the Interlake have again started to express themselves as an identifiable group. In 22 communities within the region, locals of the Manitoba Metis Federation have been organized. In a fashion similar to the Metis bands of the 1820's, each of the communities has established an elected committee responsible for administering various programs run by the Manitoba Metis Federation as well as organizing other activities for Metis in the area.

It's a recognized fact that the half-breed people of the Interlake have been allowed to fall behind in many of the developments that taken place.

In the past century, the Metis in the Interlake have not kept pace with the developments of the dominant Anglo-Saxon society. Today, they are catching up in areas such as housing, employment and education. More importantly, the general community spirit that has been lacking for the past 100 years is *once* again coming to life and Metis people, as well as other groups, are beginning to realize the important role that the Metis played in making Manitoba the province it is today.



This 1918 photo of the interior of the cathedral at St. Laurent shows the size of project that Metis groups have been willing to undertake.

# *French 1830*

Ed Ledohowski

The town of St. Laurent is traditionally known as a Metis centre. However, with French being the spoken language of the area, a number of French families have settled in the area also. The Metis population began settlement of the area in 1824 when the Pembina Valley, the traditional Metis homeland became American territory. It was only a few years later that members of a certain Duchorme family from Quebec, seeking high adventure in Canada's wild west, found their way to the St. Laurent settlement. The brothers built a small cabin in the community and hunted and trapped the surrounding area with the Metis. A few years afterwards, two other French families joined them and they all moved on to become the first settlers at Shoal Lake.

Between the years of 1848 and 1861, the Metis settlement was often visited by French priests from St. Boniface. Some of the missionaries who visited the area during these early years were Bishop Provencher (founder of St. Boniface), Bishop Langevin, Archbishop Tache, Fathers Thebault, Gascon and Lestanc.

Father Simonet became the first resident priest in 1861 and it is to him that the Parish owed its name. Father Simonet was also in charge of the mission stations in the area: Duck Bay, Salt Springs, Tatogan and others. It was impossible for him to remain permanently at St. Laurent. In 1866, Father Camper was sent from France to be the assistant or vicar of Father Simonet. The next summer another zealous missionary, Brother Jeremias Mulvihill was sent to help Father Camper. The two brothers left an indelible mark on the mission of St. Laurent and the whole religious environment of the area. Their efforts made St. Laurent the center of the Metis population in the area. Between them they opened three schools, supervised and stimulated the work for the building of two small churches plus the beautiful stone church in 1895 (which burnt down in 1961). Meanwhile the population was growing and the school in the village, like the first church, became too small. There had been a need felt in the parish for a community of sisters to look after the schools and help with the parochial work.

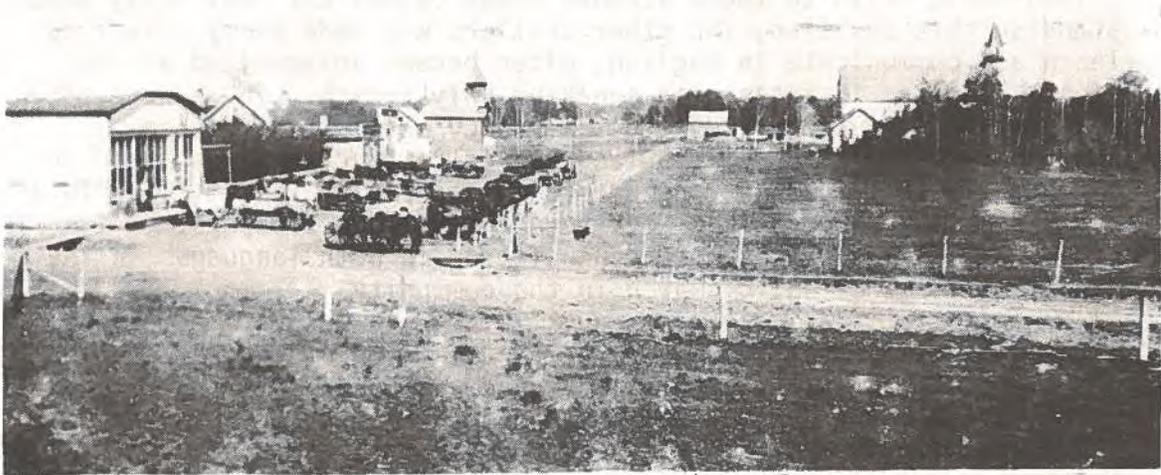
1897 saw the arrival of the first contingent of the Franciscan missionaries of Mary. These first six sisters received assistance from four more sisters from Quebec that summer and by 1899, there were fourteen sisters there. The fathers and sisters had to find accommodation in the schools and other buildings until 1902, when the convent, and the fathers' residence was finally built.

In 1902 the first contingent of French settlers also came to the area. Rev. Father Peran, who had become the new Pastor of St. Laurent, went to France and brought several Breton families with him. He believed that the St. Laurent area would be an ideal area for his people to settle in. In Brittany, the people were all fishermen and fishing was a very hard and poor life at that time. The St. Laurent area, in addition to being near the lake, had much fertile land which enable them to grow vegetables and raise cattle.

These first families were large and it was not easy to feed and clothe a dozen or more youngsters. Before the railway came through in 1904, material was bought by the roll and clothing sewn up for the whole family from it. Consequently it was easy to recognize the members of the same family by the identical material and cut of their clothes.

More families came out in 1904 and yet another group in 1911-12, enticed no doubt by the favorable reports of the first settlers. Most became successful farmers in the area, while others moved to Lac Plat (Shoal Lake) and carried on the traditional fishing, farming, trapping life.

The French settlement at Fisher Branch had its beginnings at St. Laurent, despite the fact that few of its residents are actually from the St. Laurent area. In 1906 Abicide Gamache, at the suggestion of his father-in-law Simon Menard of the Shoal Lake area, came up to St. Laurent from Laurier, Manitoba to scout out new lands for his saw milling operation. While passing through St. Laurent, they happened upon two young Metis, Gabriel Beauchamp and Alex De Lorme, who for several years had trapped and dug snake (seneca) root in the Northern Interlake region. Abicide questioned them as to the types of forest which grew there. They described vast areas of huge and dense spruce forests which could keep his mill operating for years, and also made special mention of the fertile soils along the region of the Washow River (now known as the Fisher River).



This 1914 photograph of Fisher Branch was taken from the roof of the old hotel. Judging from the number of horses and wagons along the main street, the town was a busy place even back then.

So in the spring of 1907, Abicide, his father-in-law and several relatives brought the saw mill up to Oak Point by rail and hauled it by horses some 60 miles to the northeast, finally setting up their operation a few miles east of present day Broad Valley. As soon as the time could be spared from the work at the mill, they all went up to the area of the Washow River. They were so impressed by the land that they decided to settle there. Several Slavic families who had been living around Broad Valley also accompanied the group on their excursion and decided to settle there as well. As soon as the area was opened to homesteading late the following summer, Gabriel Beauchamp and Alex De Lorme came up from St. Laurent with their families and several other Metis families and also settled near what is now Fisher Branch.

Hoping to entice more French settlers to the area, Abicide and Simon Menard wrote to many of their relatives who were living in the U.S.A. and described the rich, "free" land which was available along the Washow. The reason for their wanting more French families to settle was so they could establish a nucleus of French speaking people in the area. That way they would be able to preserve their language and their Roman Catholic religion, which was often associated exclusively with the French, at least until the Polish began to come in.

Many French families did come up from the U.S.A. When they arrived, they in turn wrote their relatives to come. This continued until 1915 when the Parish record showed over 100 French families had settled in the area or more accurately one huge family, for a great portion of them were related in one way or another.

Determined to retain their language, the early French settlers tended to be somewhat clannish. To them losing their language was tantamount to losing their identity. It was the cement that held the French together. For these settlers to speak English would eventually anglicize them and to be anglicized was to become a Protestant--an unimaginable faith to these staunch Roman Catholics. Not fully understanding this position, the other settlers who made every effort to learn and communicate in English, often became antagonized at the French settlers insistence on speaking only French. There were often many heated discussions between the French settlers and those of other nationalities as to the language of instruction to be used in schools. But it was not long before the people learned to live in a heterogeneous community and work together as true pioneers. Roman Catholic church services were soon offered in both languages in the beautiful large catholic church in the community.

The church was a great moving force in the lives of the French. Religious holidays were important events and Sundays were observed scrupulously. Time was always set aside to teach the children their catechism. Religious pictures were a standard form of adornment for the home.

The French around Fisher Branch also brought with them a distinctive method of building their houses. Unlike the Slavic population in the area, who notched or dove-tailed the ends of their logs, the French style was to groove the ends of their logs. Four corner posts were the first to go up with grooves cut along the length of two sides of each post. The wall logs were cut so that the center of each end would fit into the slot cut on the end post. This was the traditional French Canadian and Metis style of building construction but it was quite novel to the other nationalities in the area, who often borrowed it. One can still find old abandoned homesteads where both styles of building can be seen on the same yard. You can always tell what nationality constructed it, for the French never plastered and whitewashed their houses as the Slavics did regardless of what style was used.

The French, with their language, their religion, and their lifestyle have formed a valuable part of Manitoba's cultural mosaic.

# *Anglo Saxons 1870*

Maureen Schwanke

Some of the first white settlements in the Interlake (other than the original Red River colonists) were made during the 1870's in the Stony Mountain, Stonewall, Balmoral area. Stony Mountain being 80 feet above the flood plain, had been a refuge during the floods of 1826 and 1852. Some enterprising Winnipeegers had come out during the 1860's and staked claims to homesteads but they did not move out until after 1870 when Manitoba became a province and the land survey was underway.

The great majority of these settlers were Anglo-Saxons from Ontario but some came directly from the British Isles. Some of the Ontario immigrants were volunteers who had come with the Wolseley expedition to deal with Riel and afterwards had decided to stay and homestead in Manitoba. The Riel publicity had advertised Manitoba rather well down east and many Ontario farmers, struggling on the thin soil of the Precambrian Shield, heard the stories of deep soil ready for the plough and heeded the call. In 1871 the Dawson Trail opened. Between then and 1875 hundreds of immigrants came to Manitoba, some straight through into the Interlake. In 1871 there were Anglo-Saxon homesteaders at Stony Mountain (then called Rockwood), Balmoral and Stonewall.

Enthusiasm was checked somewhat in 1876 because of discouraging rumors about grasshoppers, but the last years of the 1870's and the early 1880's were boom years. During this time the proportion of immigrants from the British Isles was rising. The total number of immigrants to Manitoba in 1879 was 11,500; in 1880, 18,800; in 1881, 28,600. The majority were English, Scottish or Irish. The boom collapsed in 1881 but the shift in population and settlement patterns had been made. The British-Ontario core of the southern Interlake had been formed. By 1881 Stonewall, Stony Mountain and Balmoral were established as towns and trading centers and Anglo-Saxons were moving from there into Rosser and Woodlands Municipalities.

By 1891 the provincial population was 150,000 with the great bulk being British-born and English speaking. The second great boom in Manitoba at the end of the nineteenth century and the first few years of the twentieth brought thousands more Anglo-Saxons into the Interlake. They settled mostly in the southern Interlake, in what are now the Municipalities of Rockwood, St. Andrews, Rosser and Woodlands. Here the British influence was strong and set the character of the communities. In most of these areas this influence is still felt. Many also moved farther north in the Interlake, joining the French, Scandinavian and Icelandic groups in St. Laurent, Coldwell, Eriksdale and Siglunes Municipalities on the west.

Some of the settlers who moved north along Lake Manitoba were actually homesteading for the second time in the Interlake. They were people, or the children of people, who had pioneered at Balmoral and Stony Mountain in the 1870's. Many of the immigrants had already homesteaded in Ontario and then started all over again in Manitoba.

What compelled families to leave their homes and make the difficult journey to Manitoba? Usually it was a desire for land. One hundred-sixty acres to a tenant farmer in England for practically nothing was a prize worth struggling for. A quotation in "The Story of Stony Mountain and District" describes the feeling. "They love their land, because it is their own, and scorn to give aught other reason why."

Some simply found their first place of settlement not to their liking for one reason or another and moved on. For instance, Wilfred Bell in "Memory Opens the Door," (a history of settlement along the east shore of Lake Manitoba) tells how his family left England in 1911 and lived at Pipestone, Manitoba for a year. But, "Dad didn't like the prairies and wanted to be where there were trees...so we tried the Interlake district." They moved near Eriksdale.



Artist's concept of the visit of Lord and Lady Dufferin to Stonewall in 1877.

For some the problems of emigrating became almost overwhelming as soon as they left home. Three generations of the Lusted family left England in 1841. There were Stephen Lusted, his son John Lusted and his wife Ann plus their ten children. In mid-ocean they ran into a violent storm, and the Captain ordered all heavy articles overboard. When they landed they had little but their clothing. They settled in Ontario. One of John's five sons married, and decided to homestead in Manitoba. One of his sons writes of his parents' journey in "Rockwood Echoes." In 1867 they arrived by train at St. Cloud, Minnesota, the terminus of the Great Northern Railway, 400 miles from their destination. They started in a light spring wagon but a tornado overtook them and destroyed the wagon. They continued on to Winnipeg in a Red River cart. "The trip took them three weeks, and the rain fell on 17 out of the 21 days. The hardships of a trip like this for a woman with two small children can easily be imagined. The bumping of the cart, the hordes of mosquitoes and a shortage of food, for the trip was delayed by the continuous rain, made the travellers long for their destination." They lived in Winnipeg for a number of years and then because, "Father had always had a yearning for farming," they moved to a homestead near Stonewall in 1881.

Arriving at the homestead was just the beginning. The earliest settlers faced real wilderness--no schools, no churches, few neighbours, no doctors and no roads except the Indians' and fur traders' trails. There was bush to clear, houses to build, barns and fences to go up and no running down to the local store to pick up a few groceries. They ran down to the local woods or slough and shot a few groceries. The meat supply was mostly rabbits in winter and wild fowl in summer. A few more fortunate brought cows or pigs with them when they came.

They lived under a wagon or in a tent until a log house was built. It was not always easy to choose the right site either. One Stonewall resident remembers her grandmother telling how they had built their house in the path of the spring run-off. She opened the door one morning the first spring and water poured through the house and out the other side. They soon built another little log house north of Stonewall on higher ground.

The breaking of the tough sod was done with ox teams. Usually two yoke of oxen were required to pull a breaking plow and, as in most activities, the settlers joined forces. As early as 1874 a fair acreage was seeded in Rockwood and the settlers were joyfully awaiting a bumper crop. Success was farther into the future than they thought, however. For two years grasshoppers devoured everything in sight. Not only the grain, but vegetables, grass and leaves.

In spite of these setbacks, the Anglo-Saxon communities built schools as soon as possible. Tecumseh, south of Stonewall was built in 1876, a log school was built at Balmoral in 1878 and Bruce and Greenbridge School Districts were formed in 1884. These were some of the earliest schools in the Interlake. The pupils walked to school in all weather.

The adventures of the early Anglo-Saxon settlers would fill many books. As a matter of fact, they have. Several local histories have been published which capture the spirit of the times. Mr. Edward Mills writing of the settlers in "The Story of Stony Mountain and District" sums it up. "These settlers--both men and women--were persons of great courage and resourcefulness; enduring privation and loneliness with great fortitude. These subdued a wilderness."

## *Anglo Saxon Culture*

Maureen Schwanke

When it comes to the Anglo-Saxons in the Interlake, numbers alone are no measure of the weight of their cultural influence. Anglo-Saxons have the advantage of being part of the predominant culture in Canada outside Quebec. Thus in the day to day life in the Interlake, the institutions, language and norms are basically "British" and all other cultural groups adopt to them.

Indeed the Anglo-Saxon culture forms the backdrop against which the traditions and rituals of other groups stand out as unique, interesting or different. Like any proper backdrop, the Anglo-Saxon culture is less obvious simply because there's so much of it behind the scene.

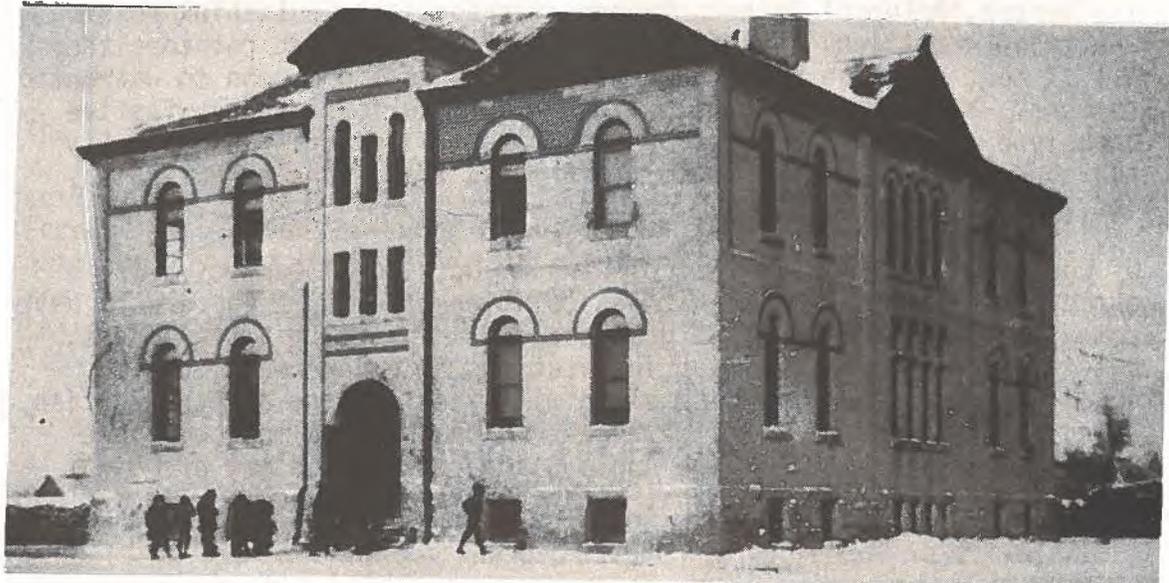
For example, visitors to the Interlake will look for and comment on its borsch, holupchi, vinstarta and even tortiere, but think nothing about the traditionally British meal of roast beef and potatoes they eat at most stops on their travels. It's just too common to warrant comment. Manitobans note with interest and curiosity such festive occasions as the Greek Orthodox Christmas Day and St. Patrick's Day but generally take for granted the British traditions of Boxing Day and Victoria Day.

Of course, it's simply a case of Canada, outside of Quebec, being a nation of basic British traditions to which other cultural groups have come. In their coming these groups added a diversity and richness, but they accepted the British institutions of governments, public school and British common law along with the language and the British brand of politics. Thus after a generation or two almost everyone unconsciously partakes of the Anglo-Saxon rituals and way of doing things without even giving that behavior a second thought.

The influx of settlers in the Interlake from Britain and Ontario influenced permanently the major social institutions such as education and local government systems. In the early Red River settlement, the missionary was the only educated man whose efforts were not devoted to the fur trade. Given the minimum of government at the time and the belief of both Anglican and Catholic that the education of the young was a job for the churches, it was inevitable that church and school should be inseparable.

However, the greater number of settlers from Ontario were Presbyterians who felt that education should be dealt with by the laity as well as the clergy. The second largest group was Methodist, which was in favour of completely separating church and state. Also, Upper Canada was following England's example of replacing the old government of parson and squire by that of municipal institutions run by elected representatives. It was not the parish but the township and county that were the units of Ontario local society. In the Interlake, Anglo-Saxon settlers attempted to settle into townships as support of a secular school and voluntary churches required a fair density of people with similar ideas. However, the township never became a unit of local government and the county was too costly for a thin population to support. 1884 saw the creation of the rural municipality which was a compromise between the two.

The growth of municipal institutions and the trend toward secularism combined to foster the concept of a general municipal system of which the public schools were a part. Of course, long before this was accomplished the Protestant schools were multi-denominational (though not anti-religious) mainly because the population was not sufficient to support more than one school in an area and there was a need for uniformity in a struggling new community. As early as possible after the homesteads were established, school districts were formed and schools built. They were usually of logs with benches instead of desks and chairs. Of note, though, was that the public school system was basically Anglo-Saxon.



Selkirk Central School number One, 1897

The local schoolhouse, along with the local church, were also the focal points of the social events in most Interlake communities. While the church did provide more opportunity for exercising separate cultural traditions, the school had a more anglocizing influence partly because many of the events held there were either open to the entire population or more likely to be attended by all families regardless of religious beliefs.

Agriculture in the Interlake reflects a strong Anglo-Saxon influence. An echo of the British Isles is noticeable particularly in the southern part of the region, particularly in the Stonewall-Balmoral area. Here many farms look more like small country estates with trees lining the driveways leading up to the somewhat large and imposing houses. Even the landscaping around the house yard is a prairie adaptation of the English garden.

Many of the breeds of livestock bear Anglo-Saxon heritage. Today the majority of cattle in the region are Herefords, an English breed from Herefordshire. Once the Clydesdale work horse was popular, while the hogs are mainly Yorkshire and the sheep are primarily the Downs breeds. One could not, in the past or even today, attend a country fair without constantly being surrounded by "English" livestock.

The churches and schools, especially the former, provided musical education and entertainment. Many a fine singer first found his voice as a member of a church choir or part of a classroom chorus group. It was well nigh impossible to escape eulogizing some British tradition or another if the school teacher was dedicated to music. Few indeed are the students of two generations ago who could avoid singing "Rule Britannia", the British biased "Maple Leaf Forever", or the less heavy "Lass of Richmond Hill", and "Drink to Me Only With Thine Eyes". Even "London Bridge" was more than just a recess or school party game and "God Save the King" (or Queen) was sung every day with obvious impact.

The Anglo-Saxon pioneers maintained a historical perspective and a love for chronicling, often in great detail. In this respect they were most akin to the Icelanders. A number of histories of Anglo-Saxon communities in the Interlake and their people have been published.

A partial list includes: Balmoral, 1872-1972; The Lovely Woods of Clandeboye, published by the Community Club of Clandeboye; Meadows, Centennial 1970, published by the Women's Auxiliary to the Meadows Community Club; Rosser Ripples, published by Rosser Women's Institute; Memory Opens the Door, published by Lucy Lindell; Rockwood Echoes, Published by the Rockwood-Woodlands Historical Society; The Story of Stony Mountain and District, by Edward R. R. Mills; Woodland Echoes, published by Rockwood-Woodlands Historical Society.

The British settlers were also devoted to athletic endeavours. A Cricket Club was organized in Stonewall before 1884 and entered matches with clubs from Winnipeg, Portage and Selkirk. There were also tug of war and football teams, baseball, billiards and horseshoe pitching tournaments.

T. Lusted tells a story (Rockwood Echoes) of the popularity of Sports Days in 1892. He lived then in Stonewall which is 8 miles south of Balmoral. "Balmoral always had a sports day on the 1st of July, and Ewart Gunn and I wanted to attend but we could not get transportation, so Ewart suggested that we run up, so off we started, loads of people in buggies and light democrats passed us laughing, but as they were heavily loaded we could not get a lift. We had just arrived in front of the hotel as the race I figured to run in was called out--12 years and under. I lined up with a good number of other young fellows, and believe it or not I won first prize, which was .50¢."



English settlers gardening in front of the Teulon School, 1915

Over the years, of course, there has been a great deal of blending and melting and what not going on among the various cultural groups in the Interlake. The result has been a quite uncoerced and largely unconscious absorption into a general Anglo-Saxon way of life spiced with some special traditions from the parent non-English culture. To many it's the addition of the spices that makes the Interlake cultural menu most interesting, but strangely enough, it is often the Anglo-Saxon who least notices that the major ingredients are his own contribution.

# *Icelandic 1875*

The century long history of Icelandic people in the Interlake has been well documented in newspapers, letters, diaries and other literature still available in the old Icelandic libraries and family collections. Of all the groups who have settled in the Interlake in the last 165 years, the Icelandic people have probably faced the most hardship and abuse from nature.

Although individuals and small groups of people started emigrating to North America as early as 1855, the first large group of Icelandic settlers arrived on this continent in 1873 and moved directly to Ontario and Wisconsin. Other groups temporarily settled in Nova Scotia, Michigan and different areas of Ontario. The conditions they had left behind were severe and the settlers were anxious to establish a thriving Icelandic colony in the New World. Deadly volcanic eruptions, epidemics affecting the essential sheep herds, severe year-round weather conditions and a poor economy that had been dominated by outside interests were the principle reasons for the emigration movement.

Promises of free land, free transportation and abundant jobs in Canada and the United States had attracted over 600 Icelandic immigrants by the spring of 1875. However, most of the free land proved to be unproductive, the free transportation ended when the crowded steamers landed at their coastal destination and making a living proved to be difficult at best. By the spring of 1875 most of the newcomers were temporarily settled in Ontario and just south of the border in the states. The need for a permanent colony was obvious. Sites in Wisconsin, Nebraska and even Alaska were considered and it was finally decided to send a small delegation to Manitoba to explore the possibilities of settlement there.

The party of six arrived in Winnipeg in mid-summer and proceeded up the west shore of Lake Winnipeg to investigate the possibility of colonizing that area. When the party returned to Kinmount, Ontario they reported that the area held excellent prospects and they suggested that the move to New Iceland should take place before freezeup. The idea of settling along the shores of a large lake and the opportunity to once again fish for their livelihood appealed to these people from the tiny North Atlantic Island.

However, it was going to be difficult to set up a colony before the winter set in and the settlers had no money for transportation or to live on over the winter. Opposition to a immediate move was strong.

Federally appointed Icelandic Agent John Taylor, along with Sygtryggur Jonasson and Einar Jonasson, travelled to Ottawa to request government aid for the move and to request that the settlement be officially recognized by the Canadian government. At first the government was reluctant to cooperate with the venture arguing that they had no authority to spend money for the movement of immigrants once they are within the country. Lord Dufferin, Governor-General of Canada in 1875, had visited Iceland 20 years previously and felt moved to intervene on the behalf of the Icelandic settlers. The result was that an unprecedented grant was made to the settlers to cover their cost of moving to Manitoba and buying supplies for the winter.

On October 8, 1875, Parliament passed an Order in Council establishing the Icelandic Reserve and granting Icelandic immigrants exclusive settlement rights to the area. The "miniature republic" extended from the northern border of Manitoba, which at the time was Boundary Creek, up to Washow Bay and Hecla Island and included land as far as 36 miles in from the shoreline. Icelandic emigrants finally had their home in the New World and a goal to work for.

Preparation for the trip and the actual journey from Ontario used up the remainder of the valuable summer and early fall and the party of 285 Icelanders, accompanied by agent John Taylor, didn't reach Winnipeg until October 11, 1875. Approximately 50 single people opted to remain in Winnipeg and work for the winter while the remaining families proceeded to make their way up the shore of Lake Winnipeg by flat boat.

The Icelanders landed at Willow Point on the afternoon of October 21 and by the following morning ice was already beginning to form along the shorelines. Work began immediately to cut trees and build houses for the winter. The number of buildings was limited by the number of stoves available and as many as three families were forced to live together in a single 12 by 16 foot shanty.

The winter of 1875-76 was one of the coldest on record in Manitoba and the meager food supplies were exhausted before Christmas. Some hunting and fishing, in addition to government food grants and dried moose meat from local Indians pulled the colony through the coldest months. An unrecorded number of settlers died from scurvy that winter and several others decided to make the 60 mile walk back into Winnipeg in hopes of finding employment there. Despite the conditions, the Icelandic settlers were able to set up a successful school, a system of government, maintain their traditional celebrations, set up a newspaper and even proceed to clear some land and build farmhouses in preparation for spring.

The following summer, however, didn't prove to be much better. Continuous rain, snow in July and high waters that completely flooded most of the meadows that were previously assumed to be safe for haying are some of the factors that caused even more settlers to move down to Winnipeg in search of regular, secure employment.

The "Large Group" of Icelandic settlers, totalling nearly 1,200 people, arrived in Gimli in August of 1876. Driven out of their homeland by the disastrous volcanic eruption of the Dyngja Mountains, these immigrants came directly to New Iceland with only a brief stop in Nova Scotia. Winter arrived early that year, adequate housing couldn't be built quickly enough and the overcrowding and unsanitary conditions were even worse than the previous winter. Smallpox broke out in New Iceland that fall. Over a hundred settlers died during the winter. The provincial government kept the entire colony under strict quarantine until the following July with the result that outside employment, mail service, supplies and agricultural implements and materials were badly lacking.



In the early years, lumbering was an essential source of income for the Icelanders as well as other newcomers to the region.

It was late in the summer of 1877 before the colony was operating at a stable level. By the time Governor-General Lord Dufferin visited in the fall, New Iceland was finally beginning to take on the appearance of a successful and thriving colony: "...in many of these close atmospheres and squalid cottages were to be found little libraries of from 30 to 40 books. A few of the houses are quite roomy and more comfortable."

By this time, Icelandic settlers were to be found as far north as Hecla Island and along most of the inhabitable shoreline. Framfari, the newspaper of New Iceland, was being published regularly and the elected council was beginning to deal with matters such as health, fire protection, water supplies and the general well being of the community. There were nearly 1,500 Icelanders living in the colony by 1878. The fishing industry was advancing, people were constructing their own boats, nets and farm implements and the number and quality of livestock was improving. Many of the problems and difficulties were put to the backs of the Icelanders minds and the general feeling was one of optimism.

But the relatively favourable conditions were not permanent and nature was only waiting to make yet another attempt to drive the settlers away. The summer of 1879 was wet and the effect on the crops and hay was disastrous. The severe winter of 1879-80 took an even greater toll. The "Great Flood" of November 5, 1880 drove water inland farther than anyone had imagined possible. Winter fodder supplies for livestock were destroyed and the next 8 months saw most of the cattle herds dwindling in size as cattle perished or had to be slaughtered for human consumption. Progress and the good life was not to be found along the west shore of Lake Winnipeg it seemed and for many the conditions were worse than what they had left behind in Iceland. Family by family, the immigrants began to leave New Iceland in search of a more desirable area.

Selkirk and Winnipeg were the destinations for many of the Icelanders. The Selkirk settlement had served as a half way house for people travelling between Winnipeg and New Iceland so it seemed a logical village in which to settle. Selkirk offered better economic opportunities in terms of jobs and also farming plus the Icelanders still had easy access to Lake Winnipeg which allowed them to continue fishing. Many of the families who live in Selkirk today are descendants of those Icelanders who left after the "Great Flood".

In Winnipeg the Icelanders found they had a far better chance of obtaining advanced education which allowed them to move into the business and professional fields. Other groups took up farming in North Dakota and Minnesota while a large percentage of those who left New Iceland moved to the southwestern corner of Manitoba.

By 1881 only 250 people remained in New Iceland. Those who stayed when friends and relatives left did so out of pride and loyalty to the idea of a new Icelandic nation.

The exodus was only temporary. Within two years the treacherously high lake levels subsided and those settlers who had decided to stay were again beginning to prosper. A few of those who had left New Iceland saw the progress that was being made and returned. The population again expanded as new immigrants from Iceland moved into the area and by the early 1890's there were nearly 1,600 Icelanders in the district. Lumbering, commercial fishing and farming industries grew. This time it looked as if New Iceland would make it and the settlement would keep its head above water.

The influx of Icelandic immigrants to Manitoba continued until the turn of the century. Although many of the newcomers came directly to the area designated as New Iceland, an increasing number of the immigrants sought security in Winnipeg and other rural areas of Manitoba.

The Swan Lake settlement, now known as Lundar, was established in 1887. Most of the first settlers in the area came directly from Iceland. The next group to move up to the Lundar area were Icelanders who had settled for a time in North Dakota but who desired better agricultural land. Later, some families moved across the region from Gimli and Hecla Island.

In 1889 a few of the settlers from Lundar moved over to the shores of Shoal Lake where they established a separate community. They were quickly joined by some North Dakota settlers and some new immigrants who came directly from Iceland. In 1903 when high waters again plagued Hecla Island, several more families moved across to the Shoal Lake colony.

A few settlers also moved up to the Lake Manitoba Narrows area in 1889. Although the total number of Icelandic settlers in that corner of the Interlake wasn't great, they were able to operate successful dairy farms when the water levels were low enough and fishing became a major winter enterprise.

In the fall of 1900 a small group of Icelanders came up from North Dakota in search of better farm land. They settled along the Icelandic River in the area around Arborg and were soon joined by other Icelanders from North Dakota as well as some new immigrants. Geysir, Vidir and Sylvan are some of the settlements that centered around the trading community of Arborg.

In 1897 the special status of New Iceland was removed and the settlement became part of Manitoba. Although the area was now open for settlement by other ethnic groups, the Icelandic influence on the area was strongly entrenched and there can be little doubt today, six generations later, that the old dream of an Icelandic nation in the new world was at least partially fulfilled.



Gimli waterfront at the turn of the century as dog teams prepare to leave for Norway House.

# *Icelandic Culture*

One significant aspect of the history of Icelandic people in the Interlake is that it is well documented. Immigrants from Iceland brought with them the strong love of literature that thrives in many Icelandic households today. Even in the trying years of early settlement they made time for reading and writing. Today, records still exist which vividly describe the economic and social activities of the settlers from the very time they left their home island in the North Atlantic.

Why is this attachment to books such a strong part of the Icelandic heritage? One old timer conjectured that centuries ago, the long and severe winters on the home island forced the people to adapt an indoor form of mental recreation just in order to make it through the dormant months. Creating plays, poems and stories about their own lives and their relationship with the natural forces perhaps seemed like a more constructive way to spend the winter than simply sitting. Active involvement in literature evolved into the most characteristic trait of the Icelandic culture. Perhaps the coincidence of settling in New Iceland and finding an environment similar to the one they had left is the reason why the Icelandic immigrants continued to write plays, verses, stories and histories. Whatever the reason, the love of literature is strong in the Icelandic culture of North America.

Libraries were packed into family trunks as a vital part of the belongings that accompanied the first immigrants to the new world. Consolidation of the small home libraries into village libraries made the old Icelandic books available to more people. As English became the predominant language in New Iceland, even first generation immigrants began reading and collecting the works of the great masters in the original. Librarians in the small Icelandic libraries eventually began collecting English books. Today, the Evergreen Regional Library, with branches in Gimli, Riverton and Arborg has more than 25,000 volumes in circulation. The Icelandic library in Arborg is still operational and the Evergreen system also has a number of Icelandic publications.

Newspapers, also, are characteristic of the culture. Almost as soon as the first settlers arrived in New Iceland in 1875, a weekly newspaper called Thjodolfur, was established. Throughout the years, several weekly and monthly Icelandic newspapers and magazines have been published in Manitoba. The two remaining periodicals reach most of the Icelandic communities in North America and are also subscribed to by people in Iceland. Logberg-Keimskringla, written in Icelandic, is a weekly newspaper with a circulation of over 4,000. The Icelandic Canadian is a quarterly magazine, written in English, that also reaches homes throughout North America and Iceland.

Education is emphasized by traditional Icelandic families as one of the most important aspects of growing into adulthood. In the past, those Icelandic children and youth who didn't have the opportunity for a formal education often spent countless winter days and evenings studying within the confines of their own home. During their first difficult winter in New Iceland the settlers petitioned the government for a school. However, before the proposal even had a chance to be refused, they had already organized their own school with an enrollment of nearly 30 students, including some adults. Today, formal education is still a highly prized goal and many modern scholars from the area once called New Iceland have become nationally recognized in professional and academic fields.



Gimli School in 1901

The ability to successfully make a living by fishing open waters is another trait that immigrants have brought with them from the North Atlantic. Although it took them a couple seasons to adapt their traditional deep sea methods to Manitoba waters, Icelandic fishermen are now considered to be some of the best in the province. Icelandic families from Hecla Island all the way down to Winnipeg still earn a significant share of their income by harvesting fish from Lake Winnipeg.

In the public's eye, Isleningadagurinn--the Icelandic Festival--is the most conspicuous characteristic of the Icelandic culture in North America. Even back when the celebration was first begun in 1890, it was considered to be an important tourist event attracting visitors from all over North America and even some from the home island. The festival was held in Winnipeg until 1932 and for those first years, the main activities were exclusively Icelandic: plays, songs, speeches, sports events, traditional foods and, of course, toasts to Iceland, Canada, Manitoba, community leaders, authors.....

In recent times, these activities have been maintained and new attractions have been added that have broadened the appeal of the festival: fish derbies, rock dances, sportscar and motorcycle races, bicycle and foot races, hootenannies, fireworks and a beer garden are only some of the features that now draw people of all nationalities to the Islendingadagurinn. While in Gimli, whether for the festival or at some other time during the year, almost everyone is bound to pick up at least a bit of the flavor of New Iceland in North America.

# *Cree 1875*

It was on September 24, 1875 that Chief Dave Rundle of the Norway House Band of Cree Indians signed Treaty Number Five with the Canadian Government. According to the terms of the treaty, the government was to help the band establish agriculture as their main form of livelihood. Although the band had traditionally obtained the necessities of life from their natural surroundings (hunting, fishing, gathering etc) at least 90 families decided to take up farming for a living. Many of the elders could envision a time in the future when their traditional means of living could be drastically changed and farming offered a potentially more secure and stable form of livelihood.

Because the area around Norway House was unsuitable for cultivation, the chief and council agreed to accept a new reserve farther to the south. The main condition demanded by the band was that the new reserve be located on the shore of Lake Winnipeg so they would still have access to water transportation and good fishing. The mouth of the Icelandic River was first considered as a possible site. A few Cree and Saulteaux had already been trapping and hunting that area long before 1875 and they were aware of what was available there. However, the land was still within the New Iceland reserve and Icelanders officially had first settlement priority. Government agents then suggested the area at the mouth of the Fisher River and the Cree agreed.

Most of the families made the transfer to the Fisher River Reserve by the fall of 1878. Some of the Cree decided to take their settlement from the government in the form of script rather than treaty rights while others opted to stay at Norway House.

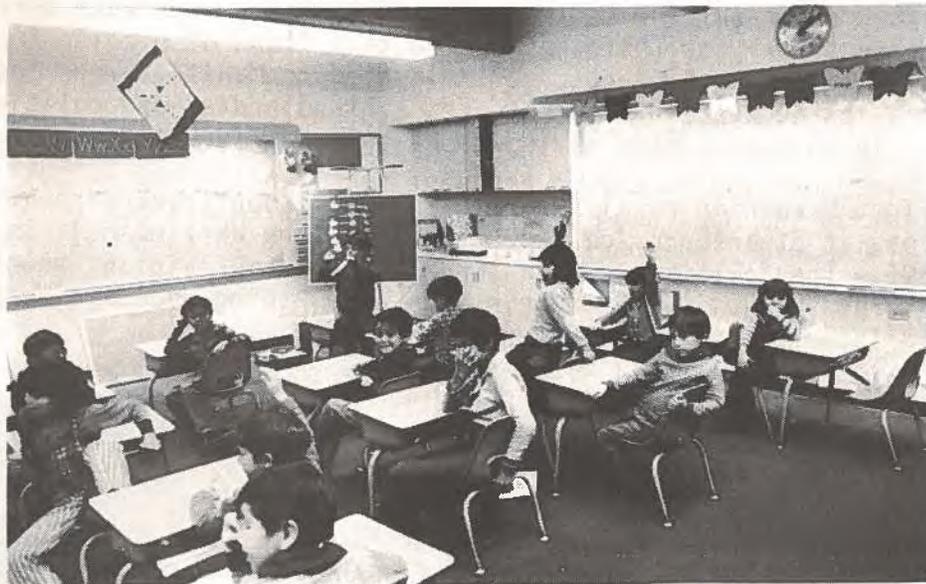
Although the records aren't absolutely clear on this matter, it seems that councillor Harry Koostatak was responsible for the transfer of most of the families. Harry must have been a strong leader because Koostatak, the name given him by the Cree Band, means "Let us fear him." In the late 1920's the reserve post office was named after this man.

The three small york boats made countless trips transporting the people and their belongings down from the top of the lake. When they arrived they found one small Hudson Bay Company Trading Post and lots of thick bush on the land they were to farm. Each family was assigned a 100 acre plot of land and the long hard work of building a community in the wilderness began.

It was during this same period of time that a few Saulteaux families from Berens River and Poplar River also came over and settled on the Fisher River Reserve. Because both Cree and Saulteaux are of the same basic Algonkian (woods Indian) background, the two groups are often able to easily fit into one another's community. In 1908 the treaty was updated to include new families that had moved down from Norway House after 1878.

Indians on the Fisher Reserve started fishing commercially around the turn of the century. Having lived on the shores of Lake Winnipeg for hundreds of years, the Cree had less trouble adapting to the conditions on the big lake than did other groups. Although the theory is maybe hard to support with data, it's believed by many that Indians make better fishermen because they understand the water and the fish better than anyone else.

Today, the Fisher River Reserve has a new, fully modern fish plant and several dozen active fishermen. The band is also proud of their new shopping centre, school building and recreation centre.



The new school at Fisher River incorporates many modern ideas including open-area classrooms, community usage of the gymnasium and instruction in native languages and culture.

# *Ukranian 1897*

Ed Ledohowski

Ukrainian people were first attracted to Manitoba by the glowing reports of the success of German and Hungarian settlers in the province. The offer of 160 acres of free, fertile land (30 times the size of the average holding in the Ukraine) as well as full religious, political and cultural rights had an electrifying effect upon the Ukrainian peasant.

All this was at first hard to believe. Villages and other interested parties sent men such as Ivan Pillipiw and Dr. Osyp Olsekiw (1895) to Manitoba to look into these reports. The mass movement of Ukrainians began the next summer with the appearance of two booklets by Dr. Olsekiw which described Manitoba as the "land of promise." His reports caused so much excitement among the Ukrainians that they began selling their land and stock and some even borrowed the money to pay for their passage to this "land of promise." The majority of the Ukrainians that immigrated to Manitoba were from Galicia in the western Ukraine. Feudal landlordism and political unrest in this area made living there quite difficult.

The first Ukrainian rural settlement in Manitoba appeared south of Winnipeg at Stuartburn (called Shtombur by the Ukrainians) in July of 1896. The following year a large number of Ukrainian settlements began cropping up in the Dauphin area, the Riding Mountain area and in the Interlake at Pleasant Home and Teulon.



Typical Interlake Ukrainian home at the turn of the century. Many of these cottages can still be found intact on old farm sites throughout the central part of the region.

Ukrainian settlement in the Interlake began with the Pleasant Home Colony. It was established in July of 1897 in Township 17 R 3W about midway between Teulon and Gimli. Eleven families, led by Stafan Dragon, left the Stuartburn area in search of a more fertile and better forested area to settle in. The area northeast of Stonewall was originally suggested to them by the Commissioner of Immigration in Winnipeg, Mr. W. McCreary, who took a special interest in the colony. But later, Ukrainian groups found the densely forested land farther north much more to their liking.

By the time the houses were built and the land cleared, crops could not be planted and the settlers were in dire need of relief for that first winter. Mr. George H. Chatfield, immigration officer and land locator for the colony, acquired relief for the settlers in the form of eight sacks of flour plus two weeks employment cutting roads in the district (at .75¢ a day) for all the men of the colony. This saw the pioneers through the winter. In the spring, the settlers went immediately to work clearing, planting and building to make sure that relief would never be needed again. They were a proud people and only accepted relief when it became absolutely necessary.

By the next summer over a hundred Ukrainian families had made their way into the Pleasant Home district. However, adjacent townships to the east had been set aside as a special reserve for Icelandic settlers and much of the remaining township had already been classified as Dominion Timber Reserves so the colony had very little room for expansion. Because little more than the actual lakeshore had ever been settled by the Icelanders, the Dominion Land Office finally cancelled the reserve and opened it up to other homesteaders in 1897. But the Ukrainians who had settled on the Timber land had to wait for five years before Commissioner McCreary could ensure them legal possession of their lands.

In the meantime the number of Ukrainian settlers had rapidly grown and by 1905 there were over 4,000 Ukrainians in the district. The original colony had now spread up as far as Arborg and small thriving communities began to appear, such Foley, Malonton, Komarno (which means "mosquito infested" in Ukrainian), Fraserwood, Meleb and many others.

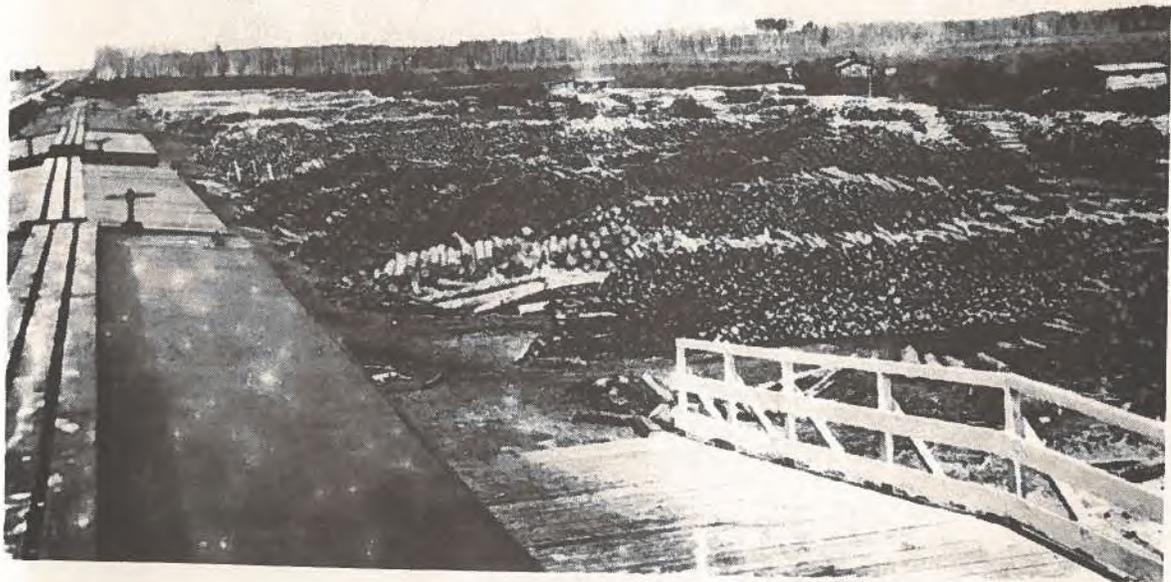
The settlement had spread very rapidly, for only the even numbered sections were open for homesteading. The odd numbered ones were held for sale by the government. Ukrainians who were recent arrivals in Canada simply could not afford to buy these sections at the price the government was asking. Consequently, they could not settle near their friends and relatives in the southern Pleasant Home district as they wished. Left with only a few dollars after paying for their passage to Canada, they were forced to homestead where the land was still available--in the north central Interlake area. Here, for only \$10, they could acquire a full quarter section. The soils often were not as good but at least the land would be their own and they would be living amongst other Ukrainians.



The Chatfield area was opened to homesteaders in 1904. Mr. Chatfield was transferred north from the Pleasant Home district to run a new Immigration Hall which had been built seven miles south of present day town of Chatfield. The hall was actually a large barracks where pioneers making their way to settle in the more northern area could lodge, protected from the elements and the insects. Mr. Chatfield would accompany the head of the family into the countryside in search of a suitable homestead while the rest of the family remained in the safety of the barracks. Land in the area was poor and this business often took days.

Mr. Chatfield also brought in the mail for the district from Teulon on his many business trips there. For many years the hall was the only post office north of Teulon and as a result became a center of activity for the whole area. You can see this by looking at an early map of the area. All the colonization roads radiated out from the hall site--the Oak Point Trail southwest to Lundar, the main Colonization Road north to the Fisher River (then known as the Washow River), the Bender Trail south to Bender, the Hamrlik Trail northeast to Hamrlik, and the Chatfield Trail east to Chatfield Lake. Because of this central location, Mr. Chatfield decided to run a store near the hall. The pioneers coming to pick up their mail and new settlers just moving up into the area could purchase provisions. Settlers in the area could also buy lumber which was cut just to the west at Chatfield Lake. When Mr. Chatfield eventually left the area, the permanent post office was named after him in recognition of his many years of service to the pioneers in the Interlake. Today one could drive past the former site of the hall and never know that it was once an important and bustling centre of activity.

Land in the area was notably poor and stony and within two years settlement around Chatfield slowed to a trickle and was directed more into the east Interlake up around Arborg. In 1907 several Ukrainians from the Chatfield area decided to go up north to the Washow River and check out the land there (now the Fisher Branch district). They found several bustling saw mills in addition to much prime land. The owners of one of the mills were of the same opinion with regard to the land. They had already sent for their families at Abbeville to come and join them there. The area hadn't as yet been surveyed, so word was sent to the Lands Office in Winnipeg that they wished to have the area surveyed and opened to homesteaders. By August of 1908 the surveyors still hadn't come and word had already gotten out about the fertile land up there. Already many Ukrainian and French squatters were on the land. A surveying party completing measurements in the Sharpwood district, between Poplarfield and Eriksdale, were persuaded to survey the Washow district first. Once the area was surveyed it was quickly settled, mostly by Ukrainians from the poorer southern areas of the Interlake and French from southern Manitoba. When the Canadian Northern Railroad was built to Arborg in 1911 and to Hodgson in 1914, the northern Interlake was opened wide to settlement. The railroad provided easy access to the region and agricultural produce and cordwood could be shipped to Winnipeg for cash. By 1916 most of the available homesteads from Teulon right up to the Montago River had been claimed.



This photo, taken near Poplarfield around 1911, shows thousands of cords of wood waiting for shipment to Winnipeg.

In choosing land the Ukrainian pioneer showed a decided preference for bush country which could only be found in the northern fringe areas of the province such as the Dauphin and Interlake areas. This was so because they wanted as much wood on their land as possible. In the old country, most of the forest and pasture lands were owned either by the church or the landlord and the peasant had no access to it on any terms. Settling in heavily wooded areas gave them a sense of self-sufficiency, since it meant that they had a guaranteed supply of firewood and more important building materials for their homes and barns for their stock. Most Ukrainians thought the Interlake would be an ideal area in which to settle. In the early years it was covered not only with the dense growth of spruce that was so very desirable, but it also had numerous sloughs, lakes, and creeks which would be a constant source of water for livestock and crops. Hence the large Ukrainian population in the Interlake. Their opinion of the land soon changed. After the trees had been cleared, they found that the land was either too stony or too poor to provide a decent living. Once they became established though very few gave up and left.

Having acquired the land, the Ukrainian pioneer immediately erected a cottage similar to the one he had left behind in the old country. It was strongly constructed of logs hewn with a broad axe and plastered over with a mixture of clay, short pieces of straw and sometimes a little horse manure. This mixture provided a solid insulative cover to the hut. After it had dried, the walls were then whitewashed inside and out. Where long hay was available, a thatched roof would be built. If not, two layers of semihollowed slabs provide a temporary but waterproof cover. The first stoves or bake ovens were also built of logs and branches plastered over with thick clay. Stones were imbedded into the clay to retain heat in the oven once the fire within had been removed. When built in the homes, these ovens in addition to their role in baking or cooking were used as beds, especially by the children during the cold winter months. The tables, benches, beds, chairs and other household furniture were also handmade from local timbers.

In their struggle to survive in the Interlake wilderness, the wits of both men and women were used to their utmost capacity. Both sexes felled the trees, up-rooted the stumps, cleared away the stones (oh, the stones!), dug the garden, plowed the land and cut and threshed the crops by hand. The women were perhaps more hardy than the men, for in addition to these regular farm duties, they cultivated the immense garden, fed and clothed the large family.

In a short time the humble and seemingly backward Ukrainians displayed a remarkable adaptability, advancing from destitution and medieval methods of tilling the soil to prosperity and highly mechanized farming. This was accomplished on marginal lands which the Anglo-Saxons and other groups had passed by. They brought civilization to areas that otherwise would probably have remained a wilderness.

# *Slavic Culture*

Ed Ledohowski

The Ukrainians, like most other immigrant groups, went through a difficult process of adjustment while settling in the harsh wilderness of the Interlake. Poor crops and general hard times often led to deep frustration and a feeling of insecurity. The Ukrainians did two things to overcome these psychological hardships. First, they tried to reconstruct a physical environment which was familiar to them--one similar to that which they left behind in Europe. Secondly, they developed a deep involvement in the various aspects of the colorful and many sided Ukrainian folkculture. Both of these methods, especially the latter, made living in the Interlake a little bit easier by taking pioneers minds off the problems of their farms.

To make the wilderness area they were settling a familiar area, the Ukrainians often named different aspects of it--the rivers, the schools, towns--after their native ones. Prut, Zburich, Milnica, Stry, Dehova, Rus, and Pawlyk are but a few of the school districts with Ukrainian names. They also built their houses in the picturesque old country style and they often settled in whole transplanted village groups.



The old Slavic clay bake oven, according to those who have tasted it's product, turns out the best bread anywhere in the world!

Longing for the company of their relatives and friends left behind in the Ukraine, the settlers often wrote letters enticing many of them to come and join them in the Interlake. The glowing descriptions of life here were not always exactly accurate and some new immigrants were disappointed when they did join their relatives in the Interlake. However, disillusionment did not last long. Life in Manitoba was generally better than it had been in the Ukraine and the presence of old friends and relatives made life even better. The joy of reunion strengthened their convictions and the prospects of a prosperous future quickly absorbed all their attentions. Because so many did join their relatives in the Interlake, the pioneers were able to achieve a reconstruction of the Ukrainian pattern of life in those early days of settlement. Consequently, nearly all Interlake Ukrainians today are related to each other in some way. As a result the Ukrainians were able to overcome the inhospitable environment, make good their claims on the land and their folk arts and culture thrived as it still does to this very day.

It was largely in observing their religious traditions that the Ukrainians managed to preserve their distinctly Ukrainian way of life. For example there is the Ukrainian wedding, which is both a religious ceremony and a folk tradition. In the old country getting married was a very long and complex process what with the matchmaking, the elaborate ceremonials before the church service, the service itself and the revelries which sometimes lasted the rest of the week. In the new country the process was trimmed down quite a bit, but still retained most of its beauty and its special meaning for the participants. Usually the wedding took three days. First came the ceremony (slyoob), then came the celebration (visilye) in which the whole community took part, not only friends and relatives. This was where the presentation took place in which everyone lines up in a line to present their gifts to the young couple and extend their congratulations to the accompaniment of lively music and song. Then on the third day the family and close friends get together for a more intimate celebration (popravena). The presence of the bride and groom is not necessary to keep the party going. In fact the whole affair is traditionally the responsibility of the bride's parents.

The Ukrainians in the old country observed the Gregorian calendar which runs a couple of weeks later than the Julian. Thus observing their religious festivals, notably Christmas and Easter, they were always aware that this was a distinctly Ukrainian activity because there was a special time set aside for it different from everyone else. And of course they had unique ways of celebrating even the universal Christian holidays. Christmas, for example was always characterized by the huge Christmas Eve supper of twelve meatless dishes symbolic of the twelve disciples. The feature dish was kutya which was made of thoroughly boiled wheat mixed with honey, ground poppyseeds and sometimes chopped nuts. The entire house was spread with hay--even under the tablecloth on the supper table--representing the manger of Christ's birth. Later this was discontinued as it proved impractical to clean up and also very dangerous what with the box stoves used for heating. In fact a house burnt in the Zbaraz area because of the hay catching on fire.

A sheaf of wheat (dgid) was placed in one corner and a decorated evergreen (yalenka) in another. The wheat in the Christmas sheaf was flailed on New Years Day and the seed kept for planting with the wheat crop in the spring. This was supposed to result in an especially good yield. Some of this wheat was kept in the house until the next year. It is supposed to bring good luck to the household during the year. The evergreen of course is a symbol of immortality.

There were many days during that year that held a special significance for the Ukrainians. For example the 10th of June is known as the green festival (dzeline svyato) the Ukrainian version of May Day. This is a celebration of the coming of spring. The interior of the church was decorated with green boughs and the holy pictures which lined the walls of peoples' houses were draped in greenery as well.

Special days on the calendar were usually connected with the changes of season, which were very important to an agrarian society. The phases of the moon were watched very closely too. In the spring, care was taken to plant vegetables which grew above ground during the phase of the new moon and those which grew underground (carrots, beets, etc.) during the time of the waning moon. These are just a few examples of the folklore which surrounded Ukrainian life.

Immediately after the settlements became permanently established, the immigrants began building many beautiful domed churches and parish halls. These Ukrainian National Homes provided a setting in which religious and national customs made their appearance. The music, songs, folkdancing and drama that Ukrainians are particularly fond of were heard and seen increasingly in many parts of the Interlake. Handicrafts, including the making of the colorfully designed Easter eggs called Pysanky, a great variety of multicolored embroidery and the intricate forms of wood carving drew the attention and admiration of the other nationalities in the area. Items and flavors of food such as borsch, pyrchy, holubtsi and many others soon began to be served in homes all around the Interlake.

With the stimulus of public applause and local interest, such cultural features as choral singing, folkdancing and the folkarts have flourished and are reaching even higher levels today. The same music, song and dance that the original pioneers enjoyed are today packing the large, modern community centres in many Interlake towns.



Two monuments, one at Poplarfield and one at Frazerwood, have been erected in memory of the 1906 Slavic settlers.

Two such towns where the Ukrainian folkarts are receiving much renewed interest are Poplarfield and Fisher Branch. In 1970 a Ukrainian Dance Group was established in Fisher Branch as a result of the interest shown by the children--notably without parental prompting. The children wanted the opportunity to learn the Ukrainian folkarts. The parents formed the group and the federal and provincial governments provided the initial funds. This group has grown so rapidly that they found it necessary to split into two smaller clubs this year, one in Fisher Branch and the other in Poplarfield. The two groups now have over 80 members and are still growing. The community interest in these clubs is such that on every occasion they have performed, the community centres have been literally packed by the local population. The groups regularly perform at Christmas and Mothers' Day concerts as well as at their own annual concert in May. The talent of these children is so superb they have to be seen to be believed.

In a somewhat different manner, Ukrainian culture is being preserved in Gimli and Winnipeg Beach. The Winnipeg Beach Ukrainian Homestead Association was formed last summer to plan and eventually run a Ukrainian Homestead which is being developed on a five-acre plot of land south of Hamilton Street in the Beach. The Homestead will be reconstructed to resemble a Ukrainian farm as it existed in the Interlake around 1910. It will feature a house, a barn with a thatched roof, grainaries, a clay bake oven and the main attraction will be the John Hykawy windmill from Meleb. The mill was moved in January of this year and restorations have already begun. The association is in the process of collecting tools, clothing, furniture and other articles to be displayed in this complex. The homestead will be open to the public, it is hoped, by next summer.

In Gimli, the Gimli Development Corporation and the Icelandic National League have combined their efforts to establish an Icelandic and a Ukrainian Museum in the old B. C. Packing Plant on the waterfront. The museum, which should be open the weekend of the Icelandic Festival, is presently collecting and documenting artifacts used by Ukrainian pioneers in the Interlake. The museum is seeking residents who wish to donate artifacts for restoration and preservation in the new permanent display area.

In a different manner again, Ukrainian culture and history is being preserved. A group of Poplarfield high school and university students, funded by an Opportunity For Youth grant, are currently researching the early development and growth of the middle Interlake area. Working out of the old converted hospital in Fisher Branch, the group hopes to complete research started two summers ago by a similar group of Fisher Branch students. The project is quite an undertaking as the research area stems right from Fisher Bay down through to Narcisse. The group has already collected a mass of information and photographs of the Ukrainian and French pioneers and they are now researching other ethnic groups in the area. They hope to research the complete history of the area while the information can still be obtained from living pioneers.

The research is to be published this year. Consequently, the group is seeking local residents who wish to see their history printed as completely and correctly as possible. To contact the group and possibly provide some much needed information or photos write to:

AN HISTORICAL INQUIRY  
c/o Rosemary Hnatiuk  
Fisher Branch  
phone number 372-6975

When completed, it should be a most interesting book!

Perpetuation of the Interlake folkculture and history seems insured by the efforts of these varied groups. By their works, future generations will have the opportunity to enjoy the Slavic segment of the Interlake cultural mosaic.

### *Pet Deer Proves Useful*



In the wooded areas of the west, deer frequently hover round the farms during the winter months. This one became the playmate of Helen Ledohowski and her brother at Sharpwood Man

One particularly interesting piece of historical material which came to light through AN HISTORICAL INQUIRY is this item from the Free Press about 50 years ago.

# *Jewish 1903*

Ed Ledohowski

Today, the Jewish people are few and far between in the Interlake. There is little evidence of the significant role they once played in the development of the Interlake, or of the substantial Jewish settlement which existed in the region.

Before the turn of the century, elaborate plans were being laid by Jewish leaders in Montreal and London in conjunction with Ottawa to set up a large number of Jewish rural colonies in the Canadian west. It isn't fully known why so little became of these splendid visions. It may have been by sheer accident that the Baron de Hirsch, the principle backer of the plans, came to invest the bulk of his colonization funds in Argentine rather than in Canada. The Canadian government was ready and willing to welcome investments and immigrants, waiting in vain for the large numbers which had been promised to populate the empty miles of the Manitoba prairies.

Out of all the visionary plans, the only sizeable rural Jewish colony that was established in Canada was the Interlake community of Bender Hamlet. It was established in 1903 about 70 miles north of Winnipeg, 7 miles south of present day Chatfield. Some 30 Russian-Jewish families who had resided in Winnipeg for several years were organized by Jacob Bender and took up homesteads in the area.



Jewish village of Bender Hamlet around 1904. The Ukranian farm at right of photo still stands today.

The Bender settlement was more of a communal enterprise--an experiment in kibbutz type living. The object was to transplant a European style Jewish village to Manitoba soil. It had a very distinctive character that aroused the awe and probably the admiration of the other settlers in the area. Each of the settlers received a homestead of 160 acres. The village site itself was divided into 20 lots of 8 acres each with all the houses being built along the north side of the main road in a long line. The vegetable gardens, farm buildings and small pastures were located further back on the lot. It was expected that a village plan would alleviate the tedium and loneliness of farm life. A schoolhouse was quickly built and for a time it also served as a community hall and as a synagogue.

Most of the families had been farmers in Russia, so the main ambition of the people was to become established farmers. Unfortunately the land was ill-chosen--the area being rocky, swampy and unsuited to grain farming. The settlers soon realized that they would not get anywhere raising crops, so they concentrated on raising cattle. There was a good market for cattle in the early days when the new settlers were just beginning to move onto the land in the region. There were always Ukrainians and Scandinavians settlers around who needed a few head to start their own herds.

The Bender Colony also had a steam engine which they used to work their fields and operate their threshing mill. The steam engine, being quite unaffordable to the other settlers, was always in demand to plow or thresh crops and for many years the engine was the wonder of the region. In addition to their community resources, the Jewish settlers were able to borrow money from the Baron de Hirsch supported society called "Iuka." Even though the interest rates were low and the terms reasonable, a number of the Jewish settlers were unable to repay their loans. It was simply not possible to make a living from the inhospitable environment that surrounded them. Once the other settlers built up their herds, there was no market for the large Bender herds.

In 1913 the Canadian Northern Railway was built through the area and a siding was constructed just three miles west of the colony. The Bender residents named the siding Narcisse in honour of Narcisse Leven, one time president of the Jewish Colonization Association. A few families moved from Bender to the site of the siding. The settlers hoped that the railroad would mean new life for the colony as the cattle could now be shipped to the stockyards in Winnipeg. For a number of years this was the case. However, the colony was given its final blow after the First World War when cattle prices fell severely, with the result that the major source of livelihood for the Jewish settlers was eliminated. Many Scandinavian and Ukrainian farmers in the region left for similar reasons.

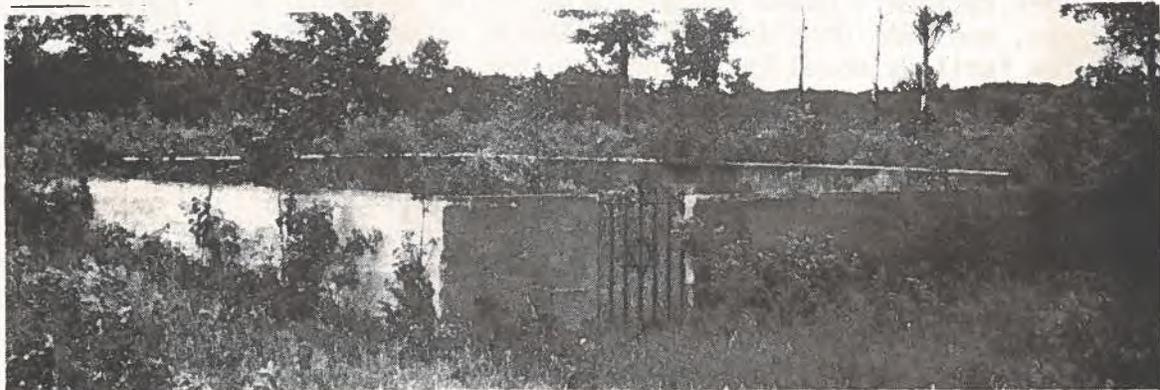
Even from the beginning, somehow, it seemed the colony was doomed to failure. Besides having poor soils, the roads were bad and distances as great as five miles from home to farm created a daily travel problem. The original settlers grew too old to work the fields and the young people, who saw no future in the area, were soon drawn by the promise of a more fruitful way of life in the city and towns.

At its height between 1915 and 1920, Bender Hamlet had a population of 38 families, a synagogue, a store and a public school. Reverend P. Dixon served the community as its spiritual leader for many years. About 1920, however, the colony began to disintegrate and by 1930 none of the original settlers were left. Today only the Jewish cemetery remains at Bender.

In 1911 a smaller group of Jewish farmers from Russia took up homesteads at Camper. New Hirsch was the name given to that colony. These farmers devoted themselves to cattle raising and dairy farming also and the colony flourished for a number of years. But like Bender, it suffered severely when the cattle prices dropped after World War I and New Hirsch, too, was forced to dissolve in 1924.

During the years when these settlements were still flourishing, Ukrainians and other settlers would often come there for supplies rather than going to Teulon and Arborg or Ashern and Eriksdale.

It became apparent to the Jewish colonists that there was a market for staple products among the newly arrived homesteaders and when their own farming ventures turned sour, many of the young colonists forged off on their own and established businesses in many of the settlements cropping up everywhere around the Interlake. These Jews felt that the Icelanders, Ukrainians and Scandinavians were farmers, as they were not. They had their own unique skills. For centuries they had been the business core in whatever country they had resided and now came the opportunity to apply their knowledge. Connections were easily made with the Jewish wholesalers in Winnipeg and the business portion of the Interlake Jewish population thrived for many years after the agricultural groups left. The towns of Chatfield, Poplarfield, Broad Valley, Fisher Branch, Ashern and Moosehorn all had their first stores operated by Jewish people. Eventually the residents of the area took over these businesses and the Jewish owners moved back to the city. However their presence and contributions to the development of the Interlake is still remembered by the other pioneers. When asked about where he got his provisions in the early days of settlement, one notable Interlake pioneer remarked "Everybody got everything from the Jew store."



The graveyard is all that remains of Bender Hamlet.

# Swedish 1904

Lucy Lindell

Probably the first Swede to arrive at what later became known as Eriksdale was a man named Jonas Erikson, generally known as "Old Man Erikson." He built his cabin in 1904, where the Swanson home stands north of the village. His son Manuel, built a cabin a few hundred yards away which became known as "Manny's shack" by the early settlers. Today, the site is marked by the rock garden in Art Lindell's yard. New settlers moving in often spent the night at "Manny's shack". John and Paulina Lindell with their infant daughter Hilda spent their first night (the night of March 18, 1906) in that long ago cabin when they came to take up their homestead.



What made people come from Europe and endure the unknown hardships of a new, raw land where the problem of learning a new language added one more burden to their already heavy load? Her reason is probably typical of most pioneers as Paulina Lindell explains in her story "Next Year" in the book of historical stories, MEMORY OPENS THE DOOR. "Ja, people leave old countries for some new land. Over dere poor people spend all deir lives vorking on dem big farms. Dey never has anyt'ing demselves. Men has te take two years army training. Ve don't like it.

But here is not easy, in dem early days. Ven ve come here it vas not'ing. Yust bush vit svamps between, dis place didn't have a name even. Ja, it vas little few Indians and Old Man Erikson had his shack yust nort' of vere town sits now. . . Ve come on de train te Oak Point. De rails is laid past dere, but de train only goes dat far. From dere ve drive vit' horses and vagon te Brandt's Store at Lily Pay. It vas early spring dat year and it vasn't much snow left in March. De vas lotsa bare patches.

Shalleen Olson, Old Man and me, vit dat babe Hilda det vas only five mont's old, ve come. Det livery fella vould not take us any farder and ve has to go from Brandt's Store by dog team. It vas no road den. We had no roads like now. Yust follow vere it is snow for de sleigh. It vas no town even, den. . . ve slept dat night in Manny Erikson's shack. Old Man said it vas about tvelve feet sqvare, yust nort' of town. . . Dere vas odder travellers come dere too, most valking. Always some coming, some going."

The Vasa Lodge was a flourishing organization in the community about 1920. Their meetings on the last Sunday of each month alternated between Nyland School and Nord. In summer the young people played ball outside, then were invited in to have coffee when the meeting was over.

There were many talented people in the community. Carl Jernberg was a carpenter who could make almost anything required. The museum in Eriksdale has a spinning wheel made by him in 1906, using a wooden rimmed bicycle wheel. Konrad Pearson was a musician who could do wonderful things with his violin. There was "Kalevalla" (Ernest) Norman who kept the Post Office northeast of Mulvihill. He had been a sailor on the Cutty Sark, one of the last sailing ships and could speak many languages. Kalevalla was a distinguished naturalist who had a collection of bird's eggs from all over the world. They were a happy, generally optimistic people who worked hard and played just as hard. Many moved away during the late twenties and early thirties. Their sons and daughters married partners of other national origins. Some stayed in the country and are in the area today.

A few of the treasured old customs still remain and are a part of our every day life. For example the practice of eating Lute Fish on Christmas Eve is still a part of the holiday tradition in our home. A few years ago a gentleman came from Upsalla University in Sweden to visit in the Swedish communities. He was somewhat disappointed to find not a Swedish community but a group of contented people who are Canadians with Scandinavian background.

# *Polish 1906*

Rosemary Hnatiuk

The Ukrainian and Polish peoples of the Interlake region have much the same historic background even today as they share the same life styles. Often it is only by the last name that you can tell whether a person's ancestors were Polish or Ukrainian. Polish names generally end with "ski", "chak", or "ik". In most cases, even in the early years, the Poles spoke Ukrainian. Their ethnic customs are practically identical with those of the Ukrainians and now that three generations have passed since the first settlers came to this land, the Canadian way of doing things is setting in amongst all the people so that differences in the day to day life of people of all racial groups are fading away.

The strong similarity between the Ukrainian and Polish people is not only the result of cultural assimilation in this region, it has its roots in the old country. The Slavic people who settled in the Interlake are almost all from the same region of Eastern Europe. It was then known as Galicia. This region was, at the turn of the century, the buffer zone between the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Russian Empire. Being on the fringes of two land hungry states, Galicia changed hands many times with the result that the populations of the two states intermingled. Not only were the Poles and Ukrainians neighbours, they were often husband and wife. Their common slavic origins made them that much more compatible.

In addition to this, both nationalities shared the miseries and inhumanity of the semi-feudal living conditions which were destroying their society at the time. Most of the people in this area were peasants and they all shared the same hardships. This peasant society was a closely knit society. Although there was "stand-off-ishness" between the two groups because of that fact that Poles were traditionally regarded as conquerors and enemies of the Ukrainians, there was no strong hostility between these two in Galicia. In time of trouble people tend to forget their differences.

The Poles and Ukrainians capably joined forces in order to survive in the Interlake wilderness. They clung to each other because, being of the same slavic origin, they understood each other better than they did their Indian, English, French or Icelandic neighbours. Since the Ukrainians were so much larger in numbers, the Poles often found themselves overshadowed. Indeed, both the Ukrainians and the Poles were lumped together under the general heading of Galicians by the public at large and by the authorities overseeing the settlement of the land. So it came about that the Poles and Ukrainians in the Interlake merged because as Galicians there was not that much difference between them to begin with.

But despite all the similarities, there were differences in the settlement patterns of the Poles and Ukrainians. In the old country, the Poles still lived together in distinctly Polish groups. So when they immigrated, they tended to do so in groups from the same community. Naturally when a man went to a new land and settled down he felt more comfortable if he had a few familiar faces around. Often it seemed as if the entire community was transplanted in the New World.

This was much the case with the Polish in the Interlake. As far as can be discerned, the largest concentration of Poles in the Interlake is in and around the area known as Zbaraz some 7 miles southeast of Fisher Branch in Township 23-2W. The neighbouring areas of Morvena and Hamrlik also were known as Polish settlements but they have since died out as such. Most of the Polish people who settled in and around this area were from the town of Zbaraz in Galicia. This Galicia town was made up of Jewish merchants and the land around was inhabited by both Poles and Ukrainians. Since the majority of people who came to Township 23 were from around this town, they named their new settlement Zbaraz.

The Polish settlers who opened up the Zbaraz area had been to the United States first. It was to this country that the bulk of the Polish emigrants had gone during the 1880's and 1890's. They felt much more comfortable going to a new area where they knew there would be other Poles. The usual destination was New Jersey where they found work in the coal mines. Being farmers at heart, many left the hard life in New Jersey and came to Western Canada when they heard that homesteads were being offered. The usual destination was Beausejour where there was already a substantial Polish village. Many of the Beausejour Poles were from the same part of Galicia as they were.

Polish woman thrashing grain by hand as the child plays in the straw, 1911.



In 1906 the word was out that good homesteading land was to be had in the central Interlake, so three enterprising individuals decided to take a look. Upon their return they went immediately to Winnipeg to file for their homesteads. They were quite excited about the land and about the price of it as well. The area around Beausejour could no longer be homesteaded and land for \$10 for a quarter section was like a gift from God, especially compared to the land prices in the old country. Soon after several other Polish families left the Beausejour area for the central Interlake.

In their letters to their friends back in Poland, the settlers painted such a glowing picture of the "land of opportunity" that they convinced many to come and give homesteading a try. In one of the letters that Valentik Chudyk wrote to Adam Malenchak, an old friend in Poland, he stated that it was so good in the new land that if Adam came here he would just "stroke his beard in contentment all day long." That was too much for Adam Malenchak to resist. He sold his little farm leaving his half constructed home and in 1908 Adam Malenchak left Poland forever and headed for Manitoba. It had probably slipped Mr. Chudyk's mind to mention that in Adam's other hand he would have an axe, a plow, a scycle plus every other conceivable farm implement and that he would have to wield it ceaselessly for years to come. But of course there was always hope for the future and the homesteaders could see things improving steadily under their labouring hand and that must have been immensely satisfying, especially when compared to the futility of life in the old country.

The first families who came out erected makeshift shelters to protect themselves from the elements until such time as a better home could be built. When friends or relations came out to get homesteads, they always shared their meager shelters with them until they could get their own built. Everyone was more than willing to help everyone else. The routine of clearing the land, breaking it, building the old country type house and generally carrying on the day to day struggle with the wilderness were the events which occupied the Polish settlers as it did all the other Interlake pioneers. Zbaraz was a very heavily wooded area so there was plenty of cordwood to cut and haul to Arborg in the winter. In the fall all the men went off to harvest on the prairies to earn some extra cash. This was the routine in the first few years of settlement. The extra income was very important since no food could be grown where no land had been broken.

For groceries the Zbaraz settlers went first all the way to Teulon. Later when a road was built across the large floating bog to Arborg, they went there instead. The situation improved when the railroad came through in 1914 and all purchases and business transactions could take place in Broad Valley five miles to the southwest. However, when the men developed a thirst for something a little stronger than cider they had to journey a little farther north to Fisher Branch which had a hotel.



The Zbaraz post office came into being in 1913 when Charles Obszarski applied for postmaster. By 1915 a priest could regularly journey into the area by rail so the settlers built a church. As was the custom with Slavic settlers, the Zbaraz congregation named it after the mother church in Poland, St. Antony's. Once a month when the priest came, the people flocked from miles around to hear the services. Often Ukrainians would attend since the Greek Catholic and Greek Orthodox clergy came around even less frequently. As a gesture of goodwill, the Polish settlers would often go to the

Ukrainian services in return. This was the one really tangible difference between the two nationalities in the Interlake. The Ukrainians were either Greek Orthodox or Greek Catholic, while the Polish were always Roman Catholic. As a result they observed different calendars and their religious feast days did not coincide. It is in this way that the Poles have managed to retain some separate identity.

In addition Winnipeg has a very strong Polish community and it is through contacts with the various Polish cultural groups in the city that the Polish people in the Interlake have been aided to keep up an awareness of their distinct cultural identity. Newspapers such as "Czas" have kept Poles in the Interlake aware of events in the outside world and in the Polish community from as early as 1914. For many a Polish speaking old timer, it was a very valuable link to his or her cultural roots.

Language and religion are the most significant bastions of the Poles, who are a minority in the larger group of Ukrainian Galicians and a minority once more in the masses of English Canada. Their ethnic customs are now those of the Ukrainians. Today Polish and Ukrainian children together dance Ukrainian dances and sing Ukrainian folk songs. The parents are glad that they have retained even that much of their heritage. "Let it be Ukrainian or Polish -- but it is good to see them cherish their Slavic origins" say their grandparents.

# *Germans 1912*

Ed Ledohowski

German pioneers played an important role in the development of the Northwestern section of the Interlake, being among the first to break the land in the districts surrounding Ashern, Moosehorn, and Grahamdale. They were instrumental in the growth of the area and at the same time added a distinctive character to the region.

Contrary to the usual chain of events, the railway was built through this region long before settlement occurred. It was extended from Oak Point to Gypsumville in 1912 to service the mining operations there. Branch lines were constructed in 1913 to the lime quarrying operations at Speer Hill and the newly developed cement plant at Steep Rock. Realizing that these lines could make successful settlement of the area possible, the Lands Office in Winnipeg had the region surveyed during the construction in 1912 and later that summer opened it to homesteaders.

In Europe, during these years, war clouds had been forming and thousands of people immigrated to North America to escape the impending trouble. Many of the immigrants were Germans. Some came directly from Germany. A large number came from Poland and Russia where years before, their parents left Germany for the free lands being offered in these countries. Now with the political unrest, they again decided to move on to new lands.

Many found their way to Winnipeg where they enquired about the availability of farm lands in the province. Unfortunately, most of the known lands in the province had already been settled. They were informed about the plans to open up the northwest area to the Interlake where they might find some good lands. Leaving their families in the Immigrant Barracks, the men went up to the region to check out the land for themselves. Most of the land was quite stony and swampy but there was some good land. Recording their location, the men were ready to file for claims the very day the area was officially opened. Many others were also ready and there was quite a rush at the Lands Office when the day arrived. Some got prime land and others had to settle for seconds.

There were not many Germans in the other area of the Interlake for they hadn't immigrated until 1910, where as the Ukrainian, Icelandic and English had started to settle here before the turn of the century. Thus, when they did come, they were forced to settle in last area available. Once a few German pioneers became established, later German immigrants wishing to have other Germans as neighbours followed them to the Ashern area.

Once the homestead had been filed, the whole family took the train up to their new home and immediately went to work. Clearing a yard and erecting a cabin was the first order of work. This usually took all summer and the family had to accommodate themselves in a tent or crude shack until it was ready. In August the men would go south to hire out as harvesters. At the end of harvest time they would go to work at the lumber camps in Northern Ontario. Some could find winter work at one of the local sawmills. Spring found them once again on their homestead, clearing the farmland and raising a few chickens or a cow that the winter's earnings had purchased. This process of migratory work often had to be repeated two or three times before the farmer was ready to work for himself.



In these early years the chickens and cattle were far too precious to slaughter for daily food. Instead, the German settlers lived on the Snowshoe rabbit that abounded in the area. Mr. H. Plohmann, one of these early pioneers testifies to this. "There were an awful lot of rabbits in this area in the early years and we ate rabbit meat most of the time." The diet was sometimes supplemented with an elk or moose shot during the winter or the occasional chicken which could be spared.

One of the first problems the settlers encountered was that of water. Wells were very difficult to dig in the hard stony ground and very often water would not be struck. Many settlers were forced to dig wells near a slough where the water would seep in. But this would last only for a few months before it dried up, forcing another to be dug. Those who were forced to get their water in this manner soon found a greater problem to overcome. Swamp fever ran rampant among the livestock. Three of every four horses and almost as many cattle died as a result of the disease. The infectious disease spread like wildfire, destroying the hard earned progress the German farmers had made.

They had come to depend upon the livestock for their living. Mr. Plohmann stated; "The German settlers in this area, being originally farmers in Poland and Russia were brought up on the land, and they came here with the intention of farming--but they landed in a poor area for farming. They soon changed to cattle and ranching, for crops just would not grow properly." One of two heads of cattle was usually the first purchase of the winter's earnings. Soon herds were to be found on most farms. The fever that had held the ranching in check for so long was finally broken when, after much prompting by the settlers, the government sent out a well-driller in 1921. The actual machine was owned by the government so all the settler had to pay to have a proper well drilled was the operator's wages. Soon every farm had a deep, clean well and healthy livestock.

Now well established, the farmers-turned ranchers slowly built up their communities. Ashern, formerly known as "the 6th siding", was named after the surveyor A. S. Hern. Moosehorn had grown from a single store along the rail siding to a sizeable village. The settlers' churches, mostly Lutheran, sprang up quickly in many areas. In 1915 a congregation was organized in Grahamdale and another a few miles to the southwest called Die Hoffnungs Gemeinde (The Hope Congregation) was built soon after. A parsonage was built at Grahamdale and in 1918 G. E. Sphor, the first permanent pastor, arrived. He was in charge of both congregations. At one time there were eight German congregations between Camper and Steep Rock.

The German settlers had little time for social life in the early years but as they established themselves they began to see more of each other. Often the settlers would get together and help a newly arrived settler erect a home or clear some land. One of the main gatherings, or Bees as they were called, occurred in the fall as Mrs. Martha Hoffman describes: "We made our own social life, like the butchering bees when several neighbours would gather at one house on an early morning after freeze-up. Usually two pigs and a beef were slaughtered. The men did the outside work while us women would take all the scrap fat off the intestines. This fat was used for making soap. Then we cleaned the casings until they were white and clean. In the afternoon the meat was cut into ham, bacon, roasts etc. Much of it was ground up for sausage of several varieties. The bladder of the animal was blown up and dried and the children used it for a football. After the meat was packed away we always would wind up with a social evening.

Someone always managed to have some chokecherry or dandelion wine left over. My husband Gustave was musical and played a few tunes on the fiddle or organ. Mike Switeck, our very good neighbour wouldn't always wait until the work was finished. His celebration would start about five o'clock. He provided enough humor to help us forget that we were tired. He jokingly called these butchering bees butchers weddings. So our butchers weddings continued until all our neighbours had their winter's supply of meat." This is just one example of the strong community spirit that fortified the spirits of the pioneers during their fight with the wilderness. Now that the wilderness has been beaten back, the spirit too, unfortunately, is fading.

A post-war depression in the early 1920's and the Great Depression of the '30's formed the final obstacle to be cleared by the German settlers. Prime steers and cows would often sell for less than ten dollars a head. As before, stock being their main means of support, its decline meant their ruin. Many settlers had no choice but to move off the land their fathers had toiled so hard to open up. Those who lasted through it all, made good their claims to the land. Now their descendants are again successfully raising prize herds of cattle on the old homesteads.

# *Hutterite 1938*

Hutterites have lived on the North American continent for one century. The majority of that time has been spent in Manitoba and one colony has lived in the Interlake for 36 years.

Although the Hutterite and Mennonite religions both grew out of the same fundamental movement in Switzerland in 1528, the ancestors of today's Hutterite people felt compelled to carry the basic religious belief one step farther and actually practice communal living. It was because of their religious practices that the Hutterite people were driven out of Europe. The first group to this continent in 1874 chose the apparently tolerant state of South Dakota. There they lived in relative solitude until World War I when their religious convictions again went against the grain of the surrounding dominant community.

Although their conscientious objector status had been officially recognized by the United States government and the Hutterites had been exempt from direct military service, severe pressure was applied to the people to conform to the national norm. Military officials, acting without authority, tried to enforce conscription, local hostility was high when the Hutterites wouldn't buy war bonds or work in munitions plants and attempts were made to cancel the colonies legal corporation charters.



Hutterite girls do their fair share of the work around the farm.

In 1918 most of the colony residents packed their joint belongings and traveled north to Elie, Manitoba. There they found an environment which was more religiously tolerant. In 1938, groups broke off and established new colonies at Grosse Isle and also Poplar Point. The scheme for deciding who goes to a new colony and who remains behind is simple--families draw straws. In this way, each new colony should receive a fair selection of elderly knowledgeable leaders, young energetic workers and children.

The Rocklake Colony, west of Grosse Isle, came from Iberville in 1938 and now includes approximately 100 people. The Clearwater Colony located near Balmoral was born out of the Poplar Point Colony in 1960. The colony started out with less than 80 people and has grown to 124. The Interlake Colony near Teulon came from Rocklake in 1961 and now numbers about 70 residents. The most recent Hutterite settlement in the region is the Marble Ridge Colony near Hodgson which came from Bloomfield in 1967.

Each colony has their own school and the provincial standard of compulsory grade eight is strictly enforced by the group leaders. The teacher for each school is hired by the local school division and the curriculum follows the standard provincial one with the addition of religious training classes.

All Hutterite colonies in the Interlake are involved in mixed farming. With representatives on both the hog and egg boards, Hutterite colonies account for 17% of Manitoba hog production and 20% of the province's egg production! A third of the colonies are also involved in large scale turkey production while others include geese, beef and dairy production.

Although the colonies do produce their own clothing, quilts and canned food, they purchase most of their manufactured supplies from local communities. Even large colonies such as Clearwater purchase fresh meat from local butchers.

Today, as in centuries past, Hutterite people are content to live their own life and look after themselves. Except for the trucks, tractors and other modern conveniences, the colony of 1974 in many ways resembles the clean, efficient Hutterite colony of 400 years ago.

# *Mennonite 1951*

"The bog, the peat moss and the mosquitoes--it's hard to say which was the greatest hindrance. They say that they used to wear parkas in the summertime at Washow Bay the mosquitoes were so bad." The first Mennonite settlers in the early 1950's faced circumstances nearly as trying as those some of the original Interlake settlers faced over a century ago.

In the late 1940's, Mennonite leaders in the Steinbach and Morris areas were becoming aware of the growing need for land so that the younger families could set up new farms. The only available "new land" at the time was the swampy area southwest of Washow Bay. Consequently, the Washow Bay Farm Society was set up to provide financial and managerial assistance to those young Mennonite farmers who wanted to establish new farms in that northern area. The first land was purchased from the government in 1949 and the first families moved onto their 40 acre plots in 1950.

The society first built a "company house" to provide temporary housing for new families moving into the area. As soon as a person had his own home nearly constructed he'd move out of the societies house and make way for another young farmer. (That house still stands today on a lot just north of Riverton). The society also purchased a TD-9 crawler tractor that was made available to the new families for bush clearing. Although the land that had been purchased from the government had been drained, it was still nearly all solid bush so the jointly owned tractor saw almost continuous duty.

The first crops were planted in 1952 and by 1953 the new, government operated Manville School was operational. In 1952 the new farmers also started expanding upon their original 40 acre holdings by purchasing more government land. Today, most of the original farms still thrive along the east side of PR 234. Although much land still waits to be put into production, the Washow Bay settlers proved that the spirit and determination that helped developed Agro-Manitoba in the last century still exists today.

It wasn't until 1962 that the first Mennonite farmers started moving into the district northwest of Arborg. Stones were the hardest problem to overcome. Although most of the land had already been cleared and farmed previously, another decade of harvesting stones by hand remained before the ground could produce its true agricultural potential. The Washow Bay Farm Society had been dissolved by the mid-1950's as soon as that community began to be self-supporting. Consequently, more recent Mennonite farmers moving into the Vidir area had no formal organization to draw on for assistance.

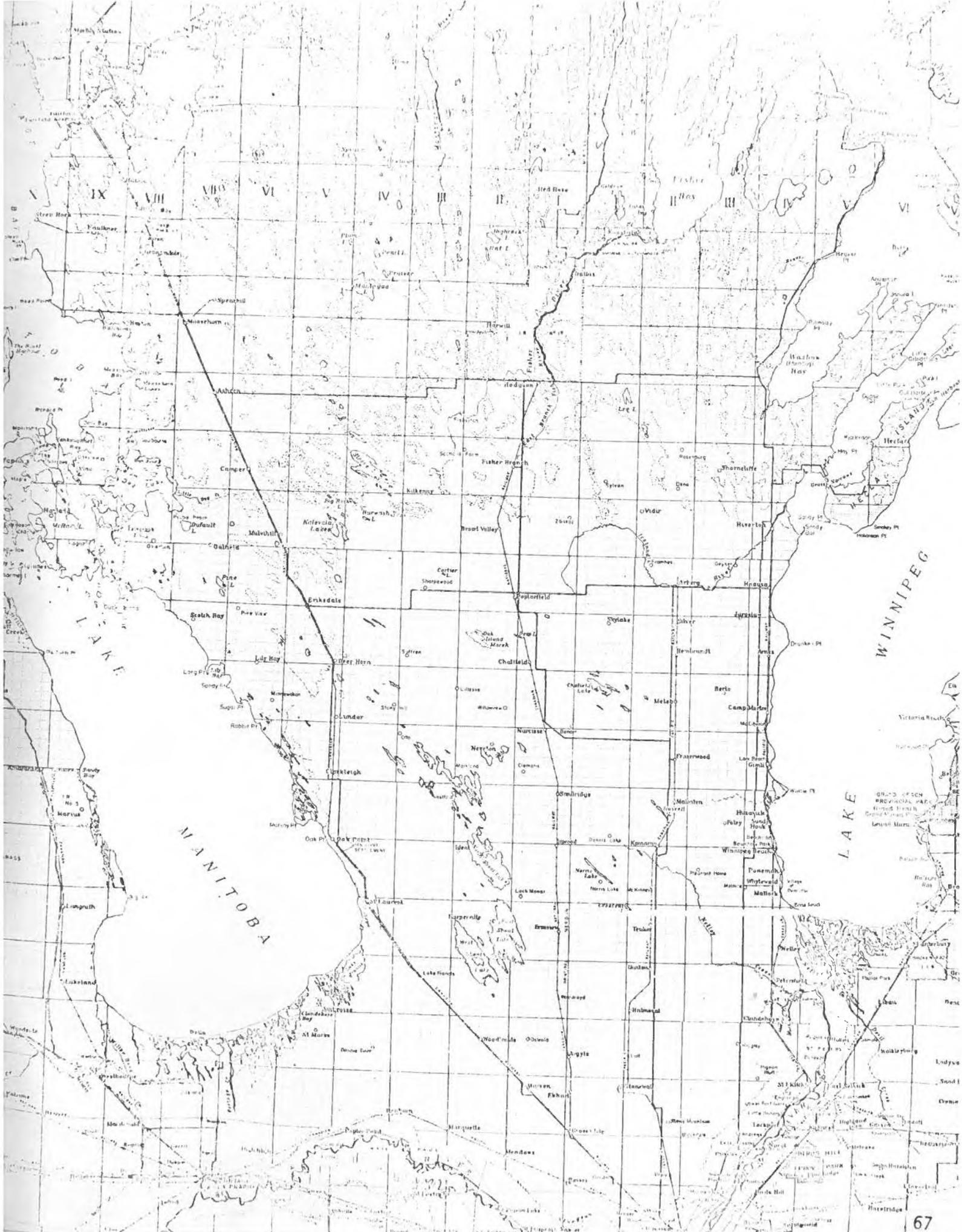
They did, however, pick up a few hints from Steinbach and Morris farmers. Turkey farms started making their appearance in the early 60's and hog farming began to grow only a few years later.

The major influx of Mennonite settlers into the Interlake ended in the late 1960's. With the farmers came new businesses--plumbers, cabinet makers, a feed mill, lumber yard and construction company and other new firms serving the people of the northern Interlake.

Education and the desire to manage their own schools is another trait that Mennonite people brought with them to the region. The Morweena School, the second Mennonite School in the region, was put under local control in 1967. A year later the Washow Bay Mennonites were granted permission to assume control of the original Manville school. Two new Mennonite schools, Interlake Fellowship and Lake Centre, have been set up since 1970 in the area north of Arborg. Although the exact arrangement for each school may vary, materials, teachers, heating and operating expenses are assumed by the local Mennonite community and textbooks are provided by the Department of Education. The school curriculum is generally patterned after the standard provincial curriculum.

Mennonite settlers in the Interlake brought with them one other significant cultural characteristic--a strong and conscious desire to maintain the family unit. While families of Anglo-saxon, Scandanavian, Slavic and Native origin have traditionally assumed that it is good for their children to "get out and become successful", Mennonite families put emphasis on making the "home situation" more desirable. It would seem that more young Mennonite people are willing to stick around and work the home farm rather than take off to seek their fortune in the city and more elderly Mennonite people are willing to stick around to do what they can on the farm rather than going to a care home. This not only provides a three or four generation input into the running of the business, but also gives each person working on the operation the secure feeling that his work won't be wasted but that it will be passed down in the family.

Today, there are approximately 600 Mennonite people spread across the Northeastern part of the region. Although they have integrated into the mainstream of the Interlake way of life, they still maintain their traditional Bible study sessions, organized choirs and missionary sponsorship. There are presently eight Interlake Mennonite missionaries located around the world.





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