



**MEET YOU ON THE TRAIL
or
WEST BEFORE THE RAILWAY**

Volume I

**Southern Manitoba
and
Turtle Mountain Country**

By
Rev. L. O. Armstrong

1880



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SOUTHERN MANITOBA and the TURTLE MOUNTAIN COUNTRY

By
REV. L. O. ARMSTRONG
Rector
St. Luke's Church of England
Emerson, Manitoba, Canada
1880

With illustrations by his esteemed friend, R. N. Lea, Esq. of Fairbrook Farm, Pembina Crossing, and a Map of Southern Manitoba showing the route of the great Highway of the southern Portions of the British Dominions in the far West over which the Emerson and Turtle Mountain Railroad will soon be built.

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As the first volume of a series of Recollections and Journals Recounting Travels over the Boundary Commission-NWMP Trail by the Explorers; Fur Traders; Buffalo Hunters; the International Boundary Commission; The North West Mounted Police; and the Pioneers of Southern Manitoba. 1738 to 1882.

FOREWORD

This book is the first of a collection to be published by the Boundary Commission-NWMP Trail Association. Entitled “Meet You on the Trail; West Before the Railroad,” this series will feature the recollections and journals of travellers along the Boundary Commission-NWMP Trail between 1738 and 1882.

Each volume will be illustrated and, in those instances where the original author is known, will be prefaced by a biographical article. Additional information about the people, places and events mentioned in the text is provided by the numerous footnotes.

These volumes will be a rich treasury of southern Manitoba history and, to insure the securing of a complete set, patrons are respectfully requested to register as subscribers to future editions. Other titles currently under consideration for publication include the following:

The Explorers, Fur Traders and Buffalo Hunters

The Journals and Reports of:

1738 La Verendrye

1798 David Thompson

1801-1808 Alexander Henry the Younger

1850 Father Albert Lacombe, O.M.I.

1857 Captain John Palliser

1859 J. E. Dawson

The International Boundary Commission

1873-1874 The Journals and Reports of Commissioners Cameron, Featherstonehaugh and Anderson

The North West Mounted Police

1874 The Journals and Diaries of Commissioner Lieut. Col. G. A. French and of James MacLeod, Assistant Commissioner

The Pioneers

1877

- A Pioneer Diary; Recollections of a Calf Mountain Pioneer. The Diary of the Hon. Ferris Bolton, MP., 1 May to 18 June 1877, A seven-part serial from the Manitou Western Canadian, May to July 1902

1879

- The Diary of James J. Dougall, Pioneer Settler of the Ruttanville District; Excerpts from his journal 22 April to 28 May 1879 as recorded in a history of Manitou and district written in 1951 by Mr. C. H. Vrooman for the Manitou Board of Trade
- From Emerson to Mountain City; an article from the Emerson International, 14 August 1879
- A Trip to the Pembina River Valley, An account of a trip from Mountain City to the Pembina River taken from the Emerson International of 23 October 1879

1880

- A Stranger's Opinion of Emerson and the Country West; A trip from Winnipeg to the Turtle Mountains, the Rock Lake Country, the Pembina Mountain Country and on to Emerson from the 29 July 1880 edition of the Emerson International
- English Tenant Farmers in Manitoba; Excerpts from the Dominion Sessional Papers of 1880; the Report of Hugh McLean, Rhu, Tabert, N.B., the delegate of the Kintyre Agricultural Society; his trip from Headingley to the Mennonite Settlement via the Boyne settlement, Nelsonville and Stodderville; and the Report of Mr. H.B.P.
- Anderson of Listowel, Co. Kerry, Ireland; excerpts of this trip from Winnipeg to Morris, Lowe Farm, Nelson, Pembina Crossing, Mountain City and the Mennonite Settlement

1881

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Southwestern Manitoba; Progress in Three Months, as observed by Two Winnipeggers. From the Manitoba Daily Times, 5 February 1881, an account of a journey from the provincial capital via Morris and Nelsonville as far west as Crystal City and Pilot Mound

- Jottings from a Buckboard – From West Lynne to the First Crossing of the Souris and on to the Assiniboine; An account of a 600-mile journey taken in May 1881 westward from West Lynne by a party of that city; A twelve-part serial from the West Lynne Southern Manitoba Times, June to September 1881
- A Trip West by an Occasional Correspondent, A two-part serial from the Emerson International June 1881 being an account of a journey westward from that city as far as Pilot Mound

1882

- Turtle Mountainwards; Four letters written by Mr. J. F. Tennant of West Lynne

being his account of a trip west from the Red River as far as the Turtle Mountain Land Office, March and April 1882 and appearing in the West Lynne Southern Manitoba Times during March and April of that year

- From Emerson to Pembina Crossing, the recollection of A.M.H. Walrond of Bradfield House, Devon, son of an English baronet and nephew of Admiral Lord Horatio Nelson, who became a pioneer of the Pembina Crossing district of June 1882

- From Emerson to St. Leon, Recollections of Father Theobald Bitsche, pioneer priest of St. Leon; "What I saw during the course of my first trip from Emerson to St. Leon in September of the year 1879 compared with what we can see now in July 1882;" translated by Mr. Albert E. Fortier.

REV. LOUIS OLIVIER ARMSTRONG **A Biographical Note**

Rev. Armstrong's association with Manitoba was a short one, (it was only four years after his arrival in Emerson from Quebec that he returned to that province), but during this time he was one of the key figures in the development of southern Manitoba. The principal focus of his activities was the districts in the vicinity of the Boundary Commission Trail, particularly in the Pembina Mountain country, the Rock Lake district and the Turtle Mountain area. Among his most important achievements was the establishment of a series of stopping places along this route. They were, in the first years of the 1880s, of inestimable assistance to thousands of travellers along this road to their new homes in the "Great Northwest." Furthermore, as the proprietor of four townsites along the Commission Trail, he deserves to be remembered not just as the founder of the two having entirely disappeared, Turtle Mountain City and Stanley City, but also of Pembina Crossing, still a well-known southern Manitoba historic site, and of Clearwater, a community now well into its second century.

Like many of his contemporaries, he was a man of grand designs; in the terminology of David Schwartz a century later, he knew the magic of thinking big. His desire to see at least part of southern Manitoba pioneered by middle class Church of England farmers dovetailed perfectly with aspirations of many of his fellow Emersonians to build a railroad to link their city with all the principal settlements west. He worked selflessly for the accomplishment of both. Although Emerson never got this railway, Rev. Armstrong was dramatically successful in

encouraging English pioneers to take advantage of southern Manitoba's settlement opportunities, especially in the Turtle Mountain country.

Louis Olivier Armstrong was born in 1850. After studies at Huron College, Kingston, Ontario from 1870 to 1873, he was ordained to the ministry of the Church of England in Quebec. In Montreal he married Mary Lindsay, the daughter of a well-known Church of England priest of that city, the Rev. R. Lindsay. Their first child, Ethel, was born in Brompton in Quebec's Eastern Townships in 1874. It was through his father-in-law that Rev. Armstrong had his first contacts with immigration affairs when, in association with him, he assisted in the settlement of several townships some 70 miles northwest of Montreal where Rev. Armstrong served the parish of Lakeview.

In November 1878, while serving at Lakeview, he notified the Canadian Minister of the Interior that 50 families in his parish had decided to take up land in the North West Territories and that he had sent a representative ahead to select a suitable site for them to settle as a group. Their choice was township 12, Range 19 West, six miles south of Rapid City where the so-called South Trail, linking Portage la Prairie on the lower Assiniboine with Fort Ellice on the upper Assiniboine, forded the Little Saskatchewan, (or Rapid), River. The misfortune of breaking his leg prevented him from personally inspecting this area and so, in March of the following year, the advance party of colonists was led by Rev. Armstrong's brother-in-law, Mr. George Lindsay, soon to become one of Rapid City's prominent merchants.

Determined to likewise settle in western Canada, Rev. Armstrong contacted the bishop of Rupertsland, Robert Machray, offering his services in his archdiocese. Desperately short of priests, his Grace accepted the offer with gratitude and in June Rev. Armstrong notified the Department of the Interior, "Bishop Machray has appointed me to Emerson. It is, of course, a very important field....and I hope to make it a life-work." By coincidence, Mrs. Armstrong's sister was living only a few miles from Emerson; she was a Mrs. Appel, the wife of the doctor in the town of Pembina, North Dakota, just two miles south.

In July 1879, Rev. Armstrong became the successor of the Rev. Mark Jukes, the first resident clergyman of St. Luke's, Emerson, the first Church of England parish in southern Manitoba. St. Luke's new rector arrived via the USA on the rail line which had linked Emerson with Minneapolis-St. Paul since the previous November. With some 1000 residents, his new home, "the commercial center of the surrounding district," to quote Henderson's Directory for 1878-1879, was the

second largest urban centre in western Canada. All of its 1000 citizens were supremely confident in the grand and glorious future in store for their hometown.

Its founders, two American entrepreneurs, Thomas Carney and Wm. Fairbanks, (friends of the US railway magnate, James J. Hill), had very deliberately located their townsite to insure its becoming the railway and wholesale capital, if not at all of Manitoba, unquestionably of all of the southern part of the province. Confident that western Canada's first railroad connection would be a branch of James J. Hill's St. Paul and Pacific Railroad, during the summer of 1873 they selected as the site of their "Gateway City" the location where this line, following the Red River downstream along its east bank, would cross over onto Canadian soil.

There were, however, other advantages to the site. For more than two decades a stockade Hudson's Bay post directly west across the Red River had been the trading center of this part of the world. Originally known as North Pembina, in the early 1870s it was renamed West Lynne and became the location of the first post office in southern Manitoba. It was also the local custom's point and the location of the Dominion Land's Office for all points west. In 1872 a site two miles north of this post had been selected as the location of Fort Dufferin, the headquarters of "Her Majesty's North America Boundary Commission," the 300-man force surveying and marking the 49th parallel from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains as the Canada-US Boundary.

And come they did. The first buildings on the Emerson townsite were completed in the fall of 1874 and the following year German-speaking Mennonites from southern Russia began taking up thousands of acres between the Red River and the Pembina Mountains forty miles to the west. They named the main trail across their settlement the Post Road after the markers they erected beside it. They were followed by hundreds of Ontario pioneers who homesteaded in the Pembina Mountain district in the mid 1870s. Beyond the Pembina Mountains was the Rock Lake Country and the last years of the 1870s settlers streamed into that district 70 miles west of the Red River. When Rev. Armstrong came to Emerson, the dream of most of the settlers arriving in Manitoba was to take up land in the Turtle Mountain Country, 125 miles west of Emerson.

However, as the 1870s came to an end there was one small cloud on the horizon. Almost all of Emerson's commerce came via the Commission Trail and the Post Road, passed the Hudson's Bay post at West Lynne and over the mighty Red on a very low-grade ferry. Rev. Armstrong arrived just in time to witness the Hudson's

Bay Company surveying out a townsite on the land surrounding its fort. To the merchants of Emerson it was very obvious that this infant rival very quickly could become a tremendous threat to their town. There was little doubt that most travellers coming east along the Commission Trail and the Post Road would prefer to do their business in West Lynne rather than risk their lives in attempting to cross the Red on Emerson's ferry.

Of course, the solution was obvious to all the town fathers. Simply construct a railroad from Emerson over the Red, through West Lynne and then follow the Post Road and the Commission Trail west, certainly to the Turtle Mountains, perhaps the 160 miles to the Souris River and possibly even beyond that to the great coal fields at the Second Crossing of the Souris 200 miles beyond Emerson. Such a line would link all the various centers of settlement springing up so rapidly along the trail; Reinland, the unofficial capital of the Mennonite settlement, Mountain City at the junction of the Commission Trail and the trail to St. Joe, (now Walhalla), Pembina Crossing, Clearwater. Farther west this line would also make connections with the towns certain to develop at the ford through Badger Creek and in the vicinity of the old Boundary Commission Depot at the eastern foot of the Turtle Mountains where a well-known Metis trader, Mr. Bernard B. La Riviere, had settled.

Why would this proposed railroad be of special interest to the newly arrived rector of St. Luke's? Principally because it was a means of aiding in the implementation of his own plans for southern Manitoba. It had not taken him long to discover that only a small minority of the homesteaders west of the Red were members of the Church of England. Within a month of his arrival in Emerson he began to do something about this deficiency. Many of England's best farmers, including some of considerable prosperity, were tenants. These, Rev. Armstrong believed, would seize an opportunity to come to southern Manitoba as soon as they learned of its advantages.

The new rector of St. Luke's began by putting together a series of lectures extolling the merits of this part of the world. These he forwarded to his brother clergymen in England. Then, on 5 August 1879, he wrote Rev. Bridger of St. Nicholas Church in Liverpool, the chaplain appointed to minister to emigrants leaving England and a man of considerable personal influence. Rev. Armstrong knew him through his father-in-law, Rev. Lindsay.

"I have been here only one month," wrote Rev. Armstrong to Rev. Bridger, "having come 2000 miles from the east, but I am so

delighted with the country and climate that I am determined to write and see if we could not induce English Church tenant farmers to come out here....Emerson is the gateway to Manitoba on the frontier next to Minnesota. I would receive them here and direct them to suitable lands. A man that can command 200 Pounds Sterling, [the equivalent then of \$1000], on his arrival in Emerson has every earthly security of becoming wealthy in five or ten years at the outside....Before leaving for Manitoba, I studied very carefully the advantages obtainable by going to New Zealand, Australia or the Northwest. I judged that the balance was in favour of this country and I am now pretty certain I was right."

Rev. Bridger obviously was impressed and he passed Rev. Armstrong's letter on to the London Times, the London Standard and several other leading papers where soon it was being read by thousands of potential emigrants. Meanwhile, in Emerson, Rev. Armstrong became one of the leading supporters and promoters of the proposal to build a railroad to the Turtle Mountains and volunteered to travel over the route in the interest of the project. The year 1880 was only a few days old when he and a group of friends set out.

Rev. L. O. Armstrong, accompanied by Messrs. S. Austin, Beach and Poston, started on Monday morning for a three-weeks' tour in the Turtle Mountain Country whither he goes to make a personal inspection of the country that he may better answer the hundreds of letters of enquiry that he is receiving from parties in England who desire to emigrate to this country. The outfit of the party consists of a team and sleigh on which was erected a small cabin about six feet by twelve with a stove inside and bunks for sleeping, the whole thing weighing about fifteen hundred lbs. Should any of the party desire to locate, the house can be used as a claim shanty.

Emerson International, 8 January 1880

The paper of the following week carried an announcement of the first public meeting of the provisional Board of Directors.

EMERSON & TURTLE MOUNTAIN R. R. - A meeting of the Board of Directors of this company was held at the Company's office last evening when matters in connection with the application for a charter were advanced a stage. The most encouraging promises of aid by bonus

have been received from the settlers along the proposed route and many letters have been received by the Secretary urging the Company to push the construction of the road vigorously. The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be held on Tuesday evening next at the Company's office and a large attendance is requested as there will be business of importance to transact. The money will be ready to build the road as soon as the Company is ready to commence.

Emerson International, 15 January 1880

Only two months after his return to Emerson, the International reported that Rev. Armstrong's pamphlets were in the hands of almost every farmer in England. However, it was also in March 1880 that a recurrence of a health problem forced the 30-year old clergyman to give up his ministry at St. Luke's. He then immediately took up immigration work, his field for the following half century. In June 1880 he was appointed a Dominion Land Commissioner, in the terminology of the time, "a Land Guide," a government official responsible for every sort of assistance to settlers. That same month he accompanied the Prof. A.R.C. Selwyn, a distinguished scholar and the Director of the Geological and Natural History Survey of Canada, to the Souris coal fields some five miles south of the present-day town of Bienfait.

Rev. Armstrong soon acquired considerable property in southern Manitoba. The four townsites he owned along the trail to the Turtle Mountains have already been mentioned. The Ottawa political machine prevented the Emerson and Turtle Mountain railroad from even securing a charter, much less beginning construction, and so Rev. Armstrong directed his interest towards a line where there was no question of its being built. This was a CPR branch line, the MSWCR, the Manitoba and Southwestern Colonization railroad. The terminus of its initial 100-mile section was in the vicinity of the Archibald post office just northwest of the present location of Manitou. Here two townsites had been laid out and Rev. Armstrong held interests in both, Archibald, (the land on which the Manitou Auction Barns are now located originally was his property), and Manitoba City, the original location of Manitou.

No doubt the most widely-read publicity this railroad received was in the 7 May 1881 edition of the London Illustrated Graphic, at the time a favorite in every corner of the British Empire. An entire page was devoted to eight woodcuts which the accompanying article stated were:

“...views were taken by a member of the British Boundary Commission staff some years ago along the Boundary Commission Trail which is now the great highway of the southern portion of the British dominions in the Far West. The line of the Manitoba South Western Colonization Railroad also follows this trail pretty closely.” And concludes “...the fertility of the soil, and the liberal policy of the railway company in disposing their lands, will soon attract a large population to this region, (Southern Manitoba), which in beauty and variety of scenery is said to excel any other parts of the North-West, whether British or American.”

In June 1881 Rev. Armstrong resigned from the employment of the Dominion government in order to accept a position as land commissioner and agent for the South Western Colonization line then being surveyed and built from Winnipeg to Gretna via Rosenfeld Junction and west to Manitoba City. In addition, he was also associated with the British and North-West Colonization Company, one of the numerous land companies at that time promoting their land holdings to potential and actual settlers. His ad in the International stated he had “Farm and City Property for Sale” at his office on the corner of Church and Short Streets.

In November 1881 he was associated with another expedition to the Souris coal fields and soon after sold out at Emerson and moved to Winnipeg with his family, his wife and two daughters, Ethel, 6 and Mary, 4. His relative prosperity at this point may be gauged by the fact that he rented the former home of one of the city’s most prominent citizens, Dr. John Christian Schultz, later the province’s Lieutenant Governor. In December 1883 he moved to Montreal where he was employed as a colonization agent for the CPR. In 1913 he became a “publicity lecturer” in their Winnipeg and Calgary offices and from 1917 until 1930 he was associated with advertising and publicity in Montreal.

His last years were spent in the Toronto home of his grandson, Dr. E. Harry Botterell, where he died in 1937 at the age of 87. He was buried in the Mount Royal Cemetery beside his wife. His surviving family included his three daughters, one of whom, Ethel was a resident of Winnipeg until her death at the age of 83 in November 1957. In 1903 she had married the prominent Winnipeg grain merchant, John E. Botterell, president of the Winnipeg grain exchange, 1919-1920, and, during the general strike of 1919, chairman of the Committee of 100.

Their son, Dr. E. Harry Botterell, a graduate in medicine from the University of Manitoba, received his Master of Science degree from the University of Toronto the year his grandfather died, and became Associate Professor of Surgery at the University of Toronto, Senior Neurosurgeon at the Toronto General Hospital. In February 1962, Dr. Botterell accepted the position of Dean of Medicine of Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario. Now retired, Dr. Botterell is a member of the Boundary Commission-NWMP Trail Association and one of the warmest supporters of its work.

The motto adopted by the Boundary Commission-NWMP Trail Association for this Trail, "*the great highway of the southern portions of the British Dominions in the far west,*" is a description penned by Rev. Armstrong. It is an excerpt from his article in the 7 May 1881 edition of the London Illustrated Graphic.

This volume has been republished by the Association as a tribute to Rev. Armstrong; a gifted clergyman, a courageous pioneer and one of the entrepreneurs responsible for the promotion of southern Manitoba as one western Canada's finest location in which to settle. His writings, and in particular this little book, influencing many pioneers to come to our province and to take up land in the vicinity of the Commission Trail. May these pages today assist us in obtaining a deeper insight into Rev. Armstrong's contribution to this part of the world so many of us call home.
June 1991

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Southern Manitoba and the Turtle Mountain Country

by Rev. L. O. Armstrong,
Rector of St. Luke's Church of England,
Emerson, Manitoba, Canada, 1880

Expecting a large immigration at Emerson from England and Eastern Canada, some of it through his own exertions, the writer was anxious to know, through personal experience and observation, which were the best localities to which immigrants might be directed. Much had been said in praise of the Turtle Mountain District and country between it and Emerson. He was determined to see this country. It is a difficult thing to travel to the Turtle Mountains in winter, but we were anxious to know just what those difficulties were and to remove them as much as possible, as we intend to send emigrants out in March before the coulees and rivers are thawed out.

We start from Emerson on Monday, the 5th of January. We are five in number; our party is as follows: Mr. S. Austin, surveyor;ⁱ Mr. Wm. Beach, land agent;ⁱⁱ Messrs. A. H. Postonⁱⁱⁱ and J. Boyd, farmers, and the Rev. L. O. Armstrong.^{iv} We travel in a house 12 feet long by 7 feet wide, made out of 1-inch tongued and grooved boards, lined with felt paper inside. The studding, sills and rafters are 2-inch by 4-inch. The weight of the house was about 1000 lbs. All this lumber was too heavy; ½ inch lumber and scantling 2X2 inch, and about half the quantity that we had would have been quite sufficient and would have reduced the weight of the house to 450 pounds. A house of this description can be built for about \$20. It was an experiment, the object of which was to prove that families could be brought out in perfect comfort all the way, and that upon their arrival they would have this house, which would answer them through the first summer.

We shall now use the present tense, as we want to take our readers along with us. Our house contains two ship's beds holding three men each, and there is room for four men to sleep on the floor. We had a little Russian iron stove which answered our purpose admirably both for cooking and heating. The house makes quite a sensation moving through the good town of Emerson. We cross the Red

River on the ice, and, mounting the ferry hill, we find ourselves in the main street of the aspiring village of West Lynne. In parting from West Lynne, we receive "A good journey to you!" from our good friend Mr. Matheson of the Hudson's Bay post.^v Here, in a light cutter and with a good horse, we move ahead of the house having business to transact along the line. We dine in the home of one of the thrifty Mennonites; it is quaint and bad-smelling. We try to give them a lecture on ventilation, but, being too practical in illustrating our idea, it does no immediate good, and we have to console ourselves by thinking that the good seed sown will bear fruit some time.

After dinner we travel on, being anxious to reach the Hon. Mr. Winram's house that night. In our desire to reach his house, we commit the unpardonable error of travelling at night on the prairie. Our punishment for this is losing the trail, burying our horses in the snow several times, and spending several hours very miserably before we at last reach the house. Mr. Winram is the local member of Parliament. He is an intelligent, broad-minded Englishman, who, although he uses his privilege as an Englishman of grumbling at the Government for the laws which "are ruining the country," in reality is a kindly, useful man, enjoying the confidence and respect of the community, by whom he was elected by acclamation as representative. Anyone wishing to get reliable information about the country will find in him a trustworthy man from whom to get it.^{vi}

We refresh the inner man with savoury venison and enliven the spirit with the intercourse of our host. Next morning, we walk over some of the farms in this district, which is called the "Mountain." The scenery is very pretty, and in places quite grand. About a mile from Mr. Winram's we cross the River Liffey, on whose banks lives a jolly Irishman, John Johnston by name.^{vii} We make his acquaintance, and we find him to be a much-travelled man in this new country, having gone over the Turtle Mountain District very carefully a year ago. We secured him as a member of our company.

Here we meet the popular Church of England minister, Mr. Wilson.^{viii} We assist him at the funeral of a young boy who was a stranger in the settlement. He had come to live with the family only a few days before his death which was due to a cold taken after measles. We all admire the settlers for the kindness shown him in his sickness and the decent funeral given him. We are glad that no manner of epidemic has ever visited this country. We are struck here, as everywhere else on our journey, with the strangeness of the phenomena that, even in the newest

districts, we find society as quiet, orderly and honest as in any old-settled district of Canada. To one who has travelled a good deal in new settlements in the United States, the contrast is delightful indeed.

After the funeral, from the height upon which we are standing, we see our house moving up from the Mennonite villages on the Government trail. We wait for it to appoint our next meeting place with its inmates at Mountain City. We drink tea that night at Mr. Stoddard's.^{ix} The excellent bread we had here elicited a well-deserved compliment to the fair bakeress. In answer we were told that it is easier to make good bread out of ordinary good Manitoba flour than out of the best Ontario. From here Mr. Wilson of Nelsonville, (a flourishing village), drove us with two good horses through to Mountain City where we appointed a further meeting with the house at Pembina Crossing City and, by a happy mistake, to the wrong crossing of the Pembina. I call it a happy mistake because it was the means of making us enjoy the hospitality and good company of a kindred spirit in the person of Mr. McRae, the Presbyterian missionary for that district.^x We are much delighted with all the country between Emerson and Pembina Crossing seventy-five miles to the west. We have not crossed a single tract of bad country. We feel that we are travelling in the richest agricultural country we have ever set foot upon. The weather has been delightful during these three days.

It seems to take less fuel to heat a house in Manitoba than in Quebec or Ontario. We slept in several very comfortable houses of good size that were heated by a small cooking stove only. The same-sized house in Quebec would have a box stove besides the cooking stove.

We finally join our house at a party at Adamson's stopping place,^{xi} Pembina Crossing, and here bid adieu to Mr. Wilson, who has kindly driven us thus far, and given us much useful information about the country. This Pembina Crossing is a beautiful place. The banks of this river are very high and generally clothed with wood. It has here a beautiful valley of good land through which it meanders clear and deep. The traveller looks forward to reaching it both in summer and winter. It seems to be the most promising site for a railway crossing. The surveyed Government trail runs through the village.^{xii} There is a splendid chance here for anyone to open a general store, blacksmith shop, grist and saw mill. It is expected that a church and school will be built during the coming year. It has a post office now. Nature has marked a county town upon it. A bridge has been built by private parties,^{xiii} but it is only a temporary affair and the settlers in the vast and good

country west of it are clamorous for a good government bridge. As we write, we hear that the Hon. Mr. Winram has obtained a grant for building this bridge from the government.

On Thursday, the 8th of January, we leave Pembina Crossing. It is a fine, sunny winter morning as we ascend the long, but well-graded hill on the left bank of the river. We cast a long, lingering look behind at the fair scene. After reaching the level prairie on the height, we travel over twenty-five miles of good country to Cypress or Clearwater Creek. We are met by large sleigh-loads of jackfish and pickerel caught in Rock Lake and the other lakes in the neighbourhood. They are firm and sweet - very delicious to eat.^{xiv} At the crossing of the Cypress is being laid out Clearwater Village.^{xv}

This too is a splendid site for a town. There is a good valley, a large and constant supply of clear and good water, and a mill site. Mr. McLaren is now engaged in putting up a house for a stopping place.^{xvi} Here too is wanted immediately a good general store, post office, blacksmith shop, etc. There are around Clearwater Village 150 square miles of the best land in the world to support these things, beside a great deal of travelling public. The village is situated in the midst of the Paisley colony.^{xvii} This colony made an arrangement with the Government that only actual settlers should take up land in the four townships which are reserved for it, and, as a consequence, all the land has been taken up by actual settlers who will be out in the spring. This, of itself, will make it a most desirable locality. About here the Emerson and Turtle Mountain Railway will cross the creek. There is no doubt that in the future the name will be changed from Clearwater Village to Clearwater City.

Here we begin to realize what our difficulties will be. We have come to the last of the settlers who tell us we will probably reach the Turtle Mountains in the spring. We cross the valley of the Cypress, not without some hard work. The bed of the river has been drifted full of snow everywhere, except where the water runs unfrozen in this, the coldest winter that Manitoba has experienced for many years.^{xviii} We go at this snow with a will using a shovel and five snow shoes and soon have a road. The horses manifest a little repugnance at the idea of plunging into this water, but it is soon overcome and, after a shorter digging episode, we surmount the west bank of the valley and reach Mr. Widmeyer's house.^{xix} Here we enjoy to the full Mrs. Widmeyer's nice German cooking, after our exertions, and in good coffee drown the idea of the trouble that may be before us.

We adopt as our motto “nil desperandum” and, shutting our ears to the warnings that are given us, determine that we shall accomplish the forty-six miles of untracked snow still before us and bring at least our horses and sleighs through to Turtle Mountain. We feel that we must do so to break a trail for emigrants coming through in March and to arrange for the establishment of stopping places on the route for emigrants. There are now settlers at Badger Creek and a number at Turtle Mountain who have been shut in all winter and we know that if we break a trail, they will keep it open.

Next day, (Saturday), we start for Badger Creek sixteen miles west of Clearwater Village. It is a fine, mild morning with a south wind blowing. We have four horses on our house now but the prairie is unburnt and the snow very deep in the long grass and we begin to hint that we will have to leave it behind. A little later we speak openly of it and finally, with sorrowing hearts, we do it. We have ridden through a severe storm in it without the least discomfort. We regret very much that it had not been made of lighter material, as we could have then brought it through. And now we start to finish our journey without shelter of any kind.

In about another hour, we strike burnt prairie and we make very good time as the snow does not lodge on it as it does in the long grass. About three o'clock the wind changed to the northwest and very suddenly began to blow a blizzard. The clergyman went on snowshoes, following the summer trail, which here and there could be seen where the prairie was bare, and which generally where there was snow could be distinguished from the fact that no grass grows upon it. He found he could not face the storm and turning, ran back to the sleighs to advise retracing our road to our house if possible. He found the men preparing to do it before his arrival, lightening their sleighs of their loads of pork and flour which we were bringing to supply the wants of any needy settlers we might meet. This done, we turn and try to follow the trail that we have ourselves made.

We soon find that the horses cannot follow it, and we send a man ahead running to follow it, relieving him about every mile. We manage to retrace a few miles in this way, but darkness overtakes us. We have lost the trail. The order is given to stop and camp before we are all fagged out. Blinded with the driving snow, with what energy we have left, we make a shelter with our two sleighs and put blankets upon the horses under their harness that they not be blown away. We are six men and have for bedclothes three buffalos full of snow and three bedquilts. We spread the quilts upon the grass, having as carefully as possible shovelled away the

snow with our snowshoes, and getting close together, we lie down, with the buffalo robes as coverlets.

We pass around a slice of frozen pork and a sea-biscuit to each man, have prayers and a hymn, and then spend half an hour in thinking. It is a chilly occupation at first lying there, but soon a snow drift covers us. Every half-hour, at first, we had a song all around, and a general squeezing to see that everyone is all right, but soon we begin to realize that we shall be ware enough and we drop to sleep. We pass a very good night, considering that it is about 25 below zero and the wind blowing 50 miles an hour perhaps. After the morning nap, we awaken to find ourselves in a profuse perspiration, our fur hats that we had pulled over our ears and our mittens wringing wet. Little streams of water were running down our necks. We are covered by a snow drift two feet thick. We have some difficulty in breaking through this.

It is just daylight. We give three rousing cheers for daylight and then survey the scene. It is a wreck indeed. The poor horses are ferocious with cold. They have nothing but a thin blanket on. We find a zinc trunk that was near their heads chewed and torn into small pieces. Our teapot, cups and dishes are flattened and curled up and dented all over with their teeth. We finally let them loose, knowing that with their wonderful instinct they will go back to the stable at Cypress Creek direct. We follow them. The blizzard is over, but the weather is very cold. We trudge on disconsolately; our hats and mittens are frozen stiff, and worse, we are going back instead of forwards. However, we feel that a day's rest and feed for the horses are necessary.

We enjoy a good warm breakfast, having first taken the precaution to serve out a piece of dry bread to each man before the meal, lest he should eat too much. We gather the few settlers in the neighbourhood in the afternoon, and hold a very pleasant little service.^{xx}

On Monday morning it is very stormy, and our horses showing signs of service, we give them another day's rest. On Tuesday we start again for the Turtle Mountains, our classic motto being still "nil desperandum," which, in Queen's English means "Turtle Mountains or bust."

Having a good team of horses fresh and a trail half the way, we made Badger Creek early in the day. Here is another town site manufactured in Nature's workshop. A good valley, a constant supply of water and timber constitute the essentials, and in these last seventy miles these are to be found only at the

Pembina, the Cypress and the Badger. Mr. Prest is now getting out the timber for a stopping place.^{xxi} As we arrived pretty early, we determined to go upon our journey as far as possible on the prairie on the other side. We had some little trouble getting up the west bank of the Badger, but we managed it, and travelled a few miles beyond before camping. It was a mild night, and we did not miss our house or the two feet of snow that covered us on the blizzard night. We slept quite warmly.

We started at daylight. We soon got into the new survey which we had come so far to see in order that we may know whereof we speak when advising our English friends where to locate. Fortunately, the prairie from here is all burnt. The mild weather is taking away the snow from the higher prairies; around each of the surveyor's posts the earth that is dug up is loose and mellow; and each half mile the soil is already dug up for us to judge of its quality. We could not have chosen a better time to see the country. From Range 16 to Range 19, and during the following day to Range 22, we pass over a magnificent country in which there is no waste land.^{xxii}

Occasionally we find a gravelly or stony knoll, but the gravel and stone are all on the surface even then and below it is two feet of splendid loam, with a rich clay subsoil below that. We can see every stone now much better than in summer when they are hidden in the long grass. These are pastures green to Mr. Beach, who takes out his book and takes down the numbers of all the best sections for the people who invest in land through him. It is a good thing, too, for these people. They are saved much hardship and expense and, in all probability, get better land than they would have chosen for themselves.

Towards night we find ourselves approaching La Riviere's trading post on Turtle Mountain.^{xxiii} We have long since given up following the trail, as we know that La Riviere's house is in Section 29, and we have the straightest possible road to it in following the new, bright and easily-read posts in Mr. Klotz's survey. We bless the surveyor for his good work,^{xxiv} and about dark arrive in Section 29, but do not see any signs of a house. However, a few high-pitched screeches elicit a response in the distance, and we find shelter from the rain that is now falling, a good host and hostess and plenty of good cheer. And now, to all the prophets of evil from Emerson to Cypress Creek, here we are, but spring is still a long way off.

Next year the country will be full of settlers, and on a good, well-beaten trail the journey will be made from Emerson in three days at the rate of ten miles an hour, and in four years we hope that it will be accomplished at the rate of forty

miles an hour by the Emerson & Turtle Mountain Railway. Here at La Riviere's we eat the best and biggest potatoes that we have ever seen, and our horses are treated to as clear and full oats as they have ever revelled upon. We were shown very fine samples of wheat, which yielded on La Riviere's farm twenty-five bushels of wheat to the "arpent" upon the sod the first year.

We were fortunate enough to meet the surveyors who had just finished their survey. They told us, (I attach certificate), that there are here 150 square miles of merchantable timber, the best water in the country in abundance in all directions, and good soil everywhere. Wood, water, soil – a settler's paradise. Every man can secure 320 acres of land and twenty acres of wood. There is enough for 5,000 settlers in this block alone.

The next day is Sunday. There assembles a good congregation – Presbyterian, Roman Catholic,^{xxv} Methodist and English Churchman, friendly fellow-travellers to the home beyond. As many of the congregation are French, the clergyman inflicts two sermons upon them, one in English and one in French; it is pretty hard upon men and women who are out of training to endure even one. The congregation is most patient, however. We enjoy very good singing. We have some very cultivated people in this frontier country. We have people of much culture from Scotland, who were heavy losers by the failure of the Glasgow Bank, and first-rate, plucky settlers they make.^{xxvi} They are most hopeful for the future good of the country they are in. God speed them in their new life and send them prosperity.

We met several old Red River settlers here who tell us that a farmer's life is much more pleasant here than in the Red River Valley.^{xxvii} They prefer the soil although it is not so strong. They have splendid home markets, and will have, with new settlers coming in, for years to come. They have wood, coal and good water. They say that it is too level and the Minnesota and Dakota prairies and in the Red River valley.

We spend several days in driving northward and westward, coming home each day more pleased with the country and hopeful. We accomplish the object of our journey most thoroughly. Good fortune clung to us up to the last day of our stay. In the very last day's explorations, and when we reached our farthest westward point, we met Mr. Norton, mining engineer, (whose certificate I have attached for publication), who is now engaged in mining coal at the Souris River about 300 miles due west of Emerson.^{xxviii} He told us that the country he had traversed for 200 miles west of where we were was as good as the country we had

gone over. He had gone over it both in winter and summer. He predicts that one of the big cities of the future will be 300 miles west of Emerson, at some point on the Souris River. We find him as enthusiastic about the country as all the other Englishmen we meet which means he is very enthusiastic.

Now we get ready for our return trip. We follow another line of posts, so as to see more of the country. We find it quite as good as we found it coming in. we make much better time on our return trip. We have provided relays of horses so as to make a speedy trip. We feel that we can conscientiously advise emigrants to go there rather than to any other point just now. We have opened a trail for them. We have arranged for stopping houses along the route of travel every fifteen miles.^{xxix} There is still needed a stopping place between Badger Creek and Turtle Mountain. Pancake Lake is the proper point.^{xxx} We shall communicate with the Government and hope to have it established before March. March is the right month for families to go out in.

On our journey in every district we found the people most enthusiastic about building the Emerson & Turtle Mountain Railway. We shall, no doubt, get good grants from every municipality which is formed along the line. We shall also have a powerful body of men interested in its construction, in the purchasers of Railway Lands throughout this belt. Here I must say, "en passant," that this sale of lands is not an unmixed evil, as it causes a number of capitalists to take a deep concern in the welfare of the country. It is almost too good an investment to offer people, yet the government needs the money to build the railways and it is easier to find fault with the way of obtaining it than to discover a better way.

The old Boundary Commission Trail, a surveyed government road, is a ready-made road-bed direct from Emerson to the Turtle Mountains, and in all the districts through which it will run there will not be twenty square miles of bad lands. The writer has travelled pretty extensively in the prairie country of the Western and South-Western States, but nowhere has he seen such a tract of country. There is no doubt that we have the best wheat-growing climate in America. Anyone who is skeptical about that may have his doubts removed by reading United States Consul Taylor's speech, delivered in Emerson in January, 1880, published "in extenso" in the Emerson International of January 22nd, 1880, and which will, no doubt, be published by the government and generally distributed.

The Emerson & Turtle Mountain Railway will pay from the day of its completion. It is a positive necessity in all the thickly settled country between this

and Clearwater Village now. It is needed to develop the country between that and the Souris which will, no doubt, all be settled within three years. It is needed to bring coal, wood and wheat to Emerson. It is needed to make the Pembina branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway pay after the main line is completed. It is needed to keep the trade of Southern Manitoba from being diverted to the Northern Pacific and St. Paul & Pacific Railways, who are even now pushing out branches to take the Canadian trade at two points west of Emerson. It is needed to prevent the good feelings of our people being alienated in all this southern country through their trade relations being with our neighbours. It is needed to prevent the large number of emigrants who are constantly disembarking at Emerson from settling upon the American side of the line.

A delegation of provisional directors of the railway from Emerson is now in Ottawa to procure a railway charter.^{xxx} It is to be hoped that there will be no unnecessary delays in obtaining it, but that the Government will do all in its power to advance this much needed and patriotic undertaking.

Emerson, Manitoba
27 January 1880

I hereby certify that in the coal field I am now working near the Souris River, there is a very large quantity of good coal, (lignite), fit for all purposes, domestic steaming, and that a railway is absolutely necessary to develop the same.

(Signed) R. H. Norton
M. J. M. E. (South Staffordshire)

I hereby certify that in the Turtle Mountain district, in the Nor'-West Territory, there are about one hundred thousand acres of woods, a good deal of which can be manufactured into merchantable lumber, and that a railway thither and beyond is a great desideratum for developing the adjoining prairie.

Otto J. Klotz,
D. L. S. & D. T.S.
Emerson, 27 January 1880

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FOOTNOTES

1. In addition to being a surveyor, Mr. Sydney Austin was a civil engineer and contractor according to Henderson's Directory for 1880. He later became the proprietor of Stephen, the original Morden townsite located on the CPR line two miles east of the present town.

2. Henderson's Directory for 1880 lists Mr. Wm. Beech as a real estate agent having his office on Dominion Street in Emerson. After this trip west, he purchased 5 quarters of land in the vicinity of Pembina Crossing in Township 2-9 as well as a quarter in 3-9 and 4-9. In October 1881, the Emerson International reported that Mr. Wm. Beech and Mr. Thos. Scott had purchased the Crystal City townsite for \$6000.

3. Mr. Albert H. Poston was a pioneer farmer of the Emerson district and, like Rev. Armstrong, originally from the province of Quebec. His brother's widow had married one of the most prominent citizens of Emerson, Mr. Frederick T. Bradley, Dominion Customs Collector and owner of the Mountain City townsite. At the time of this trip west, Mr. Poston had already been a landowner along the trail for a year having purchased property in the vicinity of Pembina Crossing in September 1878. Like Rev. Armstrong, he too held land in the vicinity of the Archibald townsite.

4. Rev. Armstrong's land at Pembina Crossing totalled three quarters. On 5 Feb. 1880, in partnership with Mr. Poston, he purchased the S ½ of 25-2-9 from the CPR and in April he purchased the SE ¼ of 26-2-9 from the Hudson's Bay Company for \$800. It was on the latter quarter that Mr. Adamson's stopping house was located and on which Mr. Armstrong had the Pembina Crossing townsite surveyed the following month.

5. Mr. Duncan Matheson was the last clerk in charge of the West Lynne Hudson's Bay post having succeeded a Mr. Watt. He was a member of an old Selkirk settler family and a cousin of Archbishop Matheson, successor of Archbishop Robert Machray as Archbishop of Rupertsland. (Both also served as the Primates of the Anglican Church in Canada). Dr. E. Harry Bottrell, a grandson of Rev. Armstrong, is married to the daughter of Archbishop Matheson.

6. In March 1879 Mr. Wm Winram, his wife and eight children came to Manitoba from their previous home in the town of Stayner, Simcoe Co., Ontario. His farm, known as "The Bluff" was situated on the Post Road some seven miles southeast of Morden. That December he was elected by acclamation as the first member of the provincial house for South Dufferin.

Born on the Isle of Man in 1838, Mr. Winram was a descendent of an ancient Scottish family who were devout adherents of the Episcopal Church of Scotland. He grew up in Ulverstone, Lancastershire, England where his family was engaged in the ship building industry and he completed his studies as a mechanical engineer. In the 1860s the family came to Canada and first settled near London, Ontario. Mr. Winram sat as a member of the provincial legislature until his death in Feb. 1891 at which time he was speaker. He was originally buried on his farm at Pembina Crossing but his remains were later moved to the Manitou cemetery. St. Mary's Winram Memorial Church at Kaleida was erected in his memory.

7. The Johnston family were natives of County Fermanagh, (the westernmost of the six counties of Northern Ireland), who came to Canada in September 1866 and settled in Keppel Township, Grey Co. Ontario near Owen Sound and in 1872 moved to Port Arthur on Lake Superior. The father, Mr. Joseph Johnston, who died at Morden in January 1895, came to the Pembina Mountain Country in 1877. Several of his sons came to Manitoba in 1872 where they worked on putting up some of the first buildings in Winnipeg and also on the survey of southern Manitoba. They began taking up land in the Pembina Mountain country in 1875. John Johnston mentioned here, one of these sons, was the pioneer settler of SE ¼ 2-2-5- in May 1875.

The Johnstons are believed to have named the creek draining the escarpment 5 miles south of Morden, and a mile south of Mountain City, the River Liffey after the stream on which Dublin is located. Like the Stoddards, and the Winrams, the Johnstons were devout members of the Church of England.

James Johnston, another son of Joseph Johnston, took up land in the Mowbray district in 1880 where there are still many relatives today. This history of this community, "Lest We Forget," published in 1968, reminds us that in the 1880s there were 8 members of the family farming in Manitoba. Together they owned a total of 3780 acres, (876 in crop), 77 horses, 283 horned cattle, many thousands of dollars worth of machinery...and that every one of them was a Tory.

8. Rev. Thomas Wilson was the second Church of England clergyman to reside in the Pembina Mountain Country. He came in June 1879 to succeed Rev. Carey and established himself on a farm two or three miles east of Nelsonville. His first wife was a Miss Sparling, the daughter of a well-known hardware merchant of Emerson. She lived only a short time after their marriage and is buried in the Nelsonville cemetery. Pioneers recalled that Rev. Wilson maintained that his territory was larger than any of the bishoprics of England for it "extended as far west as the foot of the Rocky Mountains." He was responsible for the building of the first large Anglican Church in southern Manitoba, a handsome brick structure completed in Nelsonville in the fall of 1882.

9. Unfortunately we do not know which member of the family Rev. Armstrong is referring to. The Stoddards or Stodders, (various spellings were used by different members of the family), like the Johnstons and their neighbours the Hazzards, were of Irish background, their native country having been Antrim. The two oldest brothers, John and James, came to the Pembina Mountain Country in June 1875. In 1878 a post office was opened in the home of John Stodders beside the Post Road on 10-2-5w. It received the name Stodderville.

Rev. Armstrong's reference to "the height of land upon which we are standing" may indicate that the Stodders he was visiting were either the Hugh David Stodders of W ½ 17-2-5- one mile southeast of Mountain City or John Wm. Stodders on the next half section to the west.

Daniel Bell Stodders, a younger brother to John and James, became a pioneer of the Clearwater district and later a well-known Anglican clergyman who also served the Anglican parish of Clearwater. His grandson, Walter H. Jones, is the present Archbishop of Rupertsland.

10. What location Rev. Armstrong is referring to by "the wrong crossing of the Pembina" is not altogether clear. At Calf Mountain, (shown on Rev. Armstrong's map but not mentioned in his narrative), some 8 miles past Mountain City, the Commission Trail crosses the Missouri Trail. Some seven miles south of Pembina Crossing this Trail fords the Pembina River. On the other hand, had they taken a trail to the northwest rather than the southwest from Calf

Mountain, they would have been on their way towards Archibald where Rev. McRae served the many Presbyterians settled in that district.

Twelve days after meeting Rev. Armstrong, on 19 January 1880, Rev. Donald McRae baptised the first white child born in New Haven Township, (4-8), Lillie Agnes Davidson, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. John Davidson. Born June 1879, she later became the wife of Mr. Frank W. McIntosh. On 8 April Rev. McRae officiated at one of the first funerals in the district, that of Mrs. Samuel Forrest, age 30 years, and her 18-month old daughter who had smothered when the ceiling of their log home had collapsed under the weight of the wheat stored in the attic. Rev. McRae was also responsible for the organization of the first Presbyterian congregation in the district, the Archibald congregation with preaching points at New Haven, Forrest's, Pembina Crossing, Lorne and Kingsley.

11. John Evans Adamson was born in 1859 at Chifden in the Connemara district of County Galway, Ireland. His father, Rev. John Evans Adamson, a minister of the Church of England, was related to the Fifth Earl of Cadbury and the Bronte family of literary fame. In 1873 J.E. Adamson and his older brother, Alan J. Adamson, came to Manitoba where they worked on the crews surveying southern Manitoba and eventually took up land in the Nelsonville district. John E. Adamson was twenty years old when he built a log store a few hundred yards from the Commission Trail's ford through the Pembina River.

In November of that year this store became the site of the Pembina Crossing post office with a friend of Mr. Adamson from Nelsonville, a Mr. Arthur J. Moore, as postmaster. Shortly afterwards Mr. Adamson altered his premises in order to provide accommodations for travellers along the trail. Enlarged and rebuilt several times it eventually became the Valley House, one of the trails' best-known stopping places. Operated by a series of owners, its last residents were the Matthew Young family who made it their home from September 1883 until April 1886. This historic structure was eventually demolished with part of the lumber being used to build an addition to the home of Mr. R. N. Lea.

John E. Adamson later sold his property at Pembina Crossing and returned to Nelsonville. In 1884 married Anne Marie Dennis, a daughter of Colonel J.S. Dennis, chief of the Canada Survey party of 1869. He died in Portland, Oregon in 1910 where he was chief of the city police force.

Alan J. Adamson married Julia M. Turriff in 1880. She was a sister of the Manitou pioneer, J. G. Turriff, later Senator Turriff and of Mrs. J. E. Gayton. Their son, another John Evans Adamson, born 1884 in Nelsonville, was the first Manitoba born lawyer elevated to the Court of King's Bench in our province and its first Manitoba-born Chief Justice.

In May 1882 Pembina Crossing became the site of the first Church of England erected in southern Manitoba west of the Red River. Mr. R. N. Lea, with the assistance of friends and relatives in England, put up a small church in the town which was served by Rev. T. Nelson Jones, formerly of New Brunswick. Rev. Jones made his home in Mountain City and served the Church of England people of that district as well as those living in the vicinities of Manitoba City, (the original name of Manitou seven miles north of Pembina Crossing), Pembina Crossing and Clearwater.

12. On 15 July 1878, the Department of the Interior in Ottawa authorized the survey of several pioneer trails in Manitoba, stipulating that the 99-foot road allowance to be marked out across the various quarter sections already surveyed would become government property. (It has remained government property to this day). The "Highway from Headingley to the western

boundary of the Province,” (then the 99th meridian just west of Clearwater), was designated as Road No. 8. From Headingley to Calf Mountain, this Road No. 8 was the Missouri Trail and from Calf Mountain to the western boundary of the province it was the Commission Trail. This 106-mile road was surveyed in the remarkably short time of one month, from 20 August to the 18 September, by Chas. J. Chapman party. Poplar poles were used to mark out the 99-foot road allowance and each of the numerous corners the road took as it attempted to follow, as closely as possible, the ruts of the old cart trails from the Red River through to the Rock Lake Country.

13. This is the bridge painted by Mr. R. N. Lea.

14. The pioneers of the Rock Lake Country recalled the winter of 1879-1880 as the “Fish winter.” Walpole Murdoch’s chapter in the history of the district, *Corner Stones of Empire* published in March 1940, notes that the jackfish were so plentiful in Rock Lake that it took no skill to catch them with either a spoon or bait. Many of them weighed as much as ten pounds. Writing in that same book, Mrs. Jas. McGregor, a daughter of Clearwater pioneer Alex. McLaren, recalled, “Fish was the staple food, the only alternative being fat bacon hauled from Emerson. This was mostly used to cook the fish in the fat.”

15. In 1873 the Boundary Commission had established one of their sub-depots at the crossing of the trail through this stream which their maps refer to as Long River.

16. In 1878 Mr. Alexander McLaren, (better known as Sandy McLaren), came to Manitoba with his cousin, Mr. Wm. Butchard who settled near Pilot Mound. The homestead Mr. McLaren selected was the quarter on which the Clearwater Cemetery is now located. He returned to Ontario for the winter and in the spring of 1879 brought his family out to Manitoba. Before he headed out to his new homestead, he rented a farm in the Marais River district 8 miles west of Emerson on which he planted his first crop in Manitoba. In November 1880 he became a member of the first board of Crystal City School with James Laidlaw, John Coulthard and Rev. Armstrong as his fellow trustees. By this time, Rev. Armstrong, in addition to serving as the secretary of the school board, was a part owner of the townsite with Mr. McLaren. Present-day members of the family still living in the district are descendants of Mr. Peter B. McLaren, (a son of Sandy McLaren), born at Clearwater in 1881.

17. In April 1878 two residents of Bruce County, Ontario on Lake Huron, James Murdock and James Steele, arrived in Emerson to locate land for a large number of settlers from the Paisley district who wished to settle in western Canada. The men set out walking along the trail west from Emerson with a Red River cart drawn by a spotted pony on which they had loaded their provisions, bedding, some grain for their horse and a couple of guns. Following the Commission Trail, they crossed the Pembina River on a raft of dry poles, and continued on until they arrived at the future site of Crystal City from where they could see Scotchman’s Bonnet in the distance to the north. As they walked over the district in the vicinity of this prominence we now know as Pilot Mound, they soon decided they had found what they were looking for. An agreement was soon made with the Hon. Mr. Mills, Minister of the Interior, by which Townships 2 and 3 in Ranges 11 and 12 were to be reserved for their colony. An advance party came out later that year and during the winter of 1878-1879, two cabins were occupied. By July of 1880, according to the Emerson International, 74 houses could be counted from the top of Pilot Mound.

Originally the Paisley colonists had intended to establish themselves in the Little Saskatchewan district and in August 1874 Mr. Murdoch had selected Township 16-19, 12 miles north of the present location of Rapid City, as the site for their settlement.

18. Early travellers along the trail were always amazed to note that the springs feeding this creek were so powerful that sections of it never froze. This was even true during the winter of 1870-1889, remembered, as Rev. Armstrong notes, as the coldest for many years. Entries in the diary of Mr. D. A. Stewart, (he lived a mile north of Pilot Mound and became the first secretary of Louise municipality in which Pilot Mound and Clearwater are located), verify this: "24 Dec. 1879, Mercury frozen at 50 degrees zero.....Monday, 29 Dec., A beautiful cold day, only 48 below zero. An old Norwegian told me he never saw such a long, cold spell and he has been in the North West for twenty years."

19. Mr. T. G. McKittrick's "Corner Stones of Empire" records that the first building erected in the Clearwater district was the home of Mr. Eugene Widmeyer, a homesteader who was also the district's first tinsmith. The ballot boxes which he made during his first years in the community were still in use as late as 1927. The Widmeyers are perhaps best remembered in the district today because of their son-in-law. In 1888, the Widmeyer's daughter, Aurelia Regina, became the bride of Mr. Robert Rogers, the district's first storekeeper. In later years he entered politics, became the Manitoba Minister of Public Works and in 1911 served as the acting premier of Manitoba during Premier Rodmond Roblin's severe illness. That same year he resigned to enter federal politics where he became the Minister of Public Works in the Borden cabinet.

20. No doubt this was the first Church of England service west of the Pembina river.

21. Rev. Armstrong is no doubt referring to Mr. Thomas Prest, the pioneer homesteader on E ½ 2-2-14 who took up this land in November 1879. The stopping house mentioned was erected on the homestead of Mr. James C. Waugh who, according to a notation in the 21 August 1879 edition of the Manitoba Free Press, had 10 acres of ploughing done on the south 1/2 18-2-14w and intended to put up a boarding house. Mr. Waugh was a former resident of Winnipeg where he had been associated with the firm of Muir & Waugh, agents for all types of mill machinery. Much of the timber for the village of Clearwater and the timber for the first bridge across the Cypress came from Mr. Waugh's mill on the west end of Rock Lake six miles north of his homestead. He soon became one of the most prominent settlers of the district and in 1881 was one of the two candidates nominated for the newly organized constituency of Turtle Mountain, his opponent being Mr. J. P. Alexander.

22. Apparently a typographical error. The Badger Creek Crossing is located in Township 2-14, La Riviere's in Township 2-18. Range 22 is some 24 miles beyond La Riviere's.

23. Mr. Bernard B. La Riviere was one of the most colourful characters in southern Manitoba history. Originally a resident of Ottawa, in 1869 he moved to St. Paul and from there to Crookston, Minnesota where he opened a general store and also became a fur trader. Here, in the phrase of the Winnipeg Daily Times of 7 July 1880, he soon amassed "a princely fortune." Jealous business rival brought charges against him that he was selling liquor to the Indians of a nearby reservation. These charges resulted in the seizure of his property worth more than \$25,000.

About the time when the Boundary Commission was completing its work, he arrived in Manitoba and, making his way to the Turtle Mountains, decided he would establish himself in this district. He purchased the Turtle Mountain Depot from Commissioner Cameron with its remaining unused stores and again went into business as a fur trader with the neighbouring Sioux Indians, fugitives in their region after the Minnesota massacres in the early 1860s and the St. Joe Massacre of 1874.

He also went into stock raising and starting with four cows in 1874 by the fall of 1879 he had a herd of 61 head on his claim of 1,280 acres. His relationship with the neighbouring Indians was quite remarkable for that period as noted in the December 1879 report of the Dufferin Immigration agent, Mr. J. E. Tetu: "To encourage them he furnished them with means and instruction, lent them oxen and taught them how to till the land, gave them seed corn and potatoes and generally assisted them."

24. Mr. Klotz's survey notebooks on file in the Manitoba Public Archives are masterpieces of map making. Few surveyors were so conscientious about details or so precise in their notations.

25. Mr. La Riviere and his family were devout Roman Catholics, with the exception, according to local tradition, of his Indian wife who had little use for religion of any kind.

26. Among these was Mr. James Peterkin Alexander who reputedly lost the equivalent of \$10,000 in this bank failure. He had been born in 1835, the son of a wealthy builder and contractor in Edinburgh, Scotland, the city where he attended normal school and the university. He was accompanied to Manitoba in November 1879 by his wife, the daughter of a wealthy manufacturer in Glasgow, and their two little girls.

The story of their trip along the Commission Trail to the Turtle Mountains is well known. In Emerson they purchased a Red River cart and a team of Indian ponies. After everything they had brought from Scotland was piled on the cart, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander and their two little girls climbed on. They were not many miles out before it became apparent that their little team was having trouble pulling the load. It was Mrs. Alexander, whose parties had once been the talk of the tip top of Glasgow society, who walked to the Turtle Mountains.

In November 1881 Mr. Alexander was elected the first member for the provincial house for Turtle Mountain. After his defeat at the polls in 1883, he was appointed Registrar of Deeds for the County of Souris and made his home in the village of Sourisford. In December 1886 he was re-elected as a member of the provincial legislature. (His annual indemnity was \$600). In later years he became editor of the Deloraine Advertiser and then Registrar of the Land Titles office in Boissevain.

The circumstances of his death are a local legend. On Tuesday, April 14, Mr. Alexander was having his morning shave in the Boissevain barbershop when a boy ran in with the news that had just come over the telegraph. The Titanic had gone down! After a few moments of asking the boy for further details, the barber turned to ask his customer, "Say, wasn't Jean supposed to be on the Titanic?" There was no response. Mr. Alexander, unaware that his daughter had missed the train that was to take her to Southampton to board the ill-fated White Star liner, was dead.

27. Mr. Thomas A Sharpe farmed 2 miles from West Lynne until 1876 or 1877 when he took up land in the Turtle Mountains a mile and a half directly west of Mr. La Riviere. Here he established his Elkhorn Stock Farm and by the mid-1880s his herd of purebred Shorthorn cattle,

carrying the blood lines originated on the farm of Mr. F. A. Brown of Minneapolis, were in high demand throughout the province. In 1883 Mr. Sharpe established the first creamery in the Turtle Mountain Country.

28. Mr. Norton had been involved with developing the coal mines in the Estevan district where, in the spring of 1880, five barges constructed of elm lumber sawn on the site were loaded with 100 tons of coal and floated downstream to Winnipeg via the Souris and the Assiniboine.

29. In April 1880 the International reported that Rev. Armstrong had arranged for stopping houses at the following points along the trail. At Kronsthal, 20 miles from Emerson; at Johnstons, Stodders and Hazzards at the 45-mile point, at Calf Mountain, at Pembina Crossing, 73 miles; Clearwater, 93 miles, Badger Creek, at the 115-mile point, at Pancake Lake, 130 miles from Emerson and at La Riviere's 146 miles from Emerson.

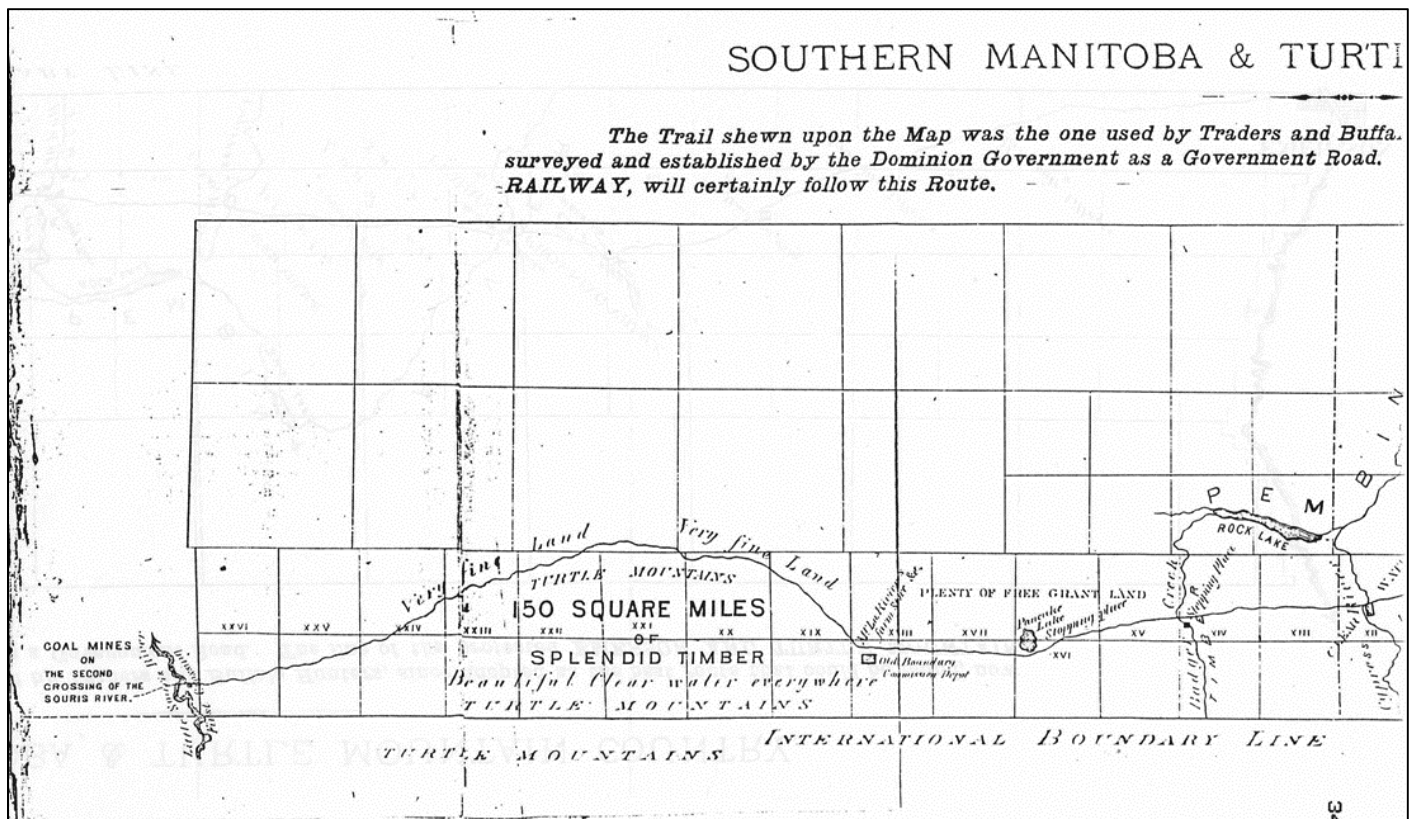
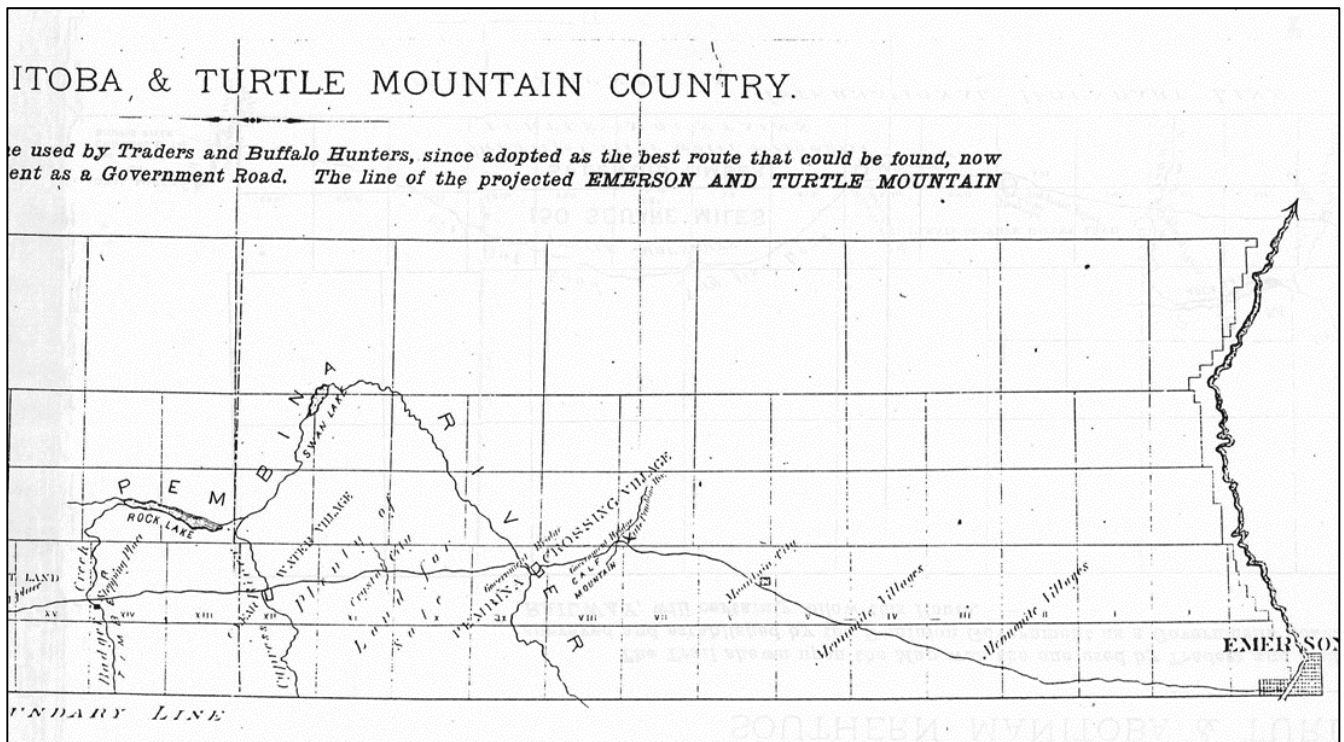
30. Immediately upon his return for this expedition, Rev. Armstrong set about doing something about this matter. His contacts resulted in a trip to Ottawa in February where he visited Mr. John Lowe, Secretary of the Department of Agriculture and by the end of the month he had secured authorization "to place portable settlers' houses near Pancake Lake in the Turtle Mountain Country."

When he was back in Emerson, the 11 March 1880 edition of the International announced; "Stopping Places for Immigrants. From Rev. L. O. Armstrong, who has just returned from Ottawa, we learn that the Government intends to put up four portable houses capable of accommodating about 50 people at Pancake Lake on the Commission Trail to the Turtle Mountains between Badger Creek and the Mountain. The houses will be free for the use of immigrants and light and fuel will be provided. It is hoped that immigrants will not injure the houses nor abuse their privileges."

31. A bill to incorporate the Emerson and Turtle Mountain Railroad was introduced to the House of Commons in February 1880 and withdrawn in April of that year.

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ILLUSTRATIONS



Above: Rev. Armstrong's famous map of Southern Manitoba and the Turtle Mountain Country.

The Trail shewn upon the map was the one used by Traders and Buffalo Hunters, since adopted as the best route that could be found, now surveyed and established by the Dominion Government as a Government Road. The line of the projected EMERSON AND TUTLE MOUNTAIN RAILWAY will certainly follow this Route.

Thus reads the caption on this, one of the best known maps of the trail from the Red to the Souris River. From Emerson to Mountain City the route shown is the Post Road; from Mountain City to La Riviere's it is the Commission Trail. Two features on it suggest that it was drawn some months after Rev. Armstrong's January 1880 expedition to the Turtle Mountains, most likely after his expedition to the Souris Coal fields in June 1880. One should note, for example, that the "Government Bridge" at Pembina Crossing and the Pancake Lake Stopping Place are both shown on this map although his narrative mentions them only as future possibilities.

Rev. Armstrong does not give us any details about the route he followed through the Turtle Mountain Country after he left La Riviere's and indeed does not even mention whether he travelled as far as the Souris River. The trail shown on his map west of La Riviere's certainly is not the Commission Trail. From La Riviere's to Township 22 West the route is too far north; from there to Township 27 it is considerably too far south.

The first part of this route, that is the portion from La Riviere's to Township 22, (very soon afterwards to become the site of the Turtle Mountain Land Office), approximates the route followed by the Dominion government coal exploration party guided by Rev. Armstrong. The spring and summer of 1880 were unusually wet and trails that generally were quite passable most years were under water that year.

After crossing Long River at LaRiviere's the expedition headed well out on to the prairie to avoid some of the worst parts of the Commission Trail at the foot of the Turtle Mountains. The route they followed immediately became known as the Boiler Trail because of the difficulties they experienced in hauling the massive boiler, the power source for their drilling machines, through this section of the Turtle Mountain country.

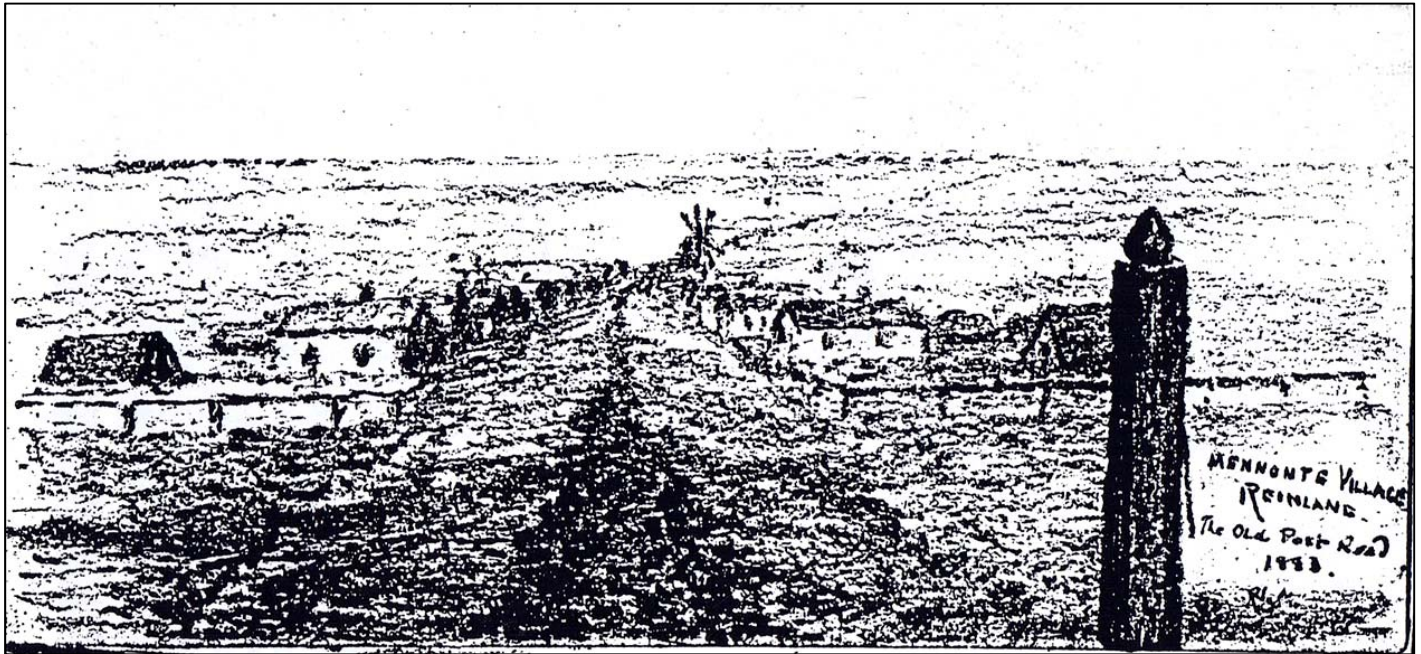
Rather than following the route indicated on this map, from Township 22 to Township 27 the Commission Trail passed through the center of the second tier of townships until it reached the First Crossing of the Souris in Township 27 West. As there was no crossing south of the ford in Township 27, (the location of Sourisford), the route shown on this map seems to be in error.

R. N. LEA, ESQ.

Among the English tenant farmers who came to southern Manitoba as a result of Mr. Armstrong's efforts was Mr. R. N. Lea, the proprietor of a beautiful dairy farm, Vernon's Oak, near Birmingham. His father was Nathaniel Lea, the founder of the stock and share brokerage house of Nathaniel Lea and Son and one of the founding members of the Birmingham stock exchange. A man of remarkably wide-ranging talents and interests, Mr. R. N. Lea arrived in Emerson in May 1880 where his cousin, E. G. Simcox, was an assistant to the chief Customs Collector Frederick T. Bradley.

After spending six weeks travelling through southern Manitoba, particularly in the Turtle Mountain and Rock Lake districts, he decided to establish himself at Pembina Crossing on a property he named Fairbrook Farm. Returning to England, he set his affairs there in order and late that fall, he and his family arrived in Emerson. Six weeks were spent in quarantine in West Lynne when it was suspected that one of the children had contracted typhoid fever on the passage across the North Atlantic. It was the third week of December before they were able to set out for Pembina Crossing via the Post Road and the Commission Trail. This trip to 15-2-9W was made in a little cabin on sleighs built according to Rev. Armstrong's pattern but in this case pulled by four mules. On Christmas Eve, 1880, the Lea family arrived at their new home, a handsome two storey house constructed that summer of lumber hauled from the Gateway City by its Emerson contractors. It still stands on its original site.

Four of these illustrations were made during this trip; two others somewhat later during Mr. Lea's frequent trips to Emerson where he soon became a partner in a real estate firm with his cousin, Mr. Simcox. These sketches are still in his original ½" by 7" sketchbook and the pencil he used to make them is still in its little leather loop on the back cover. The Association is indebted to Mr. Lea's grandson and his family, the Laurie Lea family of Fairbrook Farm, for the use of this sketchbook.



Reinland Mennonite Village - The Old Post Road, 1883

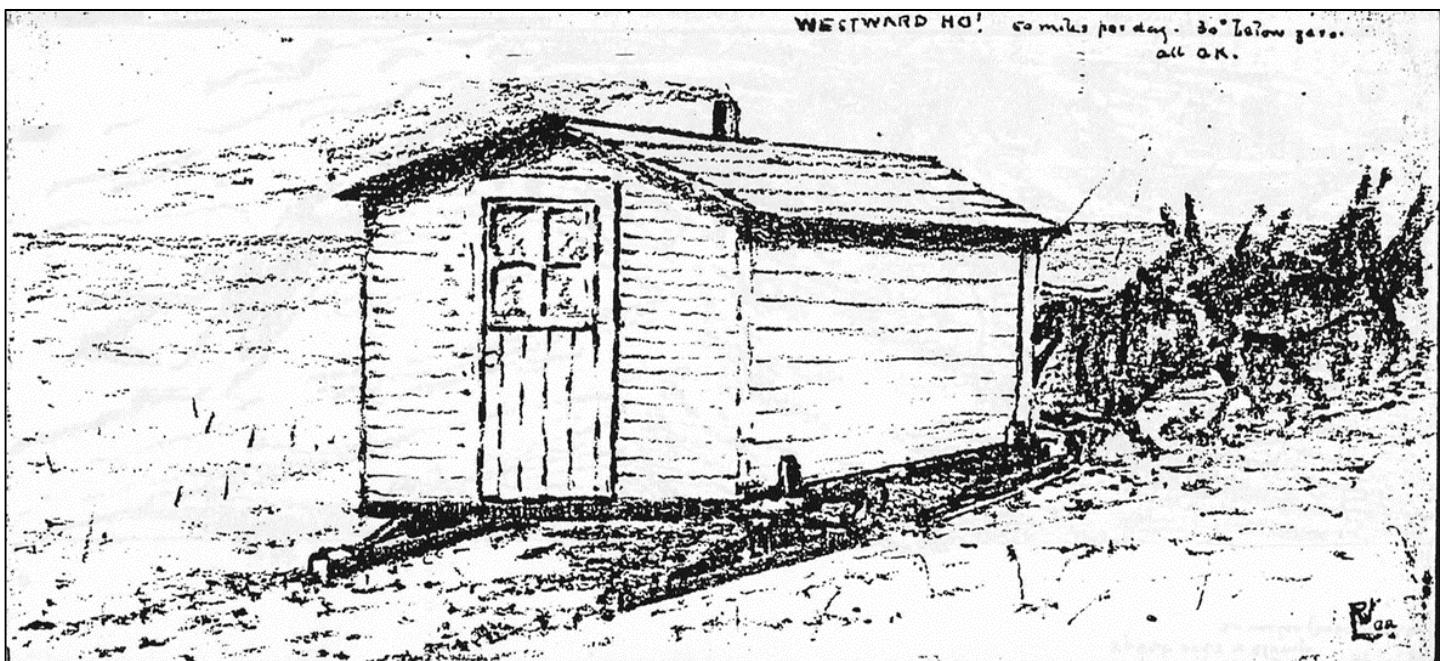
Here we view the village of Reinland in Township 2-4W, a popular stopping place for travellers along the trail some 30 miles west of Emerson. Standing at the west end of the village we are looking straight east. Note the windmill and, in the distance, the trail angling southeast towards the village of Schoenwiese. In the foreground is one of the posts for which the Post Road was named. At the present time this is the only known contemporary illustration depicting the Post Road.



Pembina Crossing - The Bridge Over The Old Ford

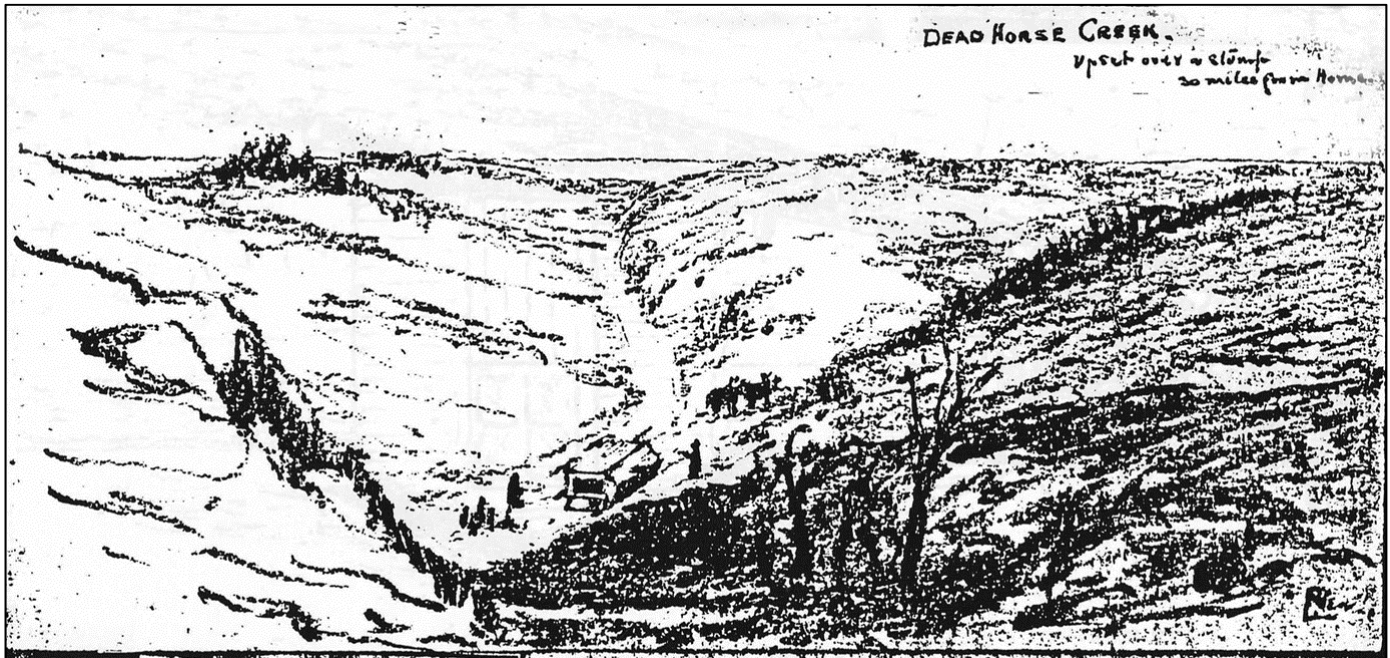
The summer after his arrival in Manitoba, Mr. Lea made a sketch of the bridge at Pembina Crossing described by Mr. Armstrong as “only a temporary affair.” The first bridge on the site of the historic ford of the Commission Trail across the Pembina River was erected by the road gang of the Boundary Commission in 1874. It soon washed out but by May of 1879 it had been replaced by a ferry. Mr. Peter Cram, a former resident of Paisley, Ontario and a pioneer of 1878 in Township 3-11, charged 30 cents a person to take travellers across “in a good skow.” In June 1879, assisted by his neighbour, Mr. Hugh Lockhart, (another pioneer of 1878 in 3-11 and also a Paisley colonist), Mr. Cram began work on constructing the bridge shown in this illustration. When completed the tolls charged by its builders were judged to be “very high;” 30 cents for a double team, 25 cents for a single. This structure was located approximately three hundred yards south of the present Pembina Crossing bridge.

In 1903 Mr. Lea, using his original sketch of 1880, painted this watercolour and gave it to the Municipality of Pembina. For over half a century it hung in the municipal office. Exactly fifty years after the construction of the bridge it depicted, this painting appeared on the front cover of the booklet published to commemorate the half century of settlement in the district, “Fiftieth Anniversary & Old-Timers Reunion, June 29 – 1 July 1929.”



**Westward Ho! - 50 Miles Per Day
30 Degrees Below Zero - All Ok**

The passengers in this vehicle included Mr. and Mrs. R. N. Lea, their eight children, (Harry 10, Rolly 9, Ada 7, Rachel 6, Alice 5, Dora 3, Nat 2 and George 1), and a 21-year old friend, Mr. Goddard F. Gale of Mitcham, Surrey, England, who had come along for the adventure in western Canada and was the driver. He later became a pioneer of Butterfield, the last location on the Commission Trail in Manitoba. Here, in 1890, he helped build a beautiful fieldstone church which in 1892 was consecrated as St. George's Anglican Church. After the death of his first wife in Oakland, California, (she was a member of the Sadler family of Gainsborough just across the Manitoba border), Mr. Gale returned to Manitoba and married Ada Lea.



**Dead Horse Creek
Upset Over A Stump - 30 Miles From Home**

Here we see the Lea family waiting for the arrival of other travellers along the trail to assist them in getting their caboose back on its runners. As it went over, Nat Lea got an unpleasant burn on his hand from the sheet iron stove.

This mishap took place at the ford through Dead Horse Creek $\frac{3}{4}$ th of a mile south of the present Alexandria-Elam cairn located 3 miles south of the junction of the Thornhill Road and Highway 3 four miles west of Morden. The best-known photograph of the Commission Trail, one showing the two dozen wagons of the Boundary Commission crossing Dead Horse Creek, was taken at this same location.



Adieu, My Friend, Adieu

Here we see what might be termed the trademarks of the end of the earliest history of southern Manitoba, the poles of an abandoned teepee and the remains of a wrecked Red River cart. When Mr. Lea arrived in southern Manitoba, buffalo were almost extinct. Only a handful were still being hunted near the Second Crossing of the Souris some 200 miles west of the Red River. Of course, their meat and hides were in considerable demand in Emerson stores and brought good prices. Soon after his arrival, Mr. Lea purchased one of the last remaining Red River carts to keep as a remembrance of pioneer travel along the trail and was outraged, years later, when one of his hired men unthinkingly took it apart and sawed it up for firewood.



A Mennonite

The Lea family never forgot the gracious hospitality of the Mennonite villagers in whose homes they stayed on their way to Pembina Crossing. During his many trips along the trail from Pembina Crossing to Emerson, Mr. Lea always liked staying in their homes and enjoyed discussing with them their beliefs and customs. His general impression was that in many ways they resembled the Quakers of England

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