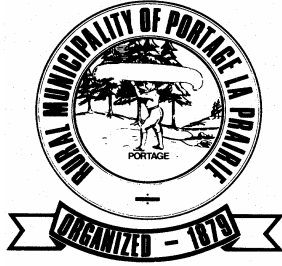


December 2006 and
January 2007

Fort la Reine Museum Newsletter



Old Style Dentist's Chair



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AROUND THE MUSEUM

The Holiday season is over for another year, and a New Year has begun. For the Museum, 2007 is an important year as it is our 40th year of continuous operation. This Museum opened at the end of April, 1967, as one small building. Today there are 31 structures on the site, which itself has grown to several acres in size.

As this is our 40th Anniversary, the Museum should plan some event to mark it. To date nothing has been decided, so if someone has some ideas, please let us know. Other noteworthy events this year are the Farewell to Victoria School on the May long weekend, and the City of Portage la Prairie's 100th Anniversary Celebrations. It is also anticipated that the Campbell House will be opened on the July Weekend. Heritage Day is once again scheduled for Saturday, August 19th. It will be a one day celebration again, and different ideas/events are welcome.

Newsletter Changes: One item of significance that has been changed is the frequency of this newsletter. After this Dec.—January newsletter, it will be published only quarterly, in March, June, September and December of each year. This should provide an opportunity to give timely articles of interest to readers, while lessening costs.

Each issue of this newsletter costs anywhere from fifty cents to a dollar to produce, depending upon the number of colour pages used. And, as our subscribers will note, the mailing costs are \$1.06 per issue plus envelopes. Advertising rates and subscription charges will remain the same. It is hoped that you will continued to support your Museum. Also please note that newsletters are available on the Museum website, as shown to the left.

Museum Closed: Until May 13, 2007

Portage Tourist Bureau OPEN

Monday—Friday

Do you have one?

Submitted by Denzil Gamble

There is one story that Pat and I never resolved to our satisfaction. It has all the drama of the time period, the late 1800's. It fits in with the land speculation that was rampant at the time in Winnipeg, and with the arrival of Easterners to the west looking for land opportunities.

The underlying reason for this land speculation came about when the McDonald Government, in Ottawa, decided to build the Pacific Railway, just south of Lake Manitoba in 1872. Angus R. Chisholm and George A. Bubar (Shism and Bubar) purchased a block of land (N.E. 24.14.9 W) from Baptiste and Angela Camatawagment (Matwewinin). The later changed there name to Roulette and must be considered the first leading citizens of the Westbourne area. This purchase took place on October 31, 1872, and 220 pounds sterling was paid.

On October 11, 1873, Duncan Sinclair, Dominion Land Surveyor, drew up the original Plan Number Two, of the Town of Totogan, containing lots 1—613, of which , for some reason, only 315 lots were entered on the register at the Portage Land Titles Office (PLTO). Mr Sinclair was mentioned in a letter from Ottawa with the phrase “he is not sufficiently versed in his profession to undertake the survey of townships....”

Subsequently there was advertising in the newspapers of the time related to Totogan, and Chisholm and Bubar. They were described as...“General Merchants and Dealers in Lumber and Real Estate with Town Lots in Totogan for sale...”

The first lot recorded at PLTO was to C.P. Brown, Dominion Land Surveyor, and later the first member of the Manitoba Legislature for the Marquette District. He purchased Lots 265 – 268 inclusive on Chisholm Street for \$300 on November 27, 1873.

Angus Chisholm had also made application for a Homestead Grant, on November 4, 1872, on N.W. 19. 14. 8 W. This Homestead site had to be abandoned in November, 1873, when the Oblate fathers fought and retained their claim to the most northerly 120 acres of this quarter section. This was the location of the first Catholic Church in this area for the Whitemud River Band.

The new Town was a continually newsworthy item in 1874, when James Robertson, Missionary Superintendent of the Northwest Territories wrote to his wife: “... quite a stir was made here by a sale of lots in the Town of Totogan at the foot of Lake Manitoba. A large number bought lots at \$100; 150 feet x 120 feet.... got a lot for our Church ... we have number 37 and 38 on the map.... a corner, as you see.”

This tells us that Plan Number Two existed on April 30, 1874, when the above mentioned letter was written. An advertisement in the Manitoba Free Press of April 11, 1874, described a “.General Blacksmith Shop in the City of Totogan...”

The Free Press, then went on in a article to proclaim the significance of the location of Totogan. “The Town is situated in a beautiful and fertile country, and with these and other natural advantages, must become, in the near future, a place of importance..... Messrs Chisholm and Bubar have sawn about 1,500,000 board feet of lumber at their mill, and which it is anticipated, will be used in the town during the present season, and they further contemplate the manufacture of shingles and lathe... The survey of the estate to be sold, gives broad streets, at right angles to each other, and are so named as to join the best utility with the highest euphony. Building on a large scale is anticipated this summer.”

The documentation at the PLTO shows that 183 lots were sold to a variety of people. The majority were non-residents, and of these sales, only 66 were registered in the office.

Alexander McDonald, a Pioneer Baptist Minister, wrote the following in his diary of September 1874... “Monday we reached Lake Manitoba, and had the satisfaction of drinking of its comparatively clear waters.... Tuesday found us in the beautiful prospective city of Totogan a more nicely arranged city on paper, I have not yet seen...”

The land deals carried on, when on August 20, 1874, Chisholm and Bubar sold to John H. Chisholm and Arthur Wakeley for \$1200. Next, under a Power of Sale, William D. Lane sold Totogan to Robert Campbell, on February 15, 1876, for \$8100.

On June 24, 1878, Robert Campbell sold the Town of Totogan to William Smith for \$4000, and he in turn sold it to Walter J. Pratt and his brother Reginald H. Pratt. They owned the land from July 1880.

We are now at the time, 1879, when nature interfered with the grandiose land speculation in the new town of Totogan. In 1882, a neat little church was built by Emma Campbell for the convenience of the settlers. It was dedicated and opened by Reverend Allen Bell of Portage la Prairie.

Beginning in 1879, very slowly, and then more swiftly in 1881, 1882, and 1883, the waters of Lake Manitoba rose, flooding the village and the lands along its shores, so much that it was difficult to find a camping ground. The water was standing 18 inches deep on the floors of some houses, and this caused Mr. Pratt to abandon the business in Totogan.

In 1887, the previously mentioned church was destroyed by fire, and this was the ending of the wonderful City of Totogan.... Destroyed by flood and fire.

The land speculators, as usual, made their money. Some realtors continued to sell lots based on the "survey of an estate," and people from Lindsay, Ontario, Winnipeg, Gladstone Portage la Prairie, the Imperial Bank of Canada and others paid the price of their own speculation.

Totogan, in reality, was the initial port for the Lake traffic, as railroad ties from the William Siftons were landed there originally and moved along the Totogan trail to southern markets. MacArthur's Landing became the next port for railroad ties. Totogan was the mailing address for people as far north as Big Point, east to House Creek, and for the settlers to the south... an area of approximately 100 square miles. This, however, was not the end of Totogan, as my wife and I continued looking in the Portage Land titles office.

When the land comprising the town site was brought under the Real Property Act of Manitoba, The PLTO was required to make sure that all the people who had bought lots, some of whom were already dead, signed Quit Claim Deeds against N.E. 24. 14. 9 W to their real or imagined interests. 47 quit Claims were found in the PLTO by diligent searching with the help of the staff.

The name Totogan can still be found along Lynch Point Road, on the Lodge beside Rat Creek.

Pat and I checked wherever we could to find the wonderful map that was previously mentioned with its wide streets at right angles and fanciful names. We were told that one had existed at the PLTO in the late 1890's, since they had a record of it, but nowhere could we find one to view.

I had always hoped that somewhere in a dusty attic, or in the old files of a realtor or lawyer, there was a beautiful coloured map of the City of Totogan.

It is ironic that we could find proof of its almost non-existence, whereas, with MacArthur's Landing, we could find no proof of its known existence.

Denzil Gamble – taken from "When the West Was Bourne"

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