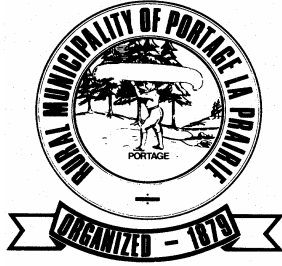


October 2006

Fort la Reine Museum Newsletter



Interior of the Ukrainian Church at this Museum



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AROUND THE MUSEUM

Closing down the Museum for another year is always a time of many activities, which ranges from cleaning displays, to storing artifacts such as the covered wagon in the Quonset, to putting away the garbage cans, to cleaning flower beds. While this was delayed somewhat this year due to some bad weather, most of this work is complete now.

This being stated, it is quite unusual that the Museum has had several people call or just drop in wanting to see the Museum since September 10th, which was official closing day. Most had arrived here because of the recommendation of someone who had visited here. The extra business is as nice as it is unexpected.

Some construction activities are still ongoing at the Museum. In particular, the Campbell House requires siding. While this was ordered on July 19th, it has not been delivered to date. The manufacturer, Kaycan, did not have the material in stock, and did not wish to produce another batch of this style. Fortunately, this matter has been resolved and the siding was to have been produced on October 23rd, with delivery a couple of weeks after that date. Hopefully the nice weather will linger just a bit longer.

Also as one may have noticed, some additional funding to replace the west side of the roof of the Southport Building #21, or the Military Museum, was received. Hopefully it will be possible to get this completed this year, weather permitting.

Museum Closed: Until May 2007

Portage Tourist Bureau OPEN

Monday—Friday

The Log of the Marquette **Submitted by Denzil Gamble**

The research that my wife, Pat, and I did for the book on Westburne and area led us to the discovery of many interesting stories not directly associated with our own area.

To understand the following unique river voyage, a short discourse on the unusual weather of the time must be considered.

“In 1879, nature was creating problems for all residents along the rivers of Southern Manitoba. This was the beginning of a series of floods....

In June 1881, Professor John McCoun of the Geological Survey Department mentioned in his report, how the Assiniboine River overflowed its banks and much of the adjoining countryside was submerged. The river overflowed the former site of the Hudson Bay Company Fort, 2 miles south-west of Portage la Prairie, and this water wended its way to Lake Manitoba. Almost at the same time, Lake Manitoba was at its highest stage, about 8 feet above its lowest level. This water overflowed and eventually reached to Long Lake, and then through the old channel of the Assiniboine River to enter the same river, 20 miles east of Portage la Prairie.” (from *When the West Was Bourne.*)

The following article is from the “Molly Basken” file at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba. This is the first voyage of the steamer Marquette to/from Winnipeg to Fort Ellis, a journey of 1000 miles This article is from a Winnipeg newspaper in 1879. (Denzil Gamble)

A Pioneer Voyage

The recent trip of the steamer Marquette to Fort Ellice, is one of the most interesting and important voyages ever accomplished in this part of Canada, in as much as the possibility of this feat has always been a matter of doubt, from the many difficulties in the way. The successful voyage made by the Marquette, which left Winnipeg on May 10, and returned on the 24th, has demonstrated the practicability of navigating that river to Fort Ellis, and we may hope in the near future, when the country is better opened up, to see regular steamboat communication between Winnipeg and that point. By the kindness of Mr. A.D. Robinson, the purser, our readers are favoured with the following extracts, given from the “logbook”, which will be found very readable.....

Log of the Marquette

May 10 – the staunch and comfortable steamer Marquette left Winnipeg at 2 AM for Fort Ellice. She had on board, about 100 tons of freight for the Portage and waypoints, besides 27 tons of Hudson Bay freight for Fort Ellice, and also a large number of passengers.

May 12 – Arrived at Portage la Prairie at 3 AM. Laid over until morning, when we then discharged our Portage freight. After taking on the 1100 sacks of flour for the Hudson’s Bay Company fort at Ellice, besides a large amount of freight for Rapid City (consigned to Masters George Lindsey and Jeryn and Gilles) left at 6 PM for Fort Ellis and waypoints. The following is the list of passengers on board: Mr. and Mrs. George Lindsey; Mr. Lindsey is on his way to start a store at Rapid City, and will no doubt carry the largest stock of merchandise west of Portage by the look of the amount of freight he had shipped on the boat. Mr. and Mrs. A.S. Kerr and G.W. Granford were also passengers bound for Rapid City. We had on board for Fort Ellis, P. MacArthur, Captain John Smith, M. Blake and J. Minejar. At 8:30 PM arrived at Smith’s Landing and took in 21 cords of wood and left at 2:30 AM.

May 13 – 8:10 AM Arrived at Headscrabble Landing and took on one passenger and a small amount of freight for Cyprus River. At Noon, we passed Stoney Bluff, and at 4 PM State Rock Rapids, where upon the bank was congregated a large number of Sioux Indians who, on seeing the first boat that ascended that far up the river, set up such a screech and yelling as if well pleased with our success.

We had left behind us the low and marshy prairie, but now the land became high and rugged and was occasionally covered with spruce trees of all sizes. One place, in particular, the bluffs rise up to a height of about 200 feet, on top of which are several large mountains with pine trees. As seen from the boat, it presented a very handsome scene.

This beautiful hill extends for about 2 miles along the river and must be seen to be appreciated. At 5 PM arrived at Cyprus River. After putting off a passenger and a small amount of freight, we proceeded up the river.

May 14, 12:30 AM – we had to go to the bank and tie up, on account of a dense fog arising. At 6:05 AM the fog has cleared and onward we go.

Another peculiarity of this part of the country is the immense sand hills, which stretch for miles along the river's bank. As we look at them from a distance of about a mile, great cracks and chasms show themselves and as the edge of the hills was approached, the whole sand hill was seen to be a network of cracks. As we looked into these fissures, from about one half a mile distant, the prismatic colours were superb. The surface of the hills is covered with spruce trees, but the tops are covered with white sand intermingled with red and yellow clay.

8:30 AM. – Captain Smith is on the hurricane deck with a shotgun trying his hand at shooting game on the banks. At 8:40 am passed Sand Hill Bend, and at 9:30 am passed Blake's Bluff, a place where Blake said it was a good place to have a picnic.

At 10:40 am past Webber's Cove, which is a delightful place.

5 pm steamed past Souris River, which appears a pretty good sized stream

5:30 pm arrived at Crawford's Landing and took on about 12 cords of wood that was just lying around in the bush.

11:15 pm went to the bank and tied up for the night.

May 15, 3 AM – left our mooring place and proceeded up the Assiniboine River.

5 am arrived at The Rapids, which extends for about 2 miles and are very swift. The current runs at no less a speed than 12 miles an hour. The land here is destitute of trees, only one or two within a distance of 2 miles. To get over these rapids, we had to get out lines and rise the 'nigger' to pull us over. About 12 o'clock noon we had accomplished about half a mile and then struck a rock, where we laid for about 2 hours trying to pull ourselves off. Having no trees with which to make a line fast, we had to make preparations for putting in a 'dead man'. So after getting the yawl into the water with ropes, spades, and axes, with which to put in the 'dead man,' it was manned by Messrs. William Griggs, Read, Williams, and Gibson and the skillful manner in which they stemmed the swiftly flowing water brought rounds of applause from the passengers and crew, who witnessed the daring deed. But at last they reached the opposite shore and amid prolonged cheering, they went at putting down their 'dead man.' They soon accomplished their purpose however, and fast the line to it. They then made preparations for returning to the boat. They first carried their boat up shore about 200 feet and put it in the water and then got into it and shoved off. They came down with lightening-like velocity, which made everyone turn pale with fright. "Were they to be dashed to pieces?" was a question heard on every side. But no, by a dexterous throw of a rope by one of the men and a skillful catch by William Griggs, the downward course of the boat was checked, but only for an instant. The velocity of the current was too much for the strong arms of the men who were holding on with all their strength. The boat turned sideways; it partly filled with water, until it seemed utter madness to hold on any longer. When at last the command came from Captain Weber, "let go", and downstream they went with at lightening speed, but not far. They grasped their paddles and with a few strokes reached the shore in safety. They then pulled in their rope and tried again, at which time they were more successful. We then put the rope around the 'nigger', and commenced hauling away. We had gone a distance of about 20 feet when the rope broke and there we were; after three hours of hard work, we had accomplished only about 20 feet. But "try again" came from the Captain's lips and they went in the same manner as before stated, amid loud cheering. But with not as much success as before. When coming downstream and nearing the boat, a line was cast for them to make fast to. They caught the rope and held to it, but the suddenness with which the boat was stopped caused Griggs and Gibson to lose their footing and overboard they went. Gibson held fast to the boat, but Bill Griggs was thrown further out, and consequently had nothing to save himself. As he came dashing down with the speed of the wind and was passing the boat, one of the hands reached out and grasped him by the hair and "yanked" him on board and thereby doubtless saved him from a watery grave. But at last, after several more attempts, we found ourselves afloat and at about seven o'clock we arrived above the rapids, where, after putting in another 'dead man' we tied up for the night. The only serious thing that has happened thus far was the fainting of Mrs. Lindsey and Mrs. Kerr, when they witnessed the upsetting of Griggs and Gibson into the water, and a very good reason they had, as there was hardly a person on the boat who did not see what was a serious predicament the men were in.

7 pm – the ladies have gotten over their scare and are at present, singing, out on the boiler deck, with the voices of Messrs. Lindsey and Kerr joining in the chorus.

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An amusing incident of the journey occurred when arriving here. Mrs. Lindsey's pet dog jumped out on the bank and off he put over the prairie after a little bird. Friend George, thinking he was making for the Portage, put after him and after chasing him for about 2 miles the "perp" made a small circuit and put back to the boat at full speed, leaving friend Lindsey to follow at his leisure. When it was seen that would take all day to get over the rapids, Captain Smith thought he could make a great deal more time, as he was very anxious to reach his post of duty on the Saskatchewan River, by taking his team and going overland, which he did in company with an Indian guide, who was sent to accompany him to Fort Ellice.

May 16, 3:30 am – the boat got underway once more, but had hardly gone a mile before Mr. Lindsey though he would have his goods put ashore. So we landed the boat, and after putting off his goods and bidding farewell to the ladies and gentlemen of the party we proceeded on up the river. We named the last place, Lindsey's Landing, in honour of our friend George, as may be seen by the sign on the tree.

8 am – arrived at Blake's Landing, and after chopping about three cords of wood we left at 9:30 am.

2 pm – passed the Little Saskatchewan River. The scenery continued grand; peak after peak looming up, some singly, others in ranges. Some are timbered, either with spruce, poplar, or ash, while others reach up bare and gray to the very tops. Patches of snow can be seen in some of the fissures of the hills, while on every hand can be seen small springs flowing out of the bluffs and making their way down to the water's edge.

7:15 pm – arrived at MacArthur's Landing and took on about 16 cords of wood and tied up for the night.

Mat 17, 3:30 am – at daylight the lines were cast off, the signal given to the engineer to 'go ahead' and once more we were underway, and enjoyed every moment in the day with its eternal changes, never the same, everything different. The river itself is a very crooked stream, lying in a valley surrounded by hills which are about 2 miles apart, while in other places, they are not more than half a mile between. We were going up the river at a pretty good speed, but all of a sudden, the boat stopped with such a suddenness that would almost throw a person off his footing. It was found on investigation that the river had become very narrow and more crooked than we had yet seen. The cause of the boat's sudden stoppage was on going round the bend the current is so swift that it sent the boat against the bank. The river is hardly anything but bends, some places you can see the water on one side of you. The distance by land in some places is no more than 50 feet, while by water, it is between three and four miles. The river from the Little Saskatchewan to Fort Ellis is a continued serpentine course, first one way and then another through this great wide valley of the Assiniboine.

Sunday, May 18, 6 am – we sighted Fort Ellice, which seemed to be about 5 miles by land.

8:45 am – arrived at Fort Ellice amid loud cheering from the officers stationed at that place and the blood curdling yells of the Indians. We returned their salutations by blowing the whistle several times. After the boat had landed and made fast, we went ashore where we were taken by the hand of the Honorable Archibald McDonald, Hudson's Bay Company's agent; Colonel McDonald, Indian Commissioner; and Mr. David Arnett, who, after congratulating us on our successful trip, extended to us the hospitality of the fort. We afterwards climbed the bluff and took a view of the fort and its surroundings. The fort is composed of several long buildings, and closed by a large fence. The buildings stand in a large square so that they all face one another, with a plot of ground between them. It is considerably on the same plan as the Hudson Bay Company's fort in Winnipeg. The view from the top of the bluff, where the fort is located, is a very extensive one. A person can see from the edge of the bluff for a distance of 10 or 12 miles up and down the river, which is a pretty long distance considering the height of the hill, which Mr. McDonald told me was 300 feet high. After we had inspected the fort to our hearts content, and were thinking of returning to boat, which looked to be 20 long from where we stood, Mr. Archibald McDonald made his appearance, bearing two sets of deer's horns of which he presented one to the boat, one to Captain Wilbur, and a small deer's head to the clerk, who was also made the recipient of a deer's head from David Harmon, the bookkeeper at the fort. In the afternoon we were visited by the ladies of the fort, who expressed themselves very well pleased with the appearance of the boat. In the afternoon about four o'clock, after we had the boat unloaded, we commenced loading up. We received 40 bales of furs from the Hudson Bay Company and 100 packs from Mr. A.B. Smith, trader, who was on his way to Winnipeg from Fort MacLeod.

Monday, May 19, 5 am – left Fort Ellice on our return trip. After a couple of days and tying up for the night, at which time we had to chop our wood to burn the next day, we at last arrived at a place called "The Crossing" where, on the bank, were two trading parties on their way to Winnipeg, with about 200 carts. We landed, and after receiving about a hundred bales of furs from Messrs. P. Burleough and Solomon Vann, we then proceeded down the river. At about 7:30 pm we arrived at Lindsey's Landing where we tied up for the night, not daring to venture over the Rapids at night.

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Thursday, May 22, 3:30 am – left Lindsey’s Landing when in about five minutes we reached the rapids, and at which place it took us but three minutes to get over coming down, but cost us 14 hours, going up.
9:15 am – arrived at Portage la Prairie

Friday, May 23 – left Portage la Prairie at about 2:30 pm

Saturday, May 24 – arrived at Winnipeg at 10:45 am, and thus completed the trip of the first boat to Fort Ellice.

(**Note:** The Captain Wilbur mentioned in the above Log was actually Captain Weber, who was a riverboat pilot from Missouri, USA. He piloted Peter MacArthur’s S.S. Marquette on the Assiniboine River – Denzil Gamble)