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THE ST. ALBERT SETTLEMENT: A STUDY
IN HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY

by

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled The St. Albert Settlement: A Study in Historical Geography, submitted by Donald Wayne Moodie in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

ABSTRACT

Founded as an Oblate mission colony in 1861, the St. Albert Settlement was the first successful agricultural community in present-day Alberta. The first settlers at St. Albert were French métis, who with few exceptions were hunters, trappers, fishermen, voyageurs, all in one. In an attempt to convert the métis to a settled way of life, the Oblates encouraged them to cultivate the land in the new settlement. Agricultural implements were imported and a grist mill established to foster agriculture in the colony. Though only a small number of the métis took the advice of their priests and began farming seriously, St. Albert by 1871 had become the most important agricultural centre between Red River and the Rocky Mountains. Agriculture, however, continued to occupy a secondary position in the St. Albert economy. Almost the entire population was dependent on the annual summer and fall buffalo hunts. Attached to the colony, moreover, was a large group of rovers - nomadic métis who camped occasionally at St. Albert, but who roamed the plains summer and winter in search of the buffalo and the fur bearing animals.

In the period 1871 to 1882 hunting gave way to agriculture at St. Albert. Foremost among the reasons for this transition to agriculture were the extermination of the buffalo, which as a means of livelihood for the métis were gone by 1882, and the influx in 1878 of white settlers into the colony. Although some of the métis persisted in

their vagabond ways, the majority resorted to farming in view of the rapidly diminishing buffalo. By 1882 a trade in agricultural produce had developed at St. Albert and a special land survey was begun of the settlement. Most manufactured goods were available locally and transport and communication services linked the colony to the outside world. No longer the mission outpost of the 1860s, St. Albert by 1882 had developed into a prosperous agricultural community firmly established in the vanguard of agricultural settlement in Western Canada.

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INTRODUCTION

Nature of the Study

Proper historical geography should provide what Mackinder called "the historical present." That is, historical geography strives to bring to life the geographies of the past and to make them as convincing as though they were of the present. The application of the adjective "historical" to the noun "geography" merely carries the geographer's studies back into the past: strictly speaking his work remains the same. His data, however, must be obtained in large part from historical materials. In "The St. Albert Settlement: A Study in Historical Geography," an attempt has been made to elucidate the geographies of the St. Albert Settlement during the period 1861 to 1882. Although the study generally relies upon the ideas and materials of the time, modern materials and concepts have been used where they assist in the interpretation of the period material. Earlier sources, moreover, have been employed to lend depth to the study, and to provide a preamble to the founding of St. Albert in 1861.

Objectives and Methods

The study deals with the reconstruction of the changing geographies of the St. Albert Settlement from its founding as a mission colony in the vanguard of settlement to its consolidation as a permanent community within the frontier. In historical geographical studies of the western frontier, according to Sauer, three questions must be asked. First,

what was the physical character of the country before the intrusion of man? Second, where and how were the nuclei of settlement established and what was the character of this frontier economy? And third, what successions of settlement and land utilization have taken place? (Sauer in Leighly, 1963, p. 45). In this study an attempt has been made to answer the questions posed by Sauer.

Part I of the thesis is introductory, and hence has been kept separate from Part II, which constitutes the thesis proper. Section A in Part I deals briefly with the physical characteristics of the plains region in which St. Albert is situated. In Section B of Part I, the various human groups on the plains are discussed in terms of settlement and the economy of the plains prior to the founding of St. Albert.

Part II of the thesis considers successions of settlement and land use at St. Albert in the period 1861 to 1882, and has been organized into successive geographic cross-sections. The first cross-section deals with St. Albert in 1861, i.e. with the mission colony in the first year of settlement. The second cross-section provides a picture of the settlement in 1871. The third and final cross-section portrays the settlement in 1882, at which time it is felt the settlement has acquired the characteristics of an established settlement within the frontier. Each cross-section has been formally separated from the next with an account of the changes that take place between the cross-sections. Although the cross-sections in themselves reflect to some extent changing geographical values, they do so only by implication, and according to Darby, inadequately (Darby, 1962, p. 133). Consequently, wrote Clark,

"to stop with the stage-by-stage, cross-sectional reconstructions surely would be to fail in an obvious opportunity, if not a duty, of interpretation" (Clark quoted in Darby, 1962, p. 133). Although the accounts which provide connecting links between the successive views of the cross-sections are chronological, the emphasis of the thesis is on the more essentially geographical cross-sections, i.e. the three geographies of St. Albert (1861, 1871, 1882).

PART I

THE PHYSICAL AND HUMAN MILIEU

The St. Albert Settlement, located nine miles northwest of the present city of Edmonton, Alberta, was founded in 1861 as an Oblate mission colony. The first successful agricultural settlement in present-day Alberta, St. Albert was founded in an attempt to convert métis hunters of the Canadian North-West to a more sedentary way of life, a way of life based upon agriculture rather than the hunt. Prior to the establishment of the colony, agriculture in the Canadian North-West was confined to the Red River Colony and a number of Hudson's Bay Company trading posts. At the company posts, vegetables, and in some instances, wheat and barley, were grown on small plots for the sole purpose of supplying food for the occupants of the posts. As the fur trade was expanded into the North-West, the traders moved further from their bases of supplies and the more important their agricultural endeavour became. The success of the agricultural experiments at the Company posts encouraged the Earl of Selkirk, a Scottish landlord and shareholder in the Company, to establish a colony of Scottish crofters in the Red River valley in 1812. Despite numerous setbacks, the colony by 1859 had a population of roughly 6,500 persons, some of whom were established on the land, but the majority lived from the proceeds of the hunt.

Not until the transfer of Rupert's Land to the Dominion of Canada in 1870 and the subsequent building of the railways, however, was agricultural settlement firmly established in the Canadian North-West. Founded in the vanguard of such settlement, the colony at St. Albert grew up in a period of transition between the North-West of the fur trader and the new North-West of the settler. Since St. Albert in its formative stages possessed many of the characteristics of the two North-Weats, some discussion of the "North-West" is required here.

The term North-West as it was first employed by the Canadian voyageur referred to the great fur region lying to the north and west of Lake Superior (Giraud, 1945, p. 286). It was used to distinguish this region from the area around Lake Michigan, where following the American Revolution the fur trade was abandoned for the more lucrative trade to the north and west. Although its boundaries are difficult to define, "The North-West" comprised the extensive belt of forest which stretches northwestward from near Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains. Bound on the south by prairie and on the north by tundra, "The North-West" for over a century called up a vision of one of the greatest fur regions of the world.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, however, the term North-West was expanded to include the prairie region to the south (Morton, n.d., p. 1). In this connection "The North-West" generally referred to the vast belt of grassland, which following the transfer of Rupert's Land to the Crown in 1870, evoked an image of spacious prairie rapidly evolving into the greatest wheatfield of the new Dominion.

The varying aspects of the two North-Wests, their soils, climate, vegetation, etc., have in many ways affected the living man has carried on in the two regions. With the exception of the portion of the forest region lying on the outer margins of the Canadian Shield, both North-Wests are embraced by the Interior Great Plains of Canada. They are part of the Interior Great Plains of North America which begin near the Gulf of Mexico and extend northwestward in a narrowing belt to the shores of the Arctic Ocean. In the Prairie Provinces of Canada, the plains occupy the area which is bound by the Cordillera on the west and by the Canadian Shield on the northeast. Their southern border is the international boundary, while they extend northward to Alberta's boundary with the Northwest Territories.

For convenience the North-West herein is considered to comprise the plains area of the three Prairie Provinces. The first few pages of Part I deal with the major physical characteristics of the plains. Following this an attempt is made to examine relationships between man and the land, i.e. between human groups on the plains and their environments. The purpose of Part I is to provide an understanding of the overall human and physical milieu in which St. Albert was set.

A. THE ENVIRONMENT

1) Geology and Landform

Consisting of rocks of Paleozoic and later age, the sedimentary formations of the Canadian Great Plains are underlain by a Precambrian basement. The Precambrian is composed of igneous and metamorphic rocks which represent an extension of the neighbouring Canadian Shield, rather than of the less metamorphosed Precambrian sedimentaries of

the Rocky Mountains to the west. Since the basement rock is stable, the sedimentary layers of the plains have departed little from their original horizontal position and thereby impart to the plains the generally flat appearance that is their distinguishing characteristic.

The very gentle slope of the Canadian plains from the foothills of the Rockies to the Mackenzie valley in the northwest, and to Lake Winnipeg in the southeast, is the most general feature of their relief. The gradient is so uniform, however, that in very few locations is their relief attributable to the bedrock. A major exception is the Manitoba Escarpment, which faces the Manitoba Lowland and rises 500 feet to 1,000 feet above it (Wickenden, in Stockwell, 1957, p. 249). Many minor depressions and uplands are found on the plains as well, the most conspicuous of which are the deeply entrenched river valleys and a number of prominent hills. The hills comprise flat-topped erosional remnants which stand well above the surrounding plain. The Cypress Hills of Alberta and Saskatchewan rise 1,200 feet above the prairie land, while others have a relief of 200 to 600 feet (Loc.cit.). These include the Hand Hills, Watt and Caribou Mountains, Wood and Turtle Mountain, Milk River Ridge and the Missouri Coteau. In contrast to the hills, most of the major rivers and their tributaries have incised deep valleys below the level of the plain. In some areas valleys that contained larger streams are now dry or are occupied only by minor or intermittent streams, or by remnants of lakes. In a number of areas where climate has inhibited the growth of protective vegetation and streams have cut into the softer rocks, small sections of deeply dissected "badland" topography have resulted.

Although almost all of the plains have been glaciated, the topography of the plains today is much the same as it was immediately before glaciation (Gravenor, and Bayrock, in Leggett, 1961, p.33). The major exceptions are the thin veneer of glacial deposits which cover most of the plains, and the modifications to the drainage systems caused by the glaciers. Relief is almost imperceptible in areas of glacio-alluvial and glacio-lacustrine deposition, although in areas of morainic deposition an uneven topography sometimes results. The large number of glacial meltwater channels that drained the proglacial lakes are conspicuous features of the landscape, and occur throughout most of the plains.

2) Climate and Vegetation

The northern portion of the plains is covered by forest which occupies a broad zone between regions that are too cold and too dry to support the growth of trees (see Fig. 1). To the north the forest becomes stunted and patchy, beyond which lies the treeless tundra. To the south the forest thins out into parkland. In the northern portions of the parkland the forest is broken only by occasional patches of grassland on the drier sites. As the prairies are approached, the percentage of forest cover diminishes until it occupies only small, isolated groves, and is finally restricted to north and east facing slopes and depressions where more moisture is available. South of the parkland lies a virtually continuous sea of grasses. Here trees occur only in river valleys or in isolated areas where extra ground water supports their growth.

All three regions, the prairie, parkland and forest, experience a continental climate which is characterized by relatively low annual pre-

FOREST REGIONS OF THE PRAIRIE PROVINCES

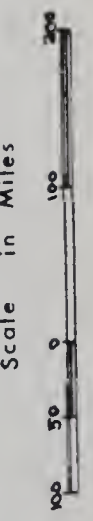
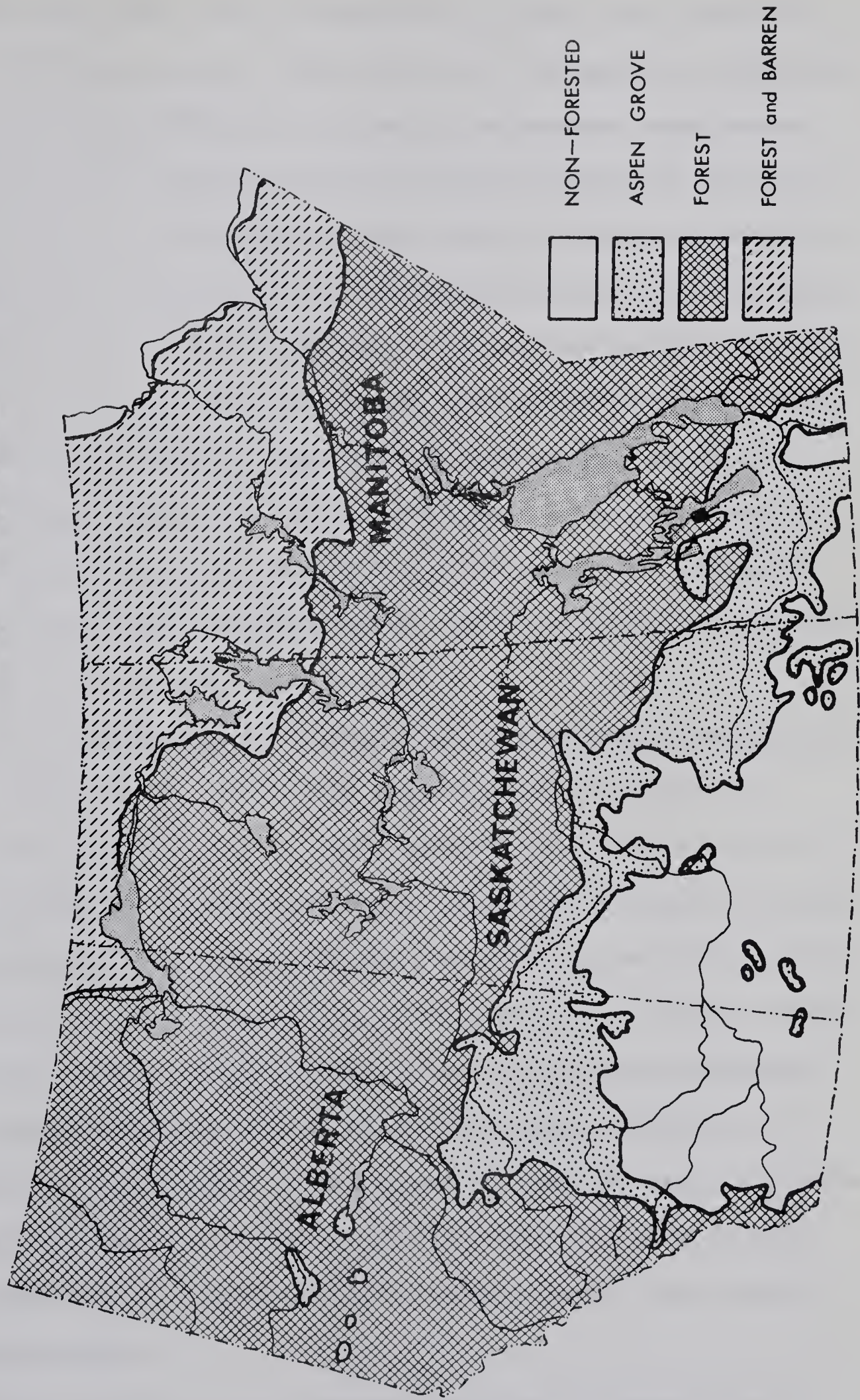


FIGURE 1.

Source: Atlas of Canada, 1957.

precipitation and a wide range in temperature. Within this framework, however, striking regional differences occur. In general, annual isotherms trend from northwest to southeast, the warmest temperatures being found in the southwest and the coldest in the north and east. This trend is most pronounced in winter while in summer temperature gradients from north to south are remarkably shallow. The frost free period varies from less than 70 days in the extreme northwest to more than 120 days in portions of the south. Annual precipitation varies from less than 12 inches to more than 20 inches within the plains. The least amount falls in southeastern Alberta and southern Saskatchewan. Most of the precipitation falls during the warm half of the year. Because of the low temperatures, that which falls in winter is nearly all in the form of snow.

In the grassland area, average annual precipitation ranges from about 12 inches to 15 inches. The grassland area, moreover, is characterized by high rates of evapotranspiration, frequent hot, dry winds and prolonged periods of drought. Grasses can adapt to drought conditions better than trees, and the precipitation, which is concentrated in the growing season, is used directly by the grasses. In the grasslands, however, little moisture from precipitation penetrates beyond grass root depth, and insufficient moisture, therefore, is available for tree growth. Where shrubs and trees do occur, they draw their moisture from telluric and riparian ground water, or in areas where large amounts of snow collect in winter, rather than directly from precipitation.

In the parkland, average annual precipitation ranges from 16

inches to 18 inches. Precipitation then increases to about 20 inches in the forest region, only to decrease to about 14 inches in northwestern Alberta where in places parkland vegetation again occurs. Over both parkland and forest, however, the rates of evapotranspiration decrease and hot winds become increasingly rare. The greater incidence of lower temperatures and of cloudiness compensate for the marginal precipitation and make available sufficient moisture for tree growth (Moss, 1955, p. 498). Where precipitation is from 16 to 18 inches and evapotranspiration is lower than to the south, trees have invaded the grassland in the places where moisture conditions are most favourable. Here the scene is park-like, and is characterized by isolated bluffs of trees which generally become more numerous toward the north. The trees in the parkland are primarily deciduous, since they are better adapted to less moisture. Further to the north, where evapotranspiration is lower still, the forest cover is continuous and composed primarily of conifers.

3) Soils

In the areas where average annual precipitation is less than 13 inches, brown soils have developed under a cover of short grass prairie. In the normal brown soil profile the Ah horizon is about 5 inches deep and the lime horizon is found at depths averaging 16 inches below the surface. Where precipitation is between 13 and 15 inches and evapotranspiration is still fairly high, a mixed grass prairie of taller growth and denser cover has developed. Under these conditions the soils are dark brown, and have an Ah horizon which averages about 7 inches and a lime horizon at depths between 18 and 24 inches. Moisture is the major factor limiting crop production in the areas of brown and dark brown soils.

In the areas of parkland vegetation, a black soil which is transitional to thin black in the south of the parkland has developed. The Ah horizon of these soils varies from 10 inches in the thin black to 12 to 14 inches in the black. Lime horizons correspondingly vary from 20 to 30 inches in the thin black to 24 to 40 inches below the surface in the black. The black soil zone is the most fertile in the plains.

The soils in the forest region have developed under primarily coniferous vegetation. The surface horizons consist of an Ah and an Ahe horizon, as well as a leaf litter. The total depth of the surface horizons averages between 8 and 12 inches. They vary from almost black in the south to light grey in the north, and because they are somewhat leached, they are less fertile than the soils to the south. Lime horizons in the forest soils are found at depths ranging from 30 to 50 inches.

4) Animal Life

Since the distribution of mammals and other forms of wildlife is basically controlled by climate and other physical conditions (Soper, 1964; p. 31), the major geographical regions in the plains area possess more or less distinct groupings of animal and plant life. In the plains area, the forest region coincides with the western portion of the Canadian Life Zone, a faunal life zone which in Canada contains most of the valuable fur bearers and a high percentage of the big game animals. Since the region is interspersed with lakes, marshes and streams, the forest is the natural home of the Canada beaver, marten, mink, muskrat, as well as a number of other fur-bearing animals. The most important big game animals are moose, deer, woodland caribou, black bear and woods bison.

Coinciding with the parkland and the grasslands are the Transition Parklands and the Transition Prairie, which together comprise the Transition Life Zone (Loc.cit.). As the name implies, many of the animals of the Canadian Life Zone range into the northern portions of the Transition Life Zone. They include many of the fur-bearers and such big game animals as the moose. Over the Transition Life Zone as a whole, however, grasslands predominate over areas of deciduous woodland, and campestrian species assume a leading rôle. Most important in the past were buffalo, deer, and American prong-horned antelope. The deer is by far the most dominant today, the antelope being restricted to a few areas in the southern plains and the buffalo to a number of provincial parks.

B. HUMAN OCCUPANCE

1) The Indians

Scattered throughout the Canadian Great Plains were thousands of aborigines or "Indians," nomads who lived almost entirely by the hunt. Their numbers prior to the coming of the white man are almost impossible to compute. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, it was estimated that they numbered about 50,000 (Simpson, Sir George, quoted in Stanley, 1963, p. 3). The aborigines comprised three great linguistic groups - the Algonkin, the Athapascan and the Siouan, each of which was split into a number of tribes and sub-tribes. The Algonkin included the Crees, the Blackfoot, the Bloods and the Piegiens; the Athapascan included the Sarcees and a number of more northern tribes, while the Siouan were represented in Canadian territory by the Assiniboines, and occasionally by a few wandering Sioux.

Despite their language affiliations, the Indians of the plains

are normally divided into two groups. To the south were the Plains Indians, so-called because they inhabited the grasslands. In the north, where the way of life was somewhat different, lived the Indians of the forest region, i.e. the Woods Indians. The Plains Indians were by far the most numerous of the two, and generally the more warlike. Their livelihood, moreover, was much less precarious, since game was more abundant in the grasslands than in the forest. Whole bands of Plains Indians were frequently found in temporary villages, and when pursuing the hunt or on the war-path they usually travelled in large parties. In the forest region, on the other hand, the food supply did not admit of such large encampments and considerable assemblages of Woods Indians were found only in times of war or on festive occasions. The Woods Indians normally hunted in small groups, which in the leaner years might not amount to more than the single family.

Among the Plains tribes, the Assiniboines were the most easterly. Having moved from the timber country around Lake of the Woods in the eighteenth century, they split into two main branches, one of which lived on the edge of the forest northwest of Lake Winnipeg, while the other was centred about the Assiniboine River to the southwest. With the acquisition of horses and firearms about the middle of the eighteenth century, the Assiniboines, or Stonies as they are often called, shifted their centres further west at the expense of their Blackfoot enemies. By the 1860s, they had spread as far west as the foothills of the Rockies.

The strongest and most aggressive nation on the prairies by the middle of the eighteenth century was the Blackfoot (Jenness, 1963, p. 317). United in a loose federation, they were made up of the Blackfoot

proper, the Bloods and the Piegans. The southernmost, or Piegans, were nearly as numerous as the other two combined. The territory of the Confederacy stretched from the Rocky Mountains well into Saskatchewan, and from near the North Saskatchewan River to the headwaters of the Missouri. To the southeast of the Blackfoot were the Gros Ventres, who toward the end of the eighteenth century retreated south into American territory. To the north and northeast of the Blackfoot were the Assiniboines and Plains Crees, often friendly towards the Blackfoot in the middle of the eighteenth century, inveterate foes at its close. The Plains Crees, before they acquired firearms and horses, comprised only small bands in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. With the firearms, and joined by other Crees and Assiniboines, they spread over the parkland areas of Alberta, and raided far into Blackfoot territory to the south. On the west of the Blackfoot were the Kootenay and Salish of British Columbia. They frequently crossed the Rockies in search of buffalo and were enemies of the Blackfoot as well. To the northwest of the Blackfoot were the insignificant Sarcees. Though Athapascan speakers, they allied themselves with the Blackfoot and would have been annihilated had they not sought shelter in the Confederacy. On their southern margins were a number of American tribes as hostile to the Blackfoot as the Assiniboine and the Cree. The Blackfoot, then, were enemies of all save the little tribe of Sarcees, and well deserved the title so often ascribed to them - the Ishmaels of the prairies.

In historical times, the tribes of the Blackfoot Confederacy lived the typical life of the Plains Indian, moving their camps from place to place with the movements of the migratory buffalo. Of the different animals providing food for the Plains Indians, and many of the other

necessities of life as well, the buffalo was without rival. Buffalo hides covered the conical teepees of the Plains tribes, the sinews of the buffalo were made into bow strings, but most important, the buffalo was the staple source of food. In historic times, this extreme specialization was accentuated by the acquisition, first of the horse, then of firearms, which greatly facilitated buffalo hunting. The buffalo roamed the plains in countless thousands, and though no one is certain of the exact numbers, there appear to have been about twenty million buffalo in the Canadian plains in 1850 (Leechman, n.d., p.107). In the early days they were in all probability even more numerous.

Buffalo were supplemented by deer and antelope, which frequented the grasslands in large herds, and occasionally by smaller game. The only plant foods eaten by the Plains Indians in any quantity were the various berries, certain of which were a standard ingredient in the pemmican made by all the Plains tribes. Although they were generally poorly stocked with fish, all the major streams of the prairies contained fish of some description or other. The fish were not eaten, however, more because they were not considered worthwhile than as a result of a definite taboo (Driver, 1964, p. 29). Certain Plains tribes, such as the Assiniboines and Plains Crees, secured moose, beaver, bear and porcupine because of their proximity to the forests. Their existence as a whole, however, depended on the buffalo.

The most important of the Woods tribes was that of the Woodland Crees. Expanding north and west of Lake Winnipeg following the introduction of firearms by the fur traders, the Woodland Crees gained control of most of northern Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta, and pushed as far north as the southeastern portion of the Great Slave

Lake area. Their further expansion was checked by smallpox and the acquisition of firearms by other tribes.

The game most desired by the Woodland Crees was moose and woodland caribou, of which the moose was the most important. Other animals which were hunted for food were bear, beaver, porcupine and deer, but owing to the relative scarcity of these animals, the various bands subsisted in winter principally on rabbits (Jenness, 1963, p. 285). Because of the cyclical increase and decrease in the rabbit population, however, many of the natives starved in winter. In the leaner years, cannibalism was not unheard of. Winter famines were common among the Woods Indians, often taking the form of fat starvation which resulted from eating mainly lean meat (Driver, 1964, p. 25).

Birds constituted only a minor part of the diet. Ducks and geese were secured in autumn and ptarmigan and grouse in winter. Plant foods were limited, with berries outranking greens, roots and seeds, although all of these were occasionally eaten. Fishing among the eastern Woodland Indians was almost as important as hunting, but the Crees would have little to do with it. Their women fished a little, however, using woven traps or fish fences; but generally the Crees, who were among the most skillful hunters on the continent, scorned the other tribes, such as the Chipewyans, for resorting to fishing.

2) The Fur Companies and the Trade

The fur trade was considered of the first importance from the time of the earliest settlement in Canada. The profits derived from furs provided the main incentive for exploration, which was pursued in order to extend the trade among the various Indian tribes. Shortly after the founding of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1670, the business of the fur

trade was introduced among the Indians of the North-West. By 1675 the Hudson's Bay Company had five factories or trading posts established on the shores of Hudson Bay, and as early as 1690, Henry Kelsey was despatched inland in an attempt to draw the more remote tribes to the trading posts on the Bay. Kelsey travelled as far south as present-day southeastern Saskatchewan, and arrived back at Hudson Bay with what he called "a good fleet of Indians" (Kelsey, quoted in Morton, n.d., p. 113).

While the English were drawing the Indians to Hudson Bay, the French were pushing up the St. Lawrence valley and the Great Lakes. Dulhut is said to have built a post on Lake Superior about 1678. Ten years later De Noyer reached what is now called Lake of the Woods, but the man who really opened the door to the North-West was Pierre Gaultier, Sieur de la Vérendrye. In 1732 La Vérendrye built Fort Charles on Lake of the Woods, and between that date and 1743, built a number of posts in Manitoba, including Fort Rouge on the site of the present city of Winnipeg. Through the gateway opened by La Vérendrye came the French fur traders, who by 1743 were in active competition with the Hudson's Bay Company. Until that time the Hudson's Bay Company had confined its trading operations to the shore of Hudson Bay. But in 1743 the Company made its first advance inland by effecting a settlement at Fort Henley, located about 150 miles up the Albany River. Here they hoped to intercept the Indians who were then beginning to carry their furs to the French. In 1754-55 Anthony Henday was sent out by the Hudson's Bay Company to dissuade the Indians of the interior from trading with the French, and to encourage them to continue taking their furs to Hudson Bay. He was followed in 1772 by Matthew Cocking, who made a similar journey.

Following the surrender of New France to General Amherst in 1760, a new period in the fur trade of the St. Lawrence was inaugurated. From their newly-won base in Montreal, English and Scottish merchants, like their French predecessors, endeavoured to push the trade to the far west, irrespective of any claims by the Hudson's Bay Company. By 1768 the free traders, or the pedlars as they were called, had pushed as far into the Company's territories as Portage du Traite on the Churchill River. Ten years later they reached the Athabaska River, and with the assistance of the French voyageurs, who were everywhere in their service, they commenced to tap the Hudson's Bay Company's trade at most of its sources. This forced the Hudson's Bay Company to abandon its century-old practice of "sleeping by the Bay." Henceforth it too had to send men into the interior and compete for furs on the spot.

In the winter of 1783-84, competing interests among the pedlars joined forces to form the North-West Company. Spurred on by a bitter commercial rivalry, both the newly-formed North-West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company pushed further and further into Indian country. Within the space of ten years the whole region from Lake Superior to Lake Athabaska and from Hudson Bay to the Rocky Mountains was dotted with rival trading posts. It is estimated that by 1800 the two companies had from 1,500 to 2,000 white men permanently in the North-West (Stanley, 1963, p. 5). In the years that followed, the decline in furs throughout the North-West together with the growing effectiveness of Hudson's Bay Company competition, led to hostilities between the two companies (Innis, 1964, p. 263). After a period of almost open warfare, the rival companies eventually united under the name of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821.

Following the union of the companies the wild race to build trading posts ceased. The forts occupying strategic positions remained in situ, while the smaller posts were moved from time to time as the supply of furs demanded. The policy of the newly-reorganized Company was to keep the posts further apart and to force upon the Indians the burden of bringing in their furs to trade.

East of the Rockies, the most productive of the Company's districts was the Saskatchewan district. Prior to the union of the fur companies, it comprised roughly the area drained by the two Saskatchewan river systems. Following the union it was enlarged to include Jasper House on present-day Jasper Lake, Fort Assiniboine on the Athabaska and the Lesser Slave Lake. The major posts in the district were located along the North Saskatchewan River, where transportation was easier and less costly than in the districts to the north. The posts along the Saskatchewan were able to tap the furs of the great forest region from its southern edge, which accounted for the abundant supplies of beaver taken in by the posts on the Saskatchewan. And from the prairies to the south, they gathered in the great masses of pemmican which provisioned the brigades for the north, and the boats running from Lake Winnipeg to York Factory. Fort Carlton, for example, was favourably situated to gather in the furs of the wooded region to the north and the pemmican of the prairies to the south (see Fig. 2). Carlton was also the natural point of departure for the supplies of pemmican needed at Ile à la Crosse. Fort à la Corne provided pemmican as well as furs from the upper waters of the Carrot River, and Fort Pitt, located near the wintering ground of the buffalo, furnished pemmican and fresh meat in the winter season. Fort Edmonton, however, was the busiest post in the district during the

LOCATION MAP



FIGURE 2.

nineteenth century. For this reason, as well as for the rôle it played in the early development of the St. Albert Settlement, it deserves more detailed description here.

Aside from securing its own furs and pemmican, Fort Edmonton was the headquarters of the Saskatchewan District and served as a major bulk-break point on the Company's continental trade route. According to Morton, its transport functions began in late September or early October with the arrival of the boat brigade from York Factory (Morton, n.d., p. 699). The goods brought in by the brigade were made up into "outfits," which were assembled as quickly as possible, since they had to reach destinations as far away as Fort Vancouver before the ice formed. The first outfit to leave Edmonton was that for Jasper House and the districts of New Caledonia and Columbia. The outfit was sent by pack-horse overland from Edmonton to Fort Assiniboine on the Athabaska, for which purpose the Company normally had about 400 horses in the horse-guard at Edmonton. From Fort Assiniboine the goods eventually made their way through the Yellowhead and Athabaska Passes to Fort Vancouver and Fort George respectively, as well as to a number of smaller posts in the two districts. The next outfit to leave Edmonton went to the Lesser Slave Lake post. The same route to Fort Assiniboine was employed, following which the goods were transferred to boats and sent down the Athabaska River, and then up the Lesser Slave Lake River to their destination. Finally, the outfit for Rocky Mountain House was sent up the North Saskatchewan River by boat from Edmonton.

In the spring, trains of horses arrived at Edmonton from Fort Assiniboine. They carried valuable furs of all sorts, including beaver, otter, mink, marten, muskrat, lynx, fox and bear, all of which were

derived from the winter's trade at Fort Assiniboine, Lesser Slave Lake, Jasper House and the districts of Columbia and New Caledonia. The boats from Rocky Mountain House arrived about the same time with dried and pounded meat, dressed leather and wolf skins. The incoming furs were inspected, packed and loaded into boats for the long journey to York Factory. The brigade was despatched about the middle of May and with it went most of the men from Fort Edmonton.

Following 1846 the transcontinental trade route via the North Saskatchewan and Edmonton became decreasingly important. In that year the Oregon Territory, or the lower Columbia region, was ceded to the United States, and by about 1855, trade with the Pacific coast had developed via Cape Horn (Ockley, 1932, p. 23). Edmonton, in consequence, lost many of its functions as a bulk-break point on the Company's trade routes and a sizeable part of its hinterland.

Captain John Palliser, who visited Fort Edmonton a few years prior to the founding of St. Albert in 1861, found it the largest post of the Saskatchewan, containing a population of about 40 men, 30 women and 80 children (Palliser, 1863, p. 116). Palliser noted that "few fine furs" were traded at Edmonton, and that these were brought in mainly by the métis from Lac Ste. Anne (Loc.cit.). A description of the Edmonton fur trade in somewhat more detail is provided in the Company's 1862 Edmonton Report.

There are very few Thickwood Indians who belong to, or trade at Edmonton, the few fine furs collected here are got from Halfbreeds and Assiniboines, who hunt between Edmonton and the Athabaska River. When buffalo are within reach a good trade of robes and other plain furs and provisions are made at this post (Edmonton Report, 1862).

Writing of the Indians and their trade at Edmonton in 1846, Paul Kane

gives us further insight into the nature of the trade.

Seven of the most important and most warlike tribes on the continent are in constant communication with the fort which is situated in the country of the Assiniboines and the Crees, and is visited at least twice in the year by Blackfeet, Sarcees, Gros-Vents, Pay-gans and Blood Indians, who come to sell the dried buffalo meat and fat for making pemmican which is prepared in large quantities for the supply of other posts (Kane, 1925, p. 256).

Fort Edmonton in the late 1850s provisioned the boat brigades of the Saskatchewan as well as the nearby posts with the dried meat, buffalo tongues and pemmican derived from its trade. Palliser mentions that "...great quantities of provisions are traded here; it is the principal depôt for provisions, as the several brigades of boats are most provisioned from this post (Palliser, 1863, p. 116). Not only were the brigades provisioned at Edmonton, but most of the boats were built there as well. Kane describes the work of the men in winter as "consisting chiefly in building boats for the trade" (Kane, 1925, p.93). The boats, or York boats as they were called, were constructed from logs which were rafted down the North Saskatchewan from the more heavily wooded areas upstream from the fort (Hector in Palliser, 1863, p. 74).

Buffalo meat and white fish comprised the major items in the diet of the people at Fort Edmonton. On his arrival at Fort Edmonton in the winter of 1846, the intrepid Jesuit traveller, Father de Smet, noted that "...the icehouse contained 30,000 white fish weighing four pounds each and 500 buffalos, the ordinary amount of the winter provisions" (Chittenden and Richardson, 1905, p. 532). In 1847 Kane wrote that "...the buffalo ranged in thousands near the fort" (Kane, 1925, p. 256). In Palliser's time (1857-60), however, the buffalo in the vicinity of the fort were apparently much less numerous. He mentions that buffalo

meat was still the staple food at the fort, but because it had to be transported "for sometimes of upwards of 250 miles across the plains" was the source of much expense (Palliser, 1863, p. 116). White fish, according to Palliser, were obtained from the Company's fall fishery at Lac Ste. Anne, where 30,000 to 40,000 pounds were gotten annually (Loc. cit.).

Writing of agriculture in general in the Company's territory, Morton makes the claim that "On the whole, the Hudson's Bay Company took...Rupert's Land as far, or nearly as far, along the road of agriculture as the geographical and climatic conditions and the unskilled labour of the country admitted" (Morton, n.d., p. 639). Toward the end of Company rule, Hector reported that "nine-tenths of the little flour that is consumed in the Saskatchewan is brought either from Red River or all the way from England" (Hector in Palliser, 1863, p. 72). Of agriculture at Fort Edmonton Palliser wrote that there was very little "...owing partly to the want of acquaintance with even the leading principles of agriculture and principally from the disinclination of both men and women to work steadily at any agricultural occupation" (Palliser, 1863, p. 116). Kane gives us some idea of the kinds of crops in the Company's farm at Edmonton in 1847, and the degree to which they were successful.

The potatoes are very fine, and the turnips do well here. Of wheat..., with very indifferent farming they manage to get from 20 to 25 bushels per acre. The crop, however, is sometimes destroyed by early frost. The corn [i.e. wheat] is ground in a windmill...and seemed to make very good flour (Kane, 1925, p. 256).

3) The Métis

While the employees of the fur companies were plying their trade among the Indians of the North-West, it was inevitable that these men,

living in a society so far removed from their own, should form unions with the Indian women of the plains. When Henry Kelsey arrived back at Hudson Bay with an Indian woman in 1692, he only began among the Hudson's Bay Company employees what had been common practice among the French traders since the early days of Canadian history (Stanley, 1963, p.5). Though the Hudson's Bay Company was at first opposed to unions between company servants and the native women, marriages of this sort were later favoured as being helpful to the trade. The Nor'-Westers, on the other hand, encouraged such relations from the beginning. The voyageurs with their squaws and families, for example, were supported at the North-West Company posts, and frequently, the bourgeois of the posts made alliances with the daughters of the Indian chiefs (Morton, n.d., p.349). Although some of these marriages proved permanent, the majority were only temporary, often ending with the woman returning to her tribe or the man moving on to another post. Few, however, were disadvantageous to the trade, for they had a steadying effect upon the men and usually led to better trade relations between the companies and the tribes concerned. The companies, of course, were well aware of this, which is evidenced in at least one case where the daughter of a chief was formally installed in the bourgeois' quarters for the purpose of securing the trade of a hostile tribe (Ibid., p. 351)..

From this intermingling of fur traders and Indians, there developed in the North-West a distinct group of people variously known as half-breeds, *métis* or *bois brulés*. With few exceptions, the *métis* were the descendants of either Scottish or, more commonly, French Canadian fathers, since the employees of the fur companies were generally drawn from Scotland and Quebec. A majority of *métis* were the offspring of the

Canadian voyageur, servants of the North-West Company whose ability to adapt themselves to the habits and peculiarities of the various tribes rendered them more popular in the eyes of the Indians than the men from Scotland. On their mother's side, the majority of the métis were Cree in ancestry, although even Blackfoot and Sioux métis were not unheard of (Lacombe, n.d., p.131). Of the various tribes of the North-West, however, the Crees were most frequently in contact with the traders and the friendliest toward them.

In the century following the penetration of the North-West by the fur traders the métis increased rapidly in numbers. Little is known of their population in the early days, but in 1871, Captain Butler, who was sent out by the Federal Government to report on conditions in the North-West Territories, estimated that there were about 2,000 métis living "along the Saskatchewan River line between Red River and the Rockies" (Butler, 1876, p. 385). The Bishop of St. Albert, Vital Grandin, estimated that in 1871 "...à partir du fort Ellice jusqu'à l'extrémité du district d'Edmonton sur la Saskatchewan il y a au moins 4,000 Métis Canadiens-français" (Grandin, n.d., Vol. 6, p. 168). The Honourable D. Laird, Lieutenant Governor of the North-West Territories, estimated that there were about 5,000 métis living within his jurisdiction in 1878 (Laird, December 20, 1878). By 1890, it is estimated that there were more than 12,000 métis living in Manitoba and the North-West Territories (Lacombe, n.d., p. 133).

Although it is difficult to determine the exact numbers of métis, there is no doubt that next to the Indians, the métis by 1850 comprised the most populous group in the North-West. According to Stanley, "they developed a resolute feeling of independence and a keen sense of their

own identity which led them to regard themselves as a separate racial and national group" (Stanley, 1963, p. 10). The métis of the North-West, unlike the mixed blood progeny of Quebec and Acadia, were cut off from "white" civilization by distance and by the policy of the Hudson's Bay Company. And their social and powerful military organization enabled them to keep separate from the Indians of the Canadian Great Plains (Trémaudan, 1935, p. 47).

Not all of the métis were the offspring simply of Indian mothers and "white" fathers. As time passed there were persons who had varying amounts of either Indian or "white" blood in their veins, while there was a tendency for the métis to intermarry among themselves. By 1859-60, the Earl of Southesk, on his trip through the North-West, was able to remark that "...in the Company's domains there are grandfathers of mixed blood whose own grandfathers were half-breeds" (Southesk, 1875, p. 153). The term métis, as the métis used it themselves, and as it was employed throughout the North-West, did not refer specifically to the mixed-blood progeny resulting from unions between full-blooded Indian women and full-blooded whites. Rather, the term was applied as follows:

In this country in fact, the name applies to all who have Indian blood in a greater or less degree. This is the general accoption [sic.] of the term, and, in this sense nine-tenths or more of the civilized people of Rupert's land are "Halfbreeds" (The Nor'-Wester, Oct. 22, 1862).

For this reason the term half-breed should be abandoned, as well as the less frequently used "bois brulé," for the latter translated literally means "burnt wood," in reference, it seems, to the dark skin colour of the métis. The term métis, on the other hand, comes from the Spanish word mestizo, derived itself from the Latin, mixtus, which signifies mixed (Trémaudan, 1935, p. 46), and more aptly describes the people of

mixed blood with whom we are concerned. The English word half-breed, in the strict sense of the word, should be applied only to the first generation métis of the North-West.

Father Albert Lacombe, who for over forty years lived and worked among the métis, and who himself had Indian blood in his veins, provides us perhaps with one of the more reliable descriptions of the métis.

The Métis speaks his mother's tongue fluently and often other Indian dialects as well. The Métis has to a higher degree the qualities as well as the faults of the Indian. They are fickle and unstable. From their mothers they have inherited the want of foresight for the necessities of life which is so characteristic of the Indian who lives from day to day. As to physical traits by the third generation typically Indian traits have disappeared, at least with regard to complexion and certain facial traits but with regard to morals progress is not so rapid (Lacombe, n.d., p. 134).

Because of their feats of endurance, their often reckless abandon and their ready affiliation with the Indian ways, the métis were held to be superior for the arduous work required in the fur trade. At one time the North-West Company, and the Hudson's Bay Company following the union of the companies, had over 2,000 of this unique class of employees in their service (Begg, 1894, p. 162). In general, the métis in the Company's employ provisioned the posts with meat or served as voyageurs or part-time trip men with the canoe or York boat brigades. Not all of the métis, however, were employees of the Company, for among them from the very beginning were the so-called "hommes libres" or freemen. The freemen, unlike the métis servants of the fur companies, led a nomadic way of life, depending for their very existence upon their own resourcefulness and the vagaries of the hunt and the fisheries. Writing of the freemen in 1870-71, Captain Butler commented that

...if freedom from all restraint, general inaptitude for settled employment, and love for the pursuits of hunting

be the characteristics of free men, then they are eminently suited to the name they bear. With very few exceptions they have preferred adopting the exciting but precarious means of living, the chase, to following the more certain methods of agriculture. Almost the entire summer is spent by them upon the plains, where they carry on the pursuit of buffalo in large and well organized bands, bringing the produce of their hunt to trade with the Hudson's Bay Company. In winter they generally reside at their settlements, going to the nearer plains in small parties and dragging in the frozen buffalo meat for the supply of the Company's posts (Butler, 1876, p. 361).

One result of the amalgamation of the fur companies in 1821 was that there were nearly twice as many men in the service as were required. Large numbers of métis, in consequence, were retired from the Company's service. (Morton, n.d., p. 631). Since it was a condition of the Selkirk grant that one-tenth of the land be set aside for persons who had been in the Company's employ for a term of not less than three years, many of the Company's unemployed made their way to Red River. Of the métis who took up land in the colony, few made any attempt at farming. Those who did, farmed on a small scale, and combined their agricultural endeavours with those of the hunt. In general, the métis of Scottish and English descent took more readily to agriculture than the métis of French descent, who tended to prefer the excitement of the chase to the monotony of tilling the soil (Stanley, 1963, p. 9).

From the time when the North-West Company first began using pemmican to supply its canoe brigades, the largest source of pemmican had been in the area of the Red and Pembina Rivers. Following the union in 1821, pemmican was manufactured there in enormous quantities for the Hudson's Bay Company. And as the population increased in the Red River Colony, larger and larger buffalo hunts were engaged in by

the métis of the colony. The fall hunt near Pembina Mountain in 1840 numbered 1630 métis, and was described at that time as being the largest hunt in the world (Merriam, 1955, p. 37). To many of the métis, the hunt was as much a necessity as it had been tradition, and the hunts of Red River provided an almost certain means of livelihood. For the amount of labour required, moreover, they offered inducements far superior to those from agriculture. Thus, a large percentage of the people at Red River followed the chase, presenting the interesting anomaly of an apparently sedentary community subsisting by pursuits common to a nomadic life.

Not all of the métis cast off by the Company went to Red River, however. Many continued to live in the vicinity of the various posts where they sometimes managed to obtain part-time employment. Others hired on as trip men when the Company brigades set off for Hudson Bay, although fewer men were required at this occupation, since the York boat gradually replaced the canoe in most of the Company's districts. Others, for whom life was nomadic, but not continuously so, simply camped near forts where relatives were working. The majority, however, lacking any particular ties, joined the ranks of the freemen. They became trappers of fur, buffalo hunters and fishermen, moving about according to whatever opportunities of subsistence they might come upon. Some of these freemen began to congregate periodically in small settlements, such as those at Qu'Appelle Lakes, or at Lac Ste. Anne, west of Edmonton, where there were good fisheries. The freemen lived on the fish, and traded the fruits of the hunt and the trap line at the Company's posts. Later, when the missionaries first appeared in the North-West, the freemen were encouraged to cultivate small gardens to ensure themselves against

the all too frequent periods of scarcity.

4) The Missionaries and the Spread of Missions

In 1817, by petition to Mgr. Plessis, Bishop of Quebec, the Earl of Selkirk requested that Roman Catholic missionaries be sent to the Red River Settlement (Trémaudan, 1935, p. 113). In the summer of the following year, Fathers Provencher and Dumoulin, the first missionaries to appear in the North-West, arrived at Red River and began the task of religious instruction in the colony. Shortly after their arrival, the colony grew rapidly in numbers, and by 1822, the Diocese of Juliopolis, later called St. Boniface, was established. The almost immediate success of the Church at St. Boniface did not have its counterpart elsewhere in the North-West, although as part of the Diocese of St. Boniface, the entire North-West came under the jurisdiction of Bishop Provencher. Though Bishop Provencher had as his aim the evangelization of the métis and Indians, not only at St. Boniface, but throughout the North-West, the lack of personnel and financial resources long delayed its realization (Giraud, 1945, p. 1063). Not until 1842, in fact, did the first Catholic missionary appear as far west as Fort Edmonton. Protestant missionaries, on the other hand, had reached the Rockies by 1840.

Of particular interest to Bishop Provencher was the evangelization of the métis, since he considered the majority to be ostensibly Roman Catholic. Except for those who had settled at St. Boniface, or in the few colonies in its vicinity, none of the métis of the North-West had been reached by Catholic missionaries. In 1838, however, the factor at Fort Edmonton requested the services of a Catholic priest for the large group of freemen camped about the fort. Almost all were French métis and many were without food. Their idleness, as well as the use of

liquor among them, prompted Factor Rowand, himself a Catholic, to send for a priest, which he felt would help ease the situation. Rowand, however, failed to secure a priest, for difficulties were encountered with Governor Simpson, and transportation in the Company's boats was refused.

Without the co-operation of the Company, there was the possibility that evangelization of the French métis might occur at the hands of the Anglicans and the Wesleyans. Equally possible, they might, as some had done already, take to the pagan religions of their maternal ancestors. Large numbers of the French métis, however, had not entirely abandoned the religion of their white forefathers. And among these people the Catholic priest was held with an esteem ascribed to those who possess supernatural powers (Loc. cit.). He inspired a confidence that the Protestant missionary, less familiar with métis customs and stranger to their language, could not arouse. These dispositions were manifest when a métis from the Saskatchewan district appeared in St. Boniface, asking for the services of a priest among the métis of his district. Shortly thereafter, Rowand again requested a priest, and Bishop Provencher despatched Father Thibault in 1842 on a reconnaissance of the Saskatchewan country.

Thibault travelled on horseback as far as Fort Edmonton, and on his return reported to Bishop Provencher. On the basis of his report, the decision was made to establish a mission, which was to be located near Fort Pitt because of its centrality. Following a fierce battle between the Crees and the Blackfoot near Fort Pitt, however, it was decided that a new location must be found. In the summer of 1843, Father Thibault again travelled to Edmonton and this time decided to

establish his mission at Devil's Lake (Lac Ste. Anne), some 40 miles west-northwest of Edmonton. The founding of the Mission at Devil's Lake can be considered as the first successful step taken toward the establishment of Catholicism west of St. Boniface. Father Thibault's efforts, however, were only a prelude to the missionary activity that was soon to follow, for it was the introduction of Oblate missionaries into Rupert's Land only two years later that gave the first real impetus to Catholic missionary endeavour in the North-West.

Founded in 1816 at Aix en Provence in France, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (O.M.I.) had for their motto Evangelizare pauperibus misit me. Their purpose was the evangelization of the poor and the most neglected (Legal, n.d., p. 12). The Oblates arrived at Red River in 1845 and in 1847 opened their first mission at Ile à la Crosse. The arrival of additional Oblates soon afterwards permitted the opening of missions still further afield. Father Faraud, for instance, reached Great Slave Lake in 1851, where in 1856 he opened the mission of St. Joseph. In 1853 Father Rémas founded the mission at Lac la Biche, while in 1861 the St. Albert Mission was established by Father Lacombe. By this time the Grey Nuns had made their appearance in the North-West. Caring for the sick and the orphans, these Sisters of Charity did much to lend an air of permanency to the newly established Oblate missions. Having come to St. Boniface in 1844, they were sent to Lac Ste. Anne in 1859, to Ile à la Crosse in 1860 and to St. Albert in 1863.

The Hudson's Bay Company, according to Morton, had no intention of preventing the establishment of churches in Rupert's Land. In fact, the Company was interested in religious and educational institutes coming into existence, for the Governor and Committee "...looked on

religion and education as calculated to train the people to an orderly life and as assisting the Company in its task of ruling a fretful realm" (Morton, n.d., p. 635). Moreover, the Company was bound by its charter to encourage missionary endeavour, and especially since 1820, they did so to a considerable extent (Grant, 1873, p. 140). When a missionary was stationed near a Company post, he was usually given the position of Chaplain at the post, free passage in and out of the country in the Company's boats, and a stipend of fifty pounds per annum (Loc. cit.). At Fort Edmonton, Father Lacombe was informed that all clergy would be given hospitality free of expenses for short periods. In the case of an extended stay a fee of ten cents a day was to be charged for board (Christie, February 15, 1864).

The Catholic priests, it seems, were generally well received in the North-West, and were highly esteemed for their activities. Of the Oblates in particular, Butler wrote that "It is a curious contrast to find in this distant and strange land men of cultural and high mental excellence devoting their lives to civilizing the wild Indians of the forest and prairie...." (Butler, 1876, p. 261). Viscount Milton and Lord Cheadle, who had occasion to visit a number of Oblate missions in the North-West, recorded in the journal of their travels that

...it must be confessed that the Romish priests far excel their protestant bretheren in missionary enterprise and influence. They have established stations at Isle à la Crosse, St. Albert's and St. Ann's, and other places far out in the wilds, undeterred by danger or hardships, and gathering half-breeds and Indians around them, have taught with considerable success the elements of civilization as well as religion; while the latter remain inert, enjoying the ease and comfort of the Red River Settlement, or at most make an occasional summer's visit to some of the nearest posts (Cheadle and Milton, 1901, p. 182).

The Oblates, however, encountered a number of obstacles to their

missionary endeavour among the French métis, obstacles which were both cultural and physical in character. Foremost among their aims was the religious instruction of the métis, a work which they found complicated by the feeble notions of Catholicism already in the métis mind. In general, the métis had a vague idea of a unique God, although an idea which was mixed with Indian superstitions and respect for the priests (Giraud, 1945, p. 1069). Here and there, a métis more knowledgeable than most about his religion had aided those who approached him in attempts to retain certain elements of their religion. Many, however, had forgotten all notions of Christianity in their mingling with the Indians, and had adopted in simplified form the pagan beliefs of the savages. In certain cases, a great deal of persuasion was required on the part of the missionaries to convert those métis who were too intimately associated with the Indian ways. The missionaries, in consequence, had to limit their instructions to simple ideas. And in many instances they resorted to the powerful effect that ceremony had upon imagination in their attempts to attract the métis to their religion (Loc. cit.).

The most serious problem, however, that the missionaries had to encounter, was the nomadism of the métis. Widely dispersed throughout the vast spaces of the North-West, they were constantly moving to and fro, and the direct influence of the missionaries, in consequence, was felt only by a small proportion of the métis population. And even then, it was felt only intermittently. It was only at the Company posts which were frequented by a significant number of métis or surrounded by métis encampments, and in the areas where semi-permanent concentrations of métis were forming, that the missionaries were able to achieve some result. The missionaries, then, early in their endeavours, attempted

to choose sites for their missions in areas where relatively larger concentrations of métis were already established. And by pressing them to practise at least some agriculture or garden culture, they attempted to attract the vagrant freemen to the mission stations. It was, although in a much more modest way, the same tactic that had been applied by the priests at Red River.

Where, then, did the Oblates set up their missions? The answer to this question is perhaps best provided in Marcel Giraud's Le Métis Canadien, the most exhaustive and thoroughly documented study of the métis in the Canadian North-West.

Les missions s'érigèrent donc de préférence autour des lacs du Park Land, dans les grandes vallées fluviales de la Prairie, ou dans les secteurs dont la fertilité espérer le futur développement agricole, mais où la proximité des territoires de chasse garantirait en attendant la subsistance des missionnaires et des familles qui se réuniraient auprès de la mission (Ibid., p.1074).

It goes without saying that these colonies of freemen, where they developed around the missions, were not, in the proper sense, sedentary colonies. Where the missionaries had only partly succeeded at Red River, they could not succeed further west with a population more thoroughly nomadic than that of Assiniboia. Agricultural life, despite the example of the missionaries, rarely passed the stage of a few small, poorly-tended plots near the houses of the métis. Fishing, trapping, hunting, as well as wars with the Indians, remained the traditional occupations of the freemen. The colonies were habitually abandoned for the buffalo hunt and for the procurement of the fur bearing animals. The Edmonton Post Journal, for instance, in almost every season, announced the passage of freemen from Lac Ste. Anne in the direction of the grasslands to hunt the buffalo.

It is true that neither Lac Ste. Anne nor Lac la Biche, despite their excellent fisheries, assured the material existence of their residents. The soil, hardly favourable for agriculture, and covered by a dense growth of trees, demanded labour which the métis could not resolve themselves to undertake. Assuredly, the establishment of missions at such places as Lac Ste. Anne and Lac la Biche, and the development around them of agglomerations of métis, represented a certain amount of progress. Such places diminished to some extent the dispersion of the métis and permitted the missionaries to reach out to larger numbers of freemen, who up to that time had contact only with the Indians and the fur traders. They did not, however, suffice to transform these inveterate nomads into a sedentary population which was given over to the habits of diligent labour. Not far from Lac la Biche or Lac Ste. Anne, however, there existed one exception - the mission at St. Albert, which a little later was to prove uniquely successful.

Though the mission colonies attracted many métis, there still existed a large number of nomadic métis who permanently roved the grasslands and the forests. The missionaries, if they reached them, did so only accidentally, as when the nomads set up camp near a fort or a mission. Many were deserters from the posts or from the brigades, and all were hunters, thoroughly indoctrinated with the ideas of the Indians. These men paid little heed to the clergy. The teachings of the clergy, it seems, were able to penetrate deeply only if there was at least a germ of sedentary life.

PART II

THE SETTLEMENT

A. GENESIS OF THE ST. ALBERT SETTLEMENT

Dissatisfaction with conditions at the Lac Ste. Anne Mission, founded by Father Thibault in 1843, led to the establishment in 1861 of a new mission on the Sturgeon River near the east end of Big Lake. Located nine miles northwest of Fort Edmonton, it was first known as the Big Lake Settlement. Shortly thereafter it was called St. Albert, in honour of the patron saint of Father Albert Lacombe, the mission founder. Foremost among the reasons for the establishment of this new mission were the insurmountable problems encountered by the Oblates at Lac Ste. Anne. Many of the first settlers to arrive at St. Albert, moreover, were métis from the Ste. Anne Mission. For these reasons, no treatment of the genesis of St. Albert can be complete without some discussion of conditions at Lac Ste. Anne, and of events there that led to the founding of the new mission in 1861.

1) Roots at Lac Ste. Anne

The Lac Ste. Anne Mission, the first Roman Catholic mission established west of Assiniboia, was situated in the timber country about forty miles west-northwest of Fort Edmonton. The mission itself was located on Devil's Lake, otherwise called Manitou Sakahigan, Lake Manitou, God's Lake, and Divine Lake, and shortly after the founding of the mission, Lac Ste. Anne, christened as such by Father Thibault after his patron saint - Ste. Anne de Beaupré of Quebec. Though

the mission was established in 1843, between that year and 1852 it was visited only intermittently by Father Thibault and his associate, Father Bourassa (Archives Committee, 1959, p. 14). Normally the two priests spent their winters at Lac Ste. Anne, since the métis congregated there in late fall for the fishing. In the winter of 1844, with the help of the few métis staying at the lake, a crude log structure was built and utilized as a combined chapel and residence.

As early as 1840 several families of freemen had commenced to congregate along the shores of Lac Ste. Anne. There they could avail themselves of the abundant supplies of white fish, which as early as 1801 had been used by the men at Fort Augustus, the North-West Company's post at Edmonton, in order to supplement the food at the fort. The métis normally began to fish in the fall, and the fish, which were easily frozen at that time of year, formed their staple food throughout the winter. Life for the métis families at the lake was more certain than that of the freemen who depended almost entirely on the hunt, since this particular fishery could be depended on to a greater degree than the hunt, the vicissitudes of which frequently wrought starvation among the métis of the Saskatchewan district. With this pre-established semi-permanent nucleus formed about the lake, the missionaries hoped, by persuading the freemen to plant small gardens near the mission, to encourage them to adopt a more sedentary way of life. From an established base such as this, the missionaries could also reach out to the still larger métis population that ranged throughout the district. In particular, the missionaries attempted to reach the places where the métis for specific reasons assembled in larger numbers. In the period 1844 to 1852, Father Bourassa, for example, ministered to the métis in

places as far away as Lac la Biche, Goodfish and Lesser Slave Lakes. At these places, in much the same manner as they did at Lac Ste. Anne, the métis grouped together periodically to reap in the supplies of fish in the lakes. Father Thibault, on the other hand, visited Fort Edmonton, Jasper's House and the Mountain House. Here, at the Company's posts, large numbers of métis were frequently assembled, having come to trade their furs and the products of the hunt for the Company's wares.

The Lac Ste. Anne Mission, moreover, was situated deep in the country of the Crees and the Assiniboines where it could escape the ill effects of the frequent clashes between Crees and Assiniboines, on the one hand, and their age-old enemies, the tribes of the Blackfoot Confederacy, on the other. Such, however, was not the case near the forts. At the Company's posts these ancient enemies frequently met, and despite attempts by the Company to keep them apart, there was always the danger of hostilities. Both Crees and Assiniboines, however, frequently gathered around the mission, sometimes forming large encampments when the animals they hunted were scarce. On the whole they were friendly toward missionaries and métis alike, and were found to be more tractable towards the teachings of the missionaries than the more warlike tribes to the south.

At Fort Edmonton, located 2,000 miles from Montreal and nearly 1,000 from the Pacific, travellers generally called a halt to rest and refit. During this interlude, some of them took the opportunity to visit Lac Ste. Anne, and of these, a number described in writing what they had seen. One of the better descriptions of the nature of the country in the general vicinity of Ste. Anne comes from the pen of Father de Smet, who visited the mission in 1846.

I visited Lake St. Anne.... The distance from the fort to the lake is about 50 miles. The surface of this region is flat for the most part, undulating in some places - diversified with forests and meadows and lakes teeming with fish. In Lake St. Anne alone were caught last autumn, more than 70,000 white-fish, the most delicious of the kind; they are taken with the line at every season of the year. Lake St. Anne forms one of a chain of lakes; I counted 11 of them, which flow into the Saskatchewan by the little Sturgeon River. Innumerable republics of beaver existed there; each lake, each marsh, each river, bears even to this day proofs of their labour (Chittenden and Richardson, 1905, p. 533).

According to Palliser, late autumn was the best fishing season at Lac Ste. Anne. He records that in 1859 over 40,000 whitefish, averaging three to four pounds each, were taken in the space of a few weeks from Lac Ste. Anne (Palliser, 1863, p. 11). Milton and Lord Cheadle, who visited Lac Ste. Anne in 1863, give us some indication of the relative importance of agriculture and fishing in the mission economy.

...at St Ann's the thick forest commences, which extends north and westwards to the mountains. St Ann's was doubtless chosen as the site for a settlement on account of the immense numbers of the coregonus or white fish, furnished by the lake, forming the staple food of the inhabitants; but it is ill adapted for farming on account of the timber, which has been very partially cleared away for little fields of potatoes and grain (Cheadle and Milton, 1901, p. 199).

Dr. Hector of the Palliser Expedition, who visited Lac Ste. Anne sometime between 1857 and 1860, reported that the settlement was made up of two villages, each containing from thirty to forty houses. He also noted that the "...streams and lakes about this place abound with beaver and the woods with martin, mink, fisher, lynx..." (Hector in Palliser, 1863, p. 79).

In 1852 Father Lacombe took charge of the mission at Lac Ste.

Anne. A secular priest in the order of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Lacombe was joined in 1853 by Father Rémas, an older Oblate who in the summer of that year had founded the mission at Lac la Biche. Lacombe, who had the blood of the Saulteaux Indians in his veins, was well suited to the task ahead of him, and was soon teaching the métis in Cree, the language which all freemen had in common.* According to Palliser

Mons. La Combe, the head of the order, was a most excellent and benevolent gentleman, possessing many estimable qualities. He spoke Cree well, and had obtained a great deal of influence, not so much, however, among the Indians as among the half-breeds (Palliser, 1863, p. 117).

Although he did his utmost to improve the lot of the inhabitants of Lac Ste. Anne, Father Lacombe soon realized that it was no place for farming. A new mission site where the land could be cultivated more easily and the crops raised with greater certainty was required if the métis were to become farmers, and to begin to live a settled life. In the first instance, the land at Lac Ste. Anne was heavily wooded and therefore difficult to clear for agriculture. Much of the land, moreover, was low-lying and swampy (Alphonse, n.d.) and poor even for pasture (Grandin, n.d., Vol. 6, p. 167). What little agriculture there was, was practised almost entirely by the priests, both for their own support, and in an attempt to persuade the métis to follow their example. Even the priests, however, grew little besides garden vegetables. Wheat was unheard of and barley was frequently nipped "in the

* In a newspaper article entitled "Notes and Musings of a Rambler" it is mentioned of the Saskatchewan district that "Very little French or English is spoken here - it is Cree, Cree, everlasting Cree" (The Nor'Wester, March 17, 1864).

milk" by summer frosts (Grant, 1873, p. 187). William Christie, Chief Factor at Fort Edmonton in 1862, and more familiar with the situation at Lac Ste. Anne than most travellers to the North-West, provides us with perhaps the most accurate summary of conditions at the mission.

The country around Lac St. Annes is thickly wooded, and not a good place for farming or raising stock. This Lake used to abound in whitefish, but from the number of settlers living there who depend a great deal on their fall fishery, they are getting yearly less plentiful. A fall fishery is made at this Lake for Edmonton House, the men being sent out in October to fish, who remain fishing until the end of December, when the fishery ceases. Potatoes, Barley and vegetables are raised at the Lake, Wheat does not ripen. There is a R.C. Mission at this Lake which has been in existence for the last 20 years, and a considerable settlement, over 1,000 inhabitants (Edmonton Report, 1862).

In the period 1857-60, according to Palliser, "There were 400 whites and half-breeds at Ste. Anne, 50 at the Wesleyan Mission at Pigeon Lake, 70 at Lac la Biche and 250 at Edmonton and the Mountain House" (Palliser, 1863, p. 200). From all accounts, then, Lac Ste. Anne was by far the most populous settlement in the Saskatchewan district. Situated in the wooded area from which the most valuable furs in the district were taken, yet not too many miles distant from the buffalo grounds, and though its fishery was depleting, still sufficient to attract the freemen, the Lac Ste. Anne mission was superbly suited to the métis and their nomadic ways. The missionaries, however, in their desire to convert the métis to Catholicism, had first to convert them to a sedentary way of life. And in this respect, they failed at Lac Ste. Anne. Almost the entire population of the mission knew only the ways of the rover. Palliser, for instance, mentions that in February, 1859, there were "...only three or four families at Lac Ste. Anne; the remainder were on the plain" (Ibid., p. 26).

In 1860, the year before the founding of St. Albert, the people at Lac Ste. Anne were on the verge of starvation. The lack of provisions, the degree of nomadism among the métis, and their knowledge of agriculture at the time are clearly described by one of the Grey Nuns at Lac Ste. Anne.

Mais au printemps de 1860, les provisions devenant très rares, les métis durent s'eloigner de la mission pour aller chercher dans les bois de quoi les empêcher de mourir de faim. Chasse et pêche étaient alors pour ces tribus errantes, le seul moyen de subsistance: la culture de la terre leur étant presque inconnue (Chroniques du Couvent Youville, 1860).

Father Lacombe, during his stay at Lac Ste. Anne, was well aware of the little agricultural progress there, and in his travels throughout the district, it seems, he combined his missionary endeavours with a search for a more suitable mission site. From the Palliser Journals we know that he considered establishing a mission on the Red Deer River at a location some miles downstream from the junction of the Red Deer with the Medicine River. Palliser remarked that "We hear from our engagés that the Rev. Pere Lacombe, the Catholic missionary at Lac Ste Ann's has long contemplated removing to this locality and we are of the opinion that few places in the Saskatchewan could be found that offer greater facilities to settlers" (Palliser, 1863,p.88).

Lacombe, however, had other ideas, and on his many trips between Lac Ste. Anne and Fort Edmonton, had decided on another location. His decision, to found the new mission in the valley of the Sturgeon River near Fort Edmonton, became a reality in January of 1861. At that time, Bishop Taché, then on a pastoral visit to Lac Ste. Anne, formally agreed to Lacombe's choice of site. The Bishop expressed the hope that the new mission would be in store for a successful

agricultural future (Chroniques, 10 janvier, 1861). On January 14, Father Lacombe, accompanied by Bishop Taché, who was on his return trip to St. Boniface, set out for the new site. Stopping near the river, they stood on the hilltop which overlooks Big Lake on the right and the broad sweep of the Sturgeon valley on the left, and there they laid out the plans for the new mission.

2) Site of the St. Albert Settlement

Little can be said of site conditions at St. Albert as Father Lacombe knew them prior to the founding of the new settlement, since Lacombe left no documents concerning site conditions at this time. At best we can piece together information from a miscellany of sources, from subsequent descriptions of site, from maps, photos, even paintings, from the land itself, and from modern data which can be established as representative of conditions in 1861. In this manner we can reconstruct to some extent the physical stage upon which life was to be enacted at St. Albert, the stage upon which Lacombe was prepared to stake the future of his métis as an agricultural people. The site of the new mission colony can be defined as that portion of the Sturgeon River valley and the north shore of Big Lake which is bound by the St. Albert Settlement Survey of 1882-83 (see Fig. 10). In general, the settlement extends in a strip three and one half miles long and one mile wide along the north shore of Big Lake. From the outlet of the Sturgeon River at the east end of Big Lake, the settlement trends northeasterly in a six mile strip that more or less coincides with the valley of the Sturgeon. The settlement site generally will be referred to as the study area.

a) Climate. The St. Albert Settlement, because of its location in central Alberta, experiences the typical continental climate of the plains area. In the winter, the climate of central Alberta is largely determined by two large high pressure systems, one of which is situated over northwestern Canada, the other over western United States (Kendrew and Currie, 1955, p. 15). Continental arctic air, which originates over the snow and ice-covered surfaces of continental Canada and Alaska, and maritime polar air which forms over the Pacific Ocean, are the principal air masses which affect the area in winter (Daniels, 1965, p. 7). Continental arctic air, carried southward by the northerly and northwesterly circulation around the northernmost high, brings with it the low temperatures which characterize central Alberta in winter. The relatively warmer maritime polar air is associated with westerly and southwesterly winds aloft over central Alberta. This air, however, seldom reaches the ground, at which time the "chinook" effect is felt in the study area. The cyclonic activity which develops along the frontal zone between the two air masses accounts for the bulk of the precipitation in central Alberta in winter.

In summer, because of the heating of the land surface, the high pressure systems over the continent disappear, while a marked high develops over the north Pacific. Since the polar maritime air carried southward by the circulation around the high often flows parallel to the British Columbia coast, maritime air does not generally reach into central Alberta. If frontal or convectional uplift or uplift associated with the passage of cold air aloft occurs, summer showers will normally result, either from maritime polar or continental air.

A more detailed analysis of the climate of the study area cannot

be established with certainty, since meteorological data for the area do not exist. It can only be assumed that the climate of the Edmonton area, microclimatic considerations aside, is representative of that at St. Albert.* The Edmonton climate, taken from long term data collected between 1881 and 1963, cannot, however, be considered representative of climate at St. Albert in the period 1861-82, the period under consideration in the study. Moreover, the degree to which the Edmonton climate differs from that at St. Albert during this period cannot be qualified empirically. It can only be said that Edmonton data are indicative to some degree of conditions at St. Albert in the period 1861-82.

The Edmonton climate is described as a cold, temperate climate (Dominion Public Weather Office, 1964, p. 1). The average July temperature is 63.1°F, while that in January is 6.6°F (Ibid., p. 17). Absolute maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in July are 98.0°F and 29.0°F respectively. Those for January are 56.5°F and -57.0°F, respectively. Summer temperatures rarely exceed 90°F, however, while temperatures of -30°F occur only three or four times on the average each winter. The mean annual precipitation at Edmonton is 18.64 inches, although this has varied in amount from 8.2 inches in 1889 to 27.8 inches in 1900. The bulk of the precipitation at Edmonton falls as rain, while 65 per cent of the annual precipitation falls during the growing season (Ibid., p.1). Snow cover by mid-winter at Edmonton is normally about 7 inches.

*The climate of the Edmonton area from long term records is derived from data collected at a number of different stations. None of these stations, however, was located further than eight miles from the mission building at St. Albert, which is situated in the approximate geometric centre of the settlement.

The conditions of climate at St. Albert which were of greatest importance to Father Lacombe were those affecting agriculture, and especially those which affect wheat, since the site for the new settlement was selected primarily because crop failures at Lac Ste. Anne were frequent, and because the wheat there would not mature. Surplus and lack of water and summer temperatures are conditions which can most restrict agricultural operations. Even though no data are available on moisture conditions within the St. Albert Settlement, a number of statements can be made which to some degree reflect drought patterns in the area. Drought, according to Laycock, can be defined as a condition in which the available water supply is less than that required for evaporation and transpiration if optimum plant growth is to be obtained (Laycock, 1964, p. 5). The available moisture is that moisture from precipitation which can be utilized by plants, including any moisture in the soil which has accumulated prior to the growing season. Moisture from precipitation which cannot be used by plants takes the form of surface runoff or percolates beyond root depth. The moisture deficit, which is measured in inches, can be calculated using the usual water balance equation: Precipitation equals Evapotranspiration (Potential Evapotranspiration minus Deficit) plus Surplus plus or minus Storage Change. Maps of moisture deficits in the Prairie Provinces based upon this equation are available, which together with meteorological records from Edmonton, provide data sufficiently representative of St. Albert for the purpose at hand.

Assuming a 4 inch soil moisture retention storage use, average annual potential evapotranspiration at St. Albert generally exceeds annual precipitation, and deficits of between 4 inches and 6 inches

normally occur.* At Edmonton in the period 1921-50, the average deficit was 5.1 inches (Laycock, n.d., p.9). The maximum deficit during this period was 8.5 inches, while the minimum was 0.2 inches. Deficits of 8 inches or greater, which might be described as intense drought conditions, occurred five times in the 30-year period (Loc. cit.). Surpluses, on the other hand, averaged only 1.4 inches, and it can be assumed at St. Albert, because of the amount of slope in the settlement, that surpluses of magnitudes sufficient to negatively affect crop yields do not accumulate. The maximum surplus during the period was 5.8 inches (Loc. cit.). Surpluses in some years, however, may cause erosion and water may pond in depressions, removing the area from agricultural use.

Even though 65 per cent of the Edmonton annual precipitation falls during the growing season, temperatures in the area in the growing season are such that potential evapotranspiration exceeds precipitation. The average soil moisture deficit for wheat during June, July and August, for example, is about 4 inches. Optimum wheat yields at St. Albert, then, are limited by the available moisture, and occasionally are affected by severe droughts. Other factors, however, such as frosts, weeds and soils must also be considered as affecting yields, and the effects of moisture limitations, therefore, are difficult to determine.

Although some plants can withstand one or two degrees of frost without sustaining serious injury, the frost free period generally

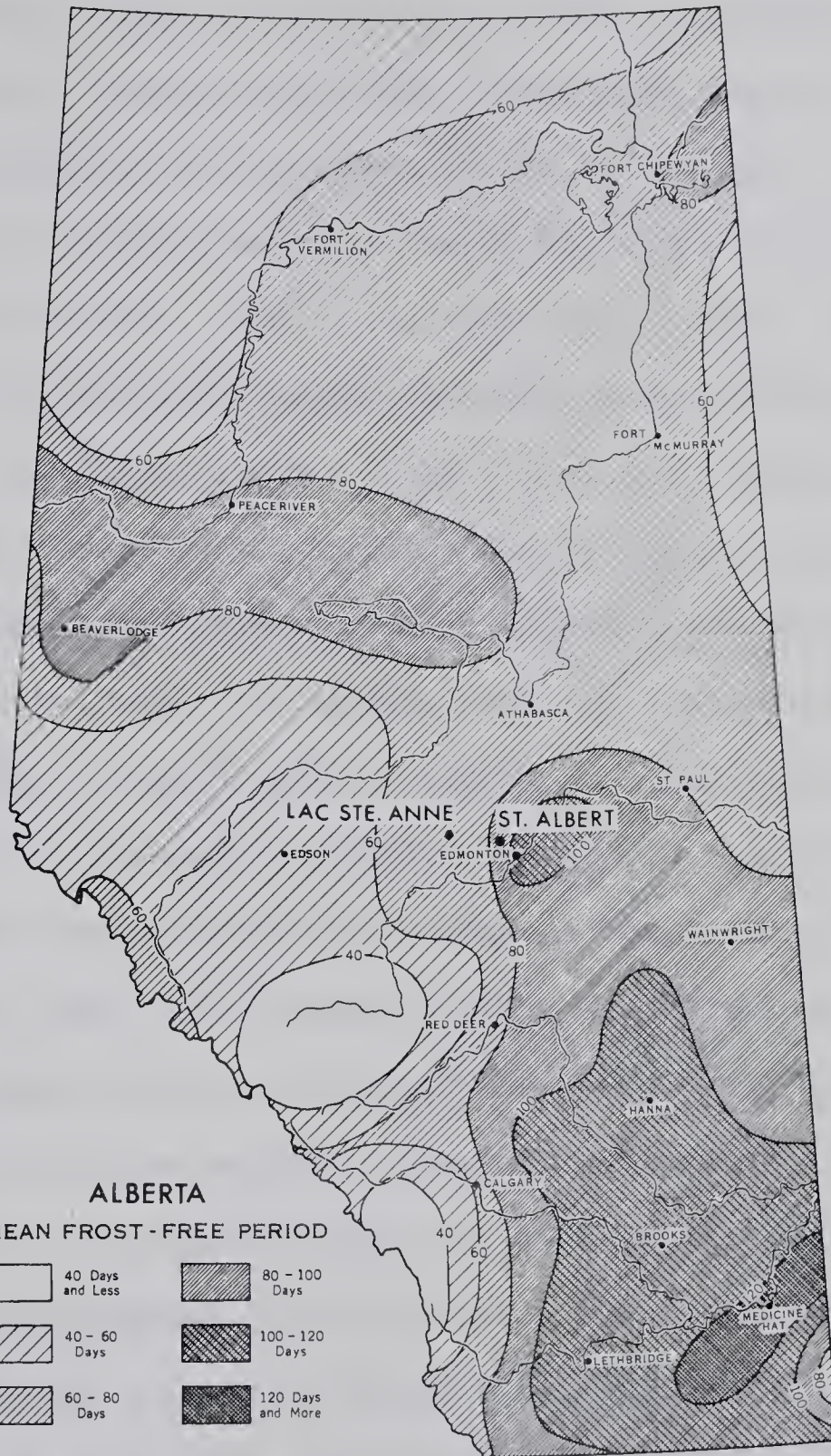
*The data on moisture deficits have been taken from the map appendix in Laycock, 1964, unless otherwise indicated.

restricts the time available for plants to mature. The frost free period at St. Albert, although critical to the development of wheat culture there, can only be roughly estimated. According to Longley, most long term stations in the North Saskatchewan River area have had at least one July frost (Longley, 1965, p. 1), while historical documents which pre-date the records make frequent reference to July frosts at St. Albert. Temperature cycles in the order of 2°F to 4°F occur for various years throughout most of Alberta. Although small in magnitude, cycles of this nature are significant with respect to occurrence or otherwise of frost (Ibid., p. 2). In consequence, summer frosts may be absent for a number of years, and the frost free period, though normally considered as constant, can vary significantly from the mean.

The mean frost free period at Edmonton during the period 1882-1942 was 100 days (Boughner et al, 1956, p. 25). Heat from the city of Edmonton, however, is probably responsible for a longer frost free period there than in the more open countryside at St. Albert. This can be illustrated from short term records at Calmar, located fifteen miles south-southwest of Edmonton, and at Bon Accord, twenty miles north-northeast of Edmonton. At Calmar, the frost free period is twenty days shorter than at Edmonton, at Bon Accord fifteen days shorter (Loc.cit.). Differences in sampling periods and in local conditions might account to some extent for the 15 to 20 day variation from the Edmonton mean, but in all likelihood the frost free period at St. Albert is shorter than the figure given for Edmonton. It should also be noted that the shortest frost free period at Edmonton is 44 days, the longest 144 days. Those at Calmar are 36 and 138 days respectively, and at Bon Accord, 58 and 116. All exhibit considerable variation.

In the period prior to 1861, the wheat which was planted at Lac Ste. Anne failed to mature, while that planted at St. Albert following 1861 was generally successful, although it was frequently troubled by frost. From the map showing the frost free period in Alberta (see Fig. 3) it can be seen that the frost free period decreases westward from Edmonton toward the Rocky Mountains. From the isolines, the frost free period at Lac Ste. Anne appears to be at least three weeks shorter than at St. Albert, which would account for the failure of wheat at Lac Ste. Anne. No data are available on the variety of wheat planted at St. Albert in 1861. There can be no doubt, however, that its maturation period was longer than that for Red Fife, which normally took between 115 and 125 days to mature. The wheat which was grown at Fort Edmonton in 1855 was harvested 145 days after it was sown (Morton, n.d., p. 701). That which was grown at Red River prior to the introduction of Red Fife required 125 to 145 days to mature (Morton and Martin, 1938, p. 70). Some wheats used today, on the other hand, may mature in 60 to 80 days. Wheat which required at least 125 days to mature, then, although its frost resistant qualities are unknown, was a marginal crop at St. Albert, where the average frost free period was less than 100 days.

It is worth mentioning at this point that microclimatic variations in temperature and moisture conditions occur throughout the study area. In critical situations it can be assumed that frosts occur in the valley bottom of the Sturgeon, when higher portions of the broadly sloping valley remain frost free. On still nights, cold air normally drains downhill and collects at the bottom in so-called frost hollows. Here, according to Longley, it cools further through radiation, and



Scale in Miles
 30 0 30 60 90

Source: Alberta Industry and Resources, 1964.

FIGURE 3

can cause the temperature at the bottom to be five to ten degrees colder than on adjacent slopes (Longley, 1965, p. 10). It is doubtful whether the thermostat effect of the Sturgeon River noticeably counteracts this phenomenon. Moreover, Big Lake probably has little or no effect upon the settlement area adjacent to its north shore.

More moisture for plant growth is available on the north-facing slope of the Sturgeon valley than on the south-facing slope. The predominantly aspen and grassland vegetation on the south-facing slope attests to higher evapotranspiration there than on the opposite side of the valley, where most of the spruce in the Settlement occurs. Moisture supplies available from snow melt, moreover, are greater on the north-facing slope, where runoff from snow melt is less rapid. They are also greater in wooded areas, hollows and other areas where greater amounts of snow collect in winter. Though not related to climate, the valley area acquires extra moisture from telluric ground water which filters down to the Sturgeon River. The telluric water, though small in amount, makes more moisture available for plants than is available on the surrounding plain. The telluric supplies, however, only slightly offset the moisture deficiency patterns already described.

b) Geology and Landform. The bedrock of the St. Albert area is composed of sedimentary rocks of the Upper Cretaceous Period. The horizontally bedded strata of these rocks dip very gently to the southwest at about 20 feet per mile, while the rocks themselves are poorly consolidated to unconsolidated. (Hughes, 1958, p. 12). The soft shales and sandstones which underlie the settlement area belong to the Edmonton formation, a term which was first used by Selwyn to describe the strata containing coal seams in the vicinity of Edmonton.

Rutherford and Allan, in more detail, described the Edmonton formation as being "composed of light to dark coloured shales, bentonitic clays and sandstones, coal seams and carbonaceous bands, and frequent layers of clay-ironstone nodules" (Allan and Rutherford, 1934, p. 4).

Bayrock and Hughes, in their maps of the surficial geology of the Edmonton district, do not indicate rock outcrops within the settlement area, although outcrops are shown a short distance to the northeast (Bayrock and Hughes, 1962, maps). Bedrock seen by the author was located in road cuts, where it was overlain by thick deposits of surficial materials. The absence of rock outcrops, together with the fact that none of the soils in the area has developed from residual materials, strongly suggests that bedrock in the settlement is located well below the surface, at least to the extent that it does not interfere with agricultural operations. Though the Edmonton formation contains coal seams, none outcrops in the settlement area. Coal is mined today on the northeast edge of the settlement, but coal, either in the settlement area or on its margins, was unknown to the St. Albert freemen or their priests. Today, almost all the farms in the area obtain water from wells and most have experienced difficulties in this regard. Although the sandstone strata of the Edmonton formation are commonly good aquifers, few drill holes have encountered either coal seams or sandstone of sufficient thickness and permeability to be suitable aquifers (Farvolden, 1963, p. 100). Moreover, if wells were dug at St. Albert by the first settlers, they probably drew their water from the surficial deposits. Probably the most significant rôle that bedrock played in the choice of site is that it does not manifest itself in any landforms which could have been adverse to agricultural settlement at the time.

The dominant feature of the landscape in the settlement area is the broad portion of the Sturgeon valley which lies between Big Lake and the northeast end of the settlement. Here the valley sides generally conform to the settlement boundaries, except at a point two miles downstream from Big Lake, where the north side of the valley bulges out in a single promontory toward the river's edge (see Fig. 4). In general, the valley in this section is about one and one half miles in width and 100 feet deep (Bayrock and Hughes, 1962, p. 8). Slope along the valley flanks is generally even while gradients average just under one per cent. Features such as terrace bluffs, however, have slopes of greater magnitude. The rolling surface in some parts of the valley is described as having slopes of ten to fifteen per cent (Bowser, et al, 1962, map). In this section the Sturgeon valley is probably an extension of the valley containing Big Lake and Atim Creek to the west, rather than an extension of the Sturgeon valley to the north and west of Big Lake (Loc. cit.). The Sturgeon River in this section is misfit and flows in a valley much larger than the present-day stream could have cut. Upstream from Big Lake the valley of the Sturgeon is less than 20 feet deep and 200 feet wide and conforms to the floodplain of the river.

There can be little doubt that the wide section of the Sturgeon valley carried glacial meltwaters during the late stage of deglaciation in the area. The water-reworked materials which overlie Lake Edmonton deposits in the valley suggest that glacial meltwaters during the later stages of Lake Edmonton passed through the valley and deposited materials, most likely from the large delta which was built into Lake Edmonton's western margin. There is little evidence, however,

CONTOUR MAP OF THE ST. ALBERT SETTLEMENT

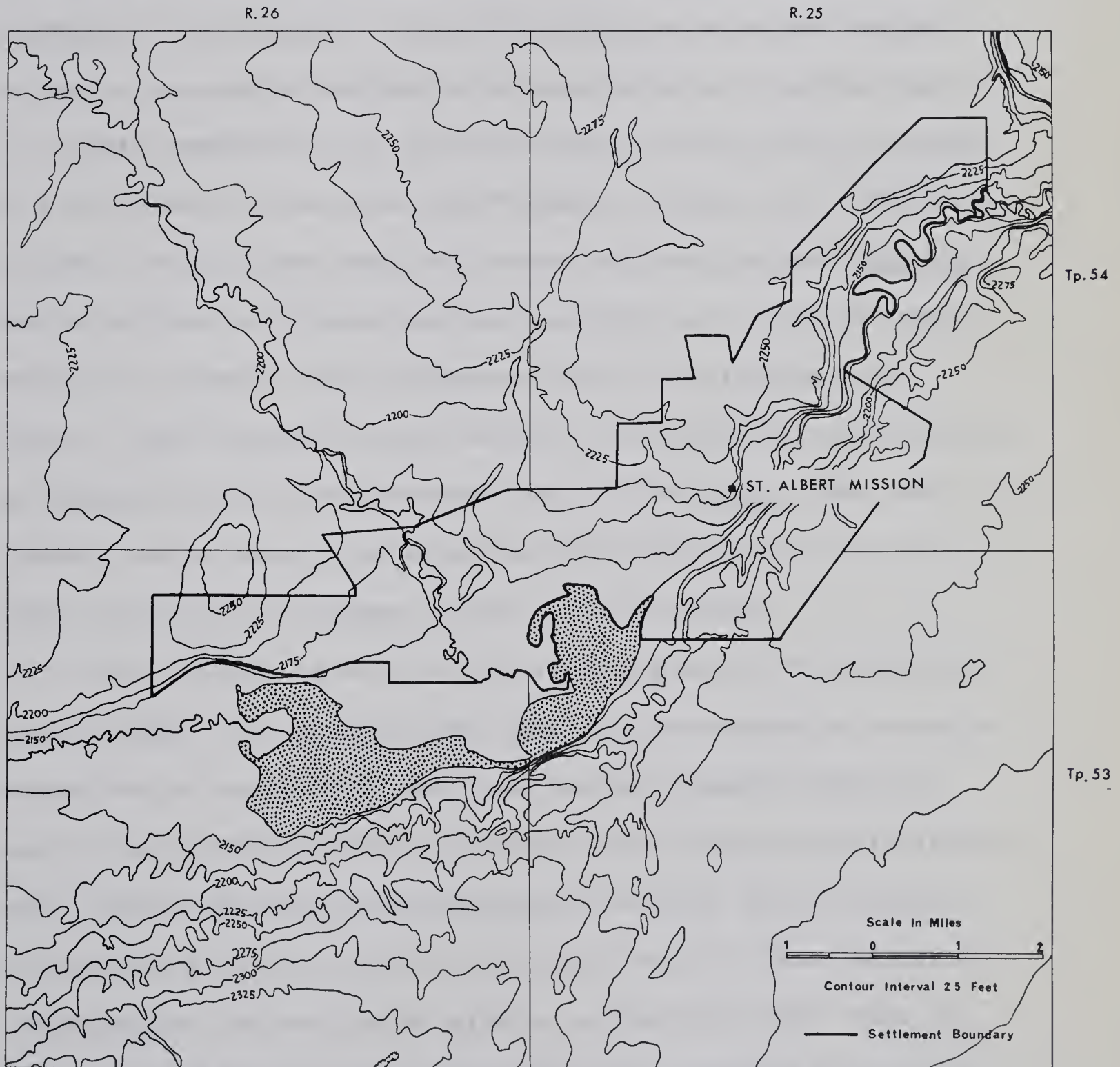


FIGURE 4.

that the Sturgeon valley was a glacial meltwater channel, especially since the valley carries water to the northeast, where water was ponding at the glacier's front when melting occurred. It is much more likely that the valley was cut by the pre-glacial North Saskatchewan, which following the ponding of meltwater, cut its present valley to the southeast of the Sturgeon. It is interesting to note that Stalker, writing of pre-glacial valleys in southern Alberta, described them as "...broad, commonly 5 to 15 miles wide from prairie level on one side to prairie level on the other side" (Stalker, 1963, p. 9). "Modern valleys," on the other hand, "are narrow and steep walled" (Loc.cit.). Stalker's first description applies remarkably well to the Sturgeon valley; his second to the contemporary North Saskatchewan River valley. One of Stalker's maps, moreover, shows the Sturgeon valley as an interglacial North Saskatchewan River valley (Idem., 1961, map). Stalker, who believes in more than one glaciation of the area, at least designates the Sturgeon valley as pre-Wisconsin.

The surficial deposits in the study area are of Pleistocene and recent origin. For the most part, they have been washed or otherwise carried out of nearby till, which was derived primarily from the poorly consolidated sandstones and shales that comprise the local bedrock. Hence, the deposits are generally medium to fine in texture. In the study area, the surficial materials were laid down following the melting of the continental glacier in Wisconsin time. When the glacier melted from the area, meltwaters were impounded in front of the ice, since the ice front retreated northeasterly in the direction of natural drainage. The study area, in consequence, was covered by a proglacial lake. This proglacial "Lake Edmonton," in the initial

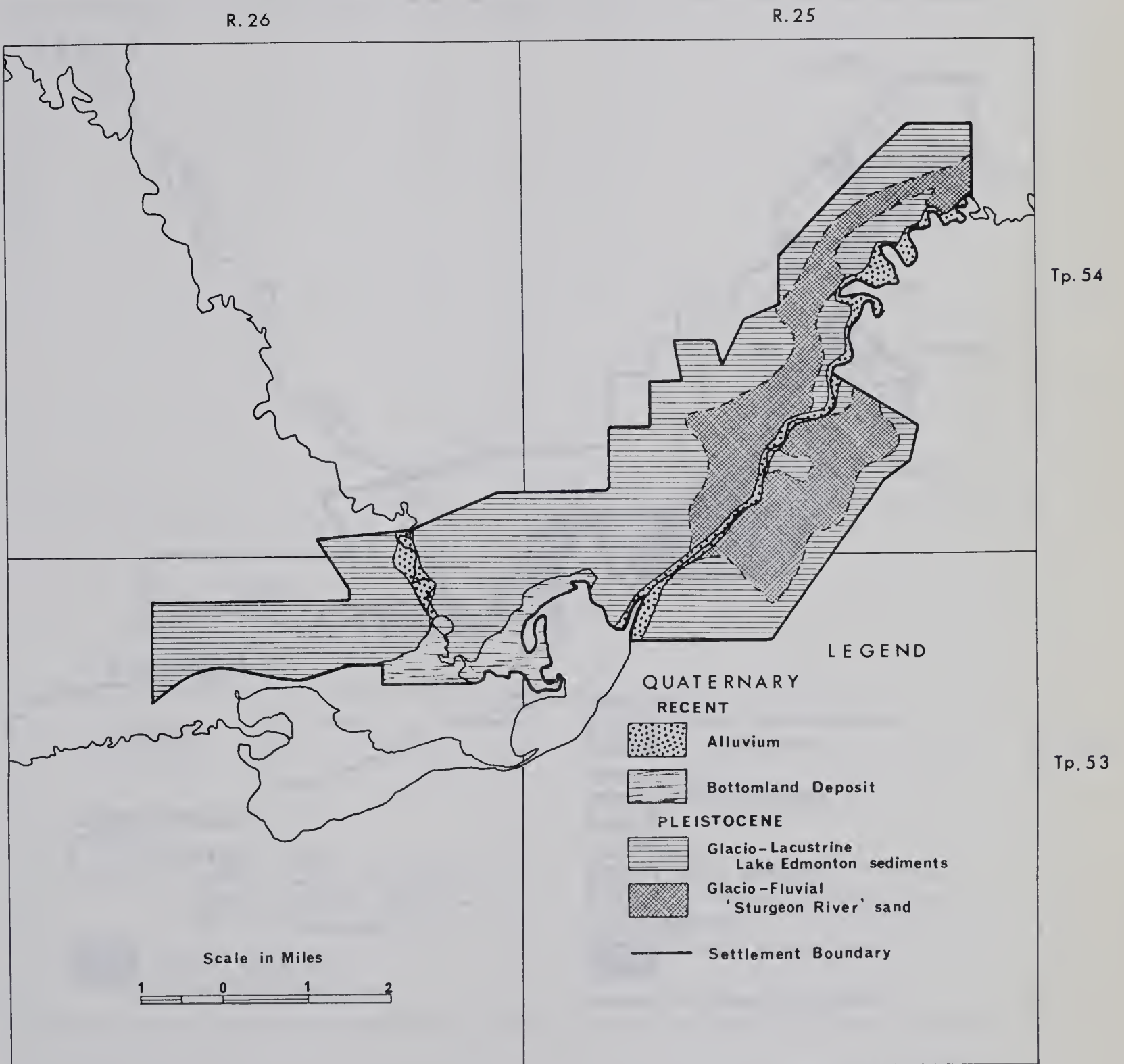
stages, was drained to the south through the Gwynne outlet (Bayrock and Hughes, 1962, p. 10). The lake was finally drained by the North Saskatchewan River in later proglacial and post-glacial time (Ibid., p. 5).

Aside from bottomland deposits, the surficial materials in the study area are of fluvial, glacio-fluvial and glacio-lacustrine origin (see Fig. 5). Lake Edmonton sediments and "Sturgeon River" valley fluvial sands predominate in the area. The fine textured Lake Edmonton deposits consist of bedded and varved silt and clay deposits which contain some sand. They were deposited under quiet-water conditions and were not modified by subsequent action. No data are available on the thickness of these sediments in the settlement area, although they generally range from about one foot to over 100 feet. The "Sturgeon River" valley fluvial sand was deposited by flowing glacial meltwaters prior to the formation of Lake Edmonton. Where it outcrops along the flanks of the valley, it attains thicknesses of about two to thirty feet, and is composed of fine sand and silt, and some clay.

The alluvium deposited on the floodplain of the Sturgeon in post-Pleistocene time consists of gravel, sand and silt. The bottomland deposits which cover the delta in Big Lake were formed from infilling by organic and inorganic materials. No colluvial or slump deposits are present in the area.

c) Soils. The distribution of soils in the area is closely related to parent material, vegetation and the microclimate of the area. Chernozemic soils which have developed under a vegetative cover of tall grasses, shrubs and deciduous trees dominate in the area (see Fig. 6). They are found for the most part on the south-facing slope

SURFICIAL GEOLOGY OF ST. ALBERT SETTLEMENT



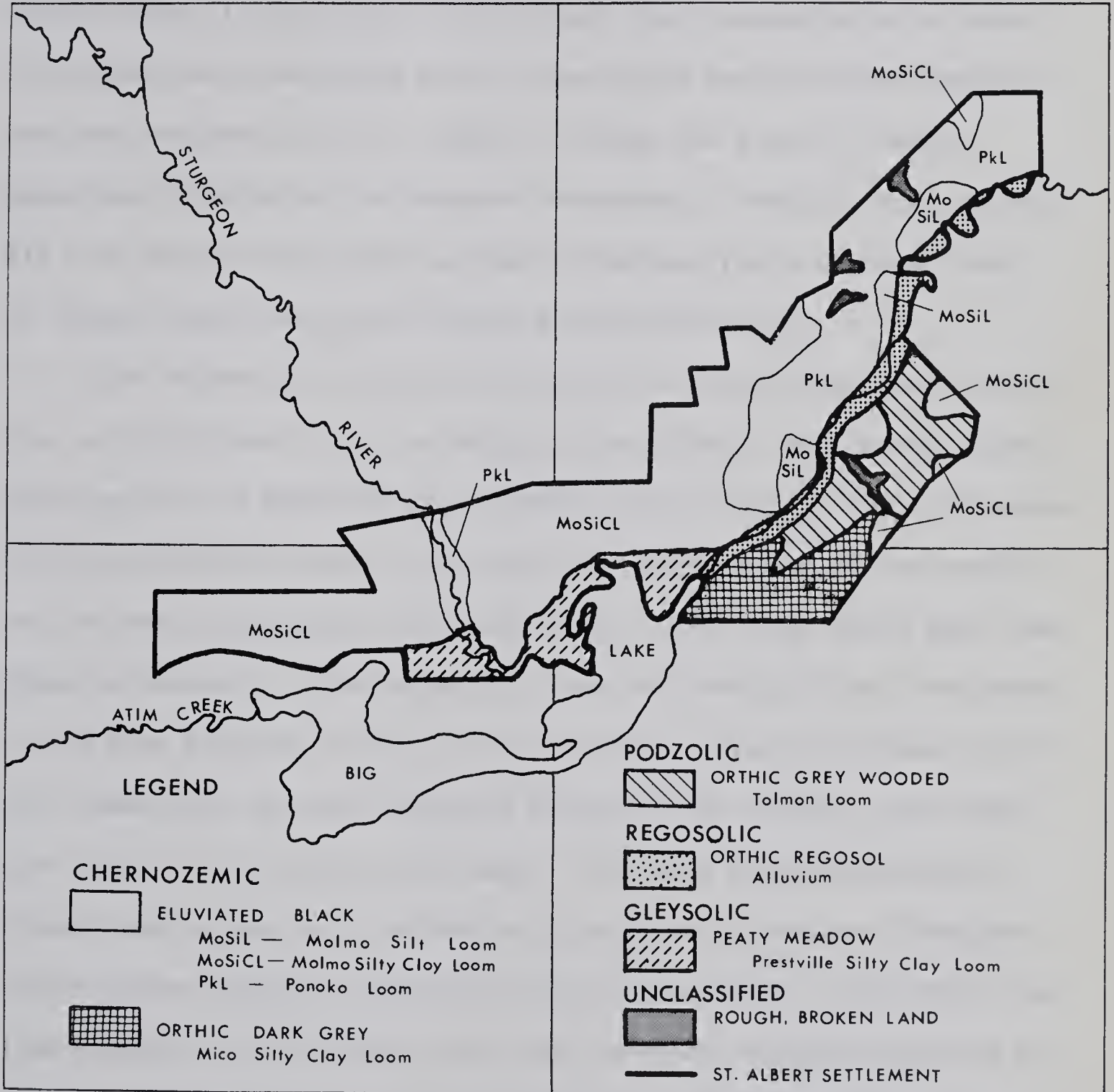
SOURCE: Bayrock and Hughes, 1962, See bibliography.

FIGURE 5.

SOILS OF ST. ALBERT SETTLEMENT

R. 26

R. 25



Tp. 54

Tp. 53

Scale 1:126,720

Source: Bowser et al.,
See Bibliography.

FIGURE 6

of the Sturgeon valley, where evapotranspiration is higher, and to the north of Big Lake. Where chernozems occur on the north-facing slope, they do so only on the finer textured parent materials. Podzolic soils, second in areal extent to the chernozems, are found only on the north-facing flank of the Sturgeon valley where evapotranspiration is lower. The podsols have developed under a vegetative cover of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees. Regosols occupy the areas of freshly deposited alluvium on the Sturgeon floodplain. Gleysols occur on the Big Lake delta, while small patches of unclassified soils are found on rough, broken land where gullying has taken place.

The chernozems in the area belong to the sub-groups orthic dark grey and eluviated black, according to the Alberta Soil Survey classification for the Edmonton Sheet (Bowser et al, 1962, p. 19). Eluviated black soils of the Malmo silty clay loam series and silt loam series are the most widespread of the chernozems. Both have formed upon Lake Edmonton sediments. The Malmo silt loam has developed upon the lowest of the Lake Edmonton deposits in the Sturgeon valley; the Malmo silty clay loams upon the finer deposits higher up the valley. The latter also occur to the north of Big Lake. Eluviated black soils of the Ponoka loam series occur on the relatively coarse textured "Sturgeon River" valley sands on the north flank of the valley. Mico silty clay loam belonging to the orthic dark grey sub-group occupies the area of lacustrine deposition in the southern portion of the settlement east of Big Lake. In this portion of the settlement, the north-facing slope is much less pronounced than further down the Sturgeon. Evapotranspiration is probably higher than downstream, which would appear to account for the vegetation transition between forest and grassland under which orthic dark grey soils develop.

The podzolic soils in the area, the Tolman loams, belong to the orthic grey wooded sub-group. They are somewhat more leached than the orthic dark grey chernozems, which in turn are more leached than the eluviated black. The Tolman loam is confined to the area of "Sturgeon River" valley sands on the south side of the river. Gleysolic soils of the Prestville silty clay loam series occur on the bottomland deposits of the Big Lake delta.

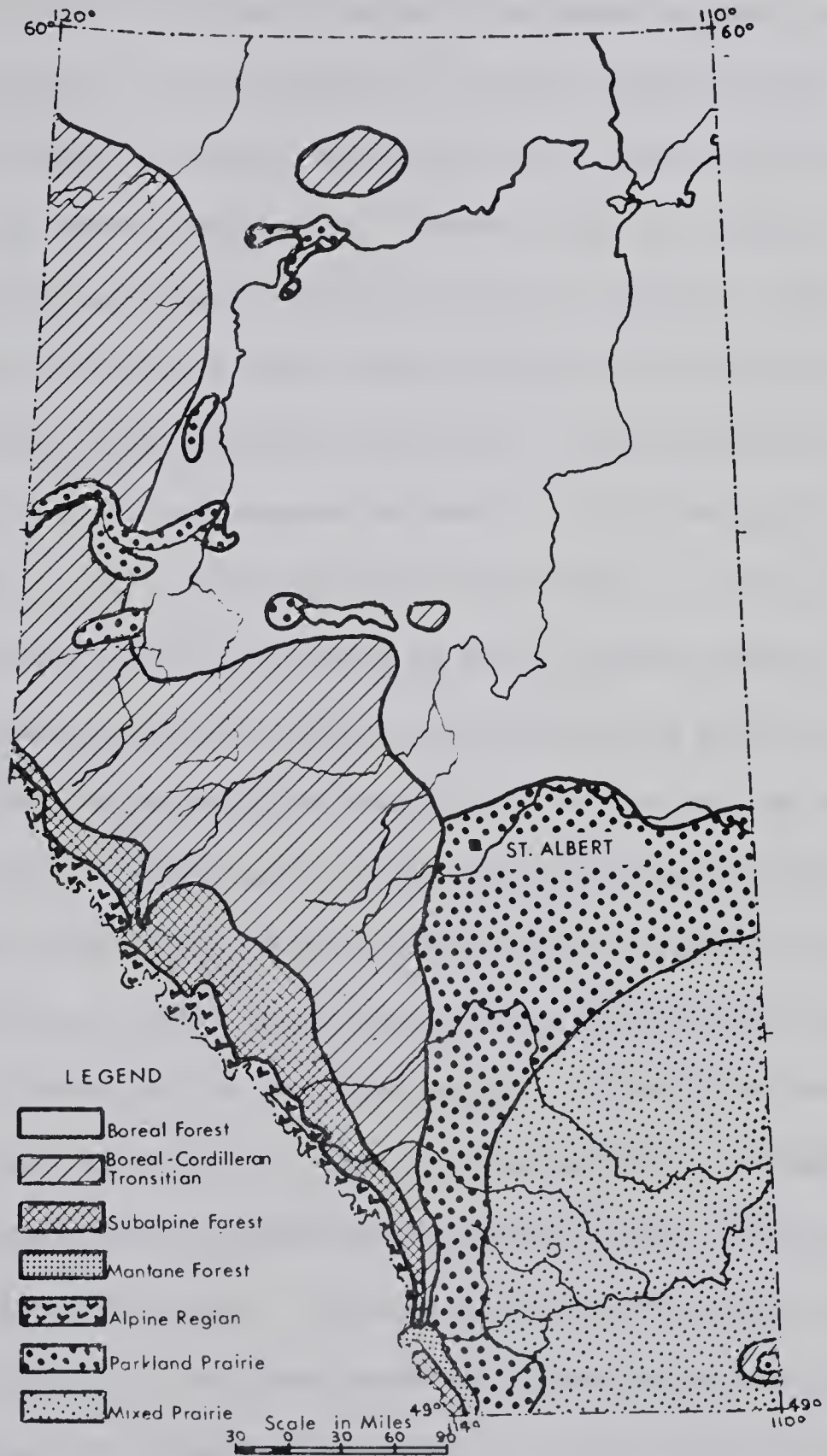
Aside from the regosols and gleysols, the soils of the settlement area are fertile and generally well drained. Because of the texture of the parent materials, they possess well developed profiles and are virtually free of stones. The eluviated black soils in the area are the best for agriculture. They possess medium high to high amounts of organic matter and their productive abilities are rated very good to excellent (Ibid., chart in Jacket). The orthic dark grey soil, with a medium organic content, has a productive capacity rated as good. All the soils of the chernozemic order, then, are very well suited for crop production, including wheat, coarse grains and forage crops. The podzolic soil, on the other hand, has a low organic content and is best suited for coarse grains and forage crops. The regosolic alluvium, which is only moderately drained and immature in profile, is best used for forage crops, or as pasture. Forage crops and with limitations, coarse grain, can be grown on gleysolic soils, but the gleysolic soil on the delta area is generally poorly drained and not suited for cultivation.

The virgin soils at St. Albert in 1861 were in all likelihood at least as fertile as they are today. It is possible, however, that fires, which prior to settlement in the area may have been frequent,

had an adverse effect upon the conditions of the soil. Depending on the nature of the vegetative cover, fires can destroy as much as 60 per cent of the humus in the topsoil, and can greatly accelerate leaching and erosion, particularly on the slopes (Haines, 1926, p. 50 ff). Cultivation, on the other hand, can render soils less fertile than they were before the land was broken. Even under average management, erosion may significantly reduce the organic content of the soil and remove most of the finer inorganic materials, while soils which have been cropped continuously, and those under a grain-fallow rotation can be depleted of surface organic matter (Bowser, op.cit.). It is equally possible for the reverse to occur - for soils to improve under good management. The grey wooded soils in the study area, for instance, may easily have a higher organic content today than prior to cultivation. It can be assumed, however, that the soils, on the whole, were as fertile as present-day soil surveys indicate. Whether or not Father Lacombe was aware of the quality of the soils at St. Albert, however, is a matter of speculation. But one is tempted to believe that he compared the soils at St. Albert with those at Lac Ste. Anne. Certainly this could be expected of a man whose first consideration was to move his people to an area where they could be induced to take up agriculture. If so, the relatively deep, dark soils at St. Albert must have appeared to him more fertile than the thin, light coloured soils at Lac Ste. Anne.

d) Vegetation. The study area is situated in the extreme north-western portion of the parkland prairie phyto-geographic region (see Fig. 7). Not far to the north lies the boreal forest region, while bordering the area to the west is the region of transition between

PHYTOGEOGRAPHIC REGIONS OF ALBERTA



Source: Mass, E.H., 1955.
See Bibliography.

FIGURE 7.

boreal and cordilleran forest. Because of its situation near the margins of the forest regions, the vegetation of the study area today is transitional between parkland prairie and continuous forest. Aspen poplar, which is the dominant tree species in areas of parkland vegetation, predominate in the study area. Trees which are characteristic of the nearby forests, particularly spruce trees, occur frequently as well. Since the aspen is the most common tree, however, the tree cover in the area has been described as "aspen ecotone to spruce" (Savage, 1965, Map).

Near the forest margins, trees rather than grasses generally comprise the greater part of the parkland vegetation. Where patches of "natural" open grassland occur, *Festuca scabrella* is the dominant species (Moss, 1955, p. 515). From present-day patterns little can be said, however, of the extent of grassland in the settlement area at the time of our study, since most areas which might have been grassland are now under cultivation. Moreover, few conclusions concerning the nature of the vegetative cover in 1861 can be drawn from evidence in the present-day landscape. Over 80 per cent of the land in the settlement is in agricultural or urban use, while the "natural" vegetation which remains may well have been altered by man or other agents. In an area where climatic conditions are marginal for tree growth, moreover, a number of factors may have brought about considerable changes in the relative distributions of grasses and trees. In historic time there has been a marked tendency for poplar to encroach upon the grassland areas (Ibid., p. 517). Aspen poplar, by extending their roots, form suckers which establish themselves as trees and thereby replace the grassland vegetation. Counteracting this tendency in the past were a number of factors, the most important of which was probably burning. Writing

of the valley of the North Saskatchewan between Fort Carlton and Edmonton, Palliser commented that "The frequent fires which continually traverse the prairies have denuded the territory of large forest trees, indeed so much so as in some places to render their absence deplorable" (Palliser, 1863, p. 13). The spread of aspen has also been inhibited by droughts, which in turn increase the likelihood of fires, by grazing, particularly by the buffalo, by damage to the suckers by rabbits, and by dessicating winds. For various reasons, then, present-day patterns cannot be considered representative of the vegetation at St. Albert in 1861. A reasonably accurate picture of the vegetation in 1861, however, can be reconstructed from historical records left by observers more or less contemporary with the time.

The area to the south of the settlement between the Sturgeon valley and Edmonton appears to have been open parkland where grassland was more extensive than trees. This pattern is particularly evident in a painting by Paul Kane, who in 1846 took a sketch of a group of buffalo near a lake (most probably Horse Lake, which no longer appears in the landscape today) located to the south of the Sturgeon River (Kane, 1925, p. 97). Kane, whose paintings are known for "...their reportorial exactitude" (Buchanan, 1950, p. 19), painted very few trees in the picture, confirming the predominance of grassland in the area. Little else can be said of the vegetation on the basis of the painting, since the trees which appear in the background of the picture (see Plate 1) are so situated as to provide classical balance in the painting (Glyde, June, 1965). Hector in 1859 referred to large tracts of prairie south of the Sturgeon River and Big Lake which provided grazing for the Company's horses (Hector in Palliser, 1863, p. 118).



GROUP OF BUFFALOS

BY
PAUL KANE

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PLATE

Writing of the area bordering the trail between Edmonton and the Sturgeon valley, Williams in 1882 noted that

The land is not, strictly speaking, prairie, though there are many small stretches that are absolutely treeless, but at the same time there is enough small timber to make the view from almost any point limited. The timber is mostly poplar and grey willow, and growing as it does, to only a small size, the clearing up of a farm among these "bluffs" is an easy and inexpensive operation (Williams, 1882, p. 182).

The north-facing slope of the Sturgeon valley was covered with spruce forest, marking a distinct change in vegetation from the plain to the south (Lacombe, 31 décembre, 1861). Here, sufficient moisture was available to support the growth of conifers, while the area was better protected from fires than the plain to the south. Some birch was located along the north-facing slope as well, which was used by the Company for the manufacture of wooden sleds at Fort Edmonton (Edmonton Post Journal, December 11, 1861). The vegetation on the south-facing slope, where less moisture was available for tree growth, appears to have been park-like with considerable areas of open grassland in places, particularly near the brow of the valley adjacent to the plain. Lacombe mentions a large prairie area located behind the mission building where the mission farm was located (Loc. cit.). The dominant tree species on the south-facing slope was probably poplar.

The plains area to the north of the south-facing slope was for the most part grassland with occasional "bluffs" of poplar and willow. Dawson, who in 1879 traversed the area between the Bridge Lakes and the Vermilion River (i.e. the Redwater River) and the Sturgeon River, described the surface as

covered with short close grass and groves of willow and poplar...chiefly confined to the valleys. This prairie has probably been produced by fire, but is

of a much older date than the grassy country to the north, which is still in process of denudation by successive fires (Dawson, 1881, p. 87B).

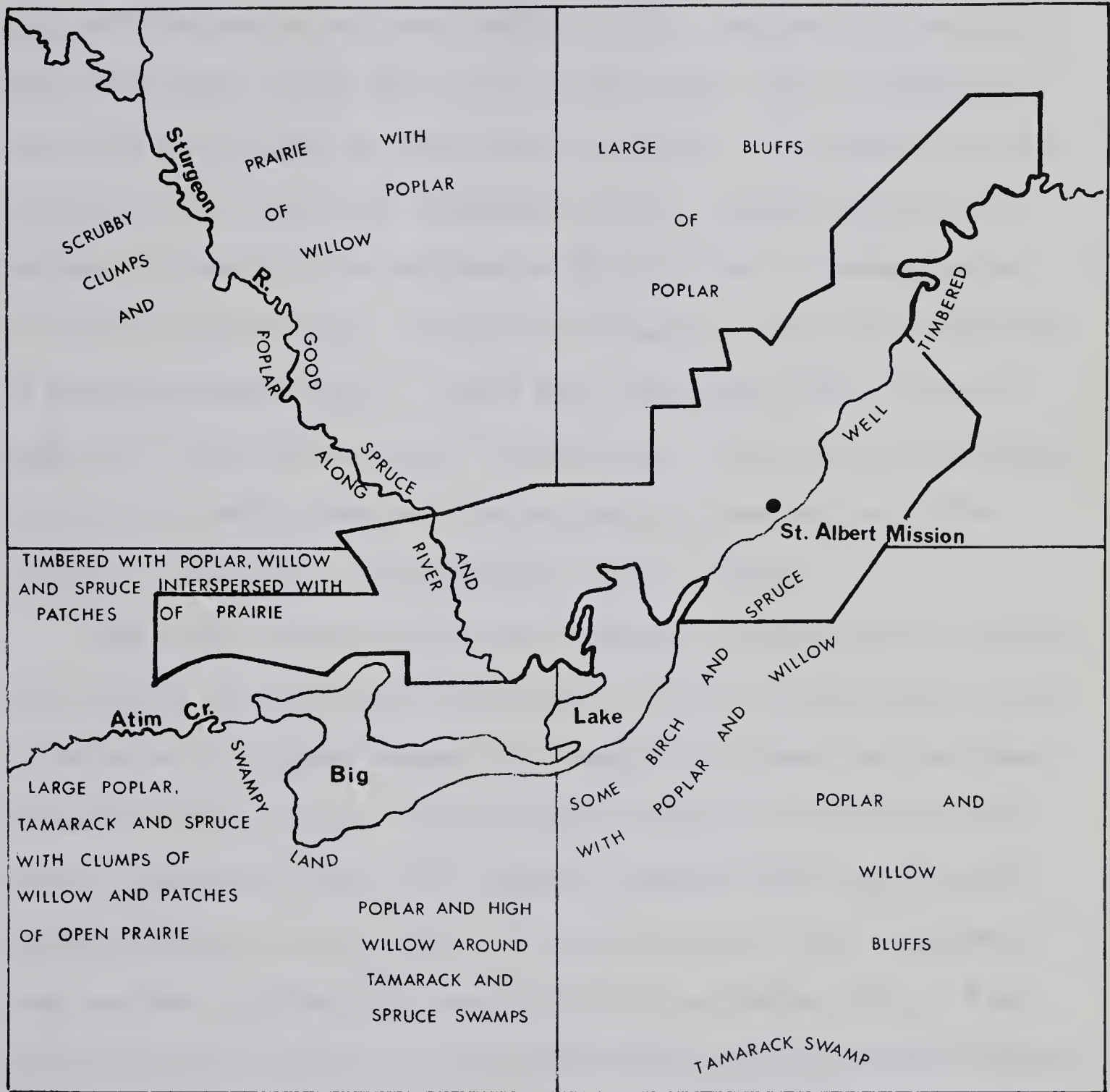
Figure 8 shows the distribution of vegetation in the study area and its vicinity in 1882. The map was compiled from descriptions of townships surveyed in 1882 by William Beatty, Dominion Lands Surveyor. Since none of Beatty's descriptions conflict with those of earlier observers, the map may be considered representative of conditions in 1861. No data are available on the nature of the vegetation on the Big Lake delta, although frequent reference is made in the St. Albert mission day book to the procurement of hay in that vicinity. Since the soils on the delta are poorly drained, and not sufficiently aerated for tree growth, it can be assumed that the area was generally covered by marsh vegetation. Shrub cover in the settlement area, probably most widespread on the north flank of the Sturgeon valley, would have included such plants as side oats, snowberry, saskatoon berry and roses (Wonders, 1959, p. 11). Strawberries and raspberries were no doubt found in the settlement, while blueberries were reported not many miles distant from the settlement boundary.

e) Animal Life. Within the St. Albert Settlement area, fish comprised one of the faunal groups of particular significance to the intending settlers. In the early days, at least, fish were abundant in both Big Lake and the Sturgeon River. One of the miners enroute to the Caribou gold fields in 1862, for instance, noted that Big Lake contained a "plentiful supply of fish" (Wade, 1931, p. 88). While as late as 1872, men of the Sandford Fleming expedition caught sturgeon in the river of the same name which weighed as much as twenty-five pounds (Grant, 1873, p. 169). Ducks, moreover, were

VEGETATION 1882

R. 26

R. 25



Tp. 54

Tp. 53

Scale 1: 26,720

Source: Canada, 1886a,
See Bibliography.

LEGEND

— St. Albert Settlement

FIGURE 8

abundant in Big Lake and neighbouring sloughs. Thomas Woolsey, a Wesleyan missionary at Fort Edmonton, recorded in his journal in 1857 that "Ducks, geese and swans are plentiful and these form our whole support" (Woolsey in Palliser, 1863, p. 282). Woolsey also mentioned that "the people of the fort go off to the small lakes and swamps in search of eggs (Ibid., p. 284). Duck's eggs were often used by the inhabitants of St. Albert in subsequent years. Frequent mention, for instance, is made of the children at the St. Albert orphanage being sent out to gather eggs, particularly at Lac des Oeufs in the vicinity of present-day Morinville. Duck's eggs, although inferior to hen's eggs, were described as being "...very good in their place, but unfortunately for cooking purposes...were generally some way on in the process of incubation..." (McDougall, 1898, p. 145).

Big game, and particularly the buffalo, provided the bulk of the meat derived from wildlife by the métis. Since the settlement area is situated on the margins between the Canadian Life Zone and the Transition Life Zone, big game animals characteristic of both zones frequently appeared in the area. Buffalo frequented the area in small groups, although the appearance of an entire herd in the settlement area has been recorded only once (André, 29 septembre, 1865). Even the prong-horned antelope, whose native habitat is the treeless country to the south, was reported in the vicinity of the settlement. Woolsey, writing in May, 1857, noted that

The Calri or Prairie Antelope, has made his appearance for the first time this season. It is about this time every year that they return to the north to seek an asylum for their young against the attacks of wolves (Woolsey in Palliser, 1863, p. 285).

Palliser mentions having killed deer, elk, moose and black bears in

the vicinity of Fort Edmonton (Ibid., p. 117), while even the grizzly bear has been reported in the settlement area (Cheadle and Milton, 1901, p. 180). The mule deer was probably the most common deer at that time in the parkland (Bird, 1961, p. 16). Moose generally inhabited the parkland swamps and willow thickets, and were frequently driven out of the forests to the north and west by bull flies and deer flies in mid-summer (Ibid., p. 65). In the parkland areas, however, the elk or wapiti was second only to the buffalo in numbers (Ibid., p.63).

Rabbits were probably the most important of the smaller game in the settlement area. Grouse, according to Woolsey, were rare in the Edmonton country (Woolsey in Palliser, 1863, p. 284). The muskrat, the dominant mammal of the sloughs and marshes (Bird, 1961, p. 20), was probably the most common fur-bearer in the settlement and its vicinity. Beaver, in all likelihood, were found along the Sturgeon to the north of Big Lake, although the settlement on the whole was located on the southern margins of the better fur regions. Further discussions of fauna in relation to life in the settlement are dealt with in subsequent parts of the study.

3). Situation

Situated in the northwestern portion of the parkland belt, the new mission possessed many of the advantages of both the open grassland to the south and the continuous forest to the north and west. The land on the north side of the Sturgeon valley was much less heavily wooded than that about Lac Ste. Anne, and agriculture therefore could be expected to be much easier. In the new mission's park-like surroundings, moreover, the areas of open prairie afforded good pasture and could be brought under cultivation without first encoun-

tering the many difficulties of clearing the land. The densely rooted sods in the grassland areas posed little problem, for they could be broken with Lacombe's iron-shod plough hauled by a team of oxen. Hay was readily available in the marshy areas around Big Lake, or could be gotten from the numerous sloughs in the area of lacustrine plain bordering the proposed site. The forested areas, on the other hand, and particularly the spruce forest on the south flank of the Sturgeon valley, possessed timber of sufficient quality for construction.

Of equal or greater importance to the intending métis settler, the mission was well situated, if not better situated, than Lac Ste. Anne, for the pursuits of the hunt. The parkland, especially on its northern margins, contained many of the fauna of the forest region, while the forest itself was little more than a day's journey away. Moreover, access to the prairies and to the annual buffalo hunts in the vicinity of present-day Red Deer and Stettler was easier from the new mission. From St. Albert the hunt could be prosecuted with greater ease, not only because St. Albert was nearer the Stettler area, but because the métis, who embarked on the hunt in large groups with their carts, could journey across the parkland with less difficulty than through the more heavily wooded area in the vicinity of Lac Ste. Anne.

Nearer Fort Edmonton, the new mission also had easier access to much-needed supplies and services. The métis were also nearer their market for furs and pemmican, as well as a potential source of part-time employment. Moreover, by locating the mission near the fort, Lacombe must have been almost certain that wheat would grow successfully, since it had been raised more or less successfully by the Company for almost forty years, while it had failed completely at Lac Ste. Anne.

At the fort as well, a Roman Catholic chapel had been constructed in 1857. But the post, with its dominantly Roman Catholic population,* was without the services of a priest, since the chapel had been used only when Father Lacombe or one of his assistants made the journey from Lac Ste. Anne. The Oblates, with their limited personnel, could easily minister to the spiritual needs of the Catholic population at the fort from their new location. In fact, the mission was close enough that the people of the fort were able to attend Sunday mass at the new mission until a priest was later secured for the fort itself.

The mission, though only nine miles away from Fort Edmonton, was still located far enough away to escape in large measure any involvement in the usual clashes between Cree and Blackfoot. Writing of Fort Edmonton in 1882, W.H. Williams, a special correspondent for the Toronto Globe, mentioned that

...in former times, it was the scene of many bloody skirmishes between the Crees on one side and the Blackfeet or Sarcees on the other. Indeed, there is hardly a block of one hundred acres anywhere in this vicinity that has not within the last thirty years been stained with the blood of murdered Indians (Williams, 1882, p. 181).

Not only did the Indians at the fort constitute a threat to peaceful settlement, but whether ill-disposed or not, their presence there was in no way favourable to the development of agriculture. William Christie, the chief factor at Edmonton, reported in 1862 that

* In the Company's journal at Edmonton it is noted: "All hands off for St. Albert as it is a holy day for the Catholics (Edmonton Post Journal, June 19, 1862).

Farming at this place is conducted under many difficulties, from the number of Indians who resort here, occasionally in large bands and not too well disposed. Large quantities of potatoes are stolen, Fences broken down and burned and their Horses let into the fields to feed on Barley or Wheat (Edmonton Report, 1862).

Writing in the following summer to Governor Dallas, Christie further noted that

Should it be your desire to carry on farming to any extent in the District, I would humbly suggest that a farm be opened some where at a distance from Edmonton, where stock could be raised and the fields and fences not subjected to the depredations of Indians....
(Christie, August 16, 1863).

Although the new mission was situated far enough away from the major concentrations of Indians at the fort, the mission site had been used as a camping ground for Indians (Williams, 1882, p. 182). There could have been little doubt, moreover, that in future even larger encampments of Indians (Crees and Assiniboines), en route to the fort, or seeking refuge when the hunt was poor, would congregate about the new mission. Not only, then, would agriculture at the mission be exposed to some extent to depredations by the Crees and allies, but the Blackfoot, on visits to Edmonton, could be expected to range beyond the fort on occasional forays into Cree territory. This in fact occurred in later years, to the disadvantage of the St. Albert free-men. Father Lacombe, for instance, tells of the Blackfoot in 1864 stealing the mission horses, and then stealing fifty-seven horses from the métis while they were out on the prairie, leaving them stranded in mid-winter on the plain (Lacombe, 10 mars, 1864).

Although Father Lacombe may well have thought of many other locations for the new mission, we know of only one - that mentioned by Palliser. Despite the site conditions so highly recommended by

Palliser for settlement there (i.e. near the junction of the Red Deer and Medicine Rivers), the situation was such that few of Lacombe's freemen would have ventured near the proposed spot. It was situated on the fringe of the Blackfoot country, and the métis, though they hunted the buffalo there, ventured into the area only in large, well-armed contingents. Palliser himself, in the course of travelling through the country of the Confederacy, mentions that "...such was the terror of the half-breeds whom I had engaged that it was only with the utmost difficulty that I could lead them on..." (Palliser, 1863, p.18). Palliser, moreover, goes on to say that if settlements were formed in the country of the Blackfoot, "...these Indians would form large war parties (against the Crees ostensibly) and these war parties...infallibly would end in attacks on the property of the settlers and in loss of life to both settlers and Indians" (Loc.cit.).

4) Breaking the Ground

Although still in charge of the mission at Lac Ste. Anne, Father Lacombe was quick to begin work at the new mission. As early as February, 1861, Father Lacombe hired a number of men to cut timber for a bridge across the Sturgeon River. Lacombe himself arrived at St. Albert on April 1st. He was accompanied by Michel Normand and his wife, domestic servants who had been in Lacombe's employ at Lac Ste. Anne, and two métis from Lac Ste. Anne, hired by Lacombe to help with the work on the new site. Father Lacombe was adequately equipped for the task before him, since he had with him four oxen, some horses, a plough, and according to his Memoirs, all the tools he required (Lacombe, n.d., p. 155). For more than a week Lacombe and his men cut down trees in the spruce grove that covered the south side of the

river. The spruce logs were then rafted across the river and hauled by the animals to the top of the hill on the opposite side. There on the hilltop Lacombe decided to build his chapel, and around it, he hoped, his métis would commence to carve out a way of life more certain than had hitherto been their lot.

a) Site of the Mission Building. The site for the mission building had been generally decided upon by Bishop Taché and Father Lacombe when they examined the area not many months before. The hill where the mission was to be erected, or mission hill as it was subsequently called, is in fact a protrusion of the higher portions of the north side of the Sturgeon valley. Mission hill comprises the highest ground in the settlement area and the mission building was to be constructed at its top. It is interesting to note that canon law recommends that the construction of Catholic churches be on dominating heights wherever possible (Deffontaines, 1948, p. 137). Lacombe no doubt was aware of this when he finally decided upon the spot, for in his first letter from St. Albert he wrote that "Après avoir bien considéré et examiné, je suis décidé, de l'avis de presque tout le monde, à fixer la mission juste là où V.G. [i.e. Bishop Taché] s'est arrêtée lors de votre visite quand nous avons monté les grandes côtes" (Lacombe, 13 avril, 1861). In a subsequent letter Lacombe remarked with pride that "De la moitié du chemin de lac Ste. Anne on voit notre maison toute à claire" (Lacombe, 31 décembre, 1861).

It was of significance that Father Lacombe felt a church in this location would be conveniently situated with respect to future settlement. "Je crois que les gens vont se placer de chaque côté et que nous nous trouverons à peu près au centre" (Lacombe, 13 avril, 1861).

That the settlers would locate along the north flank of the valley was a reasonable assumption, since the north flank was open parkland and the easiest area in the settlement to clear. By April 13, sufficient timber had been hauled to the hilltop to construct a building 32 feet long and 25 feet wide. The mission was constructed of square timbers hewn by hand with the broad axe, and the floors were fitted with planks cut from the logs with a long-saw. At least 1,000 fence poles had been cut by that time, which were to be used to enclose the mission fields. At approximately this date an uncertain number of métis with their families joined Lacombe at the site, and some began to build houses near the mission. Work of this nature, however, soon gave way to preparation of the soil, for the earth was no longer frozen and was beginning to dry. But before ploughing could be commenced, the land had to be divided among the settlers.

b) Laying Out the Land. Father Lacombe mentions in his letter of April 13, 1861, that "Dans quelques jours nous tirerons les lignes... sans oublier de prendre 10 arpents de large pour le terrain de mission" (Lacombe, 13 avril, 1861). The plan according to which Lacombe actually laid out the land, however, remains ambiguous. Lacombe simply states in his Memoirs that "as Lord over this land I gave to each his share, all in keeping, a few thousand acres on each side of the river" (Lacombe, n.d., p. 156). From the 1882-1883 Plan of St. Albert Settlement, we can reconstruct a reasonably accurate picture of some of the lots as they were laid out in 1861. The few thousand acres which Lacombe selected for the Oblates included river lots number 27 and number 52, which take in the mission and face each other from opposite sides of the river (Fig. 10). Both lots coincide with

Lacombe's description of the area in relation to our knowledge of the vegetation at the time. Lot 27 was probably prairie with some scrub poplar, while lot 52 on the south side of the river was heavily timbered. Lacombe in a letter to Bishop Taché described the mission lands as follows:

...avez-vous remarqué cette grande prairie, nous l'avons toute prise pour la mission. Nous avons aussi pris une terre à bois, qui tient à cette prairie, de sorte que notre foin et notre bois seront à notre porte (Lacombe, 31 décembre, 1861).

The two lots, however, comprise a total of only 919 acres. The remaining area taken by Lacombe in all probability included the timber reserve areas on the south side of the river comprising lots 51, 53, 54 and 55. The six lots occupy a total of 1,783 acres. There is a good possibility that the mission lands at this time comprised a number of other lots as well, of which the most likely might have been lot 50 on the south side of the river and lot 28 on the north.

Father Lacombe writes that by December, 1861, about thirty lots had been taken at St. Albert, many of which were in preparation for the following spring. Ten houses had been built by the settlers, all of which were located on the north side of the river and the lake (Loc. cit.). But which lots were taken and which contained houses is not known.

From the settlement plan we know that the lots comprised narrow strips of land fronting on the river or lake, and extending back from the water's edge for distances of about one to three miles. The length to width ratio of the lots was normally greater than three to one. The river lot shapes and sizes that appear on the St. Albert Settlement plan can be considered as representative, if not the same

in shape and size as the particular lots which Lacombe laid out in 1861, for when the land was surveyed in 1882-83, the surveyor as best as possible drew his lines in accordance with the pre-established boundaries in the settlement (Moodie, 1964, p. 7). The river lot system which Lacombe employed at St. Albert had been common practice at Red River, and was a natural and convenient system at the time. The long, narrow lots permitted the settlers to live close together and thereby provided security and social amenities which would have been impossible with square lots of the same acreages. Each family, moreover, possessed a water frontage, where fish and water for domestic purposes were easily available, and the lots which traversed the river valley normally possessed sufficient variation in landform and vegetation to permit a good combination of crops and livestock.

c) Agriculture. Father Lacombe makes no mention of when ploughing and seeding were begun at St. Albert in 1861, although he does provide a brief description of agricultural activity in the new colony in his Memoirs.

It was time to do the plowing. Having but one plow I set my oxen to work each their turn. During the day one man did his plowing with two beasts and at night another man took over and carried on the same work. This made it possible for us to seed a large field in a few days. At the same time the women...were busy preparing their garden plots in which they sowed cabbage, carrots, onions, turnips, etc;....

It was July! Our fields were gilded with the colour of our harvest. We were already eating apples and other vegetables.

Soon it was autumn. Our splendid harvest was brought in, our garden products stored in cellars. Having no flour mill, our wheat served as feed for our cows and pigs. There were already 20 Metis families settled in our midst (Lacombe, n.d., p. 156 ff.).

Writing to Bishop Taché on the 31st of December, 1861, Father Lacombe was able to report that all that had been planted had succeeded well enough, considering that it was already very late when the seeding was begun. In particular, he assured Bishop Taché that sufficient potatoes, barley and wheat had been harvested to enable the new colony to pass the winter without suffering. The mission, moreover, had taken in sixty loads of hay, a great deal more of which, according to Lacombe, could have been gotten had sufficient time been available to cut it (Lacombe, 31 décembre, 1861). A load of hay probably referred to the amount of hay that could be transported in a Red River cart or horse-drawn "charrette" (see Plates 7 and 8), the standard vehicles employed by the métis for summer cartage.

It is interesting to note that Lacombe in his Memoirs mentions that the wheat which was harvested was fed to cattle and hogs at the mission, since of course there was no grist mill at the mission. Yet in his letter of December 31, 1861, Lacombe writes that sufficient wheat was harvested to last the winter. Paul Kane tells us that a wind-powered grist mill was constructed at Fort Edmonton between 1846 and 1847 (Kane, 1925, p. 256) and we know that the same mill was in operation in 1861 (Edmonton Post Journal, January 10, 1861). We also know that in subsequent years, wheat from the mission was frequently ground at Fort Edmonton. There is no reason to believe, then, that if the wheat was successful at St. Albert in 1861, that Father Lacombe would not have used the grist mill at Edmonton. Moreover, it is difficult to believe that the inhabitants of St. Albert, who were living on a diet of pemmican, fish and vegetables, and who were on the verge of starvation during most of the summer, would readily have

fed their first crop of wheat to pigs and cattle. The discrepancy perhaps lies in the nature of the wheat crop itself. Since the crops were planted late in the season there is a good possibility that some of the wheat did not mature. The wheat which did mature was probably taken to the fort, ground into flour, and used by the people of St. Albert throughout the winter. That which did not, on the other hand, could have been best put to use as green feed for the livestock.

No information is available on the amount of land brought under cultivation at St. Albert in 1861. Nothing, moreover, is known of the agricultural endeavours of the twenty métis families reported to have been there. We may reasonably assume, however, that they planted gardens during the summer, but beyond this we can say nothing. The wheat which was raised at St. Albert in 1861 represented an agricultural accomplishment which at Lac Ste. Anne had never been achieved. Father Lacombe, in fact, regarded his first attempt at agriculture so successful that he reported to Bishop Taché that "Il y a de grandes espérances pour l'année prochaine" (Lacombe, 31 décembre, 1861).

d) The People. During the summer of 1861 large numbers of freemen visited the mission at St. Albert. Father Lacombe wrote that as many as 200 persons were there on April 13, although few of these people according to Lacombe came from Lac Ste. Anne (Lacombe, 13 avril, 1861). Some, it seems, were engaged in building houses, others were hired by Lacombe to help with the bridge, but the majority simply gathered on the site as spectators. Perhaps some were from Lac la Biche or elsewhere; others were definitely from Fort Edmonton. Of those from the fort, the majority went to St. Albert to look over the new settlement (Edmonton Post Journal, May 20, 1861).

Others had a vested interest in the new settlement, for mention is made in the *Edmonton Post Journal* of "...Olivier Veriss and Felix Munier, retiring servants clearing away their land at the Big Lake" (*Ibid.*, May 2, 1861).

Of the twenty families who settled at St. Albert in 1861, the greater portion probably came from Lac Ste. Anne, although no data are available concerning their origin. We know definitely that the majority of the people who came to St. Albert in the spring of 1862 came from Lac Ste. Anne. Writing in 1861, Father Lacombe mentioned that

...le printemps prochain, plusieurs des principales familles vont partir pour venir se fixer ici. Ceux des Métis qui viennent s'établir ici, leur vendent leurs maisons du lac Ste. Anne (Lacombe, 31 décembre, 1861).

Writing of Lac Ste. Anne in 1862, moreover, William Christie remarked that "...most of the settlers are now moving to the new Settlement forming at Lac St. Albert [i.e. St. Albert] ..." (*Edmonton Report*, 1862).

The early summer of 1861 was a difficult period, not only for the people at St. Albert, but for the métis at Lac Ste. Anne and the men at Fort Edmonton as well. The *Edmonton Post Journal* records that "...several freemen and their families came from St. Albert and Lac Ste. Anne, we hear of nothing but starvation" (*Edmonton Post Journal*, June 16, 1861). And at Fort Edmonton we learn that "...on account of starvation all work is suspended, we cannot send to the plains as we...have no word of the Bufflo [*sic.*]" (*Ibid.*, July 6, 1861). Throughout most of June and July the men at Fort Edmonton were on half rations. Almost daily mention is made of parties of men being sent out from the fort to hunt ducks and gather in their eggs, or to get fish from Big

Lake and the Sturgeon River. James Gibbons, who visited Fort Edmonton frequently in the 1860s, remarked that in summer "...there was practically nothing around the Fort except what could be shot. The Company servants used to be given a gun and ammunition to rustle their own living" (Gibbons in Griesbach, 1922, p. 9). Conditions at the fort in 1861, however, appear to have been considerably more severe than usual. Father Lacombe writes that all summer the lake and the river furnished the métis at St. Albert with an abundant supply of fish, without which, he says, there would have been a great deal of famine (Lacombe, 31 décembre, 1861). The Sturgeon River and Big Lake, according to Lacombe, provided pike, carp and sturgeon in numbers which hitherto he had believed did not exist there. He also notes that all summer the Company's men came to haul fish from the lake and the river. By late summer there is little mention of famine at Fort Edmonton and St. Albert, but as late as July 27 we are informed that "...the whole of Lac Ste. Anne is starving" (Edmonton Post Journal, July 27, 1861). In general, conditions at Lac Ste. Anne appear to have been worse than at St. Albert. Even the fall fishery at Lac Ste. Anne yielded much less than normal in 1861. The Post Journal records that "...one of our fishermen arrived from Lac Ste. Anne poor news from that quarter only nine thousand fish killed" (Ibid., November 2, 1861).

e) Hunting and Trapping. The majority of the freemen from St. Albert and Lac Ste. Anne abandoned their respective settlements by mid-summer to search out the buffalo on the plains to the south. Little information is available on the summer hunt of 1861, although we know that the métis, in an attempt to alleviate the widespread famine, left for the plains long before the buffalo were reported in the vicinity.

The Edmonton Post Journal on July 1st announces that "...all the freemen are crossing the river [i.e. the North Saskatchewan] for the plains" (July 1, 1861). The first news we have of the hunt is from Father Caër, who accompanied the St. Albert and Lac Ste. Anne freemen on the hunt. "Rev. Mr. Caër tells us that they have not done much on the plains in the way of provisions. He also says that the buffalo is far but approachin [sic.] this place slowly" (August 4, 1861). The métis appear to have made their kill far out on the plains, for by August 6 most of the freemen had re-crossed the North Saskatchewan on their return from the hunt. Some of the métis obtained provisions at the fort while en route to their respective settlements. They traded products of the hunt for the goods at the fort, a trade which amounted to 300 pounds of dried meat, four bags of pemmican, and an uncertain amount of grease and pounded meat (Ibid., August 6, 1861). Six of the freemen stayed on at the fort, where they were given part-time employment helping with the hay-making at the Company's farm (Loc. cit.).

The fall hunt for buffalo began in early November and terminated sometime in December. In the interim between the summer and fall hunts, the majority of the freemen spent their time hunting in the wooded country to the north and west of St. Albert. From the 29th of November entry in the Edmonton Post Journal we learn that "Most of the freemen are now back from the woods and have killed little or nothing. They are all now mostly on their way to the plains" (November 29, 1861). In the fall of 1861 the freemen went to the plains in two distinct groups. The first group left Fort Edmonton on November 10, and reported back the following day that the buffalo were near and numerous (November 11, 1861), while the second group left on November 29. The

The buffalo during the fall season were more plentiful and more accessible to the freemen than during the summer. No mention is made of food shortages at St. Albert or even at Lac Ste. Anne during the following winter, which suggests that the fall hunt yielded sufficient meat to last the métis for most of the winter.

We know from Father Lacombe that twenty métis families resided permanently at St. Albert during the winter of 1861-62. There can be little doubt, however, that groups of freemen camped there during the winter as well. The latter people pitched camp about the mission only occasionally. They belonged to the class of freemen known as "hivernants," or "commerçants," or winter rovers, who in winter as well as summer led a nomadic life in the forest or on the prairies. Ostensibly they belonged to the settlements at St. Albert, Lac Ste. Anne or Lac la Biche, and usually they were accompanied by a priest from St. Albert or Lac Ste. Anne. In the winter, they hunted and trapped along the parkland margins or in the wooded area between the North Saskatchewan and Athabaska Rivers. They collected in small colonies and traded their furs at Fort Edmonton, or to the métis free traders who frequently lived among them. Almost nothing, however, is known of the activities of these people during the winter of 1861-62. We do know, however, that the best furs traded at Fort Edmonton in 1862 came from Assiniboine Indians and from the winter rovers from St. Albert and Lac Ste. Anne (Edmonton Report, 1862). There is no complete record of the furs and provisions traded by the winter rovers at Fort Edmonton in the spring of 1862, although a list of what was traded there in April, 1862, is available, which in all likelihood is representative of the 1862 trade. The following items were traded by the St. Albert and Lac Ste.

Anne freemen on April 8, 1862: "27 beavers, one black bear, one brown bear, four lynx, two wolves, 250 muskrats, 50 pounds of grease, 58 pounds of pemmican, 37 pounds of dried meat and two kegs of pounded meat" (Edmonton Post Journal, April 8, 1863).

f) Relations with Fort Edmonton. Even in the first year of settlement, a close relationship sprang up between Fort Edmonton and the embryonic settlement at St. Albert. Men from the fort, for instance, were clearing land at St. Albert, others had relatives there, while almost all went to church at the mission. Father Lacombe and Chief Factor Christie, moreover, contracted an agreement to share expenses for the bridge across the Sturgeon. The bridge could be employed by the Company's pack-horse trains en route to Fort Assiniboine, and would improve communications between St. Albert and Fort Edmonton. Lacombe and his métis, moreover, readily availed themselves of the various services to be had at the fort. The métis had their guns repaired by the fort blacksmith, while Father Lacombe had him construct a sheet iron stove for the mission. Lacombe obtained considerable quantities of lime from the Company's newly constructed kiln at the fort, and there is little reason to doubt that he used the fort's flour milling facilities as well. Perhaps more important at this time was the close trade relationship that existed between the fort and the mission. The fort provided a market for the products from the métis as well as many of the services and implements required at St. Albert. The St. Albert métis, on the other hand, usually brought in the best furs gotten in the Edmonton trade as well as significant amounts of pemmican and meat.

There was also another side to this symbiotic relationship between fort and mission which deserves attention. Both Chief Factor Christie

and Father Lacombe, for instance, were quick to come to each other's assistance when such was required, a relationship of no little significance in times of need in a wilderness. In the summer of 1861, when conditions were hard in both the fledgling settlement and at the fort, numerous instances of mutual assistance are recorded in the Post Journal. On July 3, for instance, Christie sent five of his men to help Father Lacombe gather stones for lime. On July 21 the Journal records that "Rev. Mr. Lacombe arrived in with a few St. Albert free-men they brought us some fish." In mid-August we read that "As we are nearly out of provisions we had to burrough [sic.] 100 lbs. of grease from Rev. Mr. Lacombe" (August 17, 1861).

B. ST. ALBERT 1862-1870

By the end of 1862 the population at St. Albert had roughly doubled. The crops that year succeeded and ten new houses embellished the landscape (Caër, septembre, 1862). A considerable number of métis took to agriculture in some form or other, which to some extent is a measure of Lacombe's success in his endeavours to convert them to a more settled way of life. Father Scollen, an Oblate and teacher in charge of the Catholic school at Fort Edmonton, attributed the métis interest in agriculture to a change in attitude. Writing of the St. Albert métis in 1862, Father Scollen noted:

They now know the fact, that if they put their whole dependence on the buffalo, that they shall soon be without food. They are now coming to cultivate the land, so that when the buffalo fail they may have plenty to support themselves. We shall soon have an important mission here (Scollen, December 24, 1862).

It should also be noted that the métis who came to settle at St. Albert in 1862 were better disposed toward agriculture than the majority of the Lac Ste. Anne métis, since this was the main reason they moved to the new mission.

During the summer of 1862 the bridge across the Sturgeon River was completed. The bridge at St. Albert was claimed to be the only bridge in the North-West. If not, it was undoubtedly the first toll-bridge. In 1862 the people at St. Albert were suffering from a shortage of various manufactured goods such as agricultural implements, work tools, kitchen utensils, coal-oil and certain foods. In order to remedy the situation Father Lacombe organized an ox-cart brigade to transport goods from St. Boniface to St. Albert. The brigade, made up

of more than thirty carts, left St. Albert in the early fall of 1862 and returned about six weeks later. The brigade travelled via Fort Pitt and Fort Carlton on the North Saskatchewan and from thence to Forts Qu'Appelle and Ellice to St. Boniface (see Fig. 2). While in St. Boniface, Father Lacombe purchased machinery for a grist mill at St. Albert.

In the summer of 1863, two travellers to St. Albert referred to the colony as the most prosperous in the Company's Territories west of Red River. Lord Milton and Viscount Cheadle, who visited St. Albert in June of 1863 described it as

...a little colony of some twenty houses, built on the rising ground near a small lake and river. A substantial wooden bridge spanned the latter, the only structure of the kind we had found in the Hudson's Bay territory. The priest's house was a pretty white building, with garden around it, and adjoining it the chapel, school and nunnery.

...we strolled round the settlement in company with our host. He showed us several very respectable farms with rich cornfields [i.e., grain fields], large bands of horses and herds of fat cattle. He had devoted himself to the work of improving the conditions of his flock, had brought out at great expense ploughs and other farming implements for their use and was at present completing a corn mill, to be worked by horse power.... Altogether, this was the most flourishing community we had seen since leaving Red River (Cheadle and Milton, 1901, p. 182).

In March of 1863 the three Grey Nuns who had been sent to Lac Ste. Anne in 1859 were transferred to St. Albert. They moved into a two-story building that had been built for them by Father Lacombe. The building was used as a convent, school, hospital and orphanage combined. The construction of the grist mill was completed in the summer of 1863 with the assistance of one of the Company's men, and of an American mill wright, who was then mining gold in the gravels of the

North Saskatchewan valley. (Lacombe, 13 avril, 1863). The mill, which was powered by Indian ponies or by Lacombe's oxen, was outfitted to work a number of saws as well. The concensus of opinion was that the new mill would prove to "...be very handy for the first farmers" (The Nor'Wester, April 13, 1863).

In the spring of 1863, Lacombe's farm was "the largest farm, except the Company's," in the Saskatchewan district (Loc.cit.). According to one of the Grey Nuns, however, the harvest at St. Albert yielded practically nothing in 1863 (Emery, 21 décembre, 1863). Drought and frequent frosts throughout the summer destroyed almost everything the métis had planted. At the mission, only a little wheat and barley escaped the ill effects of the summer drought (Lacombe, 29 juin, 1863), although the potatoes yielded extremely well, returning 350 barrels* for the 13 barrels planted (Emery, 21 décembre, 1863). The métis, on the other hand, had been able to save virtually nothing - not even enough for seed for the following year. Sister Emery wrote that the métis, as usual, were expected to come to the mission for seed in the spring, implying that the métis had had little success so far with their agricultural endeavours (Loc.cit.).

The winter of 1863-64 was an extremely difficult one at St. Albert, not only because of the crop failures the preceding summer, but because the hunt throughout the winter was very poor. Nothing is known of the summer and fall buffalo hunts in 1863, but during the winter the

* Probably eight gallon kegs, which according to Grant were used by the Company at Edmonton for potatoes (Grant, 1873, p. 172).

buffalo, according to Father Lacombe, failed to appear since there was very little snow on the ground that winter (Lacombe, 10 mars, 1864). In normal winters, according to Lacombe, the buffalo moved northward to seek refuge in the parkland, where they broke into small groups and foraged in the more sheltered locations. Though the movements of the buffalo were frequently unpredictable, many observers familiar with the ways of the buffalo wrote of this general winter migration northward. McDougall, for instance, wrote that "It is still hard for the inexperienced to understand that the colder the weather and harder the winter, further into the north did the great herds feed; but all through the sixties and seventies this was my knowledge of them...." (McDougall in Roe, 1951, p. 194). According to Sir George Simpson

They make yearly migrations from one part of the country to another, reversing, in this respect, the ordinary course of birds of passage. During the winter, they go north in order to obtain the shelter of the woods against the severity of the weather, while on the approach of summer, they proceed to the open plains to the south... (Simpson in loc.cit.).

In the winter of 1863-64 the buffalo wintered out on the prairie far beyond the reach of the St. Albert freemen. According to Sister Emery, famine forced the métis to make numerous expeditions to the plains in search of the buffalo. Few were found, however, and famine was widespread among the métis and Indians of the Saskatchewan. Sister Emery writes that everyone at St. Albert suffered horribly throughout the winter (Emery, 12 mars, 1864). While the métis were on the plains, moreover, the Blackfoot made off with fifty-seven of their horses. They boldly stole all the horses from the mission as well, which at the time was under threat of famine.

The crops at the mission yielded well in 1864. Forty bushels of

wheat and 76 bushels of barley were harvested from the mission fields, while from the fall and summer buffalo hunts the mission procured 75 buffalo carcasses, 4,000 pounds of dried meat and 500 buffalo tongues (Caër, 10 mai, 1865). Despite the vagaries of both agriculture and the hunt, St. Albert had increased in size to a colony possessing over 40 houses by December, 1864 (Ami de L'Établissement, 1876, p. 11). Even so, few of the St. Albert métis were successful agriculturalists, and few, it seems, made any endeavour to improve their lot. According to the following description, the inhabitants of St. Albert, aside from the missionaries, could hardly be called an agricultural people.

Here we are then at Big Lake. I would fain give you an account of the people of this region; it would be so libellous and of necessity so defamatory, I must restrain, lest I get a broken head before leaving them. They say the soil is excellent for farming purposes, and attribute ill-success in this line to the lack of agricultural implements. I should say that downright sloth has something to do with the scabbed crops of the Saskatchewan. The Company's farm under Mr. William Flett and that of Rev. Pere Lacombe, are the only two that succeed well, and they are really very creditable (The Nor'Wester, March 7, 1864).

On December 16, 1864, Father Lacombe left his work at the mission of St. Albert to begin the work of evangelization among the Crees and the Blackfoot (Chroniques du Couvent Youville, 15 février, 1865). Although he returned to the mission occasionally, he was replaced there by Father Tissot, O.M.I., and his assistant, Father André, O.M.I. Writing of St. Albert in June of 1865, Father Lacombe informed his superior at St. Boniface that

Le fléau qui nous menace, c'est la famine, les buffalos est plus loin et ce qui est plus à regretter, c'est que nous n'avons pas de récoltes - la sécheresse et les vers ont déjà presque tout ruiné nos champs. Il y a quelques temps tous les champs avaient...très belle apparence; en quelques nuits tout a été rasé - c'est vraiment décourageant (Lacombe, 26 juin, 1865).

Father Scollen, moreover, reported that many of the métis were thinking of leaving St. Albert because of the little success they had had with agriculture.

...since the seed has been sown there are myriads of worms that are destroying everything. There are in fact some places so entirely cleaned that a person would imagine nothing had been sown. The mission at Lake Ste. Ann is the worst off in this respect. The people of St. Albert are quite disheartened. They say that they have been tilling the land 4 years without receiving the least recompense for their labour. Some of them have already formed the intention of abandoning the place to go and settle at Fort Benton, but I cannot certify whether they will carry their design into execution (Scollen, June 27, 1865).

This idea, in fact, was never acted upon, nor is there any record of the St. Albert métis having left the settlement to settle elsewhere.

Throughout the summer of 1865 the buffalo remained far out on the plains and few were killed by the St. Albert freemen on the summer hunt. Most of the crops that summer were destroyed. The worms and drought had their worst effect upon the barley. Only five bushels of barley were harvested from the eight bushels planted at the mission. Over forty bushels of wheat were harvested, although the potatoes were ruined by heavy frosts in September (André, 29 septembre, 1865). The buffalo, on the other hand, were plentiful in the fall, saving the settlement from starvation in the early part of the winter. Father André was able to report to Bishop Taché that "Heureusement la providence vient à notre secours en envoyant les animaux presque à notre porte..." (Loc.cit.). By mid-winter, however, starvation was again imminent. Many of the métis were forced to leave the mission in search of food, while those who stayed went hungry. According to Sister Emery, "...quelques unes s'éloigner de nous à cause des vivres

dont la mission n'est pas bien fournie. La misère est grande cette année, beaucoup de nos pauvres gens de St. Albert jeunent forts" (Emery, 1 mai, 1866). Facing another difficult winter, the people of St. Albert again commenced to speak in disfavour of the settlement. According to Father Tissot, they were discontented primarily with the summer frosts and periodic droughts which so frequently destroyed their crops (Tissot, 4 janvier, 1866).

No data are available for the crops at St. Albert in 1866. We know, however, that famine was widespread during the winter of 1866-67, which suggests that the 1866 crops were not entirely successful. Throughout the winter of 1866-67, the shortage of food was such that the people of St. Albert were reduced to a diet consisting primarily of rabbit meat. The rabbits, according to Father Tissot, were very plentiful that year, without which many of the St. Albert freemen would have died of starvation. As late as mid-April, 1867, Father Tissot wrote that starvation was "the order of the day" at St. Albert (Tissot, 16 avril, 1867). During the winter, moreover, the Blackfoot again stole many horses from the métis who were on the prairie in search of buffalo. In consequence, the St. Albert métis prepared to make war on the Blackfoot, but were dissuaded by the priests and Company officials from this rather imprudent resolve (Scollen, 3 mai, 1867).

From the little information available it appears that agriculture was reasonably successful in the colony in 1867. Sister Lasseseraye in early September of 1867 wrote that a good wheat crop was expected, but because of the cool summer, fears were entertained that some of the wheat might not mature. The potatoes, on the other hand, were plentiful, and from all appearances, a good barley crop was expected

(Lasseseraye, 4 septembre, 1867). In January of 1868, Father Scollen wrote that the people of St. Albert were having a hard winter. The buffalo, he said, were very far off, so far off, in fact, that the métis were starving, and even Father Tissot, according to Scollen, feared that he would be unable to provide for the persons at the mission (Scollen, 8 janvier, 1868).

In 1868 Father Hippolyte Leduc replaced Father Tissot as parish priest at St. Albert. In July of that year, Father Leduc reported that the Sturgeon valley was virtually deserted, that almost all the people were on the plains looking for the buffalo. The buffalo, he said, were very rare, although enough had been killed to provide food until the fall (Leduc, 27 juillet, 1868). The first really successful crop was harvested at the mission in 1868 (Leduc, 1 octobre, 1868). One of the Grey Nuns compiled a list of the field and garden crops harvested at the mission. They included 700 barrels of potatoes, 200 bushels of cabbages, 11 bushels of carrots, 11 bushels of onions, 150 bushels of wheat and 30 bushels of barley (Chroniques du Couvent Youville, 10 octobre, 1868).

In October, 1868, Bishop Vital Grandin, O.M.I., then coadjutor to Bishop Taché in St. Boniface, was sent to St. Albert. This was the first step in a plan which in 1871 culminated in the elevation of the St. Albert Mission to the status of an Episcopal See, and the formal appointment of Bishop Grandin as the first Bishop of the newly created Diocese of St. Albert (Tétrault, 1954b, p. 22). The arrival of Bishop Grandin at St. Albert not only marked the beginning of a new period for St. Albert as an ecclesiastical centre, but also greatly added to the resources of the mission, for Bishop Grandin

arrived at St. Albert with a contingent of 14 new recruits for the mission. Among them were a number of lay brothers who had acquired various technical skills of particular use at St. Albert. Brothers Bowes and Nemoz were cabinet makers and carpenters, Brother Lereche was a blacksmith, while Brother Croteau became the mission cobbler. Others among the lay brothers were farmers or cattle-raisers, and they were later joined by Brothers Lavoie, Avrillon and Gerante who were carpenters and Brothers Lamber and Touze, millers and sawmill operators (Ibid., p. 17 ff).

Following his arrival at St. Albert, Bishop Grandin described the colony as being quite different from the other missions in the North-West. St. Albert, he said, resembled the missions at Red River more so than the others. The climate at St. Albert, according to Bishop Taché, was milder than at Red River, and at St. Albert, crops and animals were raised with less difficulty than at the other missions. Bishop Grandin believed that St. Albert possessed greater advantages for settlement than the other missions of the North-West, and felt that it would soon be as populous as St. Boniface (Grandin, 29 décembre, 1868).

There was very little snow during the winter of 1868-69 and the buffalo wintered far out on the plains. One of the residents of St. Albert described the situation as follows.

...there is nothing very particular to communicate only starvation [sic.] the Buff [sic.] country is getting very bare. The poor freemen they had to go to a long distance this winter before they could come to the Buffalo. The fire had run along the Saskatchewan plains last fall, and we had no snow up country this year not enough to travel any distance. The poor thickwood tribes [i.e. the Woods Indians] they were starving the whole winter for want of snow (Christillian, March 20, 1869).

One of the Grey Nuns reported that temperatures throughout the winter ranged between 30°F and 40°F below zero, and that no one could remember a winter quite so rigorous or cold. The winter rovers, according to the report, suffered the most, and were forced to kill their dogs and horses to survive (Annales des Soeurs de la Charité de l'Hôpital Général de St. Boniface, 10 février, 1868).

Perhaps because of the extremely hard winter and the unprecedented success of the crops at the mission in 1868, Father Leduc noted that among the population of St. Albert there was a great eagerness or "élan" for agriculture in the spring of 1869. Everyone, he said, wanted a little field, either for barley, wheat or potatoes (Leduc, 28 avril, 1869). Unfortunately, no records are available of the crop yields in 1869 and 1870. Much more land, however, was cultivated at St. Albert in 1869 than had previously been put under cultivation in the settlement. In 1870, moreover, a great deal of seeding was carried out, since large numbers of buffalo had been killed by the heavy snows of the preceding winter. Father Leduc wrote in May, 1870, that "Nous semons à forte à la mission, ..., car il est bien à craindre que la voyage de prairie se soit bien précaire cette année, grâce à la grande neige, les animaux sont morts en masse dans le cours de l'hiver" (Leduc, mai, 1870).

Though the crops, perhaps, were encouraging in the period 1869-70, the settlement was plagued with numerous setbacks during this period, the most serious of which was a smallpox epidemic in the summer of 1870. In the summer of 1869, prairie fires destroyed a number of the spruce groves in the settlement from which the missionaries obtained their lumber. Some 40,000 shingles and 160 pieces of lumber for the

new church were burned in the fire (Leduc, 16 juin, 1869). Moreover, war broke out between the Blackfoot, on the one hand, and the St. Albert freemen and the Crees, on the other. An anonymous observer reported that

The plains Indians "Blackfeet and Crees" are getting very bad and it won't be long before there is trouble - they speak very bad so everyone says - The Blackfeet and Freemen of St Albert/a small party of 7 Freemen against 45 Blackfeet had a fight last fall - 3 Blackfeet killed and 2 Freemen wounded. The Blackfeet stole horses 3 times lately from the Halfbreeds, and left them with their loaded sleds on the plains (Anon. December, 1869).

Smallpox, which first appeared in 1869 among the Piegan tribesmen in the vicinity of the headwaters of the Missouri River, spread rapidly to the Indians of the Saskatchewan district, where it reached its height in the summer of 1870. At St. Albert, according to Butler, the disease took on "a most malignant form" (Butler, 1876, p. 369). The infection was introduced into St. Albert from two different sources at approximately the same time. The freemen on the summer buffalo hunt met the Blackfoot on the plains for the purpose of making peace and trading. The Blackfoot were infected with smallpox, and a few days later it appeared among the freemen, sweeping off half their number in a short space of time. Those who survived on the plains made their way to St. Albert, taking the disease with them. About the same time some of the Crees (their war parties against the Blackfoot that summer brought the disease to the Cree nation at their summer meeting) also reached the settlement. The infection, communicated from both quarters, spread with amazing rapidity throughout the settlement. Sister Emery, writing on November 27, 1870, reported that the disease by then had almost died out. Approximately 280 persons at the mission had died, or one third of the population of St. Albert. Some families had been swept off entirely (Emery, 27 novembre, 1870). Butler writes that "Out of a total

population of 900 souls, 600 caught the disease, and up to the date of my departure from Edmonton 311 deaths had occurred" (Butler, 1876, p. 369). Captain Butler left Edmonton on December 22nd, 1870. Although disease was no stranger to the people at St. Albert,* never before had an infectious disease so drastically thinned the ranks of the colony.

Finally, in 1870 there was a shortage of funds available for the maintenance of the Oblate missions in the North-West. Sister Emery gives us some indication of the importance of the missionary maintenance funds to the financial life of the missions.

Toutes les missions du Nord ont coutûme [sic.] de recevoir tous les ans une certaine somme de la Propagation de la Foi; cette somme est en grand partie ce qui les soutient... (Emery, 27 novembre, 1870).

The bulk of the funds originated in France, but in 1870 these were not available because of the Franco-Prussian war. According to Butler, "... the war which is at present waging in France has dried up the sources of charity (via the Propagation of the Faith) from whence the Missions of the North-West derived their chief support..." (Butler, 1876, p. 371). The winter of 1870, moreover, brought increased distress to a colony where hunger and starvation were already rife. The hunt that winter is best described in the words of Sister Lasseseraye.

Les nouvelles de la prairie sont bien tristes, nos gens pour la plupart sont restés dans la prairie cet hiver, le Buffalo est très rare, le feu ayant passé cette été a tout rasé de sorte qu'ils sont obligés de changer la direction à fin de trouver leur vie (Lasseseraye, 20 décembre, 1870).

In the period 1862 to 1870 crop failures at St. Albert were frequent and seed normally had to be distributed every spring. The buffalo hunts, on the other hand, often gave meagre returns and famine was never far away. Yet St. Albert by 1870 had become the principal

*"There is a great deal of sickness at Lac St. Annes and St. Albert, a good many people have died from dysentry" (Christie, November 28, 1865).

centre of the Saskatchewan, having grown from the small group of families that settled there in 1861 to a substantial colony of almost 600 inhabitants in 1870. With the exception of the Red River Settlement, in fact, St. Albert was the most populous settlement in the Canadian North-West. The people in the colony were either métis or members of the clergy. Between 1862 and 1870 increasing numbers of métis took to tilling the soil. Few, however, extended their agricultural operations beyond the cultivation of small plots. The clergy, on the other hand, expanded agriculture around the mission considerably.

Although St. Albert rapidly took on the appearance of a successful sedentary settlement, life for the St. Albert métis remained essentially nomadic. Hunting was the mainstay of the St. Albert economy, the primary occupation of the population, while fishing in the various lakes continued to provide a supplementary resource of some significance. At St. Albert, as at Red River, the métis population undertook large collective hunting expeditions every summer and fall. A considerable portion of the population, moreover, continued the custom of winter roving. In addition, agriculture in the colony was subject to frequent interruptions. The uncertainties of climate as they affected the crops often rendered nomadism a necessity. Droughts and frosts, for instance, forced the St. Albert métis to abandon their settlement a number of times in the period 1862 to 1870. Yet in the same period agriculture progressed gradually, and even though it held second place to the hunt among the métis, agricultural progress was such that St. Albert by 1871 had become the most important agricultural community between Red River and the Rocky Mountains.

C. HUNTERS AND FARMERS

While the people at St. Albert were experiencing the horrors of smallpox in the summer of 1870, an important event far removed from life in the colony took place. On July 15, 1870, the territorial rights of the Hudson's Bay Company were effectively transferred to the Dominion of Canada. The cession of Rupert's Land to Canada, although not of immediate importance to the residents of St. Albert, loomed up not many years later as a factor vital to the traditional way of life in the colony. With the end of Company rule in the North-West, a small district roughly 100 miles square and inhabited by a considerable number of settlers was organized into the Province of Manitoba. The administration of the vast area that remained was placed under the control of a federally-appointed officer, the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories. Between 1870 and 1876 this position was held by the Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, for reasons of economy and convenience. In 1873, following the recommendations of the Butler Report in 1871 and that of Colonel Robertson Ross in 1872, the North-West Mounted Police were formed and despatched to the prairies, where prior to 1873 there had been no law enforcement. Finally, the North-West Territories Act of 1875 provided for the re-organization of the North-West Council and for the appointment of a separate Lieutenant-Governor for the North-West. The Council assumed administration of the country, directed local finances, and meted out justice.

1) Population

In 1871 Captain Butler, following his investigation for the

Federal Government into the conditions prevailing in the North-West, reported only six colonies in the entire North-West, of which the largest was the St. Albert Settlement (Butler, 1876, p. 383). All were of mission origin. Prince Albert, Whitefish Lake and Victoria were inhabited primarily by English speaking métis, while St. Albert, Lac la Biche and Lac Ste. Anne were composed of French speaking métis. In addition, there were a number of missions in the North-West where métis and Indians congregated intermittently, as well as small white and métis populations to be found at the Hudson's Bay Company posts at Fort Qu'Appelle, Fort Pelly, Touchwood Hills, Cumberland House, Fort à la Corne, Fort Pitt and Fort Edmonton (see Fig. 2).

Five of the six colonies reported by Butler were located in the St. Albert Diocese. According to Bishop Grandin, bishop of the diocese of St. Albert, the St. Albert Settlement circa 1871 had a population of 700 French métis (Grandin, n.d., Vol. 6, p. 166 ff). Roughly 300 French métis, living from agriculture, the hunt, and especially fishing, were grouped about the mission at Lac Ste. Anne. Bishop Grandin mentioned that the Oblates built a grist mill there to encourage agriculture, but that the wheat (perhaps a different variety than had been used prior to 1861) did not grow as well as at St. Albert (Loc.cit.). Lac la Biche had a population of 300 French métis and Indians. There, as at Lac Ste. Anne and St. Albert, the Oblates had constructed a grist mill. Wheat grew better at Lac la Biche than at either Lac Ste. Anne or St. Albert, since frosts there were much less frequent, which Rev. G.M. Grant, agricultural specialist with the Sanford Fleming expedition, attributed to the much lower elevation above sea level of the mission (Grant, 1873, p. 71). It is more

likely, however, that early spring and fall frosts at Lac la Biche are inhibited by the thermostat effect of the lake (Longley, 1965, p. 10).

The Methodist mission at Victoria, located some seventy miles downstream from Fort Edmonton on the North Saskatchewan, contained about 150 persons, some of whom according to Bishop Grandin, were English speaking Canadians, although the majority were English speaking métis. The Methodists also had a mill at the mission to encourage agriculture. The mill, however, was owned by the Hudson's Bay Company. Whitefish Lake, also a Methodist mission, had a population of 150 English métis and Indians (Grandin, n.d., Vol. 6, p. 166 ff). Rev. R.V. Steinhauer, the founder and inspirer of the Whitefish Lake Settlement, estimated the population to be between 300 and 400 persons, most of whom, however, were transients (Steinhauer, 1870).

Bishop Grandin estimated that there were at least 4,000 French métis in the North-West between Fort Ellice and Fort Edmonton in 1871. Of these, about 500 were employed by the Company in the Saskatchewan district, while another 500 were entirely nomadic, or without any form of fixed employment. These were the winter rovers. The remainder of the population were white employees of the Company, Americans and English métis. The métis, however, were the first people to settle in the North-West Territories. Many were born in the North-West and grew up around the trading posts, although large numbers migrated there from Red River. The gradual withdrawal of the buffalo from the eastern plains drew many of the Manitoba métis further and further west. According to Stanley, the Red River métis were faced with two alternatives - either to follow the buffalo westward, or to take up farming in the colony. The hunt, to the métis, "was a necessity as well as a pleasure,

and many, choosing the easier road, followed the well-defined buffalo trails into the interior" (Stanley, 1963, p. 178).

The emigration from Red River was a slow movement at first. It was sanctioned to some extent by the Church, which when confronted with the ineffectiveness of its own endeavours, gave up its efforts to hold back a population which in many ways was incapable of adopting the concept of European civilization. The Oblates, on the other hand, offered the métis trekkers refuge at their missions in the North-West and promised them free land. The hazards of climate, floods and grasshoppers brought about the first real exodus among the métis of Red River before 1870. The largest number went to the Edmonton area, attracted by the settlements already in existence there. In 1865 and especially 1866, considerable numbers of Manitoba métis went to St. Albert and Lac Ste. Anne (Giraud, 1954, p. 2). Following the first Riel Rebellion in 1870, the métis migration westward intensified. One group of migrants moved towards the settlements springing up around the missions, while a second, much larger group, joined the ranks of the winter rovers (Ibid., p. 3). For both groups, life was nomadic. For the winter rovers nomadism was continuous; for the others, wandering was interrupted by more or less prolonged sojourns in dwellings around the missions or in the new settlements springing up on the plains.

2) Agriculture

Of the roughly 700 métis living at St. Albert in 1871, twenty or thirty families, according to Bishop Grandin, were successfully engaged in agriculture (Grandin, n.d., Vol. 6, p. 166 ff). According to William Pearce, the number of métis who had settled on the land at St.

Albert prior to June, 1871, "were about twenty" (Pearce in Canada, 1886b, p. 17). The remainder lived almost exclusively from hunting and fishing. Everyone, however, including the clergy, lived to a considerable degree from the proceeds of the hunt. The métis method of agriculture at this time was described by Reverend Grant as unique. According to Grant, the St. Albert métis were farmers, hunters, fishermen, voyageurs, all in one. Their methods of farming, consequently, were comparatively rude, since little of their time was spent caring for the crops. Early in May,

the soil is scratched three inches deep, some seed is thrown in, and then the whole household go off to hunt the buffalo. They get back about the first of August, spend the month haying and harvesting, and are off to the fall hunt early in September. ...they raise some wheat and a good deal of barley, oats and potatoes. The métis has a patch of potatoes or a little barley and in a year of scarcity draws his belt tighter or starves (Grant, 1873, p. 176).

Mrs. Callihoo, a métis who lived at St. Albert in the 1870s, wrote that

We cultivated our land - an acre or two - with a ten-inch plow. An ox would be trained to pull it. When plowing was done, a wooden harrow was then dragged on the plowed land.... The seeds were sown broadcast. Fences were made of rails laid on blocks.... Our haying equipment was an Armstrong mower (scythe), wooden forks with wood prongs (Callihoo, 1953, pp. 24-25).

Of the métis in general in 1870, Butler wrote that "With very few exceptions, they have preferred adopting the exciting but precarious means of living, the chase, to following the more certain methods of agriculture" (Butler, 1876, p. 361). According to Father Leduc, even though the elements of civilization were being introduced little by little among the St. Albert métis, it was only with "a thousand difficulties" that the métis who had begun farming,

could be encouraged to put more land under cultivation, or to abandon the nomadic ways of the Indians (Leduc, 1874, p. 35). Even the concept of owning land, for agriculture or any other purpose, was virtually foreign to the *métis* mind. Butler makes the point that "Ownership in any particular portion of the soil by an individual is altogether foreign to men who, in the course of a single summer, roam over 500 miles of prairie and are lords over all they survey" (Butler, 1876, p. 361).

Bishop Grandin commented that potatoes and barley grew well at St. Albert, but that wheat did not grow so well. In 1869 and 1870 the wheat had not done nearly as well as the barley and was ordinarily struck by frosts before it matured sufficiently (Grandin, 1871, Vol. 6, p. 166 ff). Grant attributed the ill-success of wheat at the mission to its situation. "...we could easily understand why they suffered. They are on the extreme northwest of the 'belt' [i.e. Palliser's Fertile Belt] at an altitude above sea level of from 2,000 to 2,500 feet" (Grant, 1873, p. 71). According to Grant, at Edmonton - and this applies to St. Albert as well - there was invariably a night or two of frost between August 10 and August 20. Thus, said Grant, if they sow late, and the wheat is in the milk when the frost comes, it is injured. The solution, he said, was to sow early. The missionaries, of course, were aware of this, but with a wheat variety which normally required 135 days to mature, the length of the growing season (under 100 days) was simply too short.

According to Bishop Grandin, considerable numbers of animals were kept at the mission, particularly cattle and horses. Both cattle and horses survived outdoors winter and summer, and frequently foraged for themselves on the open patches of grassland.

Hay, he said, was very abundant, and the only difficulties encountered were those of cutting and transporting the hay. Some of the métis owned livestock, but the majority of the animals, aside from horses, appear to have belonged to the mission. Mrs. Callihoo wrote that "Our livestock consisted of horses, cattle, pigs and chickens, all scrubs" (Callihoo, 1953, p. 21). There are no records, however, concerning ownership of livestock among the métis in 1871.

No data are available on the amount of land under cultivation at St. Albert in 1871, nor of the crops harvested that year. Alfred Selwyn, however, a geologist who visited St. Albert in 1873, wrote that "A fine farm and garden some forty or fifty acres in extent is cultivated by the missionaries" (Selwyn, 1874, p. 38). The 1872 crops at the mission were reported by Father Leduc to have succeeded passably. From their forty-odd acres the missionaries harvested 365 bushels of barley, 40 bushels of wheat and 980 barrels of potatoes (Leduc, 20 octobre, 1872).

3) The Hunt

The term "Edmonton Hunt" is used here to refer to the annual summer and fall buffalo hunts undertaken by the métis from the settlements at Edmonton, St. Albert, Lac Ste. Anne and Lac la Biche. White hunters were few in number, and since as a rule they were poor horsemen and did their hunting on foot, they cannot be said to have participated in the Edmonton Hunt proper (Steele, 1917, p. 86). The métis, it should be noted, engaged in an organized spring hunt as well, which began as soon as the snow melted and usually continued for a month or six weeks. Only part of the métis, however, participated in the spring hunt. Some remained in the settlements to till and plant their

small patches of land. Others took to the trail to trade the prime buffalo robes, furs and pemmican secured from previous hunts. Although most of the métis traded their products at Fort Edmonton, others went as far as Red River in order to get supplies which were unavailable in the Saskatchewan district (Callihoo, 1953, p. 24).

The summer hunt found almost all of the métis from the four settlements out on the plains. It began shortly after the spring hunt and usually lasted until late August or early September. The summer hunt was carried out to secure pemmican and dried meat and hence the name "dried meat" hunters was given to the people who participated. Buffalo hides taken during the summer hunt were tanned to make harness, saddles, tents and moccasins. The fall hunt began as soon as the ground was frozen and finished when the métis had obtained sufficient meat to last the winter. It was conducted for fresh meat and robes. The fall hunters, or the "green meat" hunters, carted the frozen meat back to their settlements where it was kept frozen either in outbuildings constructed for the purpose, or on stages or scaffoldings erected to keep it beyond the reach of the dogs. Since the spring hunt was participated in by fewer métis than the summer and fall hunts, but conducted in the same manner, no further discussion of the spring hunt is provided here.

The Edmonton Hunt, though much smaller than the great Red River Hunt, was conducted in much the same way (Jamieson, 1953, p. 21). In the early days, however, when the métis settlements in the vicinity of Edmonton were beginning to crystallize, the hunt was simply a matter of going out from Fort Edmonton and bringing the meat back to the fort. The buffalo, it should be noted, were much more numerous

at that time and generally ranged further north, i.e. closer to the North Saskatchewan River, than they did in the early 1870s (Roe, 1951, p. 470). One of the participants in the Edmonton Hunt in 1870 commented that "The bison were getting further south. The journey was now two days longer than usual" (Callihoo in Jamieson, 1953, p. 28). By 1870, however, the hunt was a well organized affair, participated in primarily by the St. Albert and Lac Ste. Anne métis. The métis from Edmonton and Lac la Biche were fewer in numbers, while none of the métis from Victoria or Whitefish Lake, who were all English speaking, joined with the French métis on the Edmonton Hunt (Callihoo, 1953, p. 26).

Twice every year the métis crossed the North Saskatchewan River and went south and east via present-day Big Hay Lake to hunt the buffalo on the open plains in the vicinity of the Battle River (Jamieson, 1953, p. 31). The best hunting grounds in the 1860s and 1870s were found between Buffalo Lake and the Hand Hills, or roughly in the area between the Battle River and the Red Deer River (Steele, 1917, p. 87). One explanation for this is that the area in general was a no man's land between the Blackfoot and Crees. One observer mentioned that "This is the heart of the buffalo country. It may be called the buffalo preserve, being the battleground between the Crees and the Blackfeet where none go to hunt for fear of meeting enemies" (Giraud, 1945, Footnote, p.28). Roe makes the point that

Among the Canadian Crees and Blackfoot, buffalo were the cause of numerous outbreaks, and probably engendered much of the hatred which frequently expressed itself in bloody affrays where the buffalo were not the immediate bone of contention (Roe, 1951, p. 652).

Frequently, however, the Blackfoot and the Crees were at peace, and in some instances the exigencies of buffalo hunting or of trade helped

to bring this about. In 1867, for instance, a camp of Crees and a party of Blackfoot, both of whom were hunting buffalo, ran into one another by surprise in the vicinity of present-day Wetaskiwin, located about halfway between the Hand Hills and Buffalo Lake. Their mutual surprise and the desire of the Blackfoot to move on to Edmonton for trade purposes resulted in a temporary peace (McDougall, in Roe, 1951, p. 654). The peace-making is commemorated in the Alberta place name Peace Hills, near Wetaskiwin, and in the name Wetaskiwin itself, which means "peace hills" in Indian (Canada, 1928, p. 133).

When the métis ventured into the area in search of the buffalo, they did so in large, well-organized contingents. In both summer and fall the date and place of rendezvous for the hunts were decided upon by a few of the recognized leaders. The dates and places changed considerably from year to year, according to the herds of buffalo as they were reported as being close at hand or far off. The métis then assembled at the appropriate meeting place, and the long train of carts, oxen, ponies and well-groomed buffalo runners to be used in the final chase, started out for the plains. Each hunter, in addition to the carts necessary to convey his family, and his tents, bedding and sufficient provisions to last until the buffalo were reached, had a supply of extra vehicles to load the meat and robes derived from the hunt. According to Mrs. Callihoo, each hunter had as many carts as he could afford, which was seldom less than three and generally an average of six (Callihoo, in Jamieson, 1953, p. 21). A Catholic priest, often Father Lacombe, Father André or Father Lestanc, always accompanied the hunters, providing for the spiritual needs of métis, all of whom were Roman Catholics. His vehicle had four wheels, which according to Mrs.

Callihoo, was the first four-wheeled vehicle she had ever seen (Ibid., p. 28). The hunters, with their huge array of impedimenta, followed their leader, whose cart was marked with a flag, in single file across the plains at a rate of about 20 miles per day (Robinson, 1879, p.139).

The Edmonton Hunt was organized with a captain, or leader, and lieutenants and soldiers. The lieutenants, or councillors, met each day and discussed matters pertinent to the hunt and the camp, and appointed the captains for the following day (Steele, 1917, p. 94). The captain's duties were those of a commanding officer and for the day he was in charge his word was law. He took charge of the line of march, selected the stopping places at noon and night, and if the column had encountered the buffalo, he took the lead when the hunt began. Although these hunts were carried out in a sort of military manner, it was not for wanton destruction of the bison, but mainly for protection of the hunters and their families from enemies - the Blackfeet especially, who often came across their usual boundary, the Red Deer River. It was not safe to go hunting alone. Hunters who went alone seldom returned. Since the caravan was large, the orders of the leader were obeyed. They had to be so that plans could be properly carried out (Callihoo in Jamieson, 1953, p. 22). When the column halted at night, the leader called out his soldiers and detailed them to the various officers. The soldiers then formed the camp into a ring or corral, with the carts in a circle, shafts inward and hub to hub. The horses were driven inside the circle at dusk and fires were lit at intervals outside this defence. Soldiers remained on guard throughout the night, keeping watch over the camp and replenishing the fires with buffalo "chips" (dung), since wood was usually unavailable.

Inside the circle, lodges or teepees were pitched in a circle close to the carts. According to Steele, who visited the "buffalo camps" of the Edmonton hunters on numerous occasions, the corral was often as large as 1,000 feet in diameter, and contained upwards of 300 lodges, including Indians and métis (Steele, 1917, p. 95). The Indians - Crees and Assiniboines - were a normal feature of the camp. The Indians had no carts, but used their horses and dogs to transport their luggage and the pemmican and hides obtained from the hunt. Though the Blackfoot frequently stole horses from the métis, there is no record of them attacking the summer and fall camps on the plains. The strict military organization of the camps and the numbers involved were sufficient deterrent even to the warlike Blackfoot. Mrs. Callihoo claims that "They learned to respect the Metis - the latter had flint-lock muzzle loaders and could outsmart the Blackfoot, who had only bows and arrows." Undoubtedly the Blackfoot learned to respect the métis when the métis were on the plains in force, but whether or not the métis could outsmart the Blackfoot is a moot point indeed. Moreover, though some of the Blackfoot may have used bows and arrows, the majority by this time probably possessed rifles.

When the buffalo herd was located by the outriders, camp was immediately made, usually at a considerable distance from the herd. The hunters then formed up and cantered slowly to an advantageous spot from which to launch the attack. Generally they advanced to the lee of the buffalo, and if possible, behind some rising ground. Other times, however, the métis approached the herd under the cover of darkness, attacking the following morning at first light. Once in the proper position, not a man made a move until the captain gave the word

and then it was every man for himself on a wild charge after a herd of often 50,000 to 60,000 buffalo (Steele, 1917, p. 95). The hunters galloped their "buffalo runners," the fastest horses they owned, into the midst of the shaggy horde, firing from the saddle to make the kill. Making the kill, the hunter immediately dropped his "mark," or some personal possession which could be identified as his when the animals were claimed. The hunter then re-loaded at the gallop, and without using the ramrod, fired upon the next prey before the salivated bullet rolled out the end of the muzzle. Though exciting sport, the hunt was a dangerous affair. Men were sometimes thrown from their mounts, to be killed in the fall or trampled or gored by the buffalo. During the fall hunt the numerous gopher holes on the prairie were often concealed by the snow and accidents of this nature were more frequent. The leaders of the hunt were usually expert buffalo runners. Two of the most famous leaders of the Edmonton Hunt were Gabriel Dumont and Abraham Salois. Salois, a St. Albert man, killed over 600 buffalo on one of the hunts, and in a single run felled 37 which, according to Steele, was no doubt the best kill on record (Steele, 1917, p. 87). Dumont, on the other hand, took part in the Edmonton Hunt only occasionally, although in the late 1870s he frequently wintered with the large numbers of métis, mostly métis from Red River, at the winter buffalo camp at Tail Creek. Dumont was well known from one end of the plains to another, especially for his feats on the hunt.

When the killing of the buffalo terminated and the herd had dispersed, the women and children from the camp began the arduous work of skinning and butchering the animals. This had to be done as quickly as possible, especially on the summer hunt, to prevent the spoiling

of the meat. About ninety per cent of the hides, dried meat and pemmican taken by the Edmonton hunters was either used at home or sold to the Hudson's Bay Company at Edmonton. The remaining ten per cent was usually traded at Red River and occasionally at St. Paul (Callihoo in Jamieson, 1953, p. 22). The pemmican and dried meat was processed by the métis out on the plains. The buffalo meat was sliced into long strips and dried on poles or on willows. Sometimes it was hung over a fire and smoked and cured. That which was further processed into pemmican was thoroughly dessicated, laid out on raw buffalo hides and pounded between stones until it was reduced to a flaky substance or pulp. In some instances it was left in this state and sold to the Company as "pounded meat," although usually the Edmonton hunters processed it into pemmican. In the latter process buffalo marrow and/or fat were then rendered and added to this shredded meat, usually in the proportion of fifty pounds of meat to forty pounds of melted fat. The mixture was then packed into buffalo hide bags, and the mess hardened and cooled as pemmican. The bags, when sewn tightly with buffalo sinews, ordinarily kept free of mold and there was little risk of spoiling. Sometimes the pemmican mixture included wild berries, such as saskatoons or wild cherries. Sugar was sometimes added to improve the flavour and quality. If need be, the pemmican could be eaten raw, since in a manner of speaking it was already cooked by sun, wind and the hot melted fat. In food value a pound was equivalent to four to eight pounds of fresh meat, fish or wild fowl (Merriam, 1955, p. 35). Moreover, if properly cared for, pemmican would last a very long while without spoiling. According to Robinson, "Buffalo pemmican may be said to keep itself, requiring no spices or seasoning for its preparation, and may be kept

in any vessel under any condition except that of dampness for unlimited time"(Robinson, 1879, p. 164).

The pemmican manufactured by the Edmonton hunters on the plains was usually of three different grades. Various appellations have been given to the different grades of pemmican, of which the most popular among the Company's men were "common," "fine" and "grand" (Edmonton Post Journal, May 19, 1863). The first-class pemmican, or grand pemmican, manufactured on the Edmonton Hunt consisted of marrow from the buffalo bones mixed with first quality meat. The meat of the buffalo cows was preferred. Second-class pemmican was composed of meat of the same quality, but mixed with fat. The third-class was of meat which was neither quite so good nor so finely pounded (Steele, 1917, p. 95).

The fall hunt for fresh meat involved much less labour, although there was often the danger of getting caught in a blizzard, which sometimes took the lives of the hunters. In certain years the fall hunt formed a continuation of the summer hunt, especially among the more nomadic of the métis and particularly when the buffalo were unusually numerous. To some extent this was the case in the 1871 hunts. The only data available on the hunts that year are from James Gibbons, who in the summer of 1871 arrived at Edmonton and

...immediately went to the plains to hunt with some half-breeds. When we got to the neighbourhood of where Iron Creek joins the Battle River [near present-day Hardisty, Alberta], we found lots of buffalo and made a great quantity of pemmican and dried meat and finally got back to Edmonton in the month of October and opened for trade, but there was no trading to be done since the Indians would not leave the plains until snowfall put an end to buffalo hunting (Gibbons in Griesbach, 1922, p. 13).

On their return from the fall hunt the métis generally traded their best buffalo robes at Edmonton. Some of the métis returned to

their respective settlements, where they spent the winter. Others continued hunting and trapping for the duration of the winter. Even the métis who wintered in the settlements, however, took to the hunt, and especially that for the buffalo, whenever the opportunity arose. Of the métis in the settlements around Fort Edmonton, Captain Butler wrote that "In winter they generally reside at their settlements, going to the nearer plains in small parties and dragging in the frozen buffalo meat for the supply of the Company's posts" (Butler, 1876, p. 361). Not only did they hunt the buffalo for the Company. In many a winter the meat derived from the buffalo in the nearer plains was all that saved the métis in the settlements from starvation.

The custom of winter roving or of "hivernement" was not nearly as common among the métis as were the annual buffalo hunts (Giraud, 1945, p. 817). When famine in winter was widespread, however, the majority of the métis abandoned their settlements for the hunt in much the same manner as the winter rovers. On the other hand, the true "hivernant" or winter rover, unlike his fellow who had taken up land in the settlements, pursued the hunt through feast and famine. Life for the winter rovers was continuously nomadic; they moved about in all seasons and not merely in the winter months as their name might imply. In the North-West, there figured among these winter rovers two distinct groups. On the one hand, there were the métis who had renounced the way of life at Red River for a way of life exclusively dependent on the hunt on the western plains; and on the other hand, there were the western métis who had never known any other existence, as well as a few elements who had become detached to a greater or lesser degree from the established settlements (Giraud, 1954, p. 11).

This persistence of nomadism was singularly obstructive to the work of the Oblate missionaries. Not only did it thwart the progress of settlement, but the almost continuous contact between hivernants and Indians perpetuated the use of Indian languages among the métis and cultivated primitive customs which neutralized the effects of Christian education provided by the clergy. Among every group of winter rovers there travelled rum vendors, themselves métis. Brawls between Indians and métis were frequent and stealing and pillaging were common in the winter camps. No group of winter rovers belonging to any particular mission, according to Giraud, was spared this corruption (Giraud, 1954, p. 15).

Writing of St. Albert in 1866, Father André commented that there was a considerable number of persons there who had not as yet made their first communion and whose knowledge of Catholicism was extremely superficial. These people, he said, were composed of families who spent their winters and summers on the prairies or in the woods. According to Father André, they numbered not less than 40 lodges. They fixed themselves about the mission each spring and each autumn, which was the only time they received religious instruction from the clergy. Father André noted that in like manner the Indians, sometimes Crees, sometimes Assiniboines, pitched their tents around the mission for sojourns of the same length (André, 12 avril, 1866). Shortly after 1866 the missionaries frequently joined the winter rovers during their wandering, much as they took part in the summer and fall buffalo hunts, in order to more directly attack the various moral disorders.

Little information is available on the activities of the St.

Albert "hivernants" in particular, although the assumption can be made that their activities in winter were much similar to those of the western hivernants in general. In 1872, it seems that a large portion of the St. Albert métis was composed of hivernants. A brief glimpse of their activities that year is provided by Bishop Grandin:

...le P. Dupin, qui était parti avant moi pour accompagner nos chasseurs à la prairie, n'était pas encore de retour.... La plupart de nos métis étaient là avec leurs familles. Bon nombre n'ont pu revenir jusqu'ici; arrivés dans la région boisée, ils se sont construit des baraques pour y passer l'hiver (Grandin, 1874, p. 502).

In 1872, large numbers of the St. Albert métis wintered in the forest region. Others stayed on the prairie throughout the same winter, where they were joined for the Christmas season by Father Dupin. According to Bishop Grandin, the métis who stayed on the prairie became stranded there when winter set in a month earlier than usual. Those who managed to make their way to the more sheltered wooded areas did so only with the greatest difficulties. According to Grandin, the hivernants on the prairie built themselves cabins, but they were able to provide Father Dupin little room in which to live, and a minimum of food for his sustenance, since the hunt provided almost nothing throughout the winter. Father Blanchet, who was wintering with the Crees on the prairie that same winter, reported that they were forced to disperse into small groups in order to eke out a living (Grandin, 1873, p. 9).

In all likelihood, the métis on the prairies wintered at Tail Creek, which was a small settlement before 1874, composed almost entirely of métis hunters from Red River (Jamieson, 1953, p. 26). Tail Creek is a small creek roughly eight miles in length which runs

between Buffalo Lake and the Red Deer River. The lake is so named because of its resemblance in outline (at that time but not so much now) to a buffalo hide stretched out for the purpose of being dressed. The creek represented the tail of the buffalo (Canada, 1928, p. 26).

According to Mrs. Callihoo:

I was about 15 years old when our caravan, which comprised the people from Lac Ste. Anne...and St. Albert Settlements were[sic.] caught in the worst blizzard I ever experienced.

During this winter we heard that the hunters we left behind were in an awful plight. They were snow-bound and had to dig out their carts, burn some of them for fuel, and also teepee and tent poles were burned for wood. We were told that they even had to burn tallow and sun-cured meat for wood. The hunting caravan did not return as a whole to their settlements. They were reported to have gone to a creek where there were logs from which to build houses for the winter. Some of these families never returned to the Settlements where they belonged but lived out there at Tail Creek (Callihoo in Jamieson, 1953, pp. 27-28).

The Tail Creek Settlement was frequently visited by the St. Albert winter rovers, as well as the métis on the annual buffalo hunts in the period following 1873 to about 1881. The settlement grew rapidly to a surprisingly substantial size, large enough, in fact, to warrant a North-West Mounted Police detachment during the period 1875-77 which was situated there in an attempt to eliminate an illicit whiskey trade between American whiskey runners from the south and the buffalo runners at Tail Creek. Major Steele of the North-West Mounted Police wrote that he found a town of 400 houses there in 1875. Jamieson, however, effectively argues that Steele over-estimated the size of the settlement and may have mistakenly used the word "houses" for "persons" (Jamieson, 1953, p. 23 ff). The settlement, which depended entirely upon the hunt, was made up primarily of Manitoba métis who

came there well equipped with the tools necessary to build a settlement. According to Jamieson, the settlement even possessed a large house for meetings and dances (Ibid., p. 27). Mrs. James Gibbons, who visited Tail Creek on several occasions with her husband, mentioned that "The people did not do any farming, and the place was really a buffalo hunter's winter camp" (Mrs. Gibbons in Jamieson, 1953, p. 30). The settlement was in large part abandoned when the great herds finally disappeared, discussion of which is provided in a subsequent section on the hunt in 1882. In 1898 a fire is reported to have run through the Tail Creek area, and no doubt the remains of most of the settlement were swept off with it.

Almost nothing is known of the precise locations of the St. Albert winter rovers who wintered in the parkland or forest rather than on the prairie. It seems, however, that their movements were in large part determined by the movements of the migratory buffalo, which according to Father Leduc, the winter rovers would follow to the death rather than take up land in the settlement (Leduc, 1879, p. 437). Some of the winter rovers, however, penetrated deep into the forest region where the better furs could be gotten, but the majority seem to have established their winter quarters on the parkland's southern margins. Butler described winter camps having such locations.

Journeying slowly toward the west...we reached in five days one of those curious assemblages of half-breed hunters which are to be found in winter on the borders of the great plains ["plains"^o in this instance refers to the grasslands] (Butler, 1874, p. 45).

Butler further commented that he stayed "^o...three days in this hunter's camp, which by some strange anomaly was denominated 'la mission,' its sole claim to that title being the residence of a French priest in the

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community..." (Loc.cit.). Robinson, in much more detail than Butler, described a winter rover encampment situated in a sparsely timbered area which bordered a small tributary of the North Saskatchewan. Like Butler, he made mention of a Catholic priest in the camp. "This personage," he wrote, "is the spiritual guide, philosopher and friend of a very disreputable flock" (Robinson, 1879, p. 254). Robinson, in vivid prose which at the same time is probably accurate, provides us with a graphic account of the winter camp.

It was a picturesque though not overly cleanly place. Some 30 or 40 huts crowded together and built of logs, branches of pine trees, raw-hides, and tanned and smoked skins, together with the inevitable teepee or Indian lodge; horses, dogs, women and children, all intermingled in a confusion worthy of an Irish fair; half breed hunters, ribboned, leggined, tasseled and capoted, lazy, idle, and if liquor was to be had, sure to be drunk; remnants and wrecks of buffaloes lying everywhere round, here a white and glistening skull, there a disjointed vertebra but half denuded of its flesh; robes stretched upon a framework of poles and drying in the sun; meat piled upon stages to be out of the way of dogs; wolf-skins, fox-skins and other smaller furs tacked against the walls of the huts, or stretched upon miniature frames hanging from the branches of trees; (Ibid., p. 254).

The camps were usually situated in sheltered places, especially in the valleys of streams or along the shores of lakes where wood and water supplies were ample (Jamieson, 1953, p. 26). The huts were constructed with log walls crudely put together, while the crevices between the logs were plastered with mud. Poles placed in rows and covered with earth and hay provided the roof. Holes were cut in the walls for doors and windows. When required, the latter were closed off with the skin of animals. The floors were either of pounded earth or half hewn logs. The huts contained little furniture, sometimes a table and a few wooden trunks; beds were made of boughs

covered over with buffalo robes. Every hut was the temporary home of several families. Robinson claims to have slept in structures of this nature measuring not more than 12 feet by 15 feet with as many as 15 persons of all ages and sexes (Robinson, 1879, p. 256). Jamieson claims that the ease with which the huts were constructed, together with the wanderings of the buffalo, account for the number of these cabins to be found in Western Canada. Unfortunately, there is no record of their distribution.

Attached to every winter camp was a considerable following of Indians. Few joined the camp permanently, since they were generally fair weather friends, preferring "to hunt buffalo on the half breeds' stages than on the bleak plains in mid-winter" (Robinson, 1879, p.269). Prominent among the huts of the winter camp was the store of the free-trader, himself a métis, and whose authority in the camp, according to Robinson was second to none, save the priest's (Ibid., p. 276). The free-trader obtained his furs and robes cheaply, "...for an equivalent of gilt and colour, as it were, for the tastes of his customers ... [were] of a very decided sort" (Loc.cit.). The greater portion of the furs were eventually traded to the Company, since the free-traders in many instances were outfitted from the Company's stores. According to Butler, "Some...carry the produce of their trade, or hunt (for they are both hunters and traders) to Red River, disposing of it to the merchants in Winnipeg, but I do not imagine that more than one third of their trade thus finds its way into the market" (Butler, 1876, p. 377). By 1871, however, the fur trade and the trade in provisions in the Saskatchewan district had declined drastically. Writing in 1870, Butler mentioned that there was a great scarcity of the richer descriptions

of furs and that the buffalo could no longer be procured in numbers, making the Upper Saskatchewan more of a burden to the Company than ever. The products of the district, however, still consisted primarily of provisions, particularly pemmican and dried meat, as well as buffalo robes, leather, and lynx and wolf skins (Butler, 1876, p. 376).

The buffalo hunt in winter among the hivernants in the parkland was conducted in a manner entirely different from the larger drama enacted by the métis on the prairie. According to Robinson, the winter rovers went to the hunt with horses and dog sleds, which were required to transport the meat back to their quarters. The actual hunt was conducted on foot, or on snowshoes if the snow was deep, by small parties from the winter camp. The buffalo, which separated into small bands in the wooded areas, and often into twos and threes, were stalked among the patches of small timber and open meadow (Robinson, 1879, p. 282). Living almost entirely from the buffalo, the winter rovers consumed enormous quantities of meat. In general, the métis had a propensity to consume meat in astonishing amounts. Living as they did from day to day, with little thought for the morrow, these nomads knew only alternate periods of feast and famine. If the métis could starve better than any other man (which they attempted to prepare their children for by not feeding them for four days after birth), they could equally surpass other men in the amount of food they could eat at a sitting. So well was this known, that the Hudson's Bay Company furnished their métis employees with an especially large ration of meat. The daily ration of fresh meat provided for métis hunters and voyageurs was 10 pounds. Five pounds were allotted to their women and three pounds for each child (Robinson, 1879, p. 261).

4) Buildings

The métis houses at St. Albert were built almost entirely from local resources, with the exception, perhaps, of a few nails and the occasional iron door hinge. All were built of spruce logs taken from the nearby spruce groves (Callihoo, 1953, p. 21). The logs were laid horizontally one above the other and joined at the corners with a "dovetail" (i.e. mortis and tenon) or a saddle construction (see Fig. 9). Since few trees, even among the conifers, do not have a bulge of some sort, care had to be taken to lay each log so that it touched the one beneath only at the corners. To ensure that the log would ride properly, or touch only at the corners, and that the wall would be straight, any bulge that existed was laid to face directly upwards. Consequently, when a wall was finished, spaces of different sizes were left between the various logs. As each log was laid, it was squared off with the one beneath it so as to make as straight a wall as possible. This was achieved with either the broad axe, or with a saw operated by two men, one of whom stood on a platform. The windows (normally two) and the door were cut out when the wall was completed. An axe or saw-cut was made in the topmost logs affected, in which to insert the cross-cut saw for the final operation. Usually the rawhide skin of a moose or deer calf was soaked in water and stretched across the window openings. When the hide dried it became taut, and although not transparent, it let in some light. The door was made of hewn logs which were tightly fitted together, and the hinges were either of iron or wood. Leather strap-hinges were sometimes employed as well; like the iron hinges, they were obtained from the "Big Store" at Edmonton. The wooden hinges were made of two elbows attached to the frame, with holes

bored through their protruding portions, through which ran a vertical spruce rod.

The houses possessed quarter pitch roofs constructed of a lattice-work of spruce bark and poles (Callihoo, 1953, p. 21). The poles or rafters were laid between the ridge pole and the tops of the walls at about three foot intervals. The spruce bark, normally taken in six foot lengths, although varying in width according to the size of the tree, was stripped from the trees at sapping time (i.e. in spring). When the bark was dry in the fall it was laid on the rafters, overlapping in a manner similar to shingling. The bark was then pinned down by a number of long poles laid the length of the roof. Holes were bored in the poles and wooden pins inserted through the bark and the poles, thus forming a leak-proof roof.

Some of the floors were made of hewn logs, others were simply of pounded dirt. Sometimes a small cellar was sunk beneath the floor. Since few of the *métis* had stoves, an open fire place was built in one of the corners away from the door. Mrs. Callihoo wrote:

We called them mud stoves. They were made of poles, mud and hay mixed, and more mud and water making a smooth finish. White clay was then mixed in water and rubbed all over with a cloth. When dry, this was white. About a foot away from the mud stove, the floor was plastered down solid, a precaution taken so sparks would not ignite and burn the house. The open chimney was built about two feet above the roof so the sparks would not drop on the roof. On a windy night, sparks could be seen coming out thick, but the chimney being high they would drop on the ground harmlessly (Ibid., pp. 21-22).

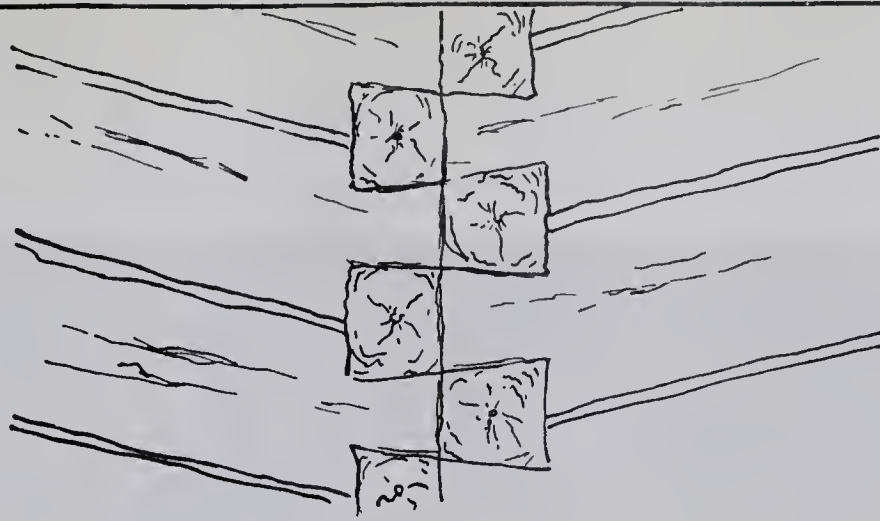
The final operation usually was the chinking, which was best done when the logs were as dry as possible. The spaces between the logs were filled in with well mixed mud containing a liberal portion of coarse grasses, following which the entire outside of the building was

"white-washed" with mud (i.e. with clay or marl with a high lime content).

The buildings erected by the clergy at St. Albert were generally larger, much more substantial structures than the small log cabins built by the *métis*. In many respects they displayed two types of architectural influence. The first, an architectural technique dubbed "Red River style" (Warkentin, 1946a), is best illustrated in the mission building, which was the first structure on the settlement site. Red River style was employed widely throughout the North-West in the construction of the larger buildings, especially by the Hudson's Bay Company in the construction of sheds and warehouses. Since the buildings were longer than the logs employed in their construction, the long walls had to be made of more than one log-length, the different "banks" of logs being joined at an upright timber (see Fig. 9). This type of construction is clearly indicated in the mission building built at St. Albert in 1861 (see Plate 2). The jointing was effected by an upright square timber, which was grooved on either side to accommodate the horizontally laid logs comprising the wall. The ends of the logs were shaped to fit into the grooves, and the logs were simply laid into the grooves one on top of the other. Each of the upright timbers was buttressed by a stout beam laid between the upright timbers of one wall and the corresponding timbers of the wall opposite (see Plate 3). The mission, the convent (built in 1863), the blacksmith shop and work shop (both built in 1868) and the Bishop's residence (that of 1879) were among the buildings at St. Albert constructed in "Red River style." In each instance, the roof was made of rough lumber and subsequently covered with shingles, all of which were cut out by hand at St. Albert.

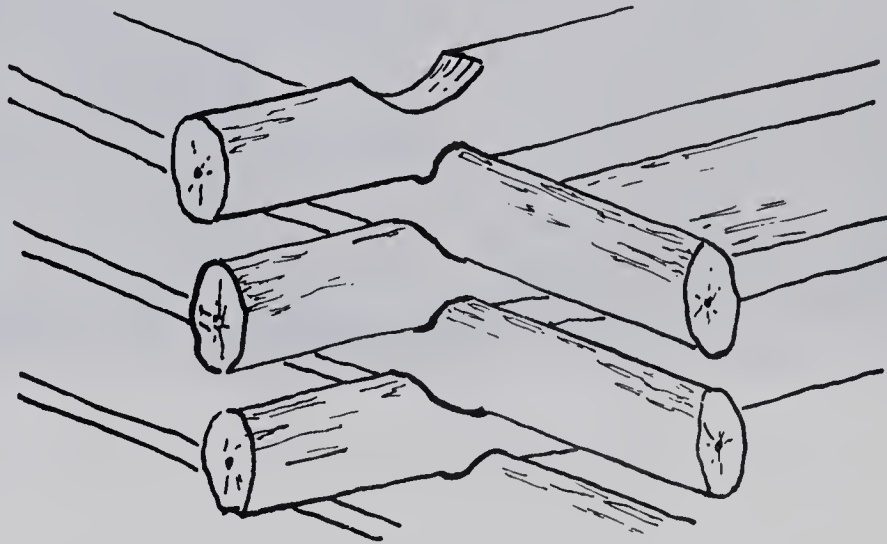
LOG BUILDING CONSTRUCTIONS

A



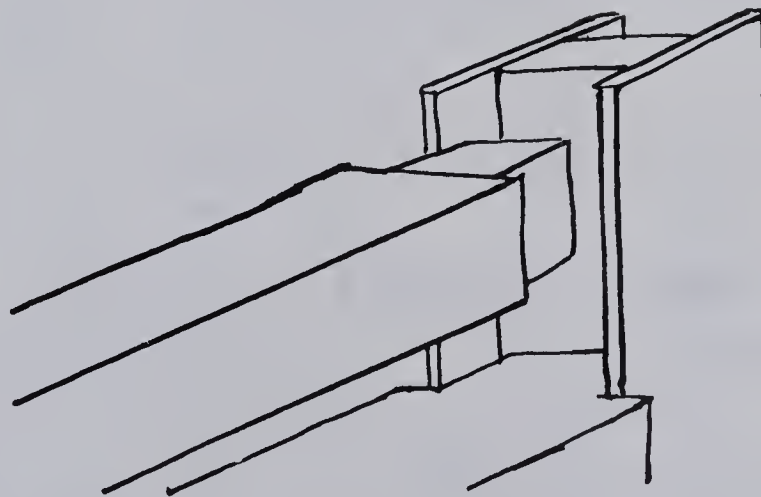
DOVETAIL

B



SADDLE

C



RED RIVER



Plate 2. The St. Albert Mission, constructed in 1861



Plate 3. Interior view of the mission building shown in Plate 2.

Second in size only to the church, the convent and Bishop's residence displayed various architectural forms of French Canadian origin. Both, for instance, possessed highly ornate wooden verandas (see Plates 4 and 5). The veranda, an architectural feature almost throughout North America, was a popular feature of eighteenth and early nineteenth century Quebec architecture (Hubbard, 1963, p. 21). Also typical of French Canadian buildings were decorated façades. The intricate designs of the verandas, and the wood trimmings located above the dormer windows and along the edges of the roof of the Bishop's residence were constructed to serve no useful purpose. Rather they decorate the front of the building and are indicative of the influence of French Canadian and French priests upon the architecture at St. Albert. The steeply pitched roof of the Bishop's residence, which accommodates an additional story under its high pitch, and the dormer windows which protrude from the roof, are also characteristic of French Canadian architecture of the time. The church, located on the dominant ground along with the other mission buildings, exhibited no exterior features that might be associated with French Canadian church architecture. It was a simple frame structure (see Plate 6). The body of the church was oriented in a north-south direction, and possessed transepts at either side which gave it a plan form of the latin cross.

The church buildings, more so than the métis log cabins, reflect architectural influences of French Canadian origin. It is interesting to note, however, that the Western log house, built of logs laid horizontally one above another, is traceable to the French Canadians, and that many of the first log cabins in Alberta inhabited by white settlers



Plate 4. The Bishop's residence at St. Albert,
constructed in 1879



Plate 5. The first convent of the Grey Nuns at St.
Albert, built in 1863

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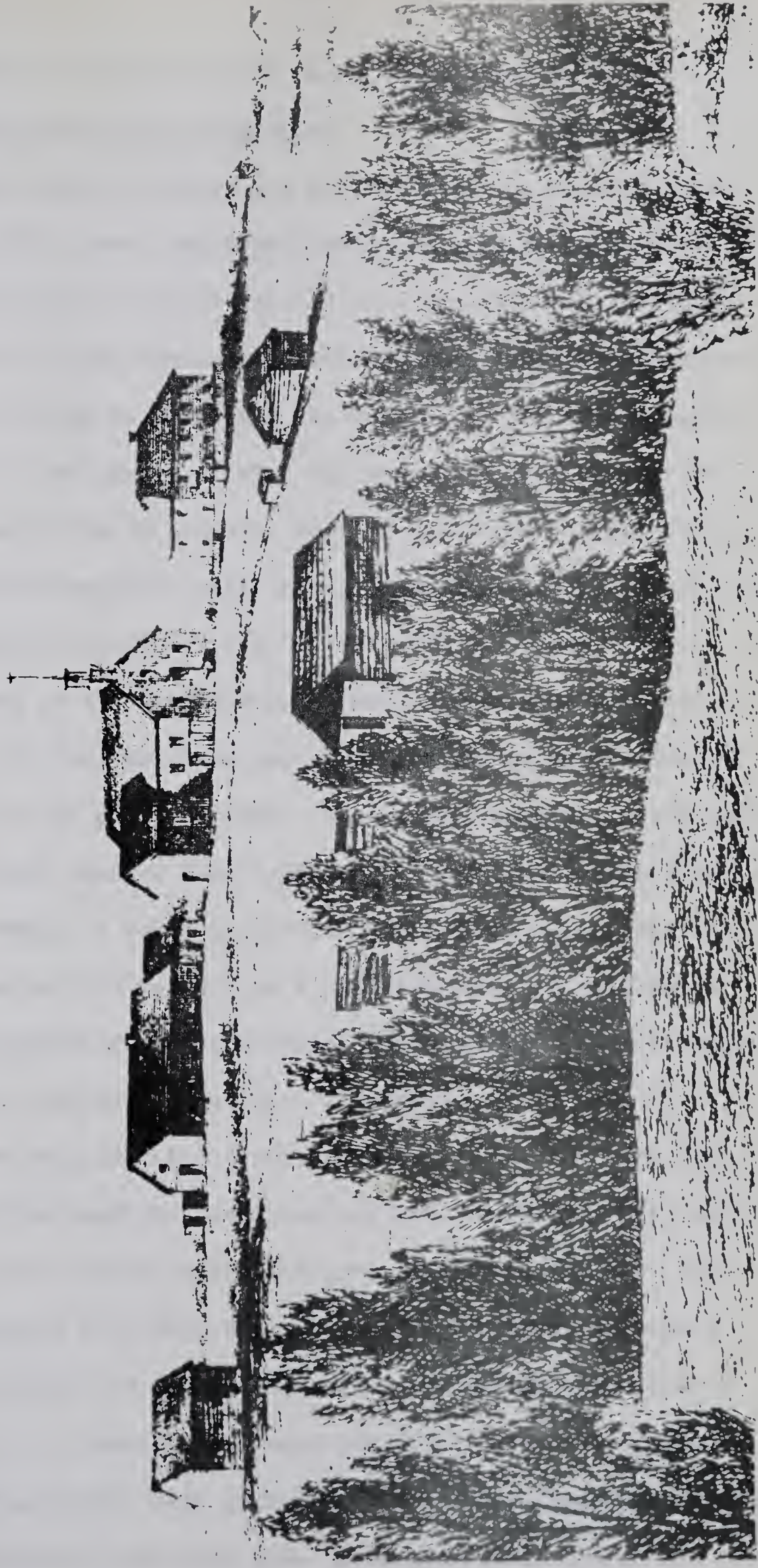


Plate 6. Mission hill in 1877 showing the church and other buildings owned by the clergy.

were constructed for them by French métis (Roe, 1958, p. 3).

5) Living Conditions in the Settlement

Like their fellow parishioners who followed the buffalo summer and winter, the St. Albert métis who spent the greater part of the year in the settlement subsisted principally on a diet of meat. Although some of the métis in the settlement raised cattle, hogs and chickens, the majority continued to rely upon the hunt as the principal source of food. Most of the people in the settlement, in fact, preferred to eat only the flesh of wild animals, and not until the buffalo finally disappeared did the majority begin to raise animals and to change their tastes accordingly (Callihoo, 1953, p. 23). On the whole, however, the diet of the métis in the settlement was more varied than that of the winter rovers. Barley, potatoes and other vegetables were commonly raised on their small plots of land. The barley, however, was generally grown in such small amounts that little of it was ground into flour. Rather it was soaked in water and pounded by a hammer-like apparatus which fitted into a hole bored into a poplar block. In this manner the hulls were separated from the grain. The grain was used in soups, or was fried and used as a substitute for bread.

Meat, fish and fowl were usually barbecued over the open fire. Fowl, including the feathers, and potatoes were frequently laid under the hot coals of the hearth where they were left until cooked. Tea and block sugar were available from the Company at Edmonton, and a substitute for coffee was made from barley: the barley which wasn't hulled was put in a greased frying-pan and fried until it was black. Pots and dishes generally came from the Hudson's Bay Company, although Mrs. Callihoo mentions that milk pans, sewn with roots and gummed

along the seams, were made from birch bark. The pots were made of copper, and since they were seamless, could stand rough usage and be pounded back into shape when so required. They were hung over the fire or iron bars, either obtained from the Company or taken from discarded firearms.

Normally the métis ate on the floors of their houses, since they had no tables or chairs. A canvas was simply spread on the floor at meal time, and on special occasions a white cloth was laid on top. Everyone slept on the floor on bedding that was usually folded and kept in a corner when not in use. Mattresses were normally made with duck and goose feathers. The remainder of the bedding was made up of buffalo robes and Hudson's Bay Company blankets. The floors were cleaned with a broom made of willow twigs lashed to a handle. Wooden floors, if they were scrubbed, were wiped dry with moss. "La potash" or soap made from grease and wood ashes was used for both household and toilet purposes.

The clothing worn by the St. Albert métis was made from cloth gotten from the Hudson's Bay Company, and from furs and hides taken from the various animals. The men wore capotes or buffalo skin overcoats, and trousers over which they wore leggings which came to the waist. The leggings were made from Hudson's Bay Company blankets and were normally tied to the trouser belt with buckskin strings. The women wore knee-length leggings, which were more like long gaiters than the full-length leggings worn by the men. Neither men nor women wore socks or stockings. Rather they wore flannel wrappings about their feet inside the moccasins. In winter the women normally wrapped flannel around their knees. They wore shawls rather than coats.

It is interesting to note that the métis babies did not wear diapers, but were kept in laced-up leather bags filled with dried moss which was changed as the occasion demanded.

Socially, there appears to have been a great deal of intercourse between the St. Albert métis and those at Lac Ste. Anne and to some degree with those at Lac la Biche. Aside from undertaking the collective hunting expeditions in summer and fall together, the métis at Lac Ste. Anne and St. Albert usually visited one another's settlements once or twice a year. Since all were Catholic métis of French origin, good fellowship prevailed and marriages sometimes took place between people from the two settlements. There was, however, no contact between the English métis at Victoria, all of whom were Protestants, and the métis from St. Albert (Callihoo, 1953, p. 26). Dances were held occasionally at St. Albert, especially when a family moved into a new house. The owner, by tradition, invited his neighbours to the house and the people danced to various reels and jigs (Ibid., p. 22).

6) Trade and Transportation

The trade in furs and pemmican engaged in by the St. Albert métis was conducted on a barter basis with the Hudson's Bay Company at Edmonton. Not until the late 1870s, when Indian Commissioners began to make cash payments to the various Treaty Indians, did money begin to circulate in the Saskatchewan district. Prior to the introduction of money, all transactions were negotiated in terms of "fur". That is, every article of commerce was priced in terms of fur equivalents. Since with few exceptions the St. Albert métis traded with the Company at Edmonton, the Company kept accounts of its dealings with the métis and frequently extended them credit. The Company, for instance,

usually advanced credit after the haying, and if required, on through the year until the métis came in with his winter's catch of furs. Even if the value of his furs was greater than his debt to the Company, the métis traded his entire catch to the Company. In return he was given a balance in his account from which he could draw as he wished. Some of the more enterprising of the St. Albert métis transported their products by Red River cart all the way to Winnipeg, where they were able to get goods that were not available at the Company's posts. Usually they bought agricultural implements such as ploughs and garden tools, and they frequently came back with whiskey as well (Callihoo, 1953, p. 24).

With the exception of a few transactions arranged between Company officials and the missionaries, trade in agricultural produce at St. Albert was negligible. The products that were traded between the fort and the mission were usually traded in times of need, more in the form of mutual assistance than in the form of trade for economic gain. Although there was a market for agricultural products, agricultural production was such that no surpluses were available. Butler noted in 1870 that the Saskatchewan country offered a market for all types of farming produce at rates which were uncommonly high (Butler, 1876, p. 380). The manufactured goods required at the mission were acquired at great expense. The mission organized cart brigades from St. Albert to St. Boniface, as well as from St. Cloud, Minnesota, to St. Boniface. Most of the goods were sent from Paris to St. Cloud, located on the upper Mississippi north of St. Paul. Bishop Grandin commented that the cost involved from St. Cloud to St. Albert was more than the charge on the goods from Paris to St. Cloud. He also mentioned that

their horses and oxen were almost crippled by the time they reached St. Albert (Grandin, 11 décembre, 1868). Grandin commented on the feasibility of obtaining goods from Fort Benton, Montana. As early as 1868, American traders had passed through Blackfoot territory with ox trains and had traded their goods on the Saskatchewan. Fort Benton, located at the head of navigation on the upper waters of the Missouri, was visited by at least thirty steamboats each year. Goods from Europe could be transported to Fort Benton directly from New Orleans without any break-of-bulk en route. Moreover, Fort Benton was only half the distance from St. Boniface to St. Albert and goods could be obtained there more cheaply and with less difficulty. The first carts from Fort Edmonton to Fort Benton left in the summer of 1869 with cargoes of furs and robes and returned safely to Edmonton with loads of flour and alcohol (Butler, 1876, p. 378). Between 1870 and 1877 the mission obtained goods via Fort Benton, a practice, however, which was abandoned two years after the introduction in 1875 of steam navigation up the North Saskatchewan as far as Fort Edmonton.

In summer, the St. Albert métis travelled either on horseback, or in ox-drawn carts or horse-drawn "charrettes" (see Plates 7 and 8). Goods were often transported in carts in winter as well as summer, since there was frequently insufficient snow to accommodate sleighs (Dillon, December 16, 1890). Horse-drawn sleighs and dog sleds, however, were the standard winter vehicles. The sled was called, more properly, a carirole. It resembled a dog-drawn toboggan since it had no runners but was constructed of a thin board which was bent up in front. It normally had sides made of "green" buffalo hides (see Plate 9).



Plate 7. The horse-cart or "charrette"



Plate 8. Red River cart



Plate 9. The "cariole"

D. ST. ALBERT 1872-1881

In 1872 there were about 50 houses at St. Albert, described by Father Leduc as being scattered here and there around the Bishop's residence on the hill (Leduc, 1874, p. 35). The crops at the mission that year were satisfactory. More important, they were of sufficient size to alleviate to some degree a famine which became widespread along the Saskatchewan not long after the crops were harvested (Grandin, septembre, 1873). The famine, which was precipitated by the failure of the fall buffalo hunt, and worsened by the severity of the winter, forced the people of St. Albert to make frequent forays from the settlement in search of the buffalo. Throughout the winter, however, the buffalo were few and the hunts yielded very little. William Christie, the Company's factor at Fort Edmonton, reported that the buffalo scarcely showed themselves anywhere along the North Saskatchewan that winter, and that most of the Indians were starving. Christie also noted that a thick crust, which prevented horses and other livestock from foraging for themselves, had formed on the snow early in winter (Christie in Le Métis, 22 mars, 1873). Because of the crust, the heavy snows and the very low temperatures, more than half of the horses and other livestock at St. Albert died during the winter (Grandin, septembre, 1873). The majority of the St. Albert métis had little to eat during the winter. Large numbers of Assiniboine Indians, moreover, camped about the mission in search of food, which added considerably to the responsibilities of the missionaries in fending off starvation in the colony. Had it not been for the food supplied from the mission stores, as well as that which was dis-

tributed by the Hudson's Bay Company, many of the métis and Indians at St. Albert, according to Bishop Grandin, would have died of starvation.

Alfred Selwyn, a geologist employed by the Federal Government, visited St. Albert in September, 1873, and noted among other things that there were about thirty métis and Indian children living in the Grey Nuns' orphanage (Selwyn, 1874, p. 38). Most were probably descendants of persons who died in the smallpox epidemic of 1870. Selwyn observed that the mission barley, which he saw on September 7th, had just been cut, but that the wheat at the mission was not quite ripe. The ears of some of the wheat, moreover, had been badly frosted. He was informed by Father Leduc that wheat had hitherto been an uncertain crop at St. Albert and was frequently injured by frosts before ripening. Selwyn recommended that some more hardy type of wheat, or fall sowing, which had not been tried at St. Albert, might produce better results.

From the newspaper, Le Métis, we learn that the crops at St. Albert in 1873, including the wheat, succeeded very well, which suggests that while some of the wheat was frosted the bulk of the crop was successful (Le Métis, 28 mars, 1874). From the same article we are told that the summer and fall buffalo hunts failed almost completely. The whitefish in Lac Ste. Anne, however, were abundant, and provided some compensation for the lack of buffalo. Sickness of a type which was not identified visited the colony in autumn of 1873. Although many were stricken by the disease, none lost their lives. Because of the failure of the hunts, famine by mid-winter was again rife among the people of the North Saskatchewan. In consequence, many of the St. Albert métis wintered on the prairie where they hoped to find the buffalo (Le Métis,

3 janvier, 1874). No data are available on the success of the métis on the prairie, nor does the writer have any information concerning conditions at St. Albert for the year 1874.

In 1875, the return of the St. Albert métis from the fall hunt is recorded in the St. Albert Codex Historicus, the day book of the mission. The métis, who returned to the settlement on the 5th of November, traded 600 pounds of pemmican to the clergy (Codex, 5 novembre, 1875). The early return of the hunters together with the surplus of pemmican which they traded suggest that the fall hunt was reasonably successful. It is also mentioned that many of the métis came to the mission some days later to sell victuals, most probably "green" meat and pemmican (Codex, 9 novembre, 1875). Despite what appears to have been a successful fall hunt, the Codex on the 23rd of November signals the departure of considerable numbers of St. Albert métis for the winter buffalo camp at Tail Creek, which strongly suggests that the winter rovers, even in 1875, comprised an important segment of the St. Albert population. In general the buffalo hunts by 1875 were conducted with greater difficulty and were less dependable than those of previous years. In an editorial in Le Métis, October 28, 1875, it is mentioned that the St. Albert métis travelled further and further from their settlement each year in their annual quests for the buffalo. Commenting on the situation in general, the editorialist further wrote that

C'est un grand malheur pour le présent et qui aura des suites très funestes dans un avenir qui n'est pas éloigné. Il est vraiment inquiétant de voir les buffaloes diminuer à vue d'oeil (Le Métis, 28 octobre, 1875)!

In 1875, only four bushels of wheat were planted in the mission fields, which when harvested were described as having produced a passable crop. Over 600 bushels of barley were harvested, although both barley and wheat suffered from the incursion of wild oats into the fields. The potato crop was reported to have been magnificent - at least 1,000 bushels were taken in by the clergy. The garden crops grew well at the mission that year, and included cabbages, onions, carrots, turnips and beets (Le Métis, 8 octobre, 1875). On October 26, four bushels of wheat were planted by one of the Brothers, which marks the first attempt at fall sowing in the settlement (Codex, 26 octobre, 1875). The Codex records that eight hogs were butchered for winter use, and although the number of hogs at the mission is not recorded, it is recorded that the mission possessed a herd of 86 cattle, one of the first indications of livestock for food in the settlement (Codex, 2 décembre, 1875).

On May 2nd, 1876, the mission day book (Codex) records that "Plusieurs de nos métis, qui ont horreur de la culture, partent pour la prairie." The statement indicates that the perennially nomadic métis still comprised an important segment of the St. Albert population, and that despite the increased uncertainties of the hunt, these people were still strongly opposed to tilling the land. Following the departure of these apparently incorrigible nomads, the métis who remained in the settlement went to the mission for seed. The fact that they borrowed seed only for potatoes and barley intimates that few of the métis by 1876 had adopted wheat culture. At any rate, no conclusive evidence is available that wheat was raised by the métis.

During the summer of 1876 the vagaries of climate all but wiped

out the crops at St. Albert. Throughout the week of July 8, temperatures descended to below freezing each night. The frosts, which were widespread throughout the settlement, were least effective in the mission fields, with the exception of the lower portion of one field located below mission hill, where the potatoes were frosted (Codex, 8 juillet, 1876). It is interesting that the mission fields were least affected by the frosts. With the exception of the small field where the potatoes were frosted, the land cultivated by the Oblates was located behind the mission buildings, or on the highest ground in the settlement. In terms of the probable microclimate of the settlement area, the Oblates were best located to escape the ill effects of frost, and therefore in a somewhat better position than the métis to develop wheat culture in the colony.

The crops that summer, moreover, were suffering from drought. The mission barley and potatoes were reported to be in poor condition on July 11. But the fall wheat, since wheat requires less moisture, was reported to be fully in the head (Codex, 11 juillet, 1876). On July 30, the crops in the settlement were virtually destroyed by a violent hailstorm. The hailstones, described as being the size of eggs, flattened the grain crops and were sufficiently large to pierce the stained glass window in the church. The total damages at the mission were estimated at \$3,000 (Codex, 30 juillet, 1876). Of the crops, only 470 bushels of potatoes were returned for the 60 bushels planted, while only one third of the barley expected was harvested (Codex, 9 octobre, 1876). On October 9 it is recorded in the Codex that the colony contained very few people. Most of the people, because of the crop failure, went to winter on the prairie, although no mention

is made of their success. The summer hunt, however, which lasted longer than any other in memory, yielded very little (Codex, 12 août, 1876), which suggests that the buffalo that year were not numerous.

Throughout the fall and early winter the priests at St. Albert managed to augment considerably their food supplies from a number of sources. Numerous trips were made to Lac Ste. Anne for the whitefish in the lake. By December 27, the Brothers had transported 5,775 whitefish to St. Albert. Since the whitefish averaged between two and three pounds each, the products of the Lac Ste. Anne fishery in no small way contributed to the food supply of the people at St. Albert. On at least one occasion help was received from Lac la Biche as well, for the Codex records that thirteen bushels of wheat were sent from there to St. Albert on December 26th. The most important move, however, was by Bishop Grandin who made an unprecedented petition to the Federal Government for aid. He requested aid for the métis farmers at St. Albert who had suffered from the hailstorm of July 30th. Although unsuccessful at first, Bishop Grandin persisted, and finally travelled to Fort Pitt where he personally presented his case before Governor Morris. With the support of Governor Morris, Grandin convinced the Federal Government of the colony's needs. Shortly thereafter ten sacks of flour were sent to the orphanage at St. Albert, while five additional sacks were distributed among the most destitute of Grandin's parishioners. Finally, a committee was appointed to survey the needs of the farmers at St. Albert and food was distributed on the basis of the results of the survey. Over twenty farmers presented claims before the committee, of which fifteen were granted federal aid. The food was distributed almost immediately following the hearings. It con-

sisted of flour and meat from the Hudson's Bay stores at Edmonton. The transaction was paid for by the Federal Government (Codex, 27 décembre, 1876).

In early January, 1877, Bishop Grandin paid a pastoral visit to his charge at St. Albert, and in so doing conducted the first proper census of the colony. The following data are the results of Bishop Grandin's visitation (Codex, 11 janvier, 1877). It is difficult to

TABLE I - CENSUS OF ST. ALBERT, JANUARY, 1877

| Category | Number of Persons |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|
| Married Couples (56) | 112 |
| Widows | 11 |
| Widowers | 3 |
| Single Men | 6 |
| Boys living with parents | 86 |
| Girls living with parents | 57 |
| Male orphans adopted | 4 |
| Female orphans adopted | 4 |
| Priests and Brothers | 10 |
| Sisters and Novices | 15 |
| Male orphans at the mission | 14 |
| Female orphans at the mission | 24 |
| Total | 346 |

evaluate the results of Bishop Grandin's census of 1877 since in 1871 he estimated St. Albert's population at 700 persons, or roughly twice the number that his 1877 census indicates. Yet there is no record of substantial emigrations, epidemics or other events at St. Albert which might account for the apparent decrease in population in the intervening years. Some of the St. Albert winter rovers had permanently severed their relations with the settlement in favour of the buffalo camp at Tail Creek. But during the same period the population at St. Albert was augmented by métis immigrants from Red River (Codex, 14

décembre, 1875). The most plausible explanation for the apparent discrepancy lies in the nature of the enumerations themselves. Grandin's estimate of the population in 1871 included the winter rovers as well as the "sedentary" people in the colony. In the 1877 census, however, the break-down into the various population groups in the settlement excludes the winter rovers, who in all likelihood were absent from the colony when the enumeration was taken. The fifty-six so-called complete households enumerated in Grandin's census more or less correspond to the fifty-odd houses mentioned by Leduc as comprising the settlement at St. Albert in 1872 (Leduc, 1874, p. 35). The métis from Red River who came to St. Albert in the period 1871-77, on the other hand, in all probability fell in with the winter rovers, since the main reason these people migrated westward was to escape the influence of white civilization at Red River, and the concomitant development of agriculture in place of the virtually decadent buffalo hunt in Manitoba. In all likelihood, then, St. Albert in 1877 had a population at least as large as that of 1871. If the population was roughly 700 and 346 of the 700 were "sedentary" colonists, then the winter rovers in 1877 comprised roughly half of the St. Albert population.

Of the 346 persons in the settlement in January, 1877, 219 were listed as communicants of the Catholic faith. There was one adult non-communicant at St. Albert and sixteen of the 346 persons were Protestant in religion. Those who remained were probably children who had not yet taken communion, the majority probably Catholic. Among the Catholic families, twenty were listed by Bishop Grandin as having to "go away" to make a living (Codex, 11 janvier, 1877). In other words, at least twenty families of the fifty-six in the settle-

ment had to rely upon nomadism to subsist. Of the total métis population listed as belonging to the settlement proper, then, it can be said that roughly thirty-five families were heavily dependent upon agriculture, at least to the extent that nomadism was no longer essential to their way of life.

No data are available on the hunts in 1877, while little is available on agriculture, even at the mission. Twenty-one bushels of wheat were planted in the mission fields in the spring of 1877 (Codex, 27 avril, 1877), and though no mention is made of the wheat or other crops throughout the year, the Codex records that the mission took in 252 bushels of wheat following the threshing (Codex, 2 mars, 1878). Famine, however, was reported in the settlement in February, 1878, probably precipitated by a poor fall hunt rather than a crop failure in the settlement. The Codex chronicles that barley soup was distributed daily by the clergy to the people in the settlement who had insufficient food (28 février, 1878).

In 1878, seventy-three bushels of wheat were planted by the clergy, the largest single planting of wheat since the colony was founded. In contrast, only fifteen bushels of barley were sown (Codex, 13 mai, 1878). The crops at St. Albert that year were the largest on record. At the mission, 1,100 bushels of wheat, 250 bushels of barley and 254 barrels of potatoes were harvested, while the total grain crop in the settlement including the mission amounted to 25,000 bushels, described as the largest crop ever seen along the Saskatchewan (Codex, 19 décembre, 1878). A considerable number of white settlers took up land at St. Albert in 1878, which may account for the exceptionally large crop that year.

The summer hunt for buffalo, on the other hand, failed miserably.

The fall hunt was not completely abortive; but of the general situation by 1878 of the buffalo and the métis hunters on the western plains,

Father André wrote:

La prairie est fini, et nos pauvres métis ont devant eux un bien triste avenir. Vous ne sauriez croire la multitude de gens qu'il y a maintenant dans la prairie. La plaine est couverte de camps que se croisent dans toutes les directions. Aussi, quand les animaux vont faire défaut, nous aurons une famine horrible parmi nos sauvages. Le même coup frappera nos métis, qui, sourds à toutes nos sollicitations et à tous nos avertissements, continuent à mener une vie de paresseux et de vagabonds, vie qui a des charmes irresistible pour eux (André, 1879, p. 37).

In 1879 the crops at the mission were almost as large as those of the previous year. Over 1,100 bushels of potatoes, 917 bushels of wheat, 75 bushels of oats and 64 bushels of barley were taken from the mission fields (Codex, 20 décembre, 1879). Bishop Grandin commented that the July frosts, which in early years had been so discouraging to agriculture, seemed to have disappeared. He also mentioned that the mission establishment, which included the Grey Nuns, the orphans, and at least twelve métis and Indian families dependent upon the mission, numbered at least 100 persons, and that all were living exclusively from the products of the mission farm by 1879. The colony, he said, was growing steadily in numbers, and large numbers of métis were cultivating the land seriously, since they realized that agriculture was their only salvation from starvation in view of the decreasing numbers of buffalo (Grandin, 20 décembre, 1879).

Of the hunts in 1879, only the following was recorded in the mission journal:

Plusieurs métis qui depuis plusieurs [années] avaient abandonés St. Albert, reviennent à la prairie plus misérables que jamais. De toute part de la prairie les nouvelles sont desolantes - les sauvages meurent de faim (Codex, 31 juillet, 1879).

Professor Macoun, however, who was in the North-West in 1879, wrote a graphic description of starvation in the Hand Hills country south of Buffalo Lake in September of that year, and of the Indians' almost miraculous relief by the appearance of a large herd (Macoun in Roe, 1934, p. 1). Since the St. Albert métis hunted in this area, there can be little doubt that the inhabitants of St. Albert profited from the appearance of the buffalo as well. Father Leduc wrote that by 1879 each family in the settlement (i.e. "les habitants actuels") was established on a plot of land, and had renounced the nomadic way of life that was the métis tradition. But the St. Albert winter rovers, he wrote, would follow the buffalo to the death (Leduc, 1879, p. 437).

Little is mentioned in the Codex of agriculture in 1880, save that the wheat, and the potatoes to a lesser degree, suffered heavily from summer frosts (9 juillet), a vagary of climate whose effects upon wheat culture even today have not been completely eliminated, despite improvements in the wheat planted. No information is available on the hunts in 1880. In 1881 the Codex contains very few entries, informing us only that the mission acquired a flock of sheep in May of that year, and that two of the lay brothers killed a number of buffalo in late June.

By the end of 1881, however, it can be said that agriculture was firmly established at St. Albert, not only at the mission, but throughout the settlement as well. In the period 1872-81 more and more métis had taken to tilling the soil. In 1877 roughly thirty-five métis families were seriously cultivating the land, and there can be little doubt that this number increased rapidly in the period 1877-81, when the scarcity of the buffalo was felt to an even greater degree. On

the other hand, despite the increasing uncertainties of the hunt few of the winter rovers had reconciled themselves to agriculture. In 1878 and again in 1880 a number of white settlers took up land in the settlement. These people more than any others, save perhaps the priests, established agriculture on a firm footing in the settlement and insured the future of St. Albert as an agricultural community. Since almost nothing is known of their activities prior to 1882, further discussion of the effect of white settlement at St. Albert is limited to the next section of the study.

E. THE SETTLEMENT IN 1882: MAINLY FARMERS

In the decade previous to 1881, population increase in the North-West Territories was confined primarily to settlements along the line of the North Saskatchewan River. Not until the arrival of the railways were bona-fide settlers attracted to the southern part of the territories. It can be said, in fact, that aside from the Mounted Police forts, several trading posts and a few Indian and métis missions, there were no settlements south of the North Saskatchewan valley (Stanley, 1963, p. 184). Following the delimitation of "Palliser's triangle" or the "true prairie", the southern part of the territories was regarded as semi-arid desert, while the "fertile belt" to the north was deemed the most suitable area for agriculture. Not only were the northern settlements, then, thought to be the best for agriculture, but they were also much more accessible. The main trails into the North-West Territories, for instance, led overland from Red River to Fort Ellice and from thence to Fort Carlton. From Fort Carlton they either followed the line of the North Saskatchewan as far west as Fort Edmonton, or led northeastward to Prince Albert and Fort à la Corne.

The development of steam navigation along the North Saskatchewan in 1874 opened up still greater possibilities for settlement in the north. In 1875 the steamer "Northcote" arrived at Edmonton and shortly thereafter the North-West Navigation Company put into service a fleet of five vessels transporting passengers between Manitoba and the settlements of the Saskatchewan. Settlement along the North Saskatchewan was also stimulated by the proposed northern railway route laid out for the Canadian Pacific Railway. In order to gain the

benefits of settlement along the proposed railway line, "squatters, traders, speculators and bona-fide settlers rushed into the north and augmented the growing populations of Prince Albert, Battleford and Edmonton" (Stanley, 1963, p. 185). In 1881, however, the decision was made to build the railway through the southern territories in a direct line west from Winnipeg. The adoption of the southern route, according to Stanley, was one of the most significant events in the history of the North West Territories (Loc.cit.). The North Saskatchewan settlements were bypassed, and the railway rather than the river became the main artery of immigration.

1) Population

The population at St. Albert in 1882 was estimated at 900 persons (Williams, 1882, p. 184), representing an increase in population of about 200 persons in the period 1871 to 1882. In "the town" of Edmonton, on the other hand, a rough census showed a "voting population" of over 850 persons (Ibid., p. 186). Williams, a Toronto journalist who visited Edmonton in the autumn of 1882, remarked that

...the influx of farmers into the settlement has been most extraordinary. It is probable that during the season just past not less than 400 settlers have come into the settlement for the purpose of remaining here, while others have called here en route to more remote points(Loc cit.).

The Edmonton district, according to Williams, was the best advertised place in the North-West. It included the succession of settlements between St. Albert and Fort Saskatchewan, which was situated on the North Saskatchewan some twenty miles downstream from Edmonton. The country between Edmonton and St. Albert was described as being "pretty well filled up with settlers" (Ibid., p. 183). Only a few settlers

were reported along the south side of the North Saskatchewan between Edmonton and Fort Saskatchewan, while the country along the north side was said to be "well settled up." Fort Saskatchewan itself was established as a North-West Mounted Police post in 1875, but only a few men, according to Williams, were garrisoned there in 1882. Williams noted, however, that there were several farms on the river terrace across from the fort. This small settlement, known to the Oblates as Notre Dame de Lourdes, was subsequently called Lamoureux, after the Lamoureux brothers who settled there in 1875.

Although St. Albert was no longer the most populous settlement in the district, important changes by 1882 had taken place in the composition of the colony's population. In 1878 there was an influx into the settlement of new settlers from eastern Canada and other parts of the country, which gave a fresh impetus to material progress in the settlement. Mainly French Canadians (Leduc, 1879, p. 436), these people devoted their energies to farming, and it is from this epoch that the establishment of St. Albert as a settlement of agriculturalists can be properly dated.

The following are the names, which to some extent are indicative of ethnic origin, of the twelve settlers who opened farms at St. Albert in 1878: Heménégilde Majeau, Frank Juneau, Edmond Brosseau, Marechal, Edmond Juneau, Edmond Couture, Louis Beaupré, Joseph Latulippe, Don E. Noyes, Joseph Paquette, Alfred Arcand and William Cust. They were followed in 1880 by David Chevigny, Louis Chevigny and Dan Maloney. Details are available on only a few of the settlers who came to St. Albert during this period. Edmond Brosseau, for instance, was born in Laprairie, Quebec (Edmonton Board of Trade, 1890, p. 17). He served

in the Union Army during the American Civil War and then gold-mined in British Columbia and along the Peace River, following which he went to St. Albert and commenced farming. The Chevigny brothers and Maloney came from eastern Canada (Tardif, n.d., p. 37). The Chevignys probably came from Quebec, while Maloney emigrated from Collingwood in Ontario (Williams, 1882, p. 185). Alfred Arcand, following a period of enlistment with the North-West Mounted Police, went to Quebec where he was married. He then returned to the North-West and took out a farm at St. Albert (Tardif, n.d., p. 37). William Cust emigrated from Ireland to the United States, mined in California and subsequently British Columbia and Peace River. Cust then began to trade in the Peace River country, following which he sold his outfit to the Hudson's Bay Company. With the capital so accumulated, he acquired one of the largest and best equipped farms at St. Albert (Edmonton Board of Trade, 1890, p.18). Some of these men, then, emigrated from eastern Canada, perhaps because of improved transport facilities, to try their luck at farming in the North-West. Others, caught up in the fast-changing economy of the west, probably took to farming as the livelihood which at the time appeared to offer the brightest future.

Aside from the *métis* farmers, the persons associated with the mission complex at St. Albert comprised the largest group in the settlement. By 1882 there were over ninety persons living or working in the various religious establishments. These included Bishop Grandin, four priests, ten lay brothers and five ecclesiastical students, all of whom belonged to the order of the Oblates of Marie Immaculate (Williams, 1882, p. 183). Among the nuns there were eight sisters and six assistants, while at the orphanage were twenty boys and a

similar number of girls (Loc. cit.). The orphans were the descendants of either white, métis, or Indian parents. Fourteen boarders were supported at the mission school, while in the summer of 1882, Father Leduc reported that the mission was feeding an average of thirty to thirty-five Indians daily (Ibid., p. 184).

With the exception of the fifteen settlers of European stock and their families, as well as the people at the mission, the population of the settlement in 1882 was overwhelmingly métis in origin. Virtually all of the métis were French speaking, although some were the descendants of English or Scottish fathers or forefathers. It is interesting to note the degree to which the languages spoken by the métis were still used by the clergy. The sermons given in the church services at St. Albert, for instance, were in both French and Cree. English, on the other hand, was used only at Christmas, when large numbers of people from Edmonton attended midnight mass at St. Albert. In the years following 1882, the population at St. Albert remained dominantly métis in make up. In 1888, the population at St. Albert was estimated at 1,000. Of these, 860 were métis, 15 were English speaking Canadians, 113 were French speaking Canadians, while 12 had recently arrived from France.

2) Agriculture

Roughly 2,500 acres of land were under cultivation at St. Albert in 1882, of which only 130 acres belonged to the clergy (Williams, 1882, pp. 183-4). It is interesting to note that by this time at least one farmer in the settlement had more land under cultivation than the clergy. William Cust, who was interviewed by Williams in 1882, reported having 180 acres in wheat, 35 acres in barley and 12

acres in oats (Ibid., p. 184), making a total of 227 acres cultivated. Cust, whom Williams described as a "well-to-do settler," having four or five men in his employ and "a very complete outfit of agricultural machinery and implements," was undoubtedly the most prosperous farmer at St. Albert (Ibid., p. 185). Williams also noted that Dan Maloney, one of the farmers from eastern Canada, had broken forty acres of land by 1882 (Loc. cit.). Table II, however, gives a much better indication

TABLE II - CULTIVATED LAND AT ST. ALBERT 1884

| Owner | Lot | Farm Size in Acres | Number of Acres Breaking | Number of Acres Cropped |
|---------------------|-----|-----------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| John Cunningham | B&C | 288 | 69 | 55 |
| Octave Majeau | F | 506 | 90 | 90 |
| Samuel Cunningham | 2 | 168 | 30 | 30 |
| Pierre L'Hirondelle | 5 | 116 | 10 | 10 |
| Auguste Gladu | 6 | 149 | 5 | 5 |
| Jeremie Gladu | 8 | 182 | 11 | 11 |
| Magloire Gray | 13 | 213 | 28 | 28 |
| Joseph Chelifeur | 14 | 165 | 6 | 6 |
| Baptiste Pepin | 21 | 138 | 30 | 30 |

The data were derived from Deane, 1882-83, Pearce, circa 1884, Majeau, September 3, 1884, and Pepin, September 3, 1884. See bibliography for detailed references.

of farm sizes at St. Albert and of the number of acres cropped by individual farmers. Of the farmers for whom data are available in 1884, none had as much as half of his land "breaking" or in crops and most had closer to one-eighth. It is interesting to note that almost all of them planted crops as soon as the land was broken. Baptiste Pepin, one of the farmers shown in Table II, mentioned that he always cropped his land as soon as it was broken (Majeau, September 3, 1884), which appears to have been the general case at St. Albert. According to Williams, barley was usually planted on new land before wheat was

introduced (Williams, 1882, p. 184), perhaps because barley is a deeper rooted plant than wheat.

The 1882-83 Plan of St. Albert Settlement (see Fig. 10) shows a partial distribution of cultivated land in the settlement. Large areas known to be cultivated at the time have been omitted from the plan, such as the large fields behind the mission, while the cultivated areas shown are inaccurately depicted at best. The areas of cultivated land shown on the plan were drawn from unenclosed two line or three line boundaries sketched in the surveyor's field book (Deane, 1882-83), and cannot be considered exact areal representations of the land under cultivation. The plan, however, shows that settlement by 1882 had spread to the forested areas on the south side of the Sturgeon River. Roughly the eastern half of the settlement area on the south side of the river was taken up by farmers, while the western portion was left as timber. Possible reasons for settlement in the forested area within the settlement rather than in more lightly wooded areas outside the settlement will be discussed later in the study under the heading of Surveys.

Though the St. Albert farmers had broken only small portions of their river lot claims by 1882, there can be little doubt that much of their land was used by livestock as well. William Cust, for example, was reported to have had a large herd of young cattle, sixty breeding cows, fifteen milch cows, nine work horses and ten oxen (Williams, 1882, p. 185). The mission, on the other hand, kept a flock of forty-six sheep, fifty horses, twenty-six cows, twenty oxen, forty young steers, six mules and large numbers of hens and ducks (Ibid., p. 183). Williams also noted that about 1,000 pounds of

butter and a large quantity of cheese had been made at the mission by the Grey Nuns in the past year. There can be little doubt that the métis, some of whom had acquired cattle, hogs and chickens as early as 1871, and the other farmers in the settlement, possessed considerable numbers of livestock as well.

Little information, it should be noted, is available regarding the success of the métis farmers at St. Albert, although they probably comprised the largest group of agriculturalists in the settlement. Octave Majeau, one of the métis farmers, had more land under cultivation than any of the white settlers listed in Table II. Others such as Magloire Gray and Baptiste Pepin had as much land cultivated as the average farmer shown in the table. These statistics, however, concern very few of the St. Albert farmers, and all that can be said from the table is that some of the métis farmers cultivated more land than some of the white settlers. But whether or not the métis farmers by this time were generally as successful at agriculture as the clergy or the newly arrived settlers is open to question.

The settlers at St. Albert, according to Williams, appeared to be doing well, "except that the cold, backward season and early winter... caught some of them in an unlucky plight with their harvesting" (Ibid., p. 182). But Mr. Cust, when interviewed by Williams, expressed satisfaction with the Edmonton district, despite what he called "the many drawbacks as to climate" (Ibid., p. 182). Cust pointed out that a Mr. Reid at Fort Saskatchewan had experimented in 1881 with sowing wheat in the fall and that Reid's results had been most satisfactory. Fall sowing, it should be noted, had been tried only once by the clergy at St. Albert (in 1876), but the crops that year were destroyed by

hail, and fall sowing was not tried again. Cust, however, had come to the conclusion that the practice of fall sowing would soon become widespread in the Edmonton district. He also added that it would prove to be the safest plan of operation for farmers in the area.

Despite the unfavourable season at St. Albert in 1882, Mr. Cust expected his wheat to yield thirty bushels per acre, his barley, thirty-five bushels, and his oats, twenty-five. The following table shows average grain yields, estimated from grain returns by the Searle Grain Company for the years 1880 and 1883. According to the table,

TABLE III - AVERAGE GRAIN YIELDS
IN ALBERTA, 1880 AND 1883*

| Year | Wheat | Barley | Oats |
|------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| 1880 | 21.1 bu./acre | 20.0 bu./acre | 25.0 bu./acre |
| 1883 | 18.1 bu./acre | 20.0 bu./acre | 25.0 bu./acre |

* Statistics from Appendices II-V in Strange, 1954.
See bibliography for full reference.

Mr. Cust, perhaps optimistically, expected his crops to yield well above average. There can be little doubt, however, that grain yields at St. Albert were at least as good as elsewhere in the area of present-day Alberta. By 1882, wheat at St. Albert had become a reasonably certain crop. The faster maturing Red Fife wheat, which had been imported into the Red River Settlement about 1870 (Strange, 1954, p.3), had been in use at St. Albert prior to 1882. By 1883, in fact, White Fife, which had a shorter maturation period than Red Fife (Loc. cit.), had been planted in the mission fields (Codex, 23 novembre, 1883). The

wheat grown at St. Albert, moreover, was as good, and probably better in quality than the average for the district. It is interesting to note that at the first agricultural exhibition held at Edmonton (1883), the mission won a first prize for its wheat, as well as ten other firsts and five seconds for various other agricultural products (Codex, 10 octobre, 1883).

3) The Hunt

According to Roe, the extermination of the buffalo as a wild species in northwestern United States and western Canada occurred between the years 1876 and 1883. Although stragglers existed in various parts of the plains as late as 1884, the buffalo as a means of livelihood for the Indian and the métis was gone by 1883 (Roe, 1934, p. 1). Prior to 1883 steps had been taken by the government to prevent the wanton destruction of the buffalo. Legislation of this nature, however, either had little effect, or was later repealed. The ordinance of 1877, for instance, forbade the use of buffalo pounds and killing animals two years of age or less, but was repealed the following year because of the destitute condition of the Indians and métis. A number of explanations for the dramatic disappearance of the buffalo have been offered, among which fires and disease have been the most prominent. These explanations, however, have undergone re-assessment and have given way to the most credible thesis, according to Roe, that the extermination of the buffalo was effected "...by hunters, and particularly white hunters, in both Canada and the United States" (Ibid., p. 18).

The last of the Edmonton hunts was held in the summer of 1881. Writing of the Marquess of Lorne on his trip through western Canada in 1881, Steele commented that "At the Red Deer River a buffalo hunt was

held in honour of the Marquess. It was the last one to be held in Canada" (Steele, 1917, p. 161). The final mention of buffalo in the St. Albert Codex Historicus concerns two of the lay brothers from St. Albert, who in June of 1881 were reported to have killed a number of buffalo near Blackfoot Crossing on the Bow River (24 juin, 1881). In 1882, then, the "all-providing buffalo," which only a few years previously had played such an important rôle in the St. Albert economy, ceased dramatically to play a rôle.

With the disappearance of the buffalo, the winter rover had either to resign himself to a sedentary way of life, or attempt to continue his wanderings despite the fast changing economy of the North-West. The majority, according to Giraud, chose the former course, a course which their priests had long been urging them to adopt (Giraud, 1945, p. 1170). Many made their way to the mission stations, most notably to St. Laurent de Grandin (see Fig. 2), where the majority of the Tail Creek hunters migrated when the buffalo failed to appear (Loc. cit.). Others established themselves around the trading posts or set up colonies of their own. Some of these vagabonds, however, dispersed into the forests to the north where the game was more abundant and they could live by hunting and fishing. At Lac Ste. Anne and Lac la Biche, moreover, where the loss of the buffalo was less significant than in the buffalo camps to the south, the winter rovers continued to eke out a living from the fisheries and the hunt. In 1890, however, a law was passed prohibiting partridge and duck hunting in the spring season, a time of year when the métis were especially dependent upon fowl. Three years later fishing was prohibited in both Lac Ste. Anne and Lac la Biche during the period October 5 to December 15,

which had the effect of depriving the métis of their major food resource. In consequence, many of the métis abandoned the two settlements for more isolated areas where the fur bearing animals were sufficiently numerous to furnish a living. Others struck out elsewhere in search of any employment which might be had (Giraud, 1945, p. 1219).

Little is known of the St. Albert winter rovers in 1882, although few, it seems, could be convinced of the advantages of tilling the soil. Some of them, according to Giraud, were working part-time with the Company in 1877 (Ibid., p. 1171). They were employed transporting goods from Edmonton to the Athabaska River, and from thence to Lesser Slave Lake and Dunvegan. Normally ill-disposed toward steady employment of any kind, these nomads undoubtedly worked for the Company in order to supplement the diminishing returns of the hunt. Writing of the St. Albert métis in 1878, Father Leduc noted that "...bien nombre sont partis pour transporter les pièces au petit lac des Esclaves, pauvre métis! ils preferent manger de la misère le long des chemins et dans les berges... que de travailler ici, d'autres sont allés à la prairie" (Codex, 19 juin, 1878). It is interesting to note that some of the freemen elected to work for the Company rather than participate in the summer buffalo hunt. Moreover, they preferred the arduous work on the Company's barges to the steadier occupation of tilling the soil at St. Albert. The winter rovers who could not find work with the Company, according to Giraud, preferred the hunt to tilling even the smallest patch of land, and in so doing reduced themselves and their families to a life of misery (Giraud, 1945, p. 1219).

Even by 1882, then, some of the St. Albert métis continued to live from the proceeds of the hunt. Others, no doubt, availed them-

selves of the hunt when the opportunity arose. Mrs. Callihoo mentions that

Though the buffalo had now gone, we raised cattle, hogs, and chickens. Food was still plentiful as moose, deer and bear were plentiful. We turned to these animals for food and clothing (Callihoo, 1953, p. 23).

The degree to which nomadism continued to hold sway over the St. Albert métis who had not taken out homesteads in the settlement is brought to light in 1885. In June of 1885 the "half-breed grants" were allotted and very few of the métis took land scrip. The St. Albert Codex Historicus records that "Presque tous nos gens prennent des scripts [sic.] d'argent. Les scripts [sic.] se vendent à la course à 50 ¢ de la piastre" (11 juin, 1885). Not only, then, did the St. Albert métis sell their titles to the land, but they sold them to speculators at half the value. Hunting and trapping, then, and any part-time employment which could be had continued to dominate the lives of a certain number of the St. Albert métis. Loath to give up their wandering, yet incapable of adopting a settled way of life, this latter group was inveterately bound to the habit of roving. Although in a modified form, and with considerable struggle, they were essentially as nomadic in 1882 as they had been in the days when the buffalo roamed the plains.

4) The Surveys

Prior to November 19, 1869, proprietary rights in the North-West were vested with the Hudson's Bay Company and any settlement which took place was on the sufferance of the Company. Where tenure did develop it was generally unrecorded, which was the case at St. Albert and Lac Ste. Anne. About the time of the transfer of the Company's lands to the Crown in 1869, however, the township system of survey was implemented

by the Federal Government in the present-day area of Manitoba. With the extension of one of the base lines toward the Red River Settlement, however, work on the survey was immediately forced to a halt. The work was stopped by Louis Riel and a band of métis who feared that their river lot settlements would be broken up by the squares of the township survey. Shortly thereafter the Riel Rebellion of 1870 broke out and put a stop to all government surveys.

The intrusion of the township survey into an area of established settlement resulted in a revised system of survey which appeared in the Dominion Lands Act of 1872. Under the Act, the township survey was remodelled to correspond with the system employed in the United States. Moreover, provisions were made to provide special surveys for the river lot settlements which had grown up in the North-West prior to the introduction of the surveys. The river lot settlements were provided for in Section 55 of the Act which states that

Notwithstanding anything within this Act contained the Minister may direct that lands bordering on any river, water course or lake, or on a public road, and upon which settlements are in existence, be surveyed, laid out and divided into lots of any certain frontage or depth, and with such roads as appears desirable (Canada, 1910, p.133).

Though work on the government surveys began as early as September, 1869, the surveys were not extended into the St. Albert area until 1882. Prior to this time the lack of a proper system of survey had been one of the major obstacles to agricultural settlement at St. Albert. The people who settled at St. Albert before the survey simply squatted on the land, hoping that their rights to the land would be recognized when the surveys reached them. Not having title to their land, they were apprehensive that their improvements, their buildings, or even their

entire claim, might be taken from them when the surveys were introduced. In the settlement, moreover, property boundaries were frequently in dispute, although they had been agreed upon by the settlers and the clergy when the land was first occupied. In 1878, for instance, Colonel Jarvis and Captain Gagnon of the North-West Mounted Police at Fort Saskatchewan were called to St. Albert to help arbitrate a number of boundary disputes (Codex, 17 janvier, 1878). The disputes were apparently precipitated by the presence of a Dominion Lands surveyor, who the following day was to conduct a preliminary traverse of the St. Albert Settlement (Codex, 18 janvier, 1878). Though the survey was carried out and had the effect of easing the situation somewhat, it was by no means official and succeeded in pacifying only the settlers who had managed to come to agreements on their respective boundaries. About the same time, similar survey traverses were made of the river lot settlements at Edmonton and Fort Saskatchewan, but boundary problems continued to plague the settlers of the district. Of the situation at Edmonton, for instance, Williams remarked that "...everyone is afraid he may be putting up buildings on his neighbour's property" (Williams, 1882, p. 181).

In 1882, to the surprise of the St. Albert settlers, the township survey rather than a river lot survey was extended across the settlement. The surveyors, according to Father Leduc, realized that the St. Albert Settlement would not admit of the township survey without imposing great hardships upon the inhabitants (Leduc, 1884a, p. 15). They continued with their work, however, informing Leduc that the township survey would in no way compromise the rights of the St. Albert inhabitants to a river lot survey at a later date. Resistance to the survey was encountered in some instances from the settlers, but they were pacified

when Leduc, prevailed upon by the surveyors, told them that the survey was a mere formality and was required to continue the township survey outside the settlement (Ibid., p. 16).

Between July 28 and October 28, 1882, a river lot survey was executed in the Edmonton Settlement. The decision to allow a river lot survey at Edmonton was arrived at by the Minister of the Interior in consultation with his officers during the previous year (Burgess, March 1, 1886). No mention, however, was made of a river lot survey for the St. Albert Settlement when the survey subdivision plans were laid for the year 1882 (Loc. cit.). The St. Albert settlers, in consequence, petitioned the Minister of the Interior in the summer of 1882 for a survey similar to that which was in progress at Edmonton. But whether or not the Department of the Interior, following the receipt of the St. Albert petition, intended to grant the settlers a river lot survey is open to question. The only information available concerning the river lot survey at this point is derived from a letter from M. Burgess, Deputy Minister of the Interior, to Sir John A. Macdonald, Minister of the Interior.

Mr. Michael Deane has been instructed to make a survey and report upon the lands occupied and claimed at Edmonton. I believe his operations on the ground have been completed and have been so satisfactory generally that a petition has been received from the settlers at St. Albert, a R.C. mission on the Saskatchewan [sic.] asking that he be instructed to perform a similar service for them (Burgess, October 23, 1882).

Before a decision was made on the St. Albert survey, however, Mr. Deane, upon completion of his work at Edmonton, commenced work on a river lot survey at St. Albert. Burgess noted in one of his letters that "Mr. Deane...without authority or instructions of any kind

from the Department, proceeded to make a survey at St. Albert...in conformity with the river lot principle" (Burgess, March 1, 1886). When the survey was begun, Father Leduc remarked that "Nos gens étaient contents, les choses allaient pour le mieux, lorsque arriva d'Ottawa l'ordre de cesser ce travail, avec avis à la colonie de Saint-Albert de se contenter de l'arpentage général" (Leduc, 1884a, p. 16). The moment it was discovered in Ottawa by the returns sent in by Deane that he was acting contrary to instructions, he was promptly ordered to discontinue his work (Burgess, March 1, 1886). At this time Bishop Grandin was in Ottawa, and Father Leduc immediately dispatched him the following telegram:

Arpentage par townships impossible pour Saint-Albert.
Il ruine et détruit la colonie. Mécontentement
général. Voyez de suite le ministre de l'interieur
(Leduc, 1884a, p. 17).

The telegraph line was broken down, however, and three weeks later, when no word had been received from Ottawa, a public meeting was held in the school house at St. Albert. According to Leduc, discontent was such that a number of the people at the meeting advocated doing as the métis had done in Manitoba - obtain their rights by force of arms (Leduc, 1884a, p. 19). However, another course of action was decided upon, which was reported as follows in the newspaper at Edmonton.

...all at the meeting considering it most unjust that this the oldest and largest settlement in this part of the country should have been ignored by the government and that they, the oldest settlers, should have land practically taken away from them, as it would be if they were obliged to abide by the township survey. A resolution was carried unanimously to send a delegation to Ottawa to look after the interests of the St. Albert settlers in this connection, they to pay the expenses (The Bulletin, January, 1883).

The delegates, Father Leduc and Dan Maloney, left for Ottawa shortly

thereafter, and less than a month later the following telegram was received by Thomas Anderson, the Crown Timber Agent at Edmonton.

Convey by mail or otherwise to St. Albert Mission Settlers that special survey of their lands will be made as early as the opening of Spring will furnish (Russell, February 8, 1883).

The river lot survey, which was begun by Deane on November 1, 1882, was completed by him on June 20, 1883.

Had the people at St. Albert been forced to abide by the township survey it would have meant virtual dismemberment of the colony (Leduc, 1884b, p. 337). In some instances, as many as seven families, who were established on the long narrow lots fronting on the river and the lake, would have found themselves living on the same section. Certainly, the entire settlement would have been in complete disorder had the township survey been enforced. Large numbers of the settlers would have lost their improvements and their buildings. Moreover, the township survey provided for roads along the section boundaries every mile east to west and every second mile from north to south. At St. Albert, however, the roads had been laid out by the settlers to serve the houses. The main trails ran more or less parallel to the river and the lake shore and linked most of the houses in the settlement (see Fig. 10). Had the township roads been enforced, almost all of the houses at St. Albert would have been left at considerable distances from the road allowances.

One of the main reasons, according to Leduc, why the inhabitants at St. Albert had settled upon long narrow river lots was to be nearer the church and the school (Leduc, 1884b, p. 338). Perhaps a greater advantage was that each settler under the river lot system had a water frontage on the river or the lake. The social advantages of living

PLAN OF SAINT ALBERT SETTLEMENT

SURVEYED BY M. DEANE, D. L. S.

1882-1883.

M. Deane D.L.S.



TOWNSHIP No. 54 RANGE 26

TOWNSHIP No. 53 RANGE 26

B I C

L A K E

SCALE 80 chains = 1 inch



close together, besides the advantage of being close to school and church, as well as the security provided by concentrated settlement were also important considerations, especially in the early days when the surrounding country was wilderness and the colony was exposed to the occasional Blackfoot raid. Perhaps the main reason settlers took out land on the south side of the river, despite the forest vegetation there, was to gain the advantage of community living. Either that, or they valued the forest for its own sake. Dawson described the St. Albert Settlement as a community which had the appearance of a street village. Such compactness, he wrote, "supplemented by a common language and religion, facilitated community coöperation in the building of homes, roads, bridges, churches, schools, and orphanages" (Dawson, 1936, p. 342). Moreover, many of these endeavours were heavily subsidized by funds gathered by the clergy from Quebec and France, which added to the advantages of living in the colony. Though the St. Albert Settlement had the general appearance of a street village, it was not as highly nucleated as, say, the "strassendorf" of north central Europe, and in this sense cannot be considered a street village proper.

The official instructions issued to the Dominion Lands surveyors required a surveyor, before proceeding with a river lot survey, to

...make a rough compass survey of the...shore upon which the settlers are located and of their improvements; he shall inquire into the claims of each. Upon the plan of the compass survey, he shall endeavour to lay out the land into lots of such shape and size as will best meet the wishes and legitimate claims of the occupants. It is essential that each settler shall remain in possession of his improvements and the lots should be laid out accordingly.... With a view to avoiding future boundary disputes, the mode of settlement adopted must be as simple and regular as the circumstances of the case admit of (Canada, 1910, p. 29).

In the survey laid out by Deane, the areas of improved land shown on the survey plan generally are located well within the individual lots (see Fig. 10), which certainly would not have been the case had the township survey been extended through the same area. However, all of the improved land is not shown on the plan and some discrepancies may have existed. Though many of the lot boundaries do not run parallel to each other at St. Albert, all of them tend toward a single alignment perpendicular to the river and the north shore of Big Lake. It is interesting to note that the long axes of the lots along the north shore of Big Lake run in a north-south direction, but at the point where the Sturgeon River flows into Big Lake, the lots change direction and run east-west, thus shifting their orientation with the river. The surveyor, it seems, managed to incorporate these changes into a relatively simple method of survey. The lots appear to have been laid out in groups, the boundaries of which have been projected from base lines that form the rear boundaries of the settlement. The number of base lines used appears to have been determined by the sinuosity of the Sturgeon River in relation to the extent of settlement along its banks. The surveyor then produced the lot boundaries at angles that approximate the boundaries of the improvements. Generally the boundaries produced from each base line are parallel to each other, and seem to indicate a compromise between survey techniques and the locations of the improved areas.

The river lots located on the east and west side of the mission complex are generally narrower than those in the remainder of the settlement, while two of the river lots to the east of the mission are triangular in shape. This phenomenon probably resulted because "...in

the vicinity of the Roman Catholic church plot, ...parties had settled so closely together along the Sturgeon River, the land in rear being occupied by others, that there was not 160 acres available for each⁷⁷ (Canada, 1886b, p. 18). The parties were warned of the plight they would find themselves in by the Church authorities but failed to take notice. When scrip was allotted in 1885, however, the people on the smaller lots had the privilege of homesteading elsewhere (Loc. cit.), but the lots remained as they were surveyed by Deane.

It is interesting to note that the so-called "hay privileges"⁷⁸ which had developed at Red River were provided for under the Dominion Lands Act. This valuable privilege, by which the river lot farmer had the exclusive right of cutting hay on the outer two miles immediately in rear of the river lot, was recognized by the Hudson's Bay Company, and apparently had always been exercised by the owners of river lot farms (Stanley, 1963, p. 15). In fact, the trouble over the township survey at Red River in 1869 had begun with the encroachment of the government surveys on the hay privileges of one of the farmers. In later years, hay permits were issued to river lot settlers who wished to exercise their privilege. At St. Albert, the settlers were not interfered with in cutting hay anywhere on Dominion Lands and it was optional whether or not the settlers took out the permits. The permits were made available to prevent speculators from taking all the valuable hay during periods when hay was scarce ("W.P.", n.d.).

The river lot surveys executed by Deane in the Edmonton area were generally satisfactory, although some of the claims to land at St. Albert were subsequently investigated by members of the Dominion Lands Board. William Pearce reported in 1885 that of the 240 land claims made

in the Edmonton district, protests following the surveys were received from less than thirty, and of these only one-half concerned disputes between neighbours over their property boundaries (Pearce in Canada, 1886b, p. 17). The surveys, then, generally solved the river lot boundary problems, despite the fact that river lot surveys frequently brought on as many boundary disputes as they solved. The Deputy Surveyor-General in 1883 made the following comment concerning the river lot survey.

When a line is drawn arbitrarily between two squatters, each one tries by all means in his power to have it removed, in order to enlarge his holdings; while when this line is drawn in compliance with a fixed system of survey, he accepts it as something which can not be altered (Deville, February 12, 1883).

It should be noted that not all the river lot claims at St. Albert were incorporated in the river lot survey of 1882-83. A survey extension of the St. Albert Settlement was conducted in 1885. Three years later a townsite survey was provided for the settlement.

5) Trade and Transportation

By 1882 a trade in agricultural produce had developed at St. Albert, replacing the old trade staples of fur and pemmican in the economy of the settlement. Although some of the St. Albert métis continued to trap, furs were much less important in the economy than agriculture, while the trade in pemmican by 1882 was finished. Agriculture, on the other hand, was well established in the settlement, and according to Williams, prices in the district were "good for all sorts of agricultural produce" (Williams, 1882, p. 185). Even at the mission, where agriculture was basically subsistence in character, grain was sold when the clergy could afford to do so. As early as 1876 the Codex

records that the clergy sold one hundred bushels of barley to the government (4 avril, 1876), while in 1879, 2,600 pounds of barley flour were sold to Kew, Stobart and Company, who at that time operated a store at St. Albert (4 juillet, 1879).

Though a small market existed at Edmonton, most of the colony's agricultural products were sold to the government. No evidence, however, is available concerning specific transactions between the St. Albert settlers and the Federal Government. The North-West Mounted Police at Fort Saskatchewan may have been provisioned in part from St. Albert, although only a small complement of men was garrisoned there. The various survey parties in the area, moreover, probably secured their supplies locally. Of greater importance, however, were the contracts let out by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Huge amounts of provisions were purchased by the Federal Government in the early 1880s in an attempt to offset the widespread famines among the Indians which were brought on by the extermination of the buffalo. Provisions, of course, were imported into the North-West from eastern Canada and Manitoba, but they were also purchased from merchants in the Territories, and contracts were let out locally where supplies were available (Stanley, 1963, p. 227). There can be little doubt that the St. Albert settlers obtained contracts of this nature, especially for the Michel and Alexander Indian Reserves located about ten miles and twenty miles respectively northwest of St. Albert. The following information, derived from a petition presented by the St. Albert settlers to the Lieutenant-Governor of the North-West Territories in 1884, is the only information available concerning government contracts at this time. It should be noted that the Lieutenant-Governor was also Indian Commissioner for the North-West

Territories.

Of late we have not been favoured with any Government contracts for our produce or cattle: we do not know why this should be so, but we can assure you that we are perfectly able to supply the Government with as good cattle, work oxen, pork, etc., as will be found in any country, and at reasonable prices.

It has been represented to this committee by the Reverend Fathers of St. Albert that the Indians of this district all ask for native flour in preference to that which is imported.

Local business men, mechanics as well as farmers have felt the scarcity of ready money very much in the past and there is no doubt that the granting of your supply contracts near us, would benefit in great degree the Settlement of St. Albert (People of St. Albert, November 28, 1884).

From the information available, the St. Albert settlers prior to 1884 appear to have been awarded a number of government contracts. By 1884, however, they wanted more contracts, especially for livestock, livestock products and flour. In all probability the St. Albert settlers had to compete with those in Edmonton and district for the government contracts, since the relationship between Edmonton and St. Albert, which in the 1860s was one of symbiosis, had changed by 1882 to one of competition. From the petition as well there appears to have been a lack of ready cash at St. Albert, implying that even by 1884 local trade was to some degree conducted on a barter basis.

The manufactured goods required at St. Albert were either purchased or traded locally, or imported from Winnipeg. The last mention of trade connections between St. Albert and Fort Benton is in 1877 (Codex, 20 juillet, 1877), while the last cart train between the mission and St. Boniface arrived at St. Albert in October, 1876 (Codex, 1 octobre, 1876). It is interesting to note that though the first steamboat reached Edmonton in 1875, this service was discontinued during 1876, the year the

mission sent a cart brigade to St. Boniface (Codex, 22 septembre, 1876). Following 1876, regular steamboat service was provided between Edmonton and Grand Rapids, and from there to Winnipeg. Undoubtedly, goods required at the mission from Winnipeg were shipped by boat to Edmonton. The Codex, however, records only one such instance, when forty-five gallons of coal oil for the mission arrived at Edmonton on the steamboat in 1881 (Codex, 30 septembre, 1881).

St. Albert in 1882 was well linked by trails to the various settlements in the Saskatchewan district. Figure 11 shows the main trails servicing the settlement. In 1883, when the railway reached Calgary, the Calgary trail became the most important transport link servicing the settlement. In June of 1884, for instance, the mission received 22,000 pounds of freight at the station in Calgary (Codex, 2 juin, 1884). In 1883, moreover, Calgary and Edmonton were connected with a stage-coach passenger service, and regular fortnightly deliveries of mail and light freight were provided by the government. Heavy freight was handled by the Hudson's Bay Company's wagon trains (Anon., 1954, p. 10). In 1890 a branch line of the Canadian Pacific Railway was built between Calgary and Edmonton.

6) Services and Industries

In 1882 many of the services required in the settlement were still provided by the clergy. The hospital at St. Albert was still in the hands of the Grey Nuns and was presided over by one of the sisters who was a thoroughly qualified physician (Williams, 1882, p. 184). The mission school, which was erected in 1874, was also run by the Grey Nuns. Leduc mentioned that in 1879 there were sixty students regularly attending the school. They were taught as much in English, he said,

CART TRAILS - EDMONTON DISTRICT 1879

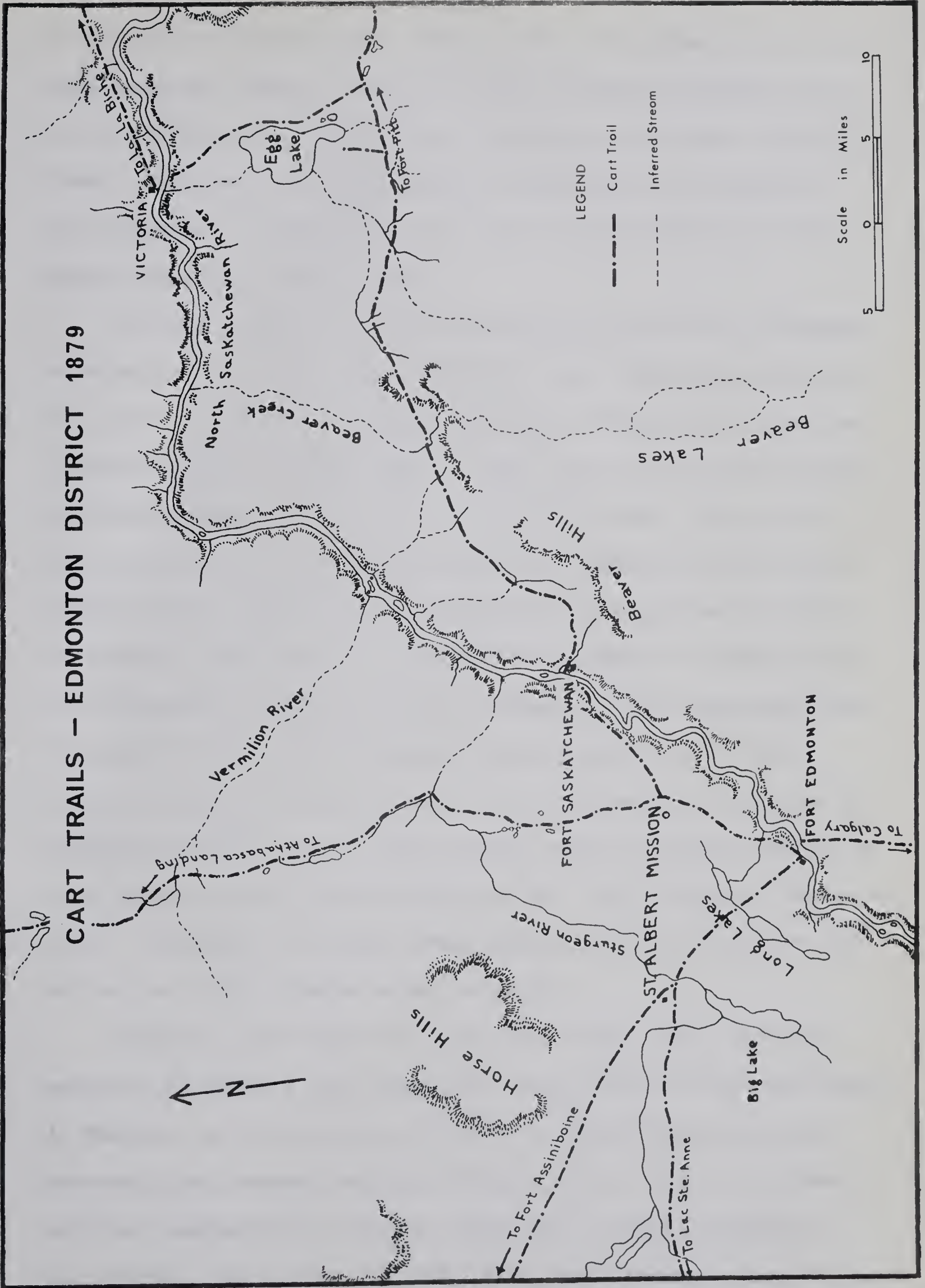


FIGURE II.

Source: Dowson, G.M., 1881.
See Bibliography.

as they were in French (Leduc, 1879, p. 438). The mission also had a blacksmith shop (Codex, 5 novembre, 1875), a small brickworks (Codex, 6 juin, 1876) and in 1880 acquired a printing press (Codex, 24 avril, 1880). Williams noted that in addition there were two carpenters, one shoemaker, a bookbinder, and a number of farm labourers at the mission (Williams, 1882, p. 183).

Although there were three steam operated grist mills at Edmonton at this time, the grain raised in the St. Albert Settlement was ground at a mill located on the Sturgeon River some fifteen miles downstream from the mission (Williams, 1882, p. 184). The mill was water-powered and had two runs of stones (Codex, 31 juillet, 1880). The mill had been built in 1878 by a company comprising a number of settler-shareholders from St. Albert and Lamoureux and the clergy from St. Albert. In January, 1880, however, the company was purchased by Bishop Grandin and the Lamoureux brothers from the settlement of the same name (Codex, 19 janvier, 1880). The new company took one-seventh of the flour ground as payment for the milling. It is interesting to note that the Lamoureux brothers and the clergy jointly owned a threshing machine as well, which did most of the threshing at St. Albert (Codex, 22 novembre, 1878). The mission also had a mowing machine, which no doubt was lent out to some of the farmers in the settlement.

There were two stores at St. Albert in 1882, one of which was owned by the Hudson's Bay Company, the other by Kew, Stobart and Company. At Edmonton, on the other hand, there were several stores which were reportedly well stocked (Williams, 1882, p. 181). Most of the common articles required by the settlers, then, were probably available in the district. The prices for manufactured goods, however, were still

quite high. Williams noted that a stove, which in Toronto would sell for 40 dollars, cost 125 dollars in Edmonton (Williams, 1882, p. 186).

Following a petition to the Federal Government in 1879, postal service was extended to the residents of St. Albert on July 4, 1880 (Codex, 4 juillet, 1880). The post office was set up at the mission and Father Leduc was appointed the first postmaster. In 1876 the telegraph was in operation at a point forty miles east of Edmonton (Codex, 13 juillet, 1876) and in December, 1879, it was extended to Edmonton (Codex, 22 décembre, 1879). A telegraph line linking St. Albert and Edmonton was built in 1883 (Codex, 7 octobre, 1883). Finally, a local newspaper, a normal service desired in any community, was initiated in 1880. The Bulletin, which was published at Edmonton, was the second newspaper to be published in the North-West Territories. St. Albert, then, was well linked with the outside world. It was connected by telegraph, regular postal and transport services and a local newspaper, while in 1885 the first telephone was installed in the settlement.

F. CONCLUSIONS

The St. Albert Settlement, situated between the old North-West of the voyageur and the new North-West of the farmer, developed during a period of transition. It was founded when the trade in furs and pemmican was in decline, yet when agriculture in the North-West had barely begun. It is not surprising, therefore, that the settlement in the period 1861 to 1882 possessed many of the characteristics of both North-Wests. Between 1861 and 1871, hunting and trapping, the traditional occupations of the old North-West, dominated the way of life at St. Albert. Almost the entire population of the colony participated in the annual summer and fall buffalo hunts. Crop failures were frequent, moreover, forcing the colonists to abandon the settlement and rendering the hunt essential for survival. In addition, attached to the colony was a large band of winter rovers, nomadic métis who roamed the plains summer and winter in search of the buffalo and fur bearing animals. Preferring the hunt to any form of settled employment, this latter group interrupted their wanderings only for brief sojourns in the settlement.

During the same period, however, the métis in increasing numbers began to cultivate the land. The priests, in an endeavour to convert the métis to a more settled way of life, imported agricultural goods into the colony and established a grist mill, which they hoped would foster agriculture among the métis. Only with the utmost difficulty, however, could the métis be persuaded to till the soil, and with few

exceptions they did not extend their agricultural operations beyond the cultivation of small plots. Next to crop failures, the crude methods of agriculture employed by the *métis*, and the general aversion which they had to agriculture, were the most important factors retarding agriculture at St. Albert in the period 1861 to 1871.

The clergy, on the other hand, expanded agriculture considerably around the mission. Crop failures were less frequent at the mission than among the *métis*, and the Oblates were generally satisfied with farming conditions at St. Albert. At the time St. Albert was established as an Episcopal See, Bishop Grandin commented that St. Albert possessed greater advantages for settlement than the other missions of the North-West, and felt that St. Albert would soon be more populous than St. Boniface. Although hunting formed the basis of the St. Albert economy in 1871, St. Albert, with the exception of the Red River Settlement, was the most populous settlement as well as the most important agriculturally in the North-West.

Following 1871 agriculture became increasingly important at St. Albert, and by 1882 had replaced the hunt as the mainstay of the economy. Foremost among the reasons for the transition to agriculture were the extermination of the buffalo, which as a means of livelihood for the *métis* were gone by 1882, and the influx in 1878 of white settlers into the colony. In the period following 1876 the buffalo rapidly diminished in numbers, and large numbers of *métis* who hitherto had not resigned themselves to agriculture, began tilling the soil in the settlement. Not all the *métis*, however, resorted to agriculture. Although some of the winter rovers may have begun to farm, the majority continued to hunt and trap in the forest region, or took part-time employment with

the Hudson's Bay Company when such was available. The first white settlers at St. Albert were quick to establish themselves on the land and added a fresh impetus to agriculture in the colony. Some were experienced farmers; others had been miners who invested considerable capital in the land and soon became prosperous farmers.

Other factors important to the development of agriculture at St. Albert at this time were the introduction of faster maturing wheats, the availability of better farm machinery, the land survey, the development of transportation and markets for farm produce, and not to be overlooked, the leadership in community affairs provided by the clergy. By 1882, then, the settlement was firmly established as a successful agricultural community, and within the space of twenty years, had played a truly pioneer rôle in opening up the North-West to agricultural settlement.

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