WINNIPEG'S EARLY DAYS
WINNIPEG'S EARLY DAYS

A Short Historical Sketch by

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and other books.

and

Twelve Full Color Prints of
Early Winnipeg Scenes

With

Introduction and Descriptive Titles

By

G. A. Stovel

The Entire Production of This Book

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WINNIPEG, MANITOBA
NOTE

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DEDICATION

To have Given Much, to have Wrought Well, to have Hoped and Striven
to the Fulfilment of that Hope, is to have Lived. To Three Brothers
whose Life in this Community Meant Just That, This Book is Dedicated.

G. A. S.
WINNIPEG'S EARLY DAYS

W. J. Healy

Of the old Red River era it is to be said that there was never anything really like it anywhere else. And the same is true of the life of Winnipeg as a frontier town.

The prairie is still here, with the same mirages on the horizon on summer days, far and shining. The Western sunlight is the same. Spring finds places on the prairie every year to paint with the same wildflowers. The same sunsets continue to fill the Western sky with splendors of color, as in the evenings of those pioneer days of Winnipeg. The buoyant Western air, which the pioneers breathed with something of an illusion that it came from lands of adventure and romance and the youth of the world beyond the horizon, is still the same.

These things are all the same, and Westerners of the present time who came from the East revisit their old homes to find themselves homesick for the West, as the pioneers did when they went back to see the East again. But Winnipeg has changed since the years when it was young, irrepressibly lighthearted in facing the hardships and deprivations of frontier life, and joyously ready, day or night, to raise political or any other kind of ructions on every possible occasion for such outbursts of high spirits. The West has changed, the world has changed, since (to speak appropriately in an antiquated manner) Winnipeg put a new slide into the Canadian magic-lantern.
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The pictures in this book are open windows through which you can look out from the present, back into those early years of Winnipeg. Only the old-timers will see in this book projections from pictures of reality which they hold in their minds. The road back to that little town of romance in a vanished world can be travelled only by the old-timers’ memories. The old-timers are few in number, and every year finds them fewer. Winnipeg of today, the great and important transcontinental railway centre, has few residents who were here when the first railway engine arrived on a flatboat from Moorhead, in Minnesota, on October 8, 1877. It has very few who were here when the first Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, Hon. Adams George Archibald, arrived in a birchbark canoe from Pembina on September 2, 1870, and established himself in Fort Garry.

If Lieutenant-Governor Archibald could have had a moment of prophetic vision when the canoe came to the junction of the two rivers and headed up the Assiniboine, he would have seen that he was about to pass under the Canadian National Railway Bridge and the Main Street Bridge before he would arrive at the landing place at the main gateway of Fort Garry. The river bank where that landing place was is now occupied by the car barns of the Winnipeg Electric Company and the building with a towering chimney where the city’s supply of electric current used to be generated by steam, before it came leaping across country along transmission cables stretched on steel towers from cataracts on the Winnipeg river scores of miles away.

The northwest-facing gateway of Fort Garry is preserved as a historical relic in a little park made for it. In one of the pictures in this book, you will find yourself looking through that gateway at
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Hudson's Bay House, the residence of the Company’s Governors up to 1870, and from 1870 until 1881 the residence of the Lieutenant-Governors. In that house the second Lieutenant-Governor, Hon. Alexander Morris, gave a dinner and ball in August, 1877, in honor of Lord Dufferin, the first Governor-General to come to the West, and Lady Dufferin. Lord and Lady Dufferin, during their stay here, lived in two summer cottages which had been built for them between Silver Heights, the residence of Donald Smith, afterwards Lord Strathcona, and Deer Lodge, the residence of Hon. James McKay, one of the most notable, and certainly one of the largest, men in the West at that time. Lady Dufferin notes in her book, My Canadian Journal, that though he weighed 320 pounds, he was light on his feet, and taught her the Red River jig.

A historian bent on blocking out history into definite, clean-cut eras, each ending as an act of a play ends with the fall of the curtain, which rises presently to disclose a new stage setting for the next act, would say that the old Red River era ended on Tuesday, August 23, 1870. He would make it end on that day, because on that day the expedition under the command of Colonel Wolseley trudged through a heavy rain, ankle-deep in mud, along the river road which is now Main Street and went into the Fort by the northwest gateway less than an hour after Louis Riel and the remnant of his "Provisional Government" galloped away out of the river gateway and vanished into the rain. But though it is true that the conditions of life as they were then passed away in a few years' time, a great deal of what was most characteristic of the old Red River era continued to blend with the life of Winnipeg for two or three decades after 1870.

None of the other Western cities of North America, this side of those whose sites were originally settlements founded in the Spanish
era, began, as Winnipeg began, in the centre of an old community (old, that is, for this new world) like Red River, whose peaceful, pastoral life, a settlement of stone residences and white farmhouses, with here and there a windmill, isolated in mid-continent and accessible only by long and hard travelling through wild regions of immense extent, had been going on for more than half a century. It was a community which included several wealthy families of retired officers of the Hudson’s Bay Company, who had married wives of the country and, on retiring to the banks of the Red, had built large, handsome stone houses in which they lived in comfort like English squires. They were content to end their days in familiar scenes and under the agreeable jurisdiction of the Company, their houses furnished like English houses with things brought out by the Company’s annual ship to York Factory on the coast of the Bay, hundreds of miles to the north. Some of them even had spotted English coach dogs to follow their English carriages.

The Selkirk settlers, each family farming its long, narrow lots fronting on the river, formed an important part of the community. The most numerous element in Red River was that of the French-speaking people, the Métis, who were the voyageurs of the fur trade, the couriers de bois from Quebec, the buffalo hunters, fishermen and drivers of Red River carts. There were frugal and thrifty families among them, but many of the Métis were roving and improvident, with a happy-go-lucky fondness for merrymaking. The summer and fall expeditions for hunting the buffaloes were for them the great events of the year.

Out on the vast prairie expanses the records left by the buffalo herds, legible in the hard-packed narrow trails they followed in Indian file from pasture grounds to drinking places on the banks of
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streams, remained decade after decade when the buffaloes were gone, like lines of black ink crossing the grass which the sun yellowed to a parchment hue. One of the buffalo trails crossing the area now within the city of Winnipeg was still to be seen for several years after Winnipeg was incorporated as a city in 1873. It passed within a few hundred yards of where the Stovel building stands, from which this book is issued and in which the pictures in this book have been made.

Along that trail the buffaloes used to go to a drinking place and wallow on the bank of the Red near the bridge over which the street cars cross to St. Boniface. Dr. Charles N. Bell, F.R.G.S., president of the Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba, who arrived in the little muddy village of Winnipeg in 1870 as a private in the Red River expedition, and two years later saw the buffaloes in their thousands on the prairies hundreds of miles west of Manitoba, and saw the first shipment of wheat from Manitoba (857 bushels), leave Winnipeg by river boat in 1878, and before his retirement from the secretaryship of the Winnipeg Grain Exchange saw the Winnipeg cash wheat market grown to be the greatest in the world, remembers that portions of that buffalo trail were used as footpaths across open fields by Winnipeggers in the early years of the city, until the land it traversed was all built upon.

Of the village of Winnipeg, as it was in the closing years of the decade 1860-70, Alexander Begg wrote in 1879:

"The wild children of the prairie, who, during the summer and autumn, were in the habit of visiting Fort Garry and Winnipeg to exchange their furs for goods, were wont to make their presence known in our midst, for with drinking, gambling, fighting, dancing, laughing, talking, swearing, horse-racing, trading and singing, they made a perfect babel of the place, but strange to say, with all this wildness, we never heard of a case of murder happening amongst them.

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"We had no bank, no insurance office, no lawyers, only one doctor, no City Council, only one policeman, no taxes—nothing but freedom; and though lacking several other so-called advantages of civilization, we were, to say the least of it, tolerably virtuous and unmistakably happy. Mr. James Mulligan was the last policeman under Hudson's Bay Company sway, and that gentleman may remember how on one occasion a few fun-loving individuals, headed by Mr. J. H. McTavish, took him, bound to a cart, and deposited him in the Jail, much to his astonishment. He took the joke very good-naturedly. The Jail and Court House of the time was a small log building just outside the wall of Fort Garry."

That small log building stood where the east corner of the broad stone steps leading to the front entrance of the Fort Garry Hotel is today. To continue the quotation from Alexander Begg:

"One of the most original characters of the day was George Emmerling, our hotel-keeper. He came to this country on spec, and, it is said, landed in Winnipeg with a barrel of whisky and two barrels of apples. He at once opened an hotel in one of Andrew McDermot's buildings on Post Office Street, and having the only place of entertainment, he succeeded beyond his expectations. Acquiring a property on the Main road, he erected what is now part of the Davis House."

What was Post Office Street is now Lombard Street. The Davis House was on the west side of Main Street, facing Lombard Street, and was named for its proprietor, Robert Atkinson Davis, who was Premier of Manitoba from 1874 until 1878.

The founders of the village which towards the close of the 1860's had begun to name itself Winnipeg were the free traders, as they were called, who had established themselves near Fort Garry, the headquarters of the fur trade. They trafficked with the buffalo hunters and fur trappers, in competition with the Company, and they had to bring in their merchandise and carry out their furs in Red River carts across the plains to the south. The name of the village of Winnipeg was known only in the West, but the name of Fort Garry had been made known on both sides of
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the Atlantic by widely read books of travel and stories of adventure in the fur trade.

Five hundred acres adjoining Fort Garry were marked out as a camping space for all who came to trade with the Company. Adjoining that common was the property of the leading man among the free traders, Andrew McDermot, a river lot whose north boundary is marked by McDermot Avenue in the city of Winnipeg. Next came the lot of A. G. B. Bannatyne, one of Andrew McDermot’s sons-in-law: its north boundary is marked by Bannatyne Avenue. Next came the lot of Sheriff Alexander Ross, whose name is likewise perpetuated in Ross Avenue. William and James Avenues bear the names of two of Sheriff Ross’s sons. Logan Avenue was named for Robert Logan, whose property came next; it included the site of Fort Douglas, the little stockaded stronghold built in 1812, after the arrival of the first Selkirk settlers. Beyond the Logan property lay the Point Douglas common.

Andrew McDermot (one of whose daughters became the wife of William McTavish, who was the Company’s Governor of Red River and the District of Assiniboia when the Riel insurrection began with the seizure of Fort Garry in 1869) arrived at the Red River in 1812, having come across the Atlantic from Ireland in the ship which brought the second party of Selkirk settlers. He was the first of the free traders, and by 1840 had made himself the richest man in the West. His friend Sheriff Ross wrote of him that he could speak the language of the Indians better than the Indians themselves, that he could run like a deer and endure cold like an Eskimo dog, and that there was no better judge of men and horses in Red River, nor any man who was his equal in address, humor, shrewdness and the power of making money. He lived to
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take part in the life of the early years of the city of Winnipeg, and did not die until October 12, 1881.

A record of the small beginnings from which Winnipeg grew is preserved for the future historian of Western Canada in the first issue of The Manitoba Free Press, which was published on November 9, 1872. It is there set down that the population of Winnipeg was about 300 in the fall of 1870, and that it had increased to 700 in the fall of 1871. "On the first day of November, 1872," continues the record, "a careful enumeration shows a population of 1,467." And it goes on:

"Of these 1,467, we find 1,019 males and 448 females, a disparity noticeable at first in most Western towns, and here explained by the fact that few immigrants are accompanied by their families, for whom they first secure a home, and then return or send, as well as because so large a proportion is made up of young men, who left the crowded family homestead to take part in the vast lottery of this territory, where the great cities and Provinces of the future furnish the field for competition. This surplus of males frequently gives rise to inconveniences. Young men mourn over the lack of society, and families coming from Canada sometimes find their female members in great demand, and likely young women are snatched off despite the tears of parents or employers, almost realizing again Tom Hood's anecdote of an offer of marriage made from the Australian coast through a speaking trumpet to a vessel approaching with young ladies on board. One gentleman, after giving large inducements to attract a favorite servant to accompany his family from Ontario, had to hand her over to an ex-volunteer on the third day after her arrival. A Nova Scotian tailor, lately arrived, who bid fair in a few weeks to accumulate more than the expenses of his immigration from the assistance given by his daughters towards the habilitating of his overflow of patrons, suddenly finds one of his animated sewing machines rushing off to stitch exclusively for a young Canadian, whom she had first seen only a few days before. Another daughter of a family just arrived, trusted out at service in a doctor's home, soon demands permission to engage for life service with another lonely Canadian. Another, the only solace of a lone mother, deserts her for the home of a thriving mechanic almost as soon as they had set up housekeeping. These are only samples of many instances coming under our notice."
The chief industry was house-building. The noise of the saw and hammer was heard day and night throughout the village. We read further in that first issue of that newspaper, which began as a weekly and did not become a daily until July 6, 1874:

"As regular mechanics are very scarce, farmers, laborers and greenhorns generally have to be crowded into the ranks, and employers are not apt to criticize too closely the finish of a joint or the smoothness of a surface of paint; which, though a disadvantage, of course, furnished profitable employment to many immigrants who arrived too late to work their claims this season.

"Though the number of new buildings must be considered enormous, and probably bears a larger proportion to the population than in any town or city anywhere, yet comparatively few of them were commenced previous to the first of August, owing to the great scarcity of labor and material—a want that has yet been only partially supplied."

One more extract may here be made from that first issue of the Free Press, November 9, 1872:

"Here the sober and industrious man may, with the savings of a month or so, secure the purchase of a lot by a first payment, and in a few months have a home of his own; when, having become, for the first time perhaps, an owner of the soil, he is a different person, and realizing that he can as easily gather rent from another as save his own, he kindles with the brilliant prospect of the future, and bends all his energies to save and accumulate. In our perambulations we met instances where parties, having bought lots on the Ross, Drever and Schultz properties, and erected comfortable houses with their own hands, thereby saved rent to an amount of very large percentage on the sum invested, besides being offered, in one case fifty, in another forty, and another thirty-seven pounds for the land (exclusive of buildings) bought a few months ago for twenty. Choice lots may be bought today near the centre of trade, prices ranging from $50 to $150 (per foot)."

In 1870 there was a once-a-week mail service, which was carried from Winnipeg by horse in summer, and by dog train in winter, to St. Cloud in Minnesota, where the railway ended, and went from there to St. Paul and Chicago. There was neither stage line nor
steamboat, and a traveller had, therefore, to depend on his own resources in going to Winnipeg, or in leaving Winnipeg. It was on April 26, 1871, that the vanguard arrived of the great movement Westward into the ocean-like extent of fertile prairie land between the Red river and the Rockies, which had just been added to the newly formed Dominion. That vanguard consisted of eight men on a raft. They were the first immigrants from Ontario to Manitoba. Their names were Clark, Dundas, Gerrond, Johnston, McDonald, McKinnon, Robertson and Savage. They had travelled by way of Chicago and St. Paul to Moorhead, where they built their raft. The Red was in spring flood, and carried them rapidly on to Winnipeg.

One of the things done as soon as was possible after the establishment of the Province was the construction of a telegraph line to Pembina. The first telegram from Winnipeg was sent on November, 1871, by Lieutenant-Governor Archibald to the Governor-General at Ottawa, who replied to it the same day. After that, the little frontier outpost at the junction of the Red and the Assiniboine was daily in touch with the outside world.

In 1871 the tri-weekly stage line, under contract with the Government, began running between Abercrombie in Minnesota and Winnipeg; in 1871 it became a daily service. In 1872 there appeared on the Red river the steamer Selkirk, owned by an active young Canadian who was living in St. Paul, James J. Hill by name; he was destined to play an important part in railway development in the Northwestern States, and in Western Canada as well, for he was associated closely in the 1880’s with the future Lord Strathcona, who was a leading spirit in the creating of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

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The appearance of the steamer Selkirk on the Red river in 1872 meant the ending of the old picturesque cross-country freighting by caravans of loudly-creaking Red River carts, numbering fifty, or a hundred, and sometimes two hundred. "The creaking of the wheels is indescribable," wrote Charles Mair in 1868. "It can be heard a mile away. It is like no other sound you ever heard in all your life, and makes your blood run cold." The wooden axles and hubs were not greased; this was because it had been found that the dust from the trails gathered in the grease and wore the hubs and axles down. It was said that the profits of the first trip of the Selkirk almost paid the entire cost of the construction of that stern-wheeler. By 1874 there were seven stern-wheel steamers plying on the Red. The first railway engine to be seen in Winnipeg, the little "Lady Dufferin," which stands now, a relic of the past, in the small park in front of the Canadian Pacific Railway Station, was brought on a barge towed by one of those steamers.

It was on Saturday, September 29, 1877, after their eight weeks' visit, that Lord and Lady Dufferin left Winnipeg on the stern-wheel river steamer Minnesota, "amidst much firing and shouting and waving adieux," as Lady Dufferin records in her Journal, which continues:

"One dear old member of the local Parliament (who came as Falstaff to our fancy ball) was quite overcome by the grief of parting with us, and almost fell into the water, because he would continue his parting speeches until the gangway was partially removed. We were very sorry to say farewell to Mr. McKay, whose substantial figure, in his well-known buggy, was one of the last things we saw as we steamed away.

"Sunday, 30th.—There is a cinnamon bear on board, a tame pig, which answers to the name of Dick, and a dog. The bear sometimes hugs the pig, and the dog rushes to the rescue. Someone tied a bun to the pig's tail today, which
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the bear perceived, and seized it; but while he was leisurely arranging himself
to enjoy it, the pig seized it, and ate it up.

"Monday, October 1st.—Steaming up the Red rivet, we reached Grand
Forks at two o'clock, and arrived at Fisher's Landing in the night.

"Tuesday, 2nd.—We went ashore, and saw the engine of the Canada Pacific
Railway. It is going to Winnipeg with a train of railway-trucks, and is to be
called the 'Lady Dufferin.'"

One of the pictures in this book shows the arrival of that little
locomotive, the first in Western Canada. There was great excite­
ment in Winnipeg on October 9, 1877, when the stern-wheeler
Selkirk appeared, towing a barge, on which were the "Lady
Dufferin" and several flat cars, all decorated with Union Jacks,
Stars and Stripes and streamers of bunting. The "Lady Dufferin"
had steam up, and "what with its shrill whistling and that of the
steamer, the ringing of bells and the whistles of the sawmills joining
in the chorus, there was a perfect babel of noise," says a record of
the time. "A young lady, Miss Racine, kept ringing the bell of
the steamer, and was cheered lustily by the crowd. The Selkirk
steamed down to the landing below Point Douglas, where a track
was laid, on which they ran the engine and cars, and thus was
landed the first locomotive ever brought to this Province."

Principal Grant, of Queen's University, whose first visit to
Winnipeg was in 1872, wrote, after his second visit nine years later,
when the boom was beginning:

"The growth of Winnipeg since 1877 has been phenomenal. Statistics need
not be given, for they are paraded in every newspaper, and so far, the growth of
one month—no matter how marvellous that may be—is sure to be eclipsed by the
next. The coming and going at the railway station combines the rush of a great
city with all the characteristics of immigrant and pioneer life. But instead of
entering Winnipeg by railway, it is better to stop on the east side of the river
and see the quaint French suburb of St. Boniface, and Archbishop Taché's
Cathedral and College.

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"We can then cross by the St. Boniface steam-ferry and take a look at the city in a more leisurely way. Even at the landing, the first thing that strikes us is that incongruous blending of the new and the old, of barbarism jostling against civilization, that distinguishes every corner of Winnipeg and every phrase of its life. Specimens of almost extinct savage and semi-savage nationalities gaze at steam-boats and steam-mills and all the appliances of modern life with eyes that dream of far different scenes that were yesterday but have vanished forever.

"In this brand-new city a historical society, a first-rate club, colleges and cathedrals have sprung up, but you find at the landing that water is drawn from the river by the time-honoured "hauley system" and sold by the gallon. Here is old Fort Garry, but its glories have departed. Once it was the centre of the Hudson Bay Company's life, and that meant the life of the North-west. Its walls and bastions were a veritable 'Quadrilateral' in the eyes of the Indian and half-breed. They ought to have been saved as a memorial of the olden time, but progress is relentless. Progress abolished the walls and gates of Quebec. How could Fort Garry expect to be preserved, except in a picture?

"Winnipeg is London or New York on a small scale. You meet people from almost every part of the world. Ask a man on the street for direction, and the chances are ten to one that he answers, 'I have just arrived, sir.' Friends meet who parted last on the other side of the globe, and with a hasty 'What! you here, too?' each passes on his way, probably to a real-estate office or auction room. The writer saw Winnipeg first in 1872. It consisted of a few rickety-looking shanties that looked as if they had been dropped promiscuously on the verge of a boundless prairie. The poorest inhabitant seemed willing to give anyone a lot or an acre. And now, land on Main Street and the streets adjoining is held at higher figures than in the centre of Toronto; and Winnipeggers, in referring to the future, never make comparisons with any city smaller than Chicago."

What Principal Grant called the "hauley system" of water service consisted at first of a few Red River carts, each carrying a puncheon of water taken from the Red or the Assiniboine, with a couple of pails and a long-handled dipper hanging behind. On July 13, 1872, Winnipeg's first water man, James Irvin, completed a scaffold out from the bank of the Red river, with a pump and a pipe into deep water, "so as to get as pure water as it is possible to get from the river itself." On April 24, 1873, what was announced as "an
improved house-to-house water service" was started by George Rath, who had constructed a tank on four wheels. It was drawn by a team of oxen. Mr. Rath had provided himself with a pump and forty feet of hose, "by which means," we read in the issue of the Free Press the next week, "the water can be introduced into the houses of our citizens without the pail system."

Fort Garry, as Principal Grant saw it—and as it is to be seen, a mere glimpse of the wall and one bastion, in the far background of one of the pictures in this book, which shows Main Street, as you would see it, looking southward from Portage Avenue in the late 1870's—was still the same Fort Garry of which Charles Mair wrote in a letter dated November 27, 1868, and published several weeks later in The Toronto Globe:

"We had a pleasant stay at Fort Garry, and received all sorts of entertainment. They live like princes here. Just fancy what we had at a dinner party! Oyster soup, white fish, roast beef, roast prairie chicken, green peas, tomatoes stewed, stewed gooseberries, plum pudding, blanc mange, raisins, nuts of all kinds, coffee, port and sherry, brandy punch and cigars, concluding with whist until four o'clock a.m. There is a dinner for you, in the heart of the continent, with Indian skin lodges within a stone's throw!"

That walled stronghold, after having stood for half a century, came to its end in 1882. The company having sold the property during the boom (excepting Hudson's Bay House, which was sold in 1888, and the northwest-facing gateway), the walls and buildings were demolished, and the materials carted away to be used by builders elsewhere in Winnipeg.

During the boom, which began early in 1881, Winnipeg had the wildest sixteen months of its existence. The boom started with speculation in Winnipeg lots and lots in other Manitoba
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townsites, some of which before long had vanished from the map, and continued with a mounting delirium until lots in Edmonton, Prince Albert, and even in Port Moody, which was represented as having been decided upon as the Pacific terminus of the projected Canadian Pacific Railway, were bought and sold in Winnipeg in a turmoil of gambling excitement. The hotels, which were small buildings, were crowded. The many bars were jammed and noisy, early and late. All the frontier gambling devices were in operation. The merchants did a roaring trade.

Stories of great fortunes picked up in this new El Dorado flew about, and the more wonderful they were the more readily they were believed by all the hopeful souls in a community where almost everybody was dreaming rainbow-tinted dreams of sudden wealth from land gambling. Were the stories not substantiated by the presence of the fortunate Aladdins themselves, living in prodigal extravagance!

"Jim" Coolican, known as "the Real Estate King," whose place of business, near the corner of Main Street and Portage Avenue, was the scene of daily and nightly auction sales of building lots while the boom lasted, was one of the outstanding town characters, a plump, red-cheeked man, with a flowing black moustache and eyes that twinkled like the diamonds he was fond of sporting. In winter he wore a sealskin coat, for which he was said to have paid $5,000. Among the stories about him which were current as far as Chicago, Toronto and Montreal, was one that, when he had a piece of good luck which brought him specially large winnings, he rejoiced in a champagne bath. "Joe" Wolfe was another leading figure among the real estate auctioneers and speculators. When the boom burst, Coolican turned to the selling of wagons and
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buggies, and Wolfe to the selling of second-hand furniture and ranges.

Not many other cities have main thoroughfares with the spacious breadth of Main Street and Portage Avenue. Main Street follows with its bendings the old river road, which followed the Indian trail along the Red that passed the mounds of St. Rapid's rapids, where prehistoric relics of a remarkable character have been unearthed. Portage Avenue follows the Assiniboine river trail. A record of Main Street would include many of the most interesting scenes in the annals of Winnipeg, and many of the most important in Western Canadian history. Sir John Schultz, Manitoba's fifth Lieutenant-Governor, in unveiling the Seven Oaks monument in 1894, said; "This road, whether as Indian trail or as king's highway, in old or more recent times, is indeed historic. Over it has passed discoverer, courier, missionary, Arctic voyager, chief, warrior and medicine man, governor, factor, judge, councillor and commander: along it has been carried wampum and tomahawk, messages of peace and war."

He, himself, could look back to his store on Main Street, in which, in December, 1869, he and the other leading residents who opposed Riel's usurpation were besieged for three days; when hunger forced their surrender, they were marched along Main Street between two lines of Riel's armed men to Fort Garry, where they were imprisoned. And he could look back to the winter night of extreme cold when he made his escape to Main Street from a bastion window of the Fort. A few weeks later, on March 4, 1870, there was another lessening of the number of Riel's prisoners in Fort Garry by one, when Thomas Scott was led out blindfolded to a spot which is now covered by the asphalt on Main Street, and [24]
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shot by a firing squad. Only six members of the Red River expedition which marched along Main Street to Fort Garry in the following August are still living in Winnipeg. They are Sir Hugh John Macdonald, Sir Daniel H. McMillan, Dr. Charles N. Bell, W. F. Alloway, W. S. Volume and R. I. Jones.

In his reminiscences of the Winnipeg of 1871, Justus A. Griffin notes that "there were many saloons," and also that "the streets were good in winter and dry weather, but in wet weather they become exceedingly bad, and pedestrians had to wade through mud. In the springtime, the small stretches of sidewalk on the east side of Main Street floated like barges."

Of the first mass meeting called for the purpose of taking action to have Winnipeg incorporated, James H. Ashdown was chairman and W. F. Luxton secretary. The Legislature rejected the bill to make Winnipeg a city. Indignation meetings followed, at one of which effigies of Donald A. Smith and other property owners who were accused of opposing the bill, because of their fear of being taxed heavily, were burned on Main Street. There were demonstrations against the Legislature, which at that time held its sessions on the second floor (over the Jail) of the Court House on Main Street, near William Street. To that floor access was had from Main Street by an outer stairway, up which the Sergeant-at-Arms, Louis G. de Plainval, bearing the mace, walked backward before the Lieutenant-Governor, bowing at frequent intervals, an agile performance which was applauded with joyful derision by the populace, while the guard of honor kept the military rigidity of their faces unmoved. There was in those days another remarkably ornamental functionary, a Gentleman Usher of the Black Rod, Captain Villiers, for the little Legislature then had an upper
Winnipeg's Early Days

chamber, which was abolished in 1876. The agitation for the incorporation of Winnipeg grew so strong after the second rejection of the bill by the Legislature, in February, 1873, that at a session called in the following November a modified form of the bill was introduced, which the Legislature passed. Then there were mass meetings of rejoicing on Main Street, with bonfires.

Of the first Mayor, Frank Cornish, Q.C., it is told that, sitting one morning as Police Magistrate, he laid a charge against himself for disorderly conduct the night before. He then left the magisterial chair, and standing submissively as an accused person before that seat of authority, he pleaded guilty. Resuming his place as Police Magistrate, he fined himself five dollars.

On July 6 of the year of Winnipeg's incorporation as a city appeared, as noted on a page preceding this, the first issue of the first daily newspaper in Canada west of Ontario. Within the preceding fortnight, on June 24, 25 and 26, the last dog feast within the limits of the city was attended by more than two hundred Indians. It was held at Point Douglas, where that religious festival had been celebrated every summer since long before the coming of the first white man.

To go back to an earlier month of the same year, it is to be noted that the first ornamental street lamp was erected on March 6, in front of the Davis House, on Main Street. "It looks well," wrote a chronicler of the time, "and guides the weary traveller to a haven of rest, billiards and hot drinks." Two days later a dog train came down Portage Avenue and turned south on Main Street, carrying to Fort Garry a noted figure in the history of the Hudson's Bay Company, Hon. W. J. Christie, who had travelled two thousand miles by dog train from Fort Simpson to attend that meeting.
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In January 4, 1874, appeared on Main Street a covered wagon with a stove in it, which had come from Moorhead. It brought "California fruit and other delicacies," which the driver had no trouble in selling along Main Street. It may be appropriate to note here that the first fresh oysters were brought to Winnipeg on February 1, 1871, by Bannatyne & Begg, and the first soda water fountain in Western Canada was installed by Hon. Dr. Bird, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, in his drug store at the corner of Main Street and Bannatyne Street, in August of the same year. The first and only hand-organ ever brought to Winnipeg was heard on Main Street in October, 1876.

The first attempt at a transportation service was begun on July 19, 1877, when an omnibus appeared on Main Street. But the service was soon discontinued. The first circus came to Winnipeg on June 22, 1878, and became bankrupt and disbanded. Several of the members of that circus remained in Winnipeg, notably the clown, Dick Burden, who became a town character. Old-timers remember him well, as a man of Falstaffian visage and girth, who often appeared on the street in disguise; one of his favorite disguises was clerical garb, in which he delighted to produce an effect of sudden and violent contrast by the tone and character of a remark he would make. He became Winnipeg's first bill poster.

Addressing a mass meeting in December, 1879, in front of the City Hall, on being re-elected mayor, "Sandy" Logan said: "Winnipeg has grown from a little village into a city which is making progress by leaps and bounds. Today nearly one thousand dwelling houses stud the plain, where ten years ago they could be counted on the fingers of two hands. That Winnipeg is destined to be a great distributing centre of the Northwest is now no empty figure of
Winnipeg’s Early Days

speech, for it admits of no denial. It is now all but an accomplished fact.” The little muddy frontier hamlet was developing like a boy growing so rapidly that he burst his clothes.

The first telephone exchange began operation on May 22, 1881; the first houses connected with it were those of Hugh Sutherland and James H. Ashdown. On February 1, 1882, delivery of letters began; the population of the city then was 7,085. The first horse cars started on August 23, 1882, from the C.P.R. station along Main Street to the Assiniboine, and on Portage Avenue to Kennedy Street, and along Kennedy Street to the corner of Broadway; the rails were laid on planks placed crosswise, side by side, to keep the horses’ feet out of the sticky mud. In winter sleighs were used. The horse car service continued for twelve years, until the company was bought out by the Winnipeg Electric Company, which had begun a trolley car service on July 26, 1892. For nearly two years Winnipeg thus had both horse cars and trolley cars. The first electric lights shone on the night of October 15, 1882. There were three electric lights on Main Street, one at the corner of Broadway, one in front of the Imperial Bank, near Post Office Street, and one at the little old C.P.R. station, where the railway crossed Main Street. The electric current was generated at the Hudson’s Bay Company’s grist mill, near the mouth of the Assiniboine. The railway crossing on Main Street was a level crossing. When street cars were established on Main Street north of the railway, passengers had to get out and walk across the railway tracks to continue their journey by street car. The paving of Main Street was begun on September 13, 1884, when thirty-three carloads of blocks arrived for that purpose.

On March 19, 1883, a meeting of bicyclists was held, at which a resolution was adopted, protesting against the bylaw which had
been passed by the City Council prohibiting the riding of bicycles within the city limits. The resolution pointed out that "doctors and even clergymen ride wheels in other cities." The increase in the number of bicyclists after the advent of the "safety bicycle" led to bicyclists having the freedom of the streets. In time bicycle paths were made on Portage Avenue, from Main Street to Deer Lodge, on both sides of the car tracks, and on summer evenings hundreds of bicyclists, women as well as men, including some on "bicycles built for two," used those paths.

On September 7, 1884, in response to the request for men of the Red River expedition of 1870 to volunteer again for service under Lord Wolseley in the expedition for the relief of General Gordon in Khartoum, a party headed by Lieut.-Col. W. N. Kennedy, marched along Main Street to the C.P.R. station and took the eastbound train. That was the first body of men to leave Winnipeg for active military service. The years to come were destined to see many departures from Winnipeg for active military service, in the Saskatchewan fighting in 1885, in the South African War, and in the Great War, in which Manitoba, with one-sixteenth of the population of the Dominion, sent one-ninth of the total number of recruits from Canada for overseas. The city's first military monument, the column in front of the City Hall in memory of the men from Winnipeg who fell fighting in Saskatchewan, was unveiled on September 28, 1886, by the fourth Lieutenant-Governor, Hon. James Cox Aikins, father of the ninth Lieutenant-Governor, Sir James Aikins.

On July 1, 1886, the nineteenth anniversary of the first Dominion Day, all Winnipeg assembled to witness the arrival of the first transcontinental train of the Canadian Pacific Railway from
Winnipeg's Early Days

Montreal. When the train came in sight, the Winnipeg Field Battery began firing a salute. The arrival was greeted by a feu de joie from the 90th Battalion. Mayor H. S. Wesbrook and City Clerk Charles J. Brown then mounted the cowcatcher with Superintendent J. M. Egan, and the aldermen stood in a circle in front of the cowcatcher while Mr. Brown read an address of welcome, and then adorned the already gaily-bedecked locomotive with a gilt-fringed banner of red satin inscribed "Winnipeg's Welcome" and a blue flag with "Winnipeg" in white letters. Superintendent Egan replied.

Without a minute of unnecessary delay the train continued on its way to the coast, and Winnipeg turned all its attention to an enthusiastic celebration. There were three days of it, with a regatta on the Red river, horse races, a balloon ascension, lacrosse, baseball and other field sports, all amid a sustained outburst of high spirits, which was renewed on July 13, when the first Dominion Premier to visit the West, Sir John A. Macdonald, arrived from Ottawa.

Sir John and Lady Macdonald were escorted by a parade to the Queen's Hotel, which you see in a winter night picture in this book—the three-story building at the corner of Portage Avenue and Notre Dame, under a wide and starry Western sky, with the cheerfully lighted square window of the Gault House bar-room on the other corner of Notre Dame Avenue.

On the evening of July 14 Sir John made a speech at a meeting which crowded the Royal Roller Rink, around the Queen's Hotel corner, on Albert Street. "I told my friends in 1881," he said in that speech, "that at my age I could not expect to see the completion of the C.P.R. in ten years, but that if I could not travel over it
myself, I would at least look down on those who did. Some of my friends were so kind as to suggest that I might have to look up. But I have disappointed both friends and foes, and I am now doing it on the horizontal.” On the following day Sir John visited Southern Manitoba, and left Winnipeg the next morning for Ottawa. That was his only visit to the West.

Of all the many public meetings in the history of the early years of Winnipeg, there is no one of which the old-timers speak oftener than the one held in Trinity Hall in the Dominion election campaign of 1891, when Hugh John Macdonald was the Conservative candidate and Isaac Campbell the Liberal. It was on a night in January, with snow on the ground, as you see it in the picture already mentioned, which shows you Portage Avenue on a night in that same winter. You are looking westward from the corner of Main Street. The lighted building with a belfry is Trinity Hall.

The meeting began early in the evening and lasted until nearly four o’clock in the morning. It was a night of wild uproar, with organized relays of shouters on both sides. The speaker who was on his feet the longest was Hugh Sutherland, who did his best for more than two hours to make himself heard. Among the devices used at that meeting was the arrival of a telegraph messenger early in the evening, before the uproar was well begun, with what was read to the meeting as a cable message from Glasgow announcing the departure of a steamship laden with a cargo of steel rails for the Hudson’s Bay Railway. There were many “alarums and excursions” as the night wore on, and more than one printed broadside, fresh from the press, was brought on the scene. The late John Stovel used to tell about the haste with which one of those broadsides was got out in the Stovel Brothers’ printing shop across Portage
Winnipeg’s Early Days

Avenue from Trinity Hall. “Both sides shouted themselves hoarse,” he used to say, in telling about that meeting, “and next day half the men in Winnipeg had to talk in whispers.”

The first automobile in Winnipeg was brought to the city in 1901 by Professor E. B. Kenrick, of St. John’s College. It was a Knox car, holding two persons: it was built like a buggy, with a long steering-handle, which at need could be turned down so as to stick out straight in front, to be used in pulling the car when its own motive power failed. The writer of these lines remembers seeing Jack McCulloch, whose feats as a champion skater made him a celebrity whom Winnipeg was proud to honor with public receptions on his return from tours in the East and in the States, drawing Professor Kenrick’s “horseless carriage” by the steering-handle along Main Street one summer morning to the bicycle repair shop of McCulloch & Boswell, on Lombard Street. “It’s like one of those invalid chairs, you know,” said a man on the sidewalk, “that you see on the esplanade at Brighton and other watering places at home.” The many jocular remarks that passed between McCulloch and the men on the sidewalks and bicyclists on the street were characteristic of the era which was at its close. The new era was rushing on.

The Winnipeggers of the old era lived on terms of intimacy which grew out of the pioneer spirit. They seldom passed one another in the street without pausing for more than a greeting. The older inhabitants of the Winnipeg of today remember easily the time when they were acquainted with every person of respectable appearance in the town. That was when Winnipeg, though it had outgrown its early youth, was still a small place, before the great inflow of settlers began to spread over Western Canada in the closing years of the century, before the city had begun to grow with extraordinary rapidity, before the automobile era arrived and the old conditions of life changed and passed away.

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WINNIPEG'S EARLY DAYS
IN
PICTURE.
WINNIPEG'S EARLY DAYS IN PICTURE

Introduction by G. A. Stovel

To look back twenty, thirty, forty years and see the scenes that were so familiar in those days, is difficult even to those most accustomed to the old familiar places. Time tricks one’s memory. Distance, size and shape change with passing years.

I remember as a lad a certain building in Winnipeg that had a cupboard so high I used a chair or box to climb up and reach the cupboard. Later, grown to manhood, I returned to visit that building. Really the cupboard was not so high. I could easily look into it standing erect; and ever since I’ve questioned the big things that I remember of the early days of Winnipeg.

A few old timers will remember the scenes and places shown in the following pages. They are all reproductions from photographs and other authentic information, and are as nearly as is possible accurate in detail. Here you will find the old Fort Garry—since removed except for the Northwest Gate. Inside the gate, of a moonlight night, you catch a glimpse of the buildings that housed the Governor and his company of men—traders, trappers and pioneers. Stand at that gate in 1871 and look north. Little does that view show of the city of tomorrow.

Yet caught for your enjoyment, reader, are these twelve scenes. They give you a somewhat clearer conception of the life and surroundings of Winnipeg’s Early Days.

Catch the glimpse of yesterday. Look at the scenes of today, then answer for yourself “What of the City of tomorrow?”

Winnipeg will continue to grow. As the West grows, so will Winnipeg. What’s big today will be dwarfed tomorrow. We pioneer today for the future generations. May our pioneering have the same faith, the same courage, the same determination that marked the men of those early days in Winnipeg.
The Gateway

Through the gateway of old Fort Garry, you catch a glimpse of the Governor’s House. The fort itself was not of pretentious construction but, nevertheless, at the time afforded ample protection from outside attack. Most of the buildings were of the wooden or frame type, the most prominent being the Governor’s House. The cannon commanded the gate, a reminder that the law must be upheld.
The Gateway
To Old Fort Garry
Interior of Fort Garry at Night

Bleak, dreary, cheerless, yet throbbing with the virility of the life of a new country. Pioneering, trading, bartering, that was the life inside the walls of old Fort Garry. They were men that lived there, rough cast, rough hewn, fearless, dauntless men. The West was no place for weaklings in those days. The struggle cut them down. That's the timber that laid the foundations of Winnipeg, the spirit of which out of the old fort spread later from Winnipeg to the last great West.
Interior of Fort Garry, at night.
Looking North from Fort Garry in 1871

'Out over the prairie, looking north from old Fort Garry, were noted in 1871 a scattering of buildings. Mere shacks they were, a church, a smithy, and a few stores, with here and there a place called home. It was the first outcropping of the Winnipeg to be. Where the church stands to the right is the present location of the Canadian National Railways' office building. Further down the way are a few buildings huddled together which marks the location of Main Street and Portage Avenue. The streets then were merely old trails that wandered over the open prairie. A few scattered buildings—meandering streets—that was Winnipeg in 1871.
Looking North from Fort Garry

in 1871
The Red River Cart

Transportation in the early days to Winnipeg was a slow, laborious process. Originally canoes bore the brunt of the freight and passenger traffic. Progress brought the ox cart, or as it was more familiarly known, the Red River cart. Overland from the south these creaking, groaning caravans carried the newcomer and his household requirements, and the necessities of life that could not be locally produced. Back they went laden with furs and the products exported to Eastern and foreign markets. Crude, tedious transportation those Red River carts were, yet they did a necessary task with real efficiency.
The Red River Cart
The River Boat "Cheyenne"

As trade developed in and around Fort Garry, the need for better means of transportation grew. The Red River cart gave way to the river steamer that plied from Minnesota and the Dakotas north to Winnipeg, and on its journey carried passengers and freight alike. One of the prominent river boats was the "Cheyenne". In the picture it is docked at the landing in Winnipeg. These boats increased the handling of freight and opened the door to a more rapid development of Winnipeg. The river and the boats, then, played their part in those days to the early development of the city.
The River Boat "Cheyenne"
The Landing of the "Lady Dufferin"

The landing of the "Lady Dufferin" and the flat cars and caboose that accompanied the engine, was no small event in the early history of Winnipeg. A public holiday was declared. A special issue of "The Manitoba Free Press" appeared on the streets. There was great rejoicing, for had not Winnipeg and the West, at last, its first railway? The coming of the railway opened up still greater development of Western Canada, and with that development Winnipeg grew. Little wonder then that October 9th, 1877, was a red letter day in Winnipeg.
The Landing of the "Lady Dufferin"

October 9th, 1877
St. Boniface Cathedral

Across the Red river from Winnipeg was the Roman Catholic Mission of St. Boniface. The Cathedral of that Mission has been marked for all time by Whittier in his poem "The Red River Voyageur":

"Is it the clang of wild geese?
    Is it the Indian's yell,
    That lends to the voice of the north-wind
    The tones of a far-off bell?

"The bells of the Roman Mission,
    That call from their turrets twain,
    To the boatman on the river,
    To the hunter on the plain!"

What those bells must have meant to the boatman, the hunter, and the early pioneer, we may never know. Yet it is certain that in the rugged life of the early settlement they played a great part in keeping the settler's mind to the higher thoughts of life. And down through the years that Mission has continued to carry on its task of helpfulness and mercy.
The St. Boniface Cathedral
**St. Boniface Ferry**

Between Winnipeg and St. Boniface the ferry was the first real link. We might term that ferry crude of construction, yet in its daily task it linked two settlements and helped spread the development East from Winnipeg and West from St. Boniface. That dual interest in the development of the West was held together by the cable of that ferry. Trade, commerce and prosperity have grown and interchanged. St. Boniface, a twin city of Winnipeg, is today more closely united with Winnipeg by mutual interests. The beginnings, though, of this mutual interest, date largely from the old St. Boniface Ferry.
The St. Boniface Ferry
IN THE EARLY EIGHTIES
Main Street, Looking North

Few scenes of early Winnipeg are more interesting than that of Main Street, looking North. On the left you see establishments known to all the old-timers, such as Arnet's "The Golden Lion," Andrew's Jewellery Store, Caldwell's Drug Store (over which were located the first offices of the C.P.R. telegraph) and Ashdown's Hardware. Next to Ashdown's stood the Jail and Court House in which were held the first legislative sessions for the Province of Manitoba, and a few years later housed Dan Roger's "Theatre Comique." The prominent building in the centre of the picture was the first City Hall, which records show was opened March 14th, 1876. The more prominent buildings on the right-hand side of the street are A. G. B. Bannatyne's Store and The Merchant's Bank.
Main Street, Looking North
About 1878
Main Street, Looking South

Just beyond the hay rack in the centre of this picture is where, today, the policeman directs traffic at the corner of Main Street and Portage Avenue. At the far end of the street you can see old Fort Garry. As early as 1876 the City had grown far beyond the fort along what was well named, and is still known as, Main Street. The store on the left in the foreground prominently displayed the name "Cuddy & Smith—flour, feed, grain, groceries." Further down the street was Winnet's Furniture Store, and across the street the Canada Dry Goods. Along Main Street was the early growth of Winnipeg's retail trade.
Main Street Looking South
About 1876
Christmas Eve in the Nineties

Scarce thirty years ago the centre of Winnipeg was Portage Avenue and Main Street. Here, in old Trinity Hall, religious, political and economic questions were oft debated. Across the Avenue stood the "Queen's" and the "Gault House"—hostelries noted for their atmosphere of genial warmth. Near the Gault House stood the Spencer Block, in which the first office of Stovel's was located. Thirty years, a little more, perhaps, the first electric street cars were seen in Winnipeg—west for a few blocks on Portage then back to Main Street again. The picture depicts the heart of Winnipeg on Christmas Eve in those days.
Christmas Eve in the Nineties
AT THE CORNER OF PORTAGE AND MAIN
Winnipeg's Early Water Supply

The first water supply in Winnipeg was distributed to the citizens from barrels on a crude ox-drawn cart. Water was at that time sold by the gallon and drawn from the river. In July, 1872, James Irvin developed an improved water supply with a pump and pipe into the deep water "so as to get as pure water as it is possible to get from the river itself." In 1873 a house-to-house service was started by George Rath by which, with a forty-foot hose, water was delivered to citizens without using the pail system.
Winnipeg's Early Water Supply

Back in the Seventies