Appendix 2: Heritage Report (Anne Lindsay)

Indigenous Histories at Portage and Main

Acknowledgement

This report was researched and written in Treaty One Territory, on land located on the original lands of Anishinaabeg, Inninuwak, OjiCree, Dakota, and Dene peoples, and on the traditional homeland of the Métis Nation.

Content Warning

Some of the information, content, and language in this report may be difficult, triggering, and/or offensive. Where such content is included, it is used because it is important to understanding the history and context of the topic. The appearance of such content in this document in no way implies its acceptability, nor does it endorse any sentiments expressed in such language.

Scope

This report represents a study of the history of Indigenous people and peoples as it relates to Winnipeg's corner of Portage and Main. It has been produced as part of a study undertaken by HTFC Planning & Design.

Limitations

At the time of writing, no reports have been requested from the Government of Manitoba, Department of Sport, Culture, and Heritage, Historic Resources Branch on the land noted in this report. This report may be updated if new information is discovered before its final submission.

It is beyond the scope of this project to produce an exhaustive study of all of the Indigenous individuals, families, communities, and nations whose lives have touched, and related with and to these lands.

Written during a significant public health event and working within the parameters and timelines of the larger planning project, this study relies heavily on primary and secondary archival and academic sources. It has not engaged with community consultations.

Public health-related limitations and restrictions at some archives has meant that some records have not been available for consultation. Where possible, alternate sources have been engaged.

This report, therefore, represents a best effort to identify and locate the history of Indigenous people and peoples relating to the land at Winnipeg's corner of Portage and Main, as identified above, into the larger arcs of the histories of the land, and of Indigenous people and peoples of which these histories are a part.

Databases and Archives Consulted

During this project, the following databases and archives have been consulted.

Archives of Manitoba

City of Winnipeg Archives

Hudson's Bay Company Archives

Library and Archives Canada

Manitobia

NewspaperArchive.com

Newspapers.com

Peel's Prairie Provinces

Overview

The Indigenous history of Winnipeg's iconic intersection, "Portage and Main" reaches back more than six thousand years, and into today. Located at the northern end of the area known as "The Forks," the land on which this intersection sits is part of the vibrant histories of Indigenous occupation and land use, of campsites and resource harvesting from a rich and diverse ecosystem. Linked by river corridors and trails to other parts of the region, and of North America, Portage and Main is also part of a history of hospitality, of cultural, social, and intellectual interchange and exchange, and of trade that define the area, as well as being part of a larger pattern of Indigenous resource use and development that reached out onto the plains and into the parklands. At the same time, the land at Portage and Main also brings its own unique elements to these histories, particularly after contact. Today, the histories at this intersection are being renewed, as the Manitoba Métis Federation prepares to open a heritage centre in the former Bank of Montreal building on the intersection's southeast corner.[1]

Selected Key Themes

- The land at Portage and Main has been part of a larger Indigenous gathering place stretching north from the Forks from time before memory
- Gatherings in this area have been possible because of the networks of rivers and river corridors and trails that have supported travel, trade, and interchange extending throughout most of North America
- These gatherings have also been possible because of the ecological diversity of the land, which has resulted in a substantial carrying capacity in the area
- Gatherings in the area have included ceremony and burials
- Gatherings in the area have involved groups of culturally diverse people and peoples, and supported a range of cultural, intellectual, and trade intersections and exchanges
- The section of the Portage trail that intersected with Main to create Winnipeg's famous corner was developed by Indigenous carters and cart brigades, many driving Red River carts
- The area around Portage and Main was already the site of a robust and hospitable business district when Henry McKenney and John Christian Schultz built a store there (building this store is framed in some narratives as the founding not only of Portage and Main, but of the village of Winnipeg)
- Gatherings in the area have supported and been part of the political identity of the area. This includes Métis organizational meetings in the late 1860s, and Manitoba's Reign of Terror after 1870

[1] CBC News, "Historic Portage and Main BMO building to become future home of Métis Nation Heritage Centre," 11 May 2020. Available at https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/mmf-to-buy-bmo-building-in-winnipeg-1.5565613, accessed on 27 November 2021.

- The development of the BMO building at Portage and Main reflects the traditions of relationship and the histories of intersection and of material, intellectual, and cultural exchange that have characterized the area since time before memory.

Precontact

Today, many people think of the Forks as a relatively small, tightly-bounded area that begins at the Red and Assiniboine rivers and extends no further than William Stevenson Way to the north, and by the Via Rail tracks to the west. But these are very recent boundaries. In the past, and until relatively recently, the Forks meeting place stretched out further from the rivers, both north and west.

Thousands of years before non-Indigenous contact, the area at the Forks of the Assiniboine and Red rivers was an important aggregation or gathering centre for Indigenous people in the area. "We can be quite sure that Indigenous people frequented The Forks 6,000 years ago and probably even some 1,500 years before that," writes archaeologist Leo Pettipas. The archaeology of the area reveals its long-standing cultural diversity and richness. Here, archaeologists have uncovered evidence of pre-contact Blackduck and Selkirk cultures, as well as Cree and Assiniboine peoples living on the land shortly before contact. Shortly after contact, La Verendrye reported two villages of Assiniboine at the Forks in 1737, and ten cabins of Cree in 1738. Traditional histories place the Ojibway in the area at least by the late 1700s, while Dakota oral tradition, and the memoires of people including John Tanner also place them at the Forks.[2]

North of the actual confluence of the Red and Assiniboine rivers, as part of an impact assessment performed in 1996, archaeologists surveying an area "bounded on the south by Pioneer Avenue and on the west and north by the elevated Canadian National Railway track" found what they described as a "moderately extensive archaeological horizon, dating to the Protocontact Period." This horizon extended over about 300 square meters in the southwest of the area they were surveying. "The horizon contained lithic tools and debitage, sherds from ceramic containers, and quantities of faunal remains deriving from food processing. The presence of copper material indicates that the site occupants had limited contact with European trade goods. This, in conjunction with the high proportion of traditional Aboriginal artifacts, date the occupation of the site between A.D. 1650 to 1730," the report notes. The mix of items found in this survey, including some European trade goods, the authors argue, may have reflected a rare journey to a distant trade post, or, what they considered more likely, a "trader who maintained access to distant European goods," adding that

[2] Leo Pettipas, "Who Lived at The Forks 6,000 Years Ago?" *Manitoba Archaeological Society,* 202. Available at https://manitobaarchaeologicalsociety.ca/sites/default/files/page/pdf/Who%20lived%20at%20The%20Forks%20June%202020.pdf , accessed on 27 November 2021; Sid Kroker and Pam Goundry (compilers). *A 3000 Year Old Native Campsite and Trade Centre at The Forks* (Winnipeg: The Forks Public Archaeology Association, 1993), 7-8. Available at https://www.theforks.com/uploads/bibliographies/1993-A_3000_Year_Old_Native_Campsite_and_Trade_Centre_at_The_Fork.pdf, accessed on 27 November 2021; Laura Peers, "The Ojibwa, Red River and the Forks, 1770-1870," in eds. Robert Coutts and Richard Stuart, *The Forks and the Battle of Seven Oaks in Manitoba History* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Historical Society, 1994). Available online at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/forkssevenoaks/ojibwa.shtml, accesssedon 28 November 2021.

> Ancient trade routes between the Great Lakes area and Manitoba are well documented, with the importation of native copper centuries ago. In addition, trade along the Mississippi/Red River system has an equal time depth: a lithic tool of Alibates Chert (found only in the Texas Panhandle region) was recovered from a 3000 year old campsite at The Forks. Until Fort Rouge was built in 1738 by M. de Louvier (a compatriot of La Verendrye), trade goods could have arrived in the area via Iroquois and Huron traders from the east or Lakota (Sioux) and Mandan traders from the south. Alternatively, long distance trade with the Hudson's Bay Company at York Factory was established in the early part of the 18th century. Ray notes that Mandan, Sarsi, Assiniboine, and southern Cree made the trip on an irregular basis. Thus, European goods could have arrived in the Winnipeg area as early as the mid-1600s, seventy to eighty years before Fort Rouge and the chain of French trading posts were established. [3]

In a 1999 archaeological monitoring report covering an area relating to the extension of Pioneer Boulevard north from Water Ave to Lombard Street, covering an area largely to the north of Water Avenue and along the west bank of the Red River, Quarternary Consultants identified 573 post- 1870 artifacts uncovered north of Water Avenue. South of Water, they found 2,699 Post-contact, and 84,611pre-contact items. The archaeologists found twelve pre-contact cultural layers, the oldest dating to about 1080 C.E., the most recent about 1340 C.E., and representing “Blackduck, Selkirk, Plains, Woodland, and Oneota” cultural groups. “Rarely does only one type of diagnostic artifact occur in a single horizon,” the authors of the report on the archaeological project note, “indicating that these campsites had representatives of two or more cultural groups present at the same time.” Noting the locations of similar nearby archaeological horizons, the authors write that “it can be assumed that any location west of Pioneer Boulevard and north of York Avenue will definitely contain archaeological resources.”[4]

Archaeological research in the Forks area shows that, since time before memory, Indigenous people have lived on the land nearby for extended periods of time. Here they built campsites and hearths, and used tools and weapons made of materials that in some cases had come from as far away as the Lake Superior region, from what is present day North Dakota, and even from what is today Texas. Local manufacturing at the Forks included bone, shell, and wood work. Here people made tools and clothing, and prepared, processed, and preserved food. As David Meyer and Paul Thistle have argued, seasonal gatherings like those at the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers took place where there was an

---

[3] Quaternary Consultants Ltd. *Heritage Resources Impact Assessment of the Portage East Site*. Winnipeg: Quarternary Consultants Ltd., 1996), Submitted to Spirit of Manitoba, I, 85. Available at https://www.theforks.com/uploads/bibliographies/1996-Heritage_Resource_Impact_Assessment_Portage_East_Site.pdf, accessed on 27 November 2021.

[4] Quaternary Consultants Ltd. *Interim Report on The Forks Access Project* (Winnipeg: Quaternary Consultants Ltd., 1999), Submitted to Reid Crowther and Partners Ltd, 10. Available at https://www.theforks.com/uploads/bibliographies/1999-Interim_Report_on_The_Forks_Access_Project.pdf, accessed on 27 November 2021.

abundance of food resources capable of supporting the large groups that would assemble. Here people fished, harvested plants and berries, and hunted, at times travelling along the waterways and trails that converged at the Forks out to the plains and parklands to pursue herds of large game. Part of the extensive gathering site around the Forks, the area that is today Portage and Main was part of an interdependent, reciprocal, healthy, ecological network connected with life on the land, and rooted in Indigenous knowledge, in community, and in the rich and diverse ecology of the area. Life in this gathering place was one of interchange and exchange.[5] As M.E. Kelly, et al write, until the early twentieth century, the area "was one of the key crossroads in the movement of goods and ideas across interior North America."[6]

This area was also one of profound cultural significance. Burials in the neighbourhood of Portage and Main bear witness to the relationships that persisted through the lives and deaths of the Indigenous people and peoples who met and lived at the Forks. Robert Coutts and Diane Payment note that there was probably more than a single burial site at the Forks, adding that "in 1801 Peter Fidler commented in his journal there were "graves on E. side by river at mouth," while "fifty years later Edwin Denig noted the existence of 'a mound near the mouth of the Assiniboine River embracing an area of several hundred yards in circumference and ten to twenty feet high, being the cemetery of nearly an entire camp of 230 lodges who died in the infection."[7]

In 1875, the *Daily Free Press* reported that "the excavation going on in the mound opposite the northern gate of Fort Garry develops the fact that the mound is an old Indian burial place. Large numbers of very large human bones, skulls, etc. have been unearthed, and carried off by curiosity seekers,"[8]while in 1888 Charles Napier Bell wrote that

> In the year 1871, following my service as a soldier of the Red River expedition, under General Wolseley, which reached Fort Garry in 1870 via the old fur traders' route from Lake Superior to Winnipeg, in company with my friend Corporal (afterwards General) Sam B. Steele, I took a walk down the Assiniboine from Fort Garry a few hundred yards to the traditional site of Fort Gibraltar, and there, plainly to be seen very near to the

[5] Parks Canada, The Forks National Historic Site: Historic Themes," 2. Available at https://www.theforks.com/uploads/bibliographies/1995-ParksCanada_Historic_Themes_Oct-1994_Ordered.pdf, accessed on 28 November 2021.

[6] M.E. Kelly, O.L. Mallory and G.S. Richards, *The Junction: An Assessment of Potential and Preparations for Archaeological Research*. : Paleo Sciences Integrated. Submitted to Parks Canada, Archaeological Research Division, Prairie Region (1979), 5. Available at https://www.theforks.com/uploads/bibliographies/1979_Paleo_Sciences_Integrated_The_Junction_Assessment.pdf , accessed on 28 November 2021; David Meyer & Thistle, Paul. (1996). Saskatchewan River Rendezvous Centers and Trading Posts: Continuity in a Cree Social Geography. Ethnohistory. 42. 403. 10.2307/483213.

[7] Robert Coutts, Diane Payment, *The Forks of the Red and Assiniboine: A Thematic History, 1734-1850*. Ottawa: Environment Canada, Parks Service (1988), 71. Available at http://www.theforks.com/files/File/Bibliography/1988-The_Forks_of_the_Red_and_Assiniboine_Thematic_History_1734-1850_Report.pdf , accessed on 28 November 2021.

[8] *The Daily Free Press,* 11 October 1875, 3.

> edge of the bank, were recognizable hollows representing cellars, and the mixture of semi-calcined limestone, remains of chimneys, and while at that time we were rather hazy on the subject of the history of Fort Gibraltar, it was clear to us that buildings of some kind had been on that ground, though it was also evident that almost the whole area of the enclosure that had once been there had disappeared into the river through the washing away and crumbling in of the banks. Steele drew to my attention several much decayed human bones and one skull close to the water's edge, which had apparently rolled down from near the funeral ground level of the bank through under-mining by the heavy spring flood. (Henry in 1800 refers to the extensive Indian graveyard hereabouts).[9]

These areas of Indigenous burials noted by Bell, and by Coutts and Payment include a burial ground that extended out from the area around the former Water (William Stephenson Way) and Wesley streets, and that was abandoned only in the later nineteenth century in the face of growing settlement pressure."[10] This may have been part of the area Bell described in 1888 when he wrote that "even as late as 1870, when I arrived at Fort Garry, the thicket of willows and brambles which stretched along what is now the east side of Main street, from near the entrance of Graham St., south to York St., covered the site of an extensive Indian grave-yard, and was evidently the locality mentioned by Henry as the resort of the watersnakes."[11] In his 1873-1874 survey notes, George McPhillips wrote that "Lot 39 was an Old Indian Camp and burial ground."[12] In the early twentieth century, at least some Winnipeggers still remembered this burial area; when remains were found near the Conway Block on Mani Street, in 1922, the *Winnipeg Evening Tribune* reported that the area had been a reserve and burial ground, and that the mother of "J Harkness" of 177 Fort St. remembered watching burials in the area where the remains were found.[13]

It is possible that human remains that were uncovered at Portage and Main in 1896 were connected with this camping area and the various burial grounds that extended north from the junction of the Red and Assiniboine. Jean Anne Drever Pinkham lived with her family on a lot that was carved out of the north end of what would come to be known as the Hudson Bay Reserve. This reserve covered much of

---

[9] Charles N. Bell, "The Old Forts of Winnipeg, 1738-1927," *Manitoba Historical Society Transactions,* series 2, number 3 (1927). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/2/oldfortsofwinnipeg.shtml , accessed on 28 November 2021.

[10] Randy R. Rostecki, "Main Street's Spectral Haunt," *Manitoba Pageant*, volume 23, number 1 (Autumn 1977). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/pageant/23/spectralhaunt.shtml, accessed on 27 November 2021.

[11] Charles N. Bell, "Henry's Journal, Covering Adventures and Experiences in the Fur Trade on the Red River, 1799 to 1801," *Manitoba Historical Society Transactions*, series 1, number 31 (1888). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/1/henrysjournal1.shtml , accessed on 28 November 2021.

[12] Quoted in: M.E. Kelly, O.L. Mallory and G.S. Richards, *The Junction: An Assessment of Potential and Preparations for Archaeological Research*. : Paleo Sciences Integrated. Submitted to Parks Canada, Archaeological Research Division, Prairie Region (1979). Available at https://www.theforks.com/uploads/bibliographies/1979_Paleo_Sciences_Integrated_The_Junction_Assessment.pdf , accessed on 28 November 2021.

[13] "Declares Skeletons are those of Indians," *The Winnipeg Evening Tribune*, 1922-09-02, 2. Available at http://hdl.handle.net/10719/1553700

the traditional camping grounds at the Forks. The Drever lot would later become part of the area of Portage and Main and the location of the Red Saloon, near which the 1896 burial was found. Drever Pinkham remembered that, growing up in the 1850s and 1860s, "for parts of the year we were surrounded by Indian camps; we did not mind them as a rule, as they were very well behaved."[14]

These burials in the area carry with them understandings of connection, of responsibility and of relationship. In discussions with Lord Selkirk and his representatives during the process leading up to what is commonly called the Selkirk Treaty, the colony governor Miles McDonell noted that "The Frisne a Cree & Ossiniboine… was glad to see White people come to visit the graves of his ancestors – the Country here belonged to the Crees."[15]

As this and the presence of burials also suggests, coming together at the Forks could include ceremonies. As late as the nineteenth century Drever Pinkham recalled that "My father was always a good friend to them and I think they liked him, and on one occasion when he was very ill with Typhus Fever, they surrounded the house, singing and shouting; my mother was alarmed and asked them to go away; they told her they heard he was ill and were trying to drive out the 'bad spirit' but they went quietly," she recalled.[16] "Each autumn the Indians generally celebrate one of their Dog Feasts on the Company's reserve in the neighbourhood of Fort Garry. …The ceremony occupies two or three days," wrote Joseph James Hargrave in 1871.[17]

Contact Period

Early 1700s to 1860

Fur traders began to appear in the Forks gathering area in the 1700s. At least from the 1730s, independent traders and others, including traders connected with Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, sieur de La Vérendrye, began to trade at the Forks. In coming to this area, these traders were following and taking advantage of the already robust and long-established patterns of meeting and of trade in the area to extend their own trading reach. By the early nineteenth century the North West and Hudson's Bay companies had established an increasingly permanent trading presence near the confluences of the rivers.[18] Dependent on Indigenous infrastructure and trading practices, these traders initially had a

---

[14] *Manitoba Morning Free Press*, 25 September 1896, 6; Jean Anne Drever Pinkham, "Selections from the Unpublished Recollections of Mrs. W. C. Pinkham, Part 2, *Manitoba Pageant,* volume 19,, number 3 (1974). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/pageant/19/pinkhamrecollections2.shtml. Accessed on 28 November 2021.

[15] Selkirk Papers, Journal of Miles McDonell, 5th April 1817 to 30th August, 1817, Sunday, June 29th 1817, f. 17301. Available at http://heritage.canadiana.ca/view/oocihm.lac_reel_c16/818?r=0&s=3, accessed on 28 November 2021.

[16] Jean Anne Drever Pinkham, "Selections from the Unpublished Recollections of Mrs. W. C. Pinkham, Part 2, *Manitoba Pageant,* volume 19, number 3 (1974). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/pageant/19/pinkhamrecollections2.shtml. Accessed on 28 November 2021.

[17] Joseph James Hargrave, *Red River* (Montreal: Printed for the Author by John Lovell, 1871), 197.

[18] M.E. Kelly, O.L. Mallory and G.S. Richards, *The Junction: An Assessment of Potential and Preparations for Archaeological Research*. : Paleo Sciences Integrated. Submitted to Parks Canada, Archaeological Research Division,

minimal impact on the cultural landscape in what would become Winnipeg, but this would change. Beginning with what Historians have come to call the "fur trade wars,"[19] and particularly after 1811, when HBC shareholder Thomas Douglas, Lord Selkirk, founded a settlement at Red River, the presence of non-Indigenous people in the area began to have more of an impact on life in the region.[20] In 1817, in the wake of the events of la Grenouillère, Seven Oaks, where the HBC and its rival NWC clashed at a site to the north along the Red River, Thomas Douglas, the fifth Earl of Selkirk, entered into an agreement, often referred to as the "Selkirk Treaty," with a number of Indigenous communities.[21] Although the written document associated with this agreement allowed for a non-Indigenous settlement belt along the Red and Assiniboine rivers, the area at the Forks would continue as an Indigenous gathering place into the 1870s.

It was in this context that many historians and anthropologists argue, the Metis Nation was born. Nicole St. Onge frames "The birth of 'La Nation'" as "a case of ethnogenesis occurring on the banks of the Red and Assiniboine rivers," framing this ethnogenesis as "derived from increasingly problematic relations with other interest groups coupled with rapidly changing social and economic situations. These changes forced a community of people to realize common interests beyond the individual, family or clan."[22]

Differing with this interpretation to some extent, Chris Andersen sees what he terms, borrowing from Nichola Vrooman, "the Red River Settlement Zone" as being at the centre of the emergence of the Métis Nation. "They arose in and from the polyethnic dynamics" of this zone, Andersen argues.[23] By the mid-1800s, the Métis represented the majority of the population living in the Red River Settlement, the Métis communities that grew up in what is now Winnipeg forming a significant part of the history of the land, and as shall be seen, of the corner of Portage and Main itself.[24]

Following negotiations with Lord Selkirk, the land stretching north from the Forks, and extending roughly to, or perhaps just past where Portage and Main now sits remained (with the exception of an area that the HBC used for a few years as an experimental farm) an Indigenous meeting place. By the 1860s, however, Indigenous concerns were rising about the impact increased numbers of settlers, and the pressure this was putting on land that they had reserved for themselves, was having. This concern included the land near the Forks. In the early 1860s, a number of publications featured correspondence

---

Prairie Region (1979), 5-6. Available at https://www.theforks.com/uploads/bibliographies/1979_Paleo_Sciences_Integrated_The_Junction_Assessment.pdf , accessed on 28 November 2021.

[19] Edward C. Shaw, "La Verendrye," *Manitoba Pageant*, volume 19, number 1 (1973). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/pageant/19/laverendrye.shtml. Accessed on 08 November 2021; Bumsted, *Fur Trade Wars,* 15-16.

[20] J.M. Bumsted, *Lord Selkirk: A Life* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008), 192-193.

[21] For a discussion of this agreement, see Nathan Hasselstrom, "An Exploration of the Selkirk Treaty," MA thesis, History, (Ottawa: University of Ottawa, 2019); "The Cultural Landscape of the Fort Garry Campus," 47-48.

[22] Nicole St. Onge, "Uncertain Margins: Métis and Saulteaux Identities in St-Paul des Saulteaux, Red River 1821-1870," *Manitoba History,* 53, October 2006, http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/53/uncertainmargins.shtml, accessed 01 February 2021.

[23] Chris Andersen, *"Métis": Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 110.

[24] "The Cultural Landscape of the Fort Garry Campus," 5.

outlining a range of different understandings of the Indigenous histories of the Forks Reserve. This correspondence reveals that, while Peguis, a signatory to the Selkirk document, and Grands Oreilles, the son of a signatory of the same name, both claimed the land as their own territory at the time, the land itself was not used exclusively by any one group or community; it continued to be a meeting place. The public debate also set out, roughly, the geographical extent of the area in question.

The one thing the correspondents could agree upon was that there was, and had been, a reserve extending from the Forks to at least the edge of Andrew McDermott's lot in the settlement. At the end of February 1860, McDermott had written to the local paper, the *Nor'Wester*, stating that, shortly after their negotiations with Lord Selkirk, a number of the Indigenous signatories to the agreement realized that "they had made a bad bargain in not having reserved lands for themselves along the river banks, their fear being that the white people would increase and leave them no room to encamp." On discussing this with Selkirk, everyone agreed that each group should reserve some land along the river for their own use, McDermott wrote. "Grands Oreilles wished to have the point below Upper Fort Garry, where many of his relatives were buried," McDermott stated.[25]

Soon after, in an article titled "Peguis Vindicated," Donald Gunn responded to McDermott, noting that "[Peguis] states that His Lordship requested permission to locate his settlers along the banks of the Red River, from the mouth of the Assiniboine down to Sugar Point, and he at first agreed to concede the land from where Mr. Drever's house is, down along the river to the rapids," adding that "Peguis further states that Les Grands Oreilles was not a party to the treaty, but his father was, and that the reserve between Mr. Drever's and Upper Fort Garry belongs to the Indians of the Lower Settlement, and not to Les Grands Oreilles and his band."[26]

The matter was still not resolved when Adams Archibald took office as the Lieutenant Governor of the new Province of Manitoba. In a report to Archibald, Frederick Edward Molyneux St. John laid out the issues involved, based on information he had received from McDermott. Paralleling the story outlined in McDermott's earlier newspaper piece, St. John's report added that McDermott was unsure "whether the creek [that formed the northern edge of the reserved land] is that one immediately to the South, or the one immediately to the North of the house now occupied by Mr. McDermitt."

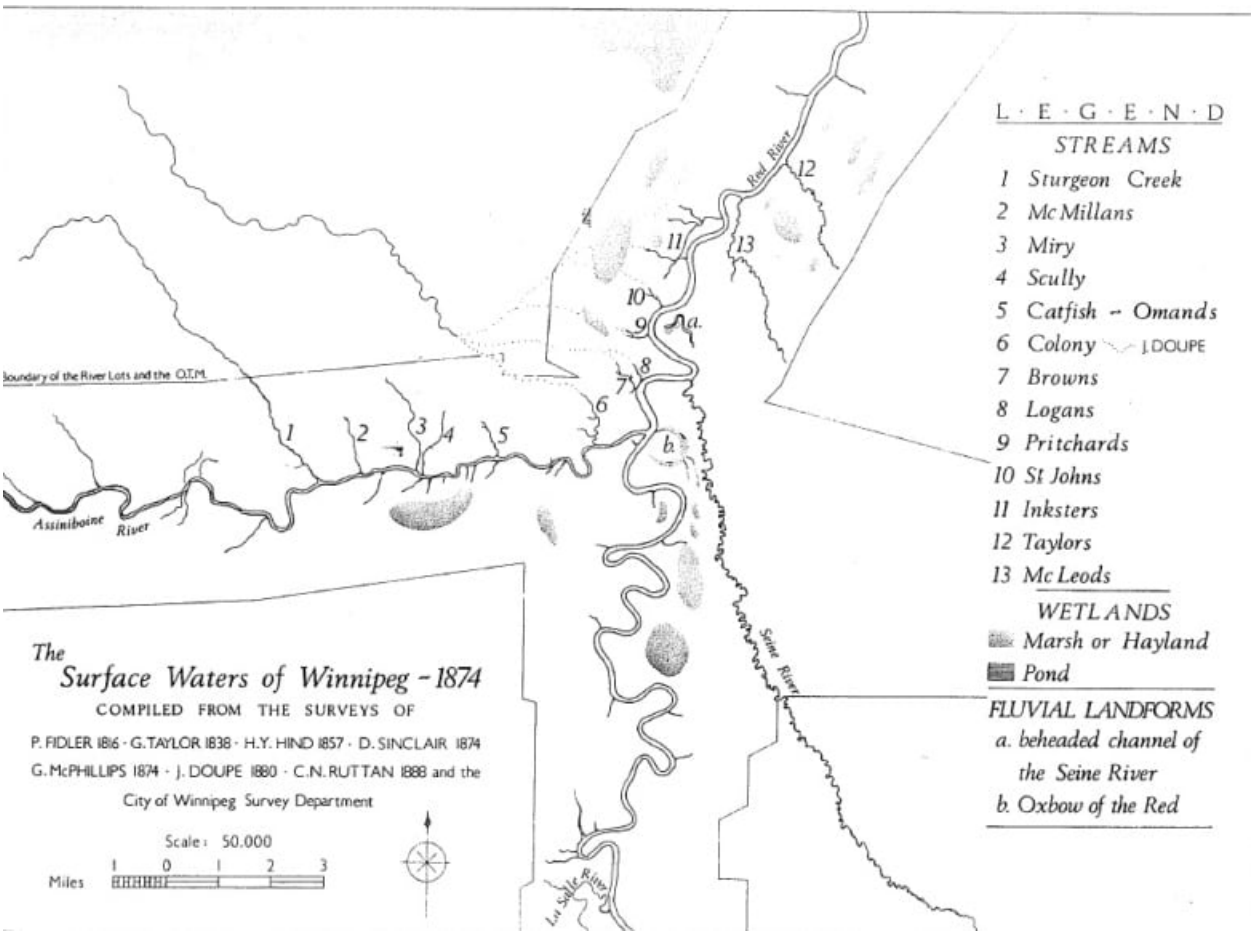
St. John's report added that

> In the course of some years the land referred to in the vicinity of the confluence of the Assiniboine and Red Rivers being required for experimental farming. Mr. Christie then Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company repurchased it from the Indians, giving in its stead a piece of land across the Assiniboine, and another piece on the North side of the same river a little above a place where St. James Church now stands.
>
> After a time the Indians became dissatisfied with these places on account of their distance from the Fort and the inconvenience of crossing the river, and returned to their

[25] Andrew McDermott, "Peguis Refuted," *Nor'Wester*, 28 February 1860, 3.

[26] Donald Gunn, "Peguis Vindicated," *Nor'Wester*, April 28, 1860, 4.

old camping ground. The Hudson's Bay Company then sold the two pieces of land relinquished by the Indians to various settlers.[27]



Map extracted from Robert Michael W. Graham master's thesis titled The Surface Waters of Winnipeg: Rivers, Streams, Ponds and Wetlands, 1874-1984, showing the locations of some of the creeks in the area near McDermott's lot. Brown's Creek lay to the north o McDermott's. If this was the northern boundary of the Forks Reserve, the reserve would have at one time extended roughly to Bannatyne Street today. [28]

Despite all of these changes, as Laura Peers notes, for Indigenous people in the area, the Forks remained central to Peguis' band's movements. Combined with visits from other groups, the Forks saw about 1500 Ojibway visiting the area each year. At the Forks, "during the 1820s Peguis' band arrived at Fort Douglas in ceremony when the new goods arrived each autumn; after the building of Lower Fort Garry, they probably traded there. While at the Forks they also received their treaty payments of tobacco and other small presents. …They returned to the settlement briefly at Christmas and New Year's, and made their rounds among the houses and to the fort, as one trader noted, 'to share in the good things of this life,

[27] Arthur J. Ray, James R. Miller, and Frank Tough. *Bounty and Benevolence: A History of Saskatchewan Treaties* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's Univ. Press, 2008), 29-31.

[28] Map reproduced by the CBC in Darren Bernhardt, "Ghost creeks: Winnipeg buried many waterways that could have changed city's shape," 2 September 2018. Available at https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/creeks-streams-winnipeg-history-1.4641823, accessed on 29 November 2021.

during the Holidays," writes Peers. "On New Year's Day Peguis and his men fired a salute at the fort and were treated to a dram and some tobacco." While not all of the settlers in the area understood the meanings behind these practices, "the Ojibwa were simply participating in the ethic of sharing and reciprocity which governed their relations with all peoples," states Peers, noting that these visits persisted long after the construction of Lower Fort Garry.[29]

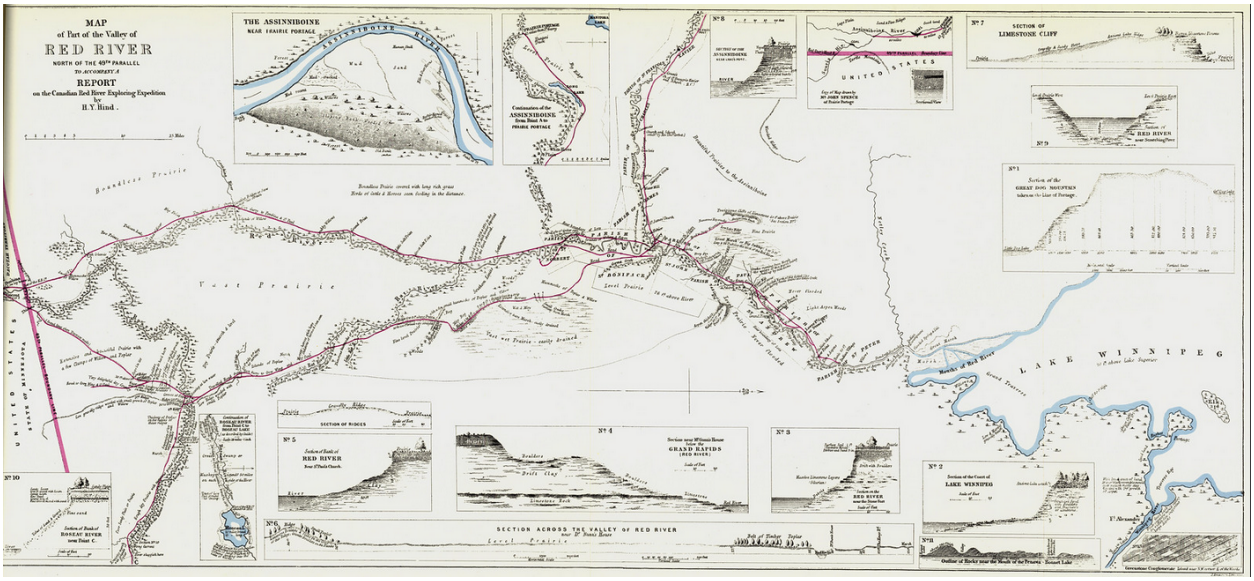
This picture of rich relationships and exchanges contrasts sharply with settler stories of the creation of the corner of Portage and Main and, by extension, of the village of Winnipeg. "Western Canada's most famous intersection – that of Portage Avenue and Main Street – has been often portrayed as the junction of two great travel routes," writes Randy Rostecki. "Along these routes were found many of the premier businesses of Western Canada, and to many, the intersection took on a storied – almost fabled importance. …But the intersection was neither always prominent nor important and, in fact, did not exist," he states. [30]

[29] Laura Peers, "The Ojibwa, Red River and the Forks, 1770-1870," in eds. Robert Coutts and Richard Stuart, *The Forks and the Battle of Seven Oaks in Manitoba History* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Historical Society, 1994). Available online at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/forkssevenoaks/ojibwa.shtml, accessed on 28 November 2021.

[30] R.R. Rostecki, "Portage and Main: A Short History," Report to the Historical Buildings Committee, City of Winnipeg, August 2003, 1.



Plan of the Red River Settlement by Peter Fidler, HBCA E.8/6 Depositions relating to disturbances between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, f. 95d. Image courtesy Archives of Manitoba, Hudson's Bay Company Archives.



Arrowsmith, John. Map of part of the Valley of Red River North of the 49th Parallel to accompany a

report on the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition by H.Y. Hind [facsimile]. 1:253,440. In: Henry Youle Hind. Papers Relative to the Exploration of the Country Between Lake Superior and the Red Rivers Settlement. London: George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1859.[31]



Extract from *Arrowsmith, John. Map of part of the Valley of Red River North of the 49th Parallel to accompany a report on the Canadian Red River Exploring Expedition by H.Y. Hind [facsimile]. 1:253,440. In: Henry Youle Hind. Papers Relative to the Exploration of the Country Between Lake Superior and the Red Rivers Settlement. London: George Edward Eyre and William Spottiswoode, 1859.*[32]

The literal intersection that would become today's Portage and Main emerged only after local carters developed a new section of cart trail during the nineteenth century. Packed down by the wheels of Red River carts and the hooves of the oxen that pulled them, this new trail was an Indigenous intervention, as the carts and cart trains that created the new track were almost exclusively organized by Métis and First Nations entrepreneurs. In the Red River Settlement at the time, extended Métis and First Nations families formed cart trains to travel to places like Pembina and St. Paul, MN to trade, while plains

[31] Available at https://www.flickr.com/photos/manitobamaps/2089812938/in/photolist-4bEQzy-4ka3M6-6MFXab-6MBDiB-5A1dR2, accessed 07 November 2021.

[32] Available at https://www.flickr.com/photos/manitobamaps/2089812938/in/photolist-4bEQzy-4ka3M6-6MFXab-6MBDiB-5A1dR2, accessed 07 November 2021.

hunters headed to the prairie or parklands to hunt, or the lakes to fish and make value-added products, including salt. The Portage trail itself owed much of its existence to the fact that it, as Rostecki notes, supported the Indigenous-dominated plains trade,[33] a trade that formed an important part of Métis identity, an identity, Brenda Madougall and Nicole St. Onge have suggested, that was "rooted in mobility."[34]



"Manitobah" settler's house and Red River cart William Hind. William George Richardson Hind collection. Library and Archives Canada, C-013965 [35]

The new track that the trains of Red River carts developed, and that would become part of the Portage and Main intersection connected one of the wye-shaped arms of the road leading west out of the settlement, the Portage Trail, with the settlement's Main Road, at a point where the new road crossed the south boundary of McDermot's lot, on the line where McDemott's lot met the reserve boundary the HBC had set, an area that had long supported a healthy family/business section of the settlement. The

[33] R.R. Rostecki, "Portage and Main: A Short History," Report to the Historical Buildings Committee, City of Winnipeg, August 2003, 2.

[34] Brenda Macdougall and Nicole St. Onge, "Rooted in Mobility: Metis Buffalo Hunting Brigades," *Manitoba History*, 71 (Winter 2013). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/71/metisbrigades.shtml, accessed on 26 October 2021.

[35] Available at https://www.flickr.com/photos/lac-bac/15427970051, accessed on 29 November 2021.

new trail then travelled east to McDermot's store and from there to the shop of his son-in-law A.G.B. Bannatyne.[36] George Reynolds describes the development of this trail, writing that

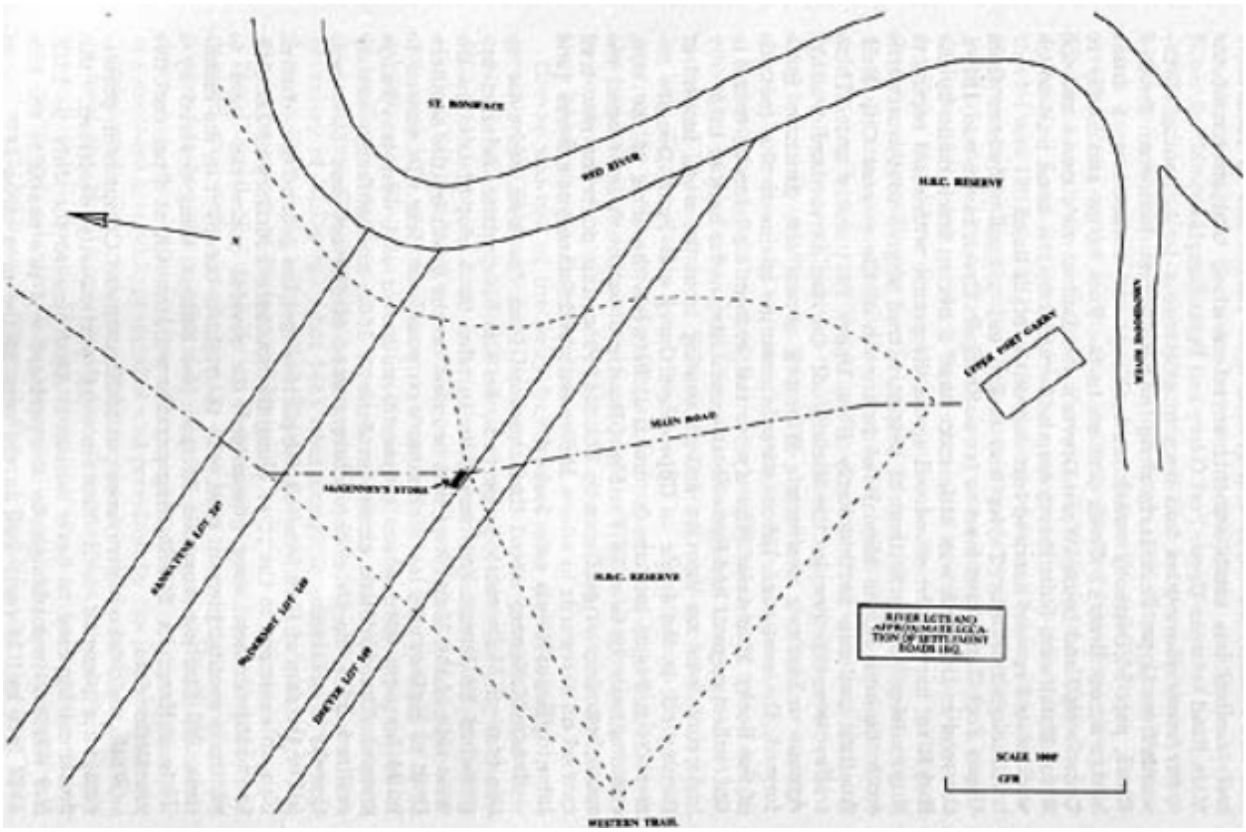
> For many years there had been in existence a trail running northwards from Upper Fort Garry along the high ground back from the Red River, past McDermot's numerous buildings and thence over a crude bridge across Brown's Creek and on to the Ross house and finally to Logan's mill and house. When Drever's and Bannatyne's stores and the Royal Hotel were built they were also serviced by the same trail which was located several hundred feet east of the Main Road.
>
> Although Surveyor Taylor had staked out a road allowance from Upper Fort Garry to at least as far as Sturgeon Creek in the mid-1830s, the road to the west was little more than a beaten track made by the Red River carts which wandered across the prairie with scant regard to survey lines. In the Settlement proper, a trail angled southwestwards from the kink in the Main Road just south of the present City Hall. Another trail ran northwesterly from Upper Fort Garry gate. These trails came together in the vicinity of Carlton Street and Portage Avenue in today's downtown Winnipeg. From the juncture there formed, the cart road led westwards over the plains to the foothills of the Rocky Mountains. The wye in the western trail can be found in the earliest maps of Red River Settlement dating as far back as 1818.
>
> As time went on the cart drivers coming from the west, instead of turning off on the trails to Upper Fort Garry and Point Douglas respectively, began to make a new trail between the arms of the wye, running easterly to cross the Main Road near where it intersected the south boundary of McDermot's Lot 248. From this point the new trail carried on eastwards to where McDermot's and Bannatyne's stores (and later the Royal Hotel) were located.[37]

Little more than a cart track, and a new one at that, it might appear on the surface that, as famous intersections go, Portage and Main has had a surprisingly short history.

---

[36] George F. Reynolds, "The Man Who Created the Corner of Portage and Main," *Manitoba Historical Society Transactions,* series 3, number 26 (1969-1970). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/3/portageandmain.shtml, accessed on 28 November 2021.

[37] George F. Reynolds, "The Man Who Created the Corner of Portage and Main," *Manitoba Historical Society Transactions,* series 3, number 26 (1969-1970). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/3/portageandmain.shtml, accessed on 28 November 2021. Rostecki Identifies the trail as branching a little further west than this, writing "This ran nearly due east until it reached a point approximately opposite the present-day University of Winnipeg. At that point, it split and part of it jogged to the southeast, crossed Colony Creek and made a route straight for the area of the two Upper Forts. After 1872, the eastern portion of this trail was straightened and formally laid out as the present-day Broadway." R.R. Rostecki, "Portage and Main: A Short History," Report to the Historical Buildings Committee, City of Winnipeg, August 2003,2.



Map showing lots and the cart trails that would eventually become Portage and Main, from: George F. Reynolds, "The Man Who Created the Corner of Portage and Main."[38]

But the history of the land beneath Winnipeg's most famous intersection tells a different story. As has been seen, during the period of rivalry between the HBC and NWC in the area, both companies maintained forts near the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers. The nascent Selkirk Settlement, on the other hand, established itself at Point Douglas, initially surveying and assigning river lots to the north of that point. "After the two rivals joined together in 1821 under the HBC name," notes Rostecki, "development of Fort Garry took place near the bank of the Assiniboine River, east and west of the present Main Street." Gradually, the HBC began granting river lots to the south of Point Douglas, including lots to Andrew McDermott and James Sinclair. The Hudson's Bay Company's Land Register B shows McDermott and Sinclair originally both on Lot 248, with Sinclair living on a 3-chain slice of the lot he had purchased from McDermott. McDermott had left the HBC in 1824, and, drawing on the extended relationships he and his Métis wife maintained in both the settlement and the fur trade, established himself as a free trader, for a time working with his northward neighbour, James Sinclair, the son of fur trader William Sinclair, and his Inninuwak wife Nahoway.[39] In the settlement, McDermott's

[38] *Manitoba Historical Scoiety Transactions,* series 3, number 26 (1969-1970). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/3/portageandmain.shtml, accessed on 28 November 2021.

[39] R.R. Rostecki, "Portage and Main: A Short History," Report to the Historical Buildings Committee, City of Winnipeg, August 2003, 1-3; Irene M. Spry, "SINCLAIR, JAMES," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of

property was located adjacent to, or even on, the camping and gathering spaces of the Forks that had existed from time before memory. “Five hundred acres adjoining Fort Garry were marked out as a camping space for all who came to trade with the Company,” wrote William Healy in his history of Winnipeg. “Adjoining that common was the property of the leading man among the free traders, Andrew McDermott, a river lot whose north boundary is marked by Mc Dermot Avenue in the City of Winnipeg,”[40]

To the south of McDermott, around 1851, HBC employee William Drever moved into a house that was located on a narrow three chain lot sliced off of the Forks Reserve. Drever would soon leave the Company and establish himself as a free trader as well.[41]

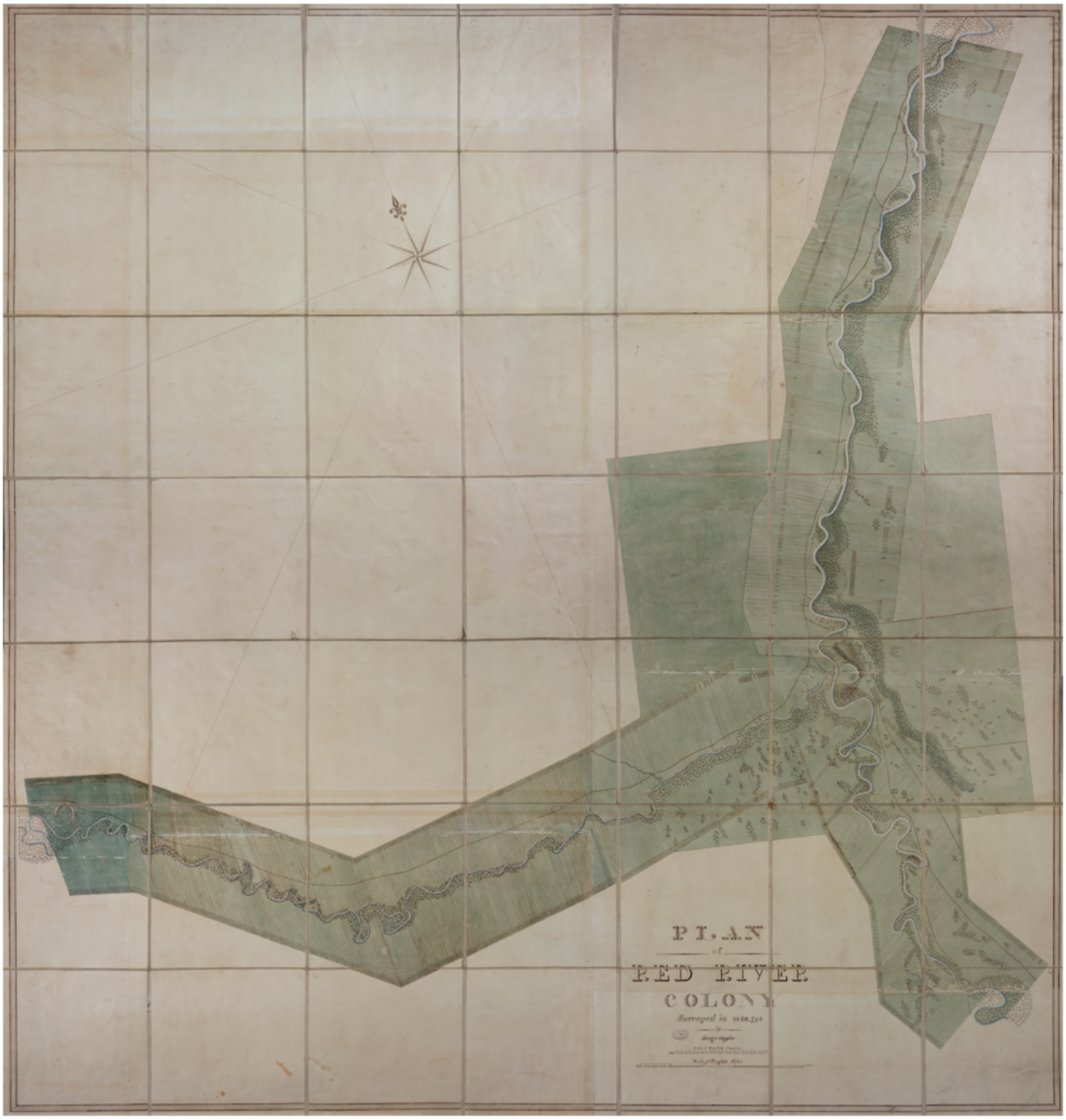
“All that section of central Winnipeg situated between Market Avenue (and its projection westward) on the north, and Notre Dame Avenue (and its extension, Pioneer Avenue, formerly called Notre Dame Avenue East) on the south, was originally divided into three river lots,” writes George Reynolds. “The most southerly of these was listed as Lot 249 in the Hudson’s Bay Company’s Land Register ‘B.’ The next going north was number 248; this lot was 12 chains 80 links (844.8 feet) wide and belonged to Andrew McDermot.” To the north of McDermott “a narrow lot only 5 chains 93 links (391.4 feet) wide” first owned by McDermott’s partner James Sinclair eventually became the property of McDermott’s son-in-law A.G.B. Bannatyne. “South of Lot 249,” Reynolds continues, “were lots 1210 and 1211, collectively called the ‘Hudson’s Bay Company Reserve’ with a total area of about 465 acres.” [42]

Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 29, 2021, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/sinclair_james_8E.html.

[40] William Joseph Healy, Gordon A. Stovel, and F.G. Sheppard, *Winnipeg's early days: A short historical sketch, and twelve full color prints of early Winnipeg scenes* (Winnipeg: Stovel Co, 1927), 15; Hudson’s Bay Company Archives E.6/2, 1830-1871, “Land Register Book B, describing lots granted by Lord Selkirk and the HBC to various individuals, including the name of the grantee, the measurement of the lot in acres, rods and poles, the date of grant and the price per acres,” Sinclair also owned part of Lot 247, immediately to the north of the piece of Lot 248 he had purchased from McDermott. William Kempt’s 1824 Index to his survey of the settlement shows McDermott at Lot 255 [part of a block of lots, 255-265, described as: “Beginning at a post on the WEST BANK of the RED RIVER, running southeast to the Road leading through POINT DOUGLAS, along the road and back to the river etc.,” Andrew McDermot #255; Hudson’s Bay Company Archives, H4-MB2-8-4 (E.6/11), William Kempt, “Index to plan of Red River Settlement by William Kempt, including the country of origin and religion of the settlers, and the acreage of pasture land and woodland for each lot.” Unfortunately, the Kempt Plan has not survived, so it is not possible to say exactly where Lot 255 was.

[41] George F. Reynolds, “The Man Who Created the Corner of Portage and Main,” *Manitoba Historical Society Transactions,* series 3, number 26 (1969-1970). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/3/portageandmain.shtml, accessed on 28 November 2021; Jean Anne Drever Pinkham, “Selections from the Unpublished Recollections of Mrs. W. C. Pinkham, Part 1, *Manitoba Pageant,* volume 19, number 2 (1974). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/pageant/19/pinkhamrecollections1.shtml . Accessed on 28 November 2021.

[42] George F. Reynolds, “The Man Who Created the Corner of Portage and Main,” *Manitoba Historical Scoiety Transactions,* series 3, number 26 (1969-1970). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/3/portageandmain.shtml, accessed on 28 November 2021.



"Plan of Red River Colony Surveyed in 1836, 7 & 8 by George Taylor." HBCA E.6/14. Image courtesy Archives of Manitoba, Hudson's Bay Company Archives.



Extracted from: *"Plan of Red River Colony Surveyed in 1836, 7 & 8 by George Taylor." HBCA E.6/14. Image courtesy Archives of Manitoba, Hudson's Bay Company Archives.*

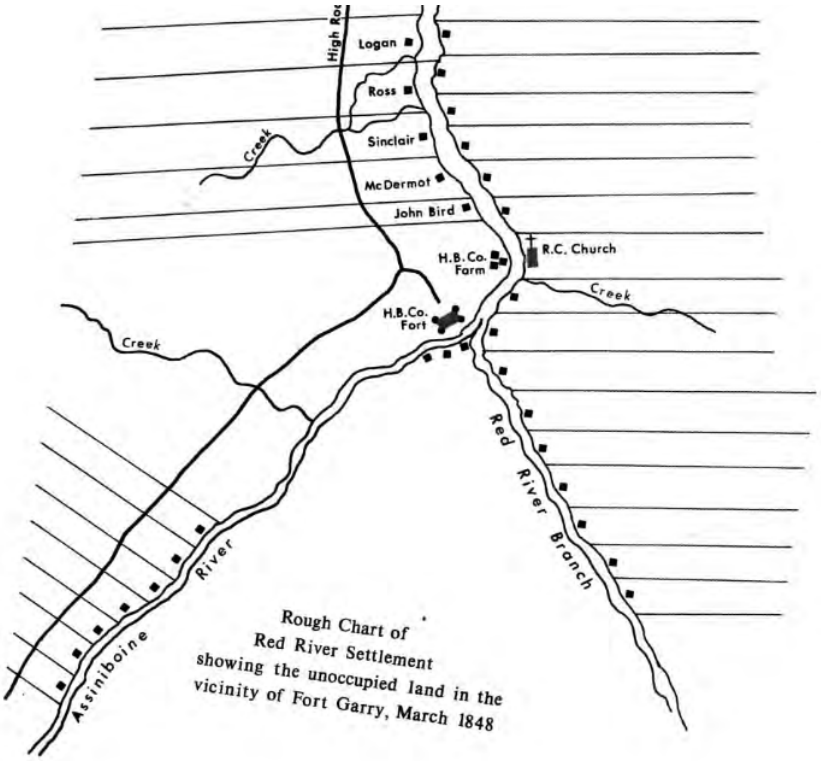


Figure 3. 1848 Map of the Forks Area Showing the HBC Experimental Farm (Courtesy H.B.C.A.)

1848 Map of the Forks Area, in: K. David McLeod, A Predictive Study of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers Junction: A Pre-Impact Assessment of the Site of The Forks National Historic Park and the Proposed Provencher Bridge Realignment. [43]

All of these men owed their success to their relationships with local Indigenous communities. On their long river lot, the McDermotts, Andrew and his partner Sarah McNab McDermott, established their home, their family, a store, and a large number of related outbuildings and businesses. Known variously as Emerald Grove, Emerald Lodge, or Emerald House, the McDermott's home, which formed an important part of this complex "was added to at various times and has been described as a rambling building with a remarkable wine cellar," writes Brian Richardson. "It was comfortable, and, as there was no hotel in the colony, visitors often enjoyed the hospitality of the McDermotts and their ever-

[43] (Winnipeg: Historic Resources Branch, Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Recreation, 1986), 8. https://www.theforks.com/uploads/bibliographies/1986-Predictive_Study_of_Red-Assiniboine_Rivers_Junction.pdf

expanding family in their ever-expanding house."[44] "Close by the fort is the fine large-mansion house of Mr. McDermot… a free, good, hearty, sociable gentleman, who has an open house for friend or stranger," wrote J. Wesley Bond in 1851. "I paid my compliments to him and his son-in-law Mr. Bannatyne, a very polite and friendly personage, as are all I met…Mr. McDermot can talk more and faster than any half dozen men I ever met before, and he would have regaled me till the early dawn without tiring.[45]

In his book *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress and Present State* Alexander Ross described the hospitality and attention to relationships that both characterized and underwrote McDermotts' success in the settlement:

> By his address and accommodating qualities, aided a little by no lack of Irish wit, he soon drew public attention to his business. He was everybody's man, and formed the centre of attraction: for he could lend a horse, change an ox, or barter a dog, as circumstances required. If a stranger, of whatever rank, chanced to visit the place, although he kept neither inn nor hotel, yet accommodations for both man and beast were always ready. A house to let, a room to hire, and every want supplied. If a contract was contemplated, or an enterprise proposed, or if money was wanted, who but McDermot was the man to do the good turn? Such being his character and services, ten years had not elapsed before he overstepped all his competitors in the settlement, as he had done in the plains. Uniting the resources of the plains with his affairs in the settlement, he stands at the head of both, in point of popularity and enterprise. It is a common saying here "that the bush he passes must be bare and barren indeed, if he does not pluck a leaf off it. His discriminating knowledge of men is proverbial; nor is it confined to men alone; as a judge of horses, he stands unrivaled.[46]

What Ross was describing, what was essential to McDermott's success, was his ability to operate within the context of mutual relationships, of Wahkohtowin that defined life at Red River at the time. This he did both with, and through, his Indigenous wife, Sarah McNab, the daughter of an HBC fur trader, Thomas McNab, himself the son of HBC officer John McNab and his Indigenous partner Jane Cook, and an Ojibway mother. Their relationship was a partnership, Andrew McDermott's obituary noted that McNab McDermott was "The wife of his youth, and, until six years since, of his active manhood and successful age, was the daughter of a Hudson Bay officer, a McNabb. She was a woman of great force of character and corresponding influence on the career of her husband."[47]

---

[44] Brian Richardson, "The Quality of Friendship: Andrew McDermot and George Simpson," *Manitoba History*, number 46 (Autumn/Winter 2003-2004). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/46/qualityoffriendship.shtml, accessed on 27 November 2021.

[45] J. Wesley Bond, *Minnesota and Its Resources: To Which Are Appended Camp-Fire Sketches ; or, Notes of a Trip from St. Paul to Pembina and Selkirk Settlement on the Red River of the North* (New York: Redfield, 1853), 289.

[46] Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress and Present State* (London, Smith and Elder and Co., 1856), 401-402.

[47] Manitoba Daily Free Press, 13 October 1881, 1.

As it had been since time before memory, and long before the land under what is today the corner of Portage and Main was an intersection of roads, the area where Portage and Main now meet was a place of hospitality, of the intersection of people, of cultures, of trade, and of ideas, a place where people came together. "Such a Noah's ark was his warehouse," noted Andrew McDermott's obituary, "that no possible purchaser was ever turned away. Even a demand for a second-hand coffin, the tradition runs, was promptly met."[48] "My two sisters were born after we came to live at the Upper Fort, there were no nurses in those days, but some kind and intelligent Indian and Half-breed women, so my mother got along very well," Drever Pinkham wrote, noting in another part of her memoire that "The Plain hunters, who dealt with my father were very fond of my mother, who always had a kind word for them. When they returned from their hunt they always brought us presents of berry pemmican, and bladders of marrow fat, made I suppose, from buffalo marrow bones, it was particularly pure and good," she recalled. [49]

Although the HBC guarded its monopoly jealously, some small merchants and traders, including McDermott, and his northern neighbours James Sinclair, Alexander Ross, and Robert Logan managed, probably in large part through a combination of supporting the Company politically, accepting the approbation of the Company philosophically, and generally maintaining a low profile and extensive connections within Indigenous networks of relationship, to operate businesses despite the HBC's general aversion to any sort of competition. To do this, the lots that the McDermott, Sinclair (and later McDermott's son in law A.G.B. Bannatyne, to whom Sinclair sold the lot) , Ross and Logan families lived on combined diverse business operations with home and family. Taking advantage of the access to water and to transportation, the homes, and some of the business operations and outbuildings on these lots tended to be located east of the Main Road, closer to the river. By 1848, a new trail, writes Rostecki, "ran off of the Garry [Main] Road at approximately St. Mary Ave," snaking its way "toward the riverbank, going to the establishments of McDermott, Sinclair, Ross and finally Logans."[50]

[48] Manitoba Daily Free Press, 13 October 1881, 1.

[49] Jean Anne Drever Pinkham, "Selections from the Unpublished Recollections of Mrs. W. C. Pinkham, Part 1, *Manitoba Pageant,* volume 19, number 2 (1974). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/pageant/19/pinkhamrecollections1.shtml . Accessed on 28 November 2021.; Jean Anne Drever Pinkham, "Selections from the Unpublished Recollections of Mrs. W. C. Pinkham, Part 2, *Manitoba Pageant,* colume 19,, number 3 (1974). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/pageant/19/pinkhamrecollections2.shtml. Accessed on 28 November 2021.

[50] R.R. Rostecki*,* "Portage and Main: A Short History," Report to the Historical Buildings Committee, City of Winnipeg, August 2003, 1.

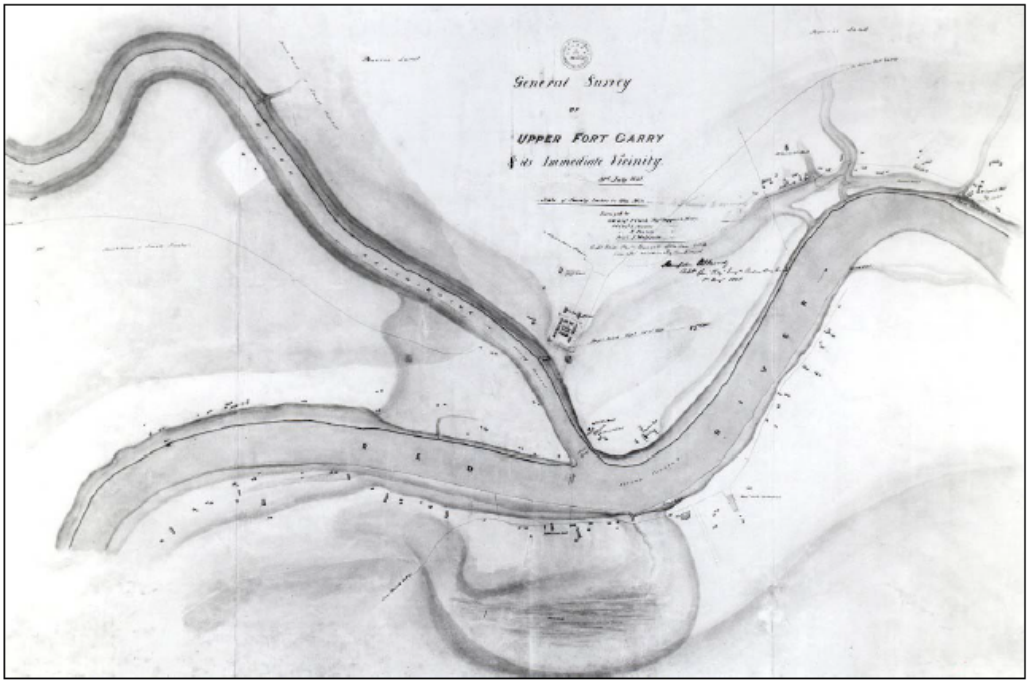


Plate 1 – General Survey of Upper Fort Garry, 1848. Compiled by the Royal Engineers, this is the earliest known map showing the trail running off the Garry Road to the riverbank enterprises. (Provincial Archives of Manitoba.)

Map, 1848, showing the trail running through the McDermot, Sinclair, Ross, and Logan properties and businesses.[51]

1860 to 1870

In historical narratives, the "birth" of Portage and Main has been constructed as coming out of thin air, or at least out of empty prairie, the imaginative gamble of two energetic newcomers to Red River in the early 1860s. "Sixty-two was a year of note in Red River Settlement!" wrote George Bryce in one of a series of articles that ran in the *Manitoba Free Press* in 1905 under the title "The Illustrated History of Winnipeg." "In that year the village of Winnipeg was born." Winnipeg owed its existence to Henry McKenney and his half-brother Dr. Schultz, Bryce opined, sweeping the rich and deep history of the corner under the rug with a dismissive "They were as full of enterprise as most of the old settlers were lacking it."[52]

[51] From R.R. Rostecki, "Portage and Main: A Short History," Report to the Historical Buildings Committee, City of Winnipeg, August 2003.

[52] George Bryce, "The Illustrated History of Winnipeg," *Manitoba Free Press,* 25 March 1905, 17.

"The deal," to purchase a lot at the intersection of the Main Road and the relatively new extension of the Portage trail, between McKenney, Schultz, and the McDermotts "was closed on June 2, 1862," writes Reynolds, "and although nobody realized it at the time, the future corner of Portage and Main was thereby determined." [53]

But, as has been seen, the land Henry McKenney and his half brother John Christian Schultz built their store on was far from the *terra nullius* histories like Bryce's paints. When McKenney and Schultz decided to build a store in 1862, they moved onto a piece of land that depended on a rich pre-existing collection of businesses, and on a trail that was already there, a trail that had been forged by carters who would have been, at the time, almost exclusively First Nation and Métis. At this intersection, the pair established themselves in a place that was promising precisely because of its long history of trade, of travel, of gathering, and of hospitality, a history that extended back to a time long before memory. If the intersection of roads that bordered the property that McKenney and Schultz purchased from Andrew McDermott and his partner Sarah McNabb McDermott at this intersection would grow into the now-famous Portage and Main, their new business depended on the health of the existing robust intersections of social, cultural, financial, and trading relationships that were already there at the corner.[54]

In 1862, McKenney erected a one and a half storey commercial building on the northwest corner of the intersection of the Portage trail, opening his new store in the fall of 1862. McDermott soon followed with a two-storey, three-store block across the road. Consistent with the land's long history as a gathering place, the McDermott Block featured an upstairs meeting space, the Red River Hall. William Drever, who we have seen, had also been an independent merchant in the area for some time built a new home on the west side of the Main Road and south of the intersection, then, in 1863, he built a commercial building between his new home and McKenney's store, right on the Portage Trail. This new building, it turned out, was literally on, not beside the Portage track, triggering a lawsuit that was eventually resolved by allowing Drever 18 years to remove his new building. Drever's misplaced building would soon become the somewhat infamous Red Saloon. "Thus, almost overnight," writes Rostecki, "the Garry [Main] Road had gone from a country road to that of the main street of a growing village that was shifting its centre from the riverbank to the high ground near the Portage Trail."[55] Yet, for all of what must have seemed like a great deal of bustle in the early 1860s, most of the businesses that located at or near the intersection were actually extensions of ones that had operated successfully on

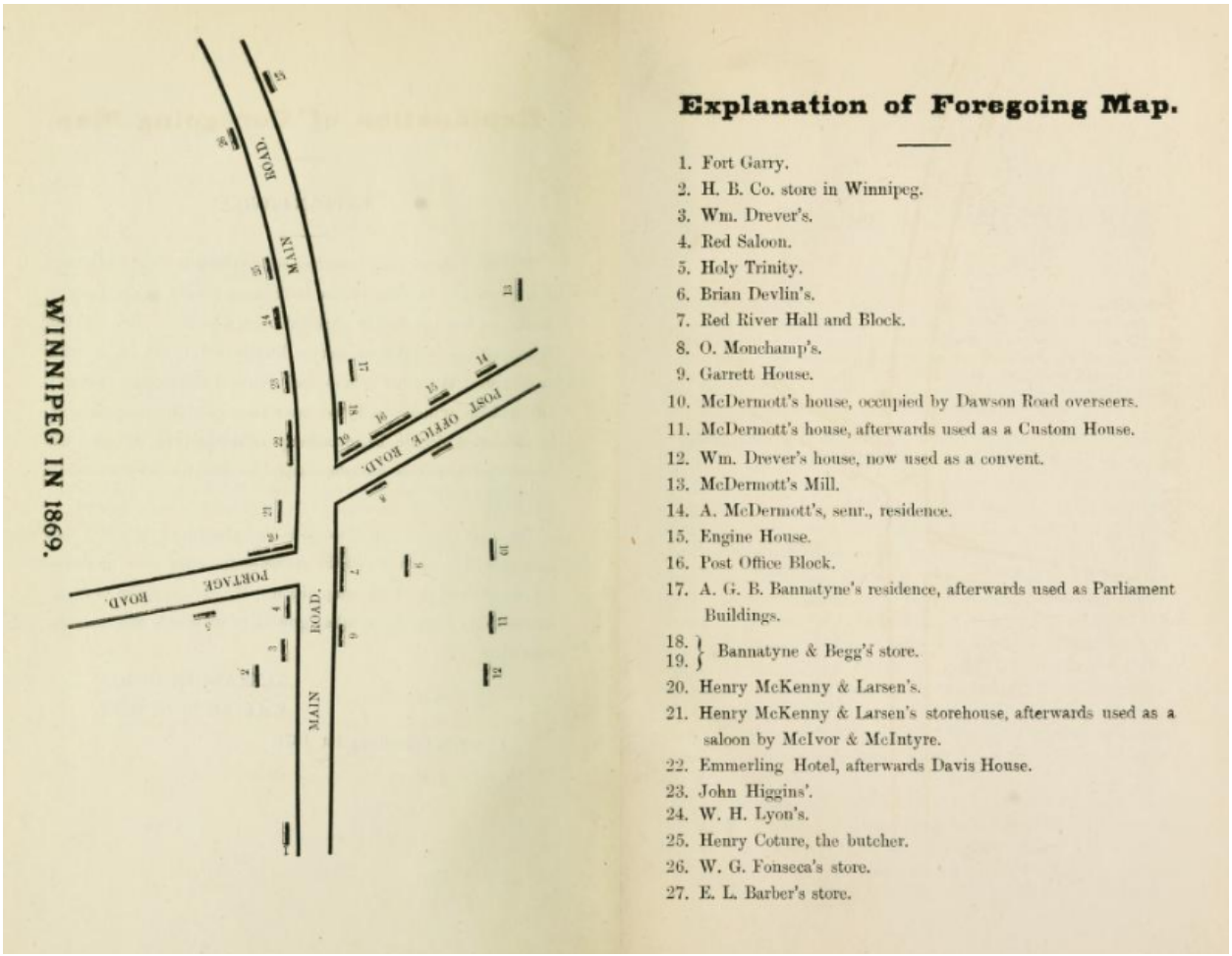
---

[53] George F. Reynolds, "The Man Who Created the Corner of Portage and Main," *Manitoba Historical Society Transactions,* series 3, number 26 (1969-1970). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/3/portageandmain.shtml, accessed on 28 November 2021; George Bryce, "The Illustrated History of Winnipeg," *Manitoba Free Press,* 25 March 1905, 17.

[54] Sarah McNabb McDermott was a party to the transaction between the McDermotts and McKenney and Schultz, surrendering, according to Bryce, her dower rights. George Bryce, "The Illustrated History of Winnipeg," *Manitoba Free Press,* 25 March 1905, 17.

[55] George F. Reynolds, "The Man Who Created the Corner of Portage and Main," *Manitoba Historical Society Transactions,* series 3, number 26 (1969-1970). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/transactions/3/portageandmain.shtml, accessed on 28 November 2021; R.R. Rostecki, "Portage and Main: A Short History," Report to the Historical Buildings Committee, City of Winnipeg, August 2003.

the same river lots, and not far from their new locations. Significantly, this emerging row of businesses still lay adjacent to, or on, the Forks Reserve, where many of their suppliers and customers could camp.



Explanation of Foregoing Map.

1. Fort Garry.
2. H. B. Co. store in Winnipeg.
3. Wm. Drever's.
4. Red Saloon.
5. Holy Trinity.
6. Brian Devlin's.
7. Red River Hall and Block.
8. O. Monchamp's.
9. Garrett House.
10. McDermott's house, occupied by Dawson Road overseers.
11. McDermott's house, afterwards used as a Custom House.
12. Wm. Drever's house, now used as a convent.
13. McDermott's Mill.
14. A. McDermott's, senr., residence.
15. Engine House.
16. Post Office Block.
17. A. G. B. Bannatyne's residence, afterwards used as Parliament Buildings.
18. 19. Bannatyne & Begg's store.
20. Henry McKenny & Larsen's.
21. Henry McKenny & Larsen's storehouse, afterwards used as a saloon by McIvor & McIntyre.
22. Emmerling Hotel, afterwards Davis House.
23. John Higgins'.
24. W. H. Lyon's.
25. Henry Coture, the butcher.
26. W. G. Fonseca's store.
27. E. L. Barber's store.

Plan of "Winnipeg in 1869," from: Alexander Begg and Walter R. Nursey, *Ten Years in Winnipeg. A Narration of the Principal Events in the History of the City of Winnipeg from the Year A.D. 1870 to the Year A.D. 1879, Inclusive*.[56]

In 1873 Andrew McDermott noted in an affidavit supporting his request for patent to the lot he and McNabb McDermot shared, that, over time, he had "made a great many improvements upon the said land consisting of dwelling houses, stores, storehouses, stables and other outbuildings. I suppose I now have more that a hundred buildings of one description or another erected upon the premises," he stated, adding that "in addition to this, I have sold a large number of Town lots from off the said Lot of land upon which a large number of houses have been erected by the purchasers and a large portion of what is known as the Centre of the said City of Winnipeg is now situated upon the said land."[57]

[56] (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Printed at the "Times Print. and Pub. House", 1879).

[57] Library and Archives Canada, RG15-D-II-2, volume number: 168, Application for patent for Lots 6 and 7 Parish of St. John - McDermot, Andrew Sr, item 1505450. Available at https://www.bac-

Throughout the 1860s, the area around Portage and Main continued to infill and to grow. Consistent with its role as a gathering place, the business district near Portage and Main had its share of hotels and drinking establishments. In fact, Henry McKenney's first venture in Winnipeg was not his store at Portage and Main; when he first arrived, McKenney had set about creating the Royal Hotel on what is today Lombard Ave. In 1860, a group of Métis met in McKenney's Royal Hotel to discuss their concerns over land rights.[58] The Hotel du Canada, operated by Onisime Monchamp, began operation in the early 1860s as a saloon, "a small room on Post Office Street [Lombard Avenue], with a bench and rough deal counter, a barrell of beer, and one or two black bottles and a few glasses, constituted his first outfit," wrote Alexander Begg of the operation. Monchamp would soon, through careful management, enlarge his operations, "and when the troops arrived in Winnipeg [in 1870] he could boast of a small hostelrie and bar on the spot where the Hotel du Canada stands to-day," noted Begg. [59]

Benefitting from the custom of tripmen, Monchamp's business continued to grow after its opening. Métis in the area felt comfortable at Monchamp's, and it soon became not only a social but also a political hub. In his memoires, Jean Baptiste Ladéroute recalled a day in April 1869 when he "went to Monchamp's saloon for a drink and met Narcisse Marion, Dr. Walter Bown and Charles Mair. Joseph Genthon and Riel arrived shortly after, and upon being introduced to each other, the men sat down for a friendly chat. ... The conversation quickly turned to the impending transfer of sovereignty of the Red River Settlement to Canada. Riel declared that the political change was not going to happen as had been foreseen. Dr. Brown and Mair asked, 'Who is going to stop it?' Riel answered, 'It is I who is going to stop it.'"[60]

"Workmen are engaged renewing the roof of an old building on Lombard street, east of Rorie, which was erected by Mr. Monchamp in 1868 on the site of the Canada hotel," the *Manitoba Free Press* reported in 1897. "It was in this building that the half-breeds used to congregate prior to the first rebellion and several times Riel harangued his compatriots there and excited them until they began the Indian war dance."[61] Monchamp's would also serve as the first meeting place of the newly formed Winnipeg Lacrosse Club. [62]

---

lac.gc.ca/eng/CollectionSearch/Pages/record.aspx?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=1505450&new=-8585634471025040110, accessed on 28 November 2021.

[58] Nor'Wester, 14 March 1860, 2

[59] Begg quoted in Tom LaPorte, "Zepherin Laporte: The 'Forrest Gump' of Red River," *Manitoba History,* number 76 (Fall 2014). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/76/zepherinlaporte.shtml, accessed on 29 November 2021.

[60] Quoted in Tom LaPorte, "Zepherin Laporte: The 'Forrest Gump' of Red River," *Manitoba History,* number 76 (Fall 2014). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/76/zepherinlaporte.shtml, accessed on 29 November 2021.

[61] *Manitoba Morning Free Press,* 9 October 1897

[62] Tom LaPorte, "Zepherin Laporte: The 'Forrest Gump' of Red River," *Manitoba History,* number 76 (Fall 2014). Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/mb_history/76/zepherinlaporte.shtml, accessed on 29 November 2021.



"Louis Riel and his Councillors (June 1870)."[63]

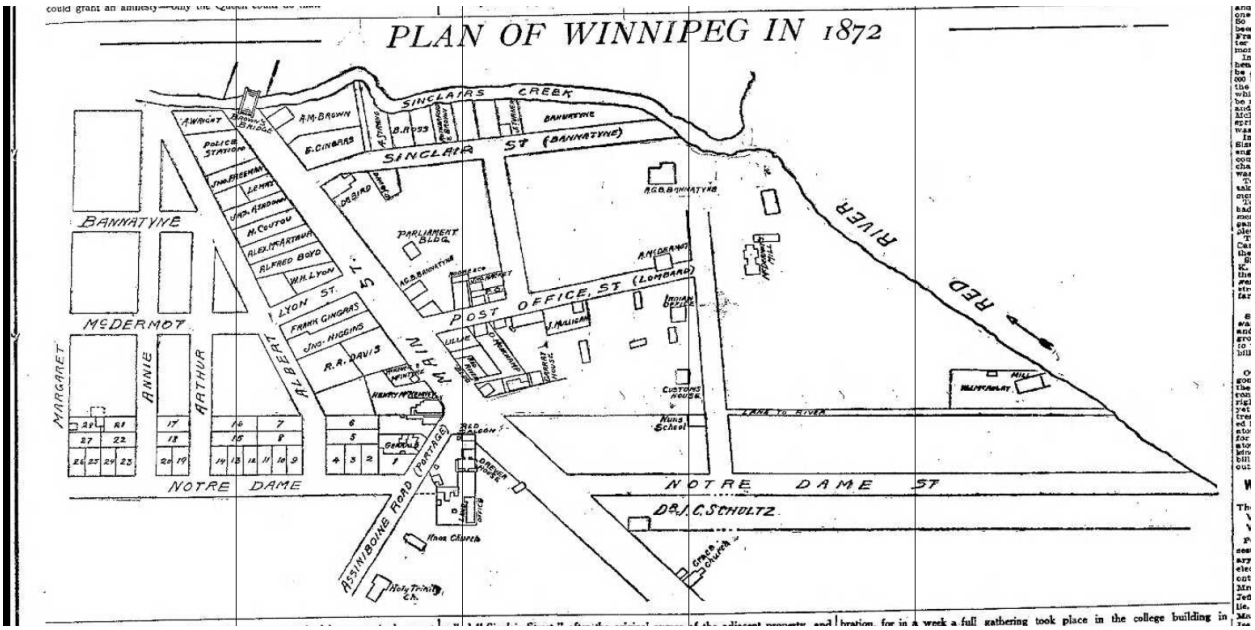
Set on land that was, it turned out, on, rather than next to, the southwest corner of the Portage Trail, another local drinking establishment, the Red Saloon, formed the backdrop for an iconic 1870 photograph of Louis Riel surrounded by a group of men. Although a number of the men in the portrait were probably not Riel supporters, captioned "Louis Riel and his Councillors," the photograph has even graced a Canada Post postage stamp.[64] The men, gathered around Riel, who is seated in their centre, were photographed on the 3rd of June 1870.[65]

[63] Manitoba Historical Society, "Events in Manitoba History: Louis Riel and his Councillors (June 1870)." Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/events/rielcouncillors.shtml, accessed on 29 November 2021.

[64] Derrick M. Nault, A Misleading Portrait: The Provisional Government of Assiniboia and the Creation of Manitoba, *Prairie History*, number 3 (Fall 2020), 56; Manitoba Historical Society, "Events in Manitoba History: Louis Riel and his Councillors (June 1870)." Available at http://www.mhs.mb.ca/docs/events/rielcouncillors.shtml, accessed on 29 November 2021.

[65] Derrick M. Nault, A Misleading Portrait: The Provisional Government of Assiniboia and the Creation of Manitoba, *Prairie History*, number 3 (Fall 2020), 57.

On the 13th of September 1870, ten days after the Riel portrait was taken, Elzéar Goulet entered the same Red Saloon. There he was identified by a mob who chased him into the street and down to the Red River. With the angry gang close behind him, Goulet jumped from the Lombard steamboat docks into the river, hoping to swim across. From the riverbank, the mob pelted Goulet with rocks until he was rendered unconscious and drowned.[66] Goulet's death would be just one of a series of violent acts against Indigenous people, and particularly against the Métis, in a period that would come to be known as "The Reign of Terror" in the settlement.[67]



Plan of Winnipeg in 1872[68]

Another Indigenous group that was singled out during this period were a community that had come to be known as "The Fort Garry Band." Lawrence Barkwell has identified this group as being made up of "mixed Saulteaux-Métis Bands," who sometimes worked as labourers for the Company or its officers, and who were "living on the camping grounds at Upper Fort Garry on a semi-permanent basis." Over time, "the community became known as the Fort Garry Band and in 1870 when Manitoba entered

[66] J. A. Jackson, "GOULET, ELZÉAR," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 29, 2021, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/goulet_elzear_9E.html; Karine Duhamel, "The murder of Elzéar Goulet and the struggle for Métis rights: Resistance, violence and the founding of Manitoba." Available at https://humanrights.ca/story/the-murder-of-elzear-goulet-and-the-struggle-for-metis-rights, accessed on 29 November 2021.

[67] On the reign of Terror see: Fred J. Shore, "The Métis: Losing the Land," Aboriginal Information Series, number 9, (August 2006), Office of University Accessibility. University of Manitoba. Available at https://umanitoba.ca/student/indigenous/media/Pamphlet_09.pdf, accessed on.

[68] From: George Bryce, "The Illustrated History of Winnipeg," *Manitoba Daily Free Press,* 6 May 1872, 17.

confederation they were led by Chief Na-sha-ke-penais, who signed Treaty No. 1 in 1871 on their behalf," Barkwell states. Led by Na-sha-ke-penais, the son of the Grands Oreilles, with "their seasonal encampment, religious ceremonies, and trading in and around Winnipeg in the 1860s and 1870s," writes David Burley, this group of people, numbering about 500 in 1871, "were sufficiently common" that settlers began to construct them as "a nuisance and, until they signed Treaty One, a potential danger."[69] Despite pressure to relocate to a reserve, many members of the band continued to follow their seasonal rounds into the later 1870s, but it was a losing battle. In 1878, the local Indian Affairs agent reported that "the Heathen or Fort, Garry Band, has not, with the exception of the Chief and a few followers, yet settled down on the Reserve, being scattered all over the country from Pembina to the Portage; a great many have however signified their intention this year of settling down and learning to farm."[70]

[69] David G. Burley "Rooster Town: Winnipeg's Lost Métis Suburb, 1900–1960," 10. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine* 42, no. 1 (2013) : 3–25. https://doi.org/10.7202/1022056ar; Lawrence Barkwell, "The Métis-First Nation Band at Upper Fort Garry," Metis Museum, 2018. Available at https://www.metismuseum.ca/resource.php/149059, accessed on 29 November 2021.

[70] Government of Canada, Sessional Papers, Indian Affairs Annual Report, 31st December, 1878. Available at https://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2017/aanc-inac/R1-89-1878-eng.pdf, accessed on 29 November 2021.



Main Street wasn't much more than a cart track in 1870. This is the view from Graham Avenue towards what's now Portage Avenue and Main Street less than a decade after the first store opened at the intersection. **W. Rowe Lewis / Courtesy of Archives of Manitoba**

Main Street from Graham Avenue, looking toward Portage, 1870. [71]

[71] Image reproduced in: Lara Schroeder & Lauren McNabb Gallery: Portage and Main through the years. Available at https://globalnews.ca/news/771585/gallery-portage-and-main-through-the-years/, accessed on 29 November 2021.



Library and Archives Canada, Corner of Portage Avenue and Main Street, 1872.[72]

[72] Item number 3192799. Available at https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/CollectionSearch/Pages/record.aspx?app=fonandcol&IdNumber=3192799&new=-8585633791789800014, accessed on 29 November 2021.



Main Street looking north from Portage Avenue, 1874. City of Winnipeg Archives.[73]

In May of 2020, the Manitoba Metis Federation (MMF) announced that it had purchased the historic Bank of Montreal building at the corner of Portage and Main, with the intention of turning it into a Metis heritage centre.[74] Reflecting on this news, in the summer of 2020, MMF President David Chartrand, wrote

> The corner of Portage and Main has always had a great deal of significance to the Métis. Historically, Portage and Main is at the crossroads of two high-traffic Red River Cart trails undoubtably utilized by our Ancestors. All roads in Western Canada lead to Portage and Main.
>
> The site is just down the road - about four large city blocks - from Upper Fort Garry, where the Métis' Provisional Government sat. It is a short walk to the Red River opposite

[73] Available at https://winnipeginfocus.winnipeg.ca/i00038, accessed on 29 November 2021.

[74] CBC News, "Historic Portage and Main BMO building to become future home of Métis Nation Heritage Centre," 11 May 2020. Available at https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/mmf-to-buy-bmo-building-in-winnipeg-1.5565613, accessed on 29 November 2020.

> Elzéar Goulet Park, which was named after a Métis political leader who was murdered by British troops and Canadian militia during Wolseley's Reign of Terror.
>
> Today, the corner of Portage and Main is the economic and cultural hub of Winnipeg, once known as the Red River Settlement…. this is the heart of our Nation - physically and emotionally. [75]

From time before memory, the Indigenous history of Portage and Main has been one of gathering, of connection and of exchange. Long before Portage and Main became an intersection in any literal sense, the land underneath Winnipeg's famous corner was a place of intersection between people, cultures and ideas. Ecologically rich and diverse, and connected through networks of rivers and trails to much of North America, Portage and Main has been part of the lives of Indigenous peoples and Indigenous cultures for thousands of years. Defined by interdependent social, cultural, and ecological networks that have always been complex, deep, and reciprocal, these relationships have found their meaning and direction in traditional understandings of land, community, and ecology. Located today at the intersection of what began as two Red River cart trails, both travelled, and at least one created, by trains of largely Indigenous-run Red River carts, the ground at the intersection of Portage and Main was never just an empty piece of prairie at the junction of two dirt tracks. With the development of a Metis heritage centre on its southeast corner, the intersection of Portage and Main continues in the rich traditions of intersection, interchange and exchange that underpin its history.

Highlights

- The land at Portage and Main is part of a camping area that at one time extended from the confluence of the Red and Assiniboine rivers east to at least Garry Street, and north at least near Lombard or possibly Bannatyne
- Archaeological evidence indicates that this area was already in use at least 6000 years ago, and quite possibly long before that as a gathering place
- Over its long history, a number of different Indigenous cultural groups have gathered and come together in this area
- The rich and diverse ecology of the area has supported these gatherings, archaeological evidence shows that people fished, hunted, and gathered plants and berries, and made wooden, stone, and shell objects here
- People also traded for goods from distant places
- The rivers and trails in the area offered access to the plains and parklands for hunting and linked people in the area with trade networks that extended across much of North America, making the area a centre of exchange of not only trade goods but of intellectual and cultural knowledge
- Burial sites in the area point to culturally significant events and ceremonies, post-contact records support this
- Early contact at the Forks began when non-Indigenous traders took advantage of the pre-existing Indigenous infrastructures to expand their markets

[75] Manitoba Metis Federation, President's Message - August 5, 2020. Available at https://www.mmf.mb.ca/presidents-message/presidents-message-august-5-2020, accessed on 29 November 2021.

- Over time other fur traders and trading companies arrived in the area, including the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies, leading to what has become known as the fur trade wars in the area
- In about 1811, Thomas Douglas, Lord Selkirk began a colony in the area
- The establishment of the settlement further exacerbated tensions, leading to the events of la Grenouillère, Seven Oaks, a little north of the intersection, this event has often been credited as an important event in the creation of the Métis Nation
- In the aftermath of la Grenouillère, Seven Oaks, Lord Selkirk entered into an agreement with local Indigenous leaders that provided for a settlement zone along the rivers
- Indigenous leaders insisted that this zone should not include the area around the Forks, and early surveys of the area show a reserve that extended from the confluence of the rivers north roughly to the Portage Trail, on this reserve various Indigenous groups continued to camp, trade, hold ceremonies, and bury their dead; the area remained one of gathering, of exchange and of interchange
- After the amalgamation of the HBC and NWC in 1821, and as the settlement continued to expand, the Colony and Company began granting lots to the south of Point Douglas, ending at what is today Portage Avenue, further defining the northern boundary of the reserve area, at least on paper
- These southern lots were held by local independent traders, including Andrew McDermott and his Métis partner Sarah McNabb McDermott, who lived on the lot immediately to the north of the reserve, and James Sinclair, the McDermotts' Métis neighbour and for sometime business partner, to the north
- Like their neighbours, the McDermotts combined their varied businesses and their home on their river lot, their success in business and in the community reflected their hospitality, generosity, and their ability to live in respectful relationships
- Famous for their open-handed hospitality, the McDermott property was a gathering place
- In the 1850s another family, the Drevers, moved onto a small strip of land the HBC had cut out of the north end of the reserve, they too became independent traders, maintaining a hospitable home and good local relations
- Indigenous people continued to camp on the Drever property after the family moved in
- Up until about the middle of the nineteenth century, the Portage Trail, which led to the plains and to a crossing on the Assiniboine river that gave access to a trail south to Pembina and from there to American markets split off into a wye just east of where the University of Winnipeg now stands, the two legs leading to a spot near City Hall on the north, and Upper Fort Garry to the south
- The area near the northern edge of the reserve at the Forks was a centre of successful independent traders and of hospitality. With goods arriving through Hudson Bay and St. Paul Minnesota, and from the plains and parkland, as well as from the many ecologically diverse waterways that connected with the Forks, the area continued to be a place of cultural and financial intersections
- In the mid-nineteenth century, carters (almost all of them would have been Métis or First Nation, many driving Red River carts) created a new trail that intersected the Main Road (roughly Main Street today) at what we know as Portage and Main

- In 1862 Henry McKenney and his half-brother John Christian Schultz purchased property from the McDermotts and built a store at this intersection, their choice of location, while further back from the river than was usual before this, took advantage of the dynamic environment that existed at the interface between the reserve and the HBC's Fort Garry that sat on the reserve, and the group of successful free traders just to the north
- Soon the McDermotts, their daughter and son-in-law to the north, the Bannatynes (who had purchased James Sinclair's lot), and their neighbours to the south, the Drevers were building along the Main and Portage roads
- This new phase continued the traditions of hospitality, interchange, and exchange. In addition to shops and trade stores, the area boasted hotels and meeting places that included Monchamp's saloon and the Red Saloon
- Monchamp's became a popular meeting place for Métis, including Riel and his followers. Riel was noted to have spoken at meetings of Métis at Monchamps
- An iconic image of Riel, taken in June 1870 that has appeared on a postage stamp was taken outside of the Red Saloon, a drinking establishment that was located at the southwest side of Portage and Main (actually on what is roadway today)
- The death of Elzéar Goulet at the hands of vigilantes began when he entered the Red Saloon and was singled out by a mob there, just one event in the Reign of Terror that gripped the settlement following the arrival of Wolseley and his troops
- An Indigenous group led by the son of one of the Selkirk Treaty signatories, known as the "Fort Garry Band" because of their relationship with the reserve land at the Forks were pressured to move to a distant reserve during the 1870s
- A number of burial sites near the corner of Portage and Main, and settler reports of ceremonies on the reserve into the 1860s testify to the ongoing spiritual and cultural importance of the area
- Portage and Main exists at a crossroads that was literally created by Indigenous carters, on land that has been a centre of Indigenous gathering, of Indigenous knowledge, relationship with the land and its ecologically diverse resources, and with culturally diverse groups of people, in short, as a place of gathering, relationship, trade and intellectual and cultural exchange
- MMF plans to establish a Métis heritage centre at the corner, in the BMO building signal a return of the corner to its place as a centre in all of these areas, and especially as a centre of hospitality, of gathering, and of financial, cultural, and intellectual exchange