

20th Century Metis Displacement and Road Allowance Communities in Manitoba

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This is a brief overview of how the Metis were displaced and ended up living on Crown Land or Road Allowances in Manitoba. This preliminary investigation simply lists and describes the affected communities. They are listed in alphabetical order.

Big Eddy, Manitoba: This was a Metis road allowance community located seven kilometres northwest of The Pas on the Saskatchewan River. In Jean Legasse's survey of 1959 there were 125 Metis living at Big Eddy.

Boggy Creek and San Clara, Manitoba: San Clara (St. Claire) and Boggy Creek are located north of Roblin, Manitoba and west of the Duck Mountain Provincial Forest. Prior to the 1870's, the Cree, Ojibway and Métis First Nations inhabited the Roblin area. Early settlement patterns were intimately linked to the fur trade and related transportation networks. The Pelly Trail and the Shell River facilitated the marketing of furs hunted in the Duck Mountains. In the early 1880's, the Métis concentrated their land claims around San Clara and Boggy Creek.

With the advent of community pastures under the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act; the Metis living on what became the San Clara Community Pasture were displaced in the late 1930s. Families such as the Jeromes, Langans, Luciers, Ledoux, Carrière and Villeneuve were displaced from their lands. A 1958 census documented 950 Metis living in the San Clara area.

Carrot River Valley (Pasquia Settlement), Manitoba: See Young Point Settlement.

Cedar Lake (Chemawawin) Manitoba Metis Settlement: This settlement was on the west shore of Cedar Lake which is on the Saskatchewan River above Grand Rapids. Due to the development of the Grand Rapids Hydro Project these residents were flooded out and lost their livelihood. The Cree of Chemawawin¹ Reserve and the Metis community were moved to Easterville in the early 1960s. In all, 55 families were moved, 43 First Nations and 12 Metis. They were provided with new homes and buildings on what was deemed a town site unsuitable for subsistence. Financial compensation for the band was only \$20,000. The community received only vague promises from the Provincial Government to maintain the income of the people and improve the economy and to undertake studies with regard to economic development. Even these promises went unfulfilled. Note that at this time the Metis had no provincial political representation as the Manitoba Metis Federation did not yet exist. The people of the area were at a great disadvantage, most of the Cree and Metis population did not speak English and they were not provided with technical support for the negotiations. In 1958 a census documented 87 Metis living at Cedar Lake. See also, Martin Loney, "The

¹ From the Cree Chemawawin, a place for fishing (nets).

Construction of Dependency: The Case of the Grand Rapids Hydro,” *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, Vol. VII, No. 1, 1987: 57-78. In 1958 a census documented 87 Metis living at Cedar Lake.

Cold Lake, Manitoba: Cold Lake, or Kississing in Cree, was a Metis road allowance community located south of Sherridon, Manitoba (then a mining town) on Kississing Lake, 800 km. northwest of Winnipeg. Senator Ed Head of Manitoba Metis Federation recalled: “My parents were married in The Pas. They went to Cranberry Portage and from there walked to Cold Lake, Manitoba (just south of Sherridon).” “The place we lived was nicknamed 'Moccasin Flats.' That's where the Métis lived, and it was always the way the Métis lived. They called us 'Road Allowance Indians,’” Ed explains. They had settled there because Ed's grandfather had moved there. His father did odd jobs for Sherritt-Gordon then was hired as a miner. Ed's grandfather had a guiding business and guided the Sherridon Mine Manager into the mine, overland from Cumberland House. “Cumberland House was the main juncture going into the North in the late 1800's,” says Ed. “Eldon Brown, the prospector who discovered the ore body at Sherridon came through Cumberland House and needed a guide. My great-grandfather was busy, so my grandfather, James Sayese, met up with Brown and became his guide. He worked for Brown as a personal guide for a long time. Later he went to work for Sherritt-Gordon.” Ed recalled that often they would be asked to move from the road allowance but would just move further down the road and cut more logs to rebuild their homes. A 1958 census documented 132 Metis living at Cold Lake and Sherridon.

Dog Patch, Winnipeg, Manitoba: This was a Metis road allowance community located in the vicinity of the CPR Weston shops, just north of Logan Ave.

Easterville, Manitoba: See Cedar Lake Metis Settlement.

Grand Rapids Metis Settlement, Manitoba: In 1875, the federal government had set aside all of the land at Grand Rapids (except for the Indian Reserve and the Hudson's Bay Company Reserve) as a government reserve in case a canal was constructed, had maintained its hold on the land through the 1890s, when it seemed possible that Grand Rapids might be the site of a bridge across the Saskatchewan for the Hudson Bay Railway. None of these schemes for Grand Rapids ever materialized. Canals had been pre-empted by railway construction, and it was decided that the proposed Hudson Bay Railway would not run through Grand Rapids. The government released its hold on the land, and R. E. Young surveyed the settlement at Grand Rapids in 1903 and laid out a town site along the river. The lots, from two to ten acres in size, were sold to the Métis and other residents at \$1.00 per acre. Within a few years, however, the Métis had sold or lost title to these lands, to speculators, and asked the government for more. In 1914-15 W.E. Weld made a new survey, adding lots of one to six acres back of the earlier river lots. In an effort to protect the Métis from speculators these lots were leased rather than sold.

In the 1960s the Province of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro began negotiations for the Grand Rapids Hydro Project. The people of the area were at a great disadvantage, most of the Cree and Metis population did not speak English and they

were not provided with technical support for the negotiations. In 1960 they began bulldozing the Metis homes at Grand Rapids. The bishop of Brandon a religious leader for the people commented “The little experience that I had with them dealing with the Metis people is that they are trying to get land and houses for the very minimum sums that they can get the people to sign for and after all to give the Indians or the Metis a sum of money which [at the time] may seem to them a fortune does not solve any problem for unless they can re-establish with some chance of providing for themselves, the Government is likely to have these people on the relief rolls for the rest of their lives.”² Note that at this time the Metis had no provincial political representation as the Manitoba Metis Federation did not yet exist. . A 1958 census documented 236 Metis living at Grand Rapids.

Longbody Creek, Kenepikiniwewe, Manitoba: This was a Metis road allowance community established in 1988, after the Metis were displaced from Bloodvein Indian Reserve, located to the west of the creek. The community was near the confluence of the creek and the Bloodvein River. Subsequently, many of these people took Treaty Status under Bill 31 and returned to the reserve. To set up the community the Provincial Government passed By-Law No. 2/88, Northern Affairs (Community of Longbody Creek) Road Allowance Closure; between Sections 23 and 26-32-6 EPM. Within about five years the community has dispersed.

Metikewap, Wooden (bark) Tent: Wooden Tent is named after the Indian bark covered tepees. This Metis settlement was located on the Saskatchewan River downstream from The Pas just below Mistikewapi Lake. This community disappeared when the Grand Rapids dam was built raising the water levels along the Saskatchewan River and its delta.

Moose Lake Metis Settlement, Manitoba: Moose Lake is a small community located on the northern limits of the Saskatchewan River delta on the western shore of South Moose Lake about 74 km Southeast of The Pas in Manitoba. There is both an Indian reserve, home to the Mosakahiken Cree Nation, and a non-treaty community on adjacent land. The livelihood of the first Nations and Metis people in this community were greatly affected when the Grand Rapids dam was built raising the water levels along the Saskatchewan River and its delta. A 1958 census documented 282 Metis living in the Moose Lake Settlement.

Pine Bluff, Manitoba: This was a Metis settlement located on the Saskatchewan River east of The Pas near Cedar Lake. There is evidence that people settled in Pine Bluff as early as 1874. Life in Pine Bluff was hard nonetheless the close-knit Métis community was productive and self-sufficient. The local economy consisted of hunting, trapping, fishing and farming. The community established a school, church, a fur trading post, and stores. The families of Pine Bluff were strongly entrenched in the community but unfortunately the development of the dam at Grand Rapids flooded the area and forced the relocation of the residents, of which most moved to The Pas.

² Martin Loney, “The Construction of Dependency: The Case of the Grand Rapids Hydro Project,” *Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, Vol. VII, No. 1, 1987: 57-78.

Throughout the 1800s the Metis of Fond du Lac used the entire Interlake region of Manitoba for their hunting trapping and fishing economy. They utilized the Duck Bay area extensively and travelled from there to the muskrat marshes just east of The Pas, Manitoba (part of the Territory of Keewatin at that time). This Pine Bluff camping site appears as a named site on a map in 1884. Around 1910, some of these Metis families decided to permanently settle at Pine Bluff, 50 miles southeast of The Pas along the Saskatchewan River. This gave them easy access to the resources of the Summerberry Marsh and the trapping areas right down to Grand Rapids on the Saskatchewan River. It is reported that the Metis had a fine sturgeon fishery on Cedar Lake. This high ground was also a stopping point when travelling between the Pas and Cedar Lake. The family names common to Pine Bluff were, Campbell, Chaboyer, Chartrand, Ducharme, Nabess, Azure, Lambert, Bourgoise, Lagimodiere, Beauchamp and Lavallee. The community had a small school from 1938 to 1942. The building of the Grand Rapids Dam meant the demise of this community since the flooding destroyed the fishery and trapping along the river and Cedar Lake. Many Metis lost both their fishing nets and all of their traps when the fore bay flooding began. The Metis had never received title to their land because the province refused to survey that area.

Rall's (Rahls) Island Metis Settlement, Manitoba: This is a Metis road allowance community located on the Saskatchewan River downstream from The Pas. It is named for Charles Rall, a prospector from Red River, who married Elizabeth Knight (Metis). A 1958 census documented 10 Metis living at Rall's Island.

Rooster Town, Pakan Town, Manitoba: Rooster Town is the last known Metis Road Allowance Community in Winnipeg. It was situated between what is now Grant Ave. and the CNR railway line which runs south of what is now Taylor Ave.

The Metis residents used to call this area Pakan Town (Michif/Cree) after the abundance of hazelnuts that grew in the area.³ The historical record indicates that there were Metis families, some of whom were squatters, living south of Corydon Avenue between Wilton on the east and Cambridge on the west in 1900. As south Winnipeg developed around Corydon Avenue, and the Grand Trunk and Pacific Railway built track down what is now Grant Ave. in 1908, a thriving Metis road allowance community grew up just north of the Grand Trunk⁴ and between the two sets of railway tracks—the Grand Trunk and Pacific on the north, and the CNR on the south. These homes had no electricity, running water or sewage systems.

With no bridge connecting the land that lay south of the Assiniboine River to Winnipeg, the area that was to become Crescentwood saw very little development before 1870. Most of the lots contained Métis farms, and others were used as wood lots, taking advantage of the mature oak tress of the river bottom forest. In 1880, a bridge was built across the Assiniboine at Main Street, and Winnipeg's first real suburb, Fort Rouge, began to take shape. West Fort Rouge, the area that was to become Crescentwood, River Height and Tuxedo, was still largely inaccessible, and until the

³ Frank Sais, personal communication October 11, 2016. Frank says that they harvested hazelnuts, blackberries and saskatoons in the area.

⁴ The 1911 Census shows Metis families living along Mulvey, Corydon, Fleet, Jessie, Rosser (now Wardlaw) and "in the bush" near these streets.

construction of the Boundary (Maryland) Bridge in 1896, there were only a few homes in the area.

Crescentwood began to take its present form in 1902 through a combination of need and boosterism. Winnipeg's wealthy had traditionally lived in the city in neighbourhoods like Point Douglas and Armstrong's Point. By 1900, however Point Douglas was becoming a downtown industrial area, and Armstrong's Point was fully developed. Crescentwood was the logical choice for those with wealth who were seeking an alternative to downtown. As the area developed the Metis were displaced moving south and west toward what was to become known as Rooster Town.

In the book *Reflections, Yesterday and Today* (MMF Press 1979), Jim Day of St. Laurent says, "I was born and raised on the outskirts of Winnipeg in a place known as Rooster Town. This place was situated where Grant Avenue is today." This community existed until the late 1950s.

Metis people who lived in Rooster Town in the 1940s and 1950s tell me that it was located west of Wilton Ave., as far west as Lindsay St., between the two railway lines but was basically centered where the Grant Park Shopping Centre and Grant Park School are now located. There was a single water pump at present day Wilton and Grant that provided the water supply. Just to the east of this the Grand Trunk water tower for steam locomotives was located at what is now the corner of Grant Ave. and Guelph St. In the mid-1950s the Grand Trunk line (now owned by CNR) sank and had to be repaired between Pembina Highway and Cambridge Street. The track was later declared surplus and sold to the City. The tracks were removed, ground redone, the street was expanded to include a service road and renamed Grant Avenue.

"In the early years of the depression of the 1930s a number of homeless families, many of whom were destitute Metis built small shacks illegally on the Canadian National Railway property adjoining city owned land just off Grant Boulevard. As well, as suburban development advanced in River Heights, other shack dwellers re-located to this area. The area, now roughly between Weatherdon Avenue and the tracks from Cambridge to Rockwood Streets became known as Rooster Town.

Over the next quarter century the number of squatters varied with economic conditions. By the 1950s at least 30 to 50 people clustered there in more than a dozen shacks.⁵ Many owned their homes, but some paid \$15 to \$20 per month rent for the land they were on. Most of the men worked as seasonal labourers, cutting sod, delivering coal, or performing other casual work, and collected relief from the city when unemployed. Their wives raised their children in two to three room shacks without running water, sewer connections or other services.

After 14 children came to school with the skin disease impetigo in late 1951 the Winnipeg Tribune reporter wrote: "Whatever you do... don't touch the Rooster Town children. You might get a skin disease. So the teacher calls for a group game and tells the children to join hands. Nobody would dare join hands with the Rooster Town children."⁶

In response the City directed Public Health nurses and social workers to the community. Alternate housing was found for six or seven families in 1952, but many

⁵ Some of the Metis family names were Sais, Lepine, Birston, Cardinal, Parisien, Conway, Roussin, Marcoux and Laramee. Many of the men from these families held seasonal employment in bush camps.

⁶ *Winnipeg Tribune*, December 20, 1951. "Heard of Rooster Town? Its Our Last Suburb."

preferred to stay where they were. In the summer of 1959, the city offered the last families cash payments of \$50 to \$75 to move or face eviction proceedings. With the school opening of Grant Park School in September 1959 and plans for a surrounding park area Rooster Town and its social problems had no place in Winnipeg's suburbs."⁷

Selby Town, Manitoba: This was a Metis road allowance community south of Binscarth. The Metis from Ste. Madeleine were resettled here in 1939 after their homes and personal possessions were burned and they were displaced from Ste. Madeleine which was located to the west across the Assiniboine River. This community was sarcastically called Selby Town, after one of the municipal officials responsible for the loss of Ste. Madeleine. It was located to the south of another similar community called The Corner or Fouillard Corner. With the loss of the Belliveau School the Metis were forced to attend school in Binscarth or the St. Hubert Mission School on Gambler Reserve. With the loss of the Mission of Ste. Madeleine Church many of the Metis began attending services at the home of Joe Bushie (Boucher), he donated four acres of land where they built St. Hubert Church, using what they could of logs from the Ste. Madeleine church. A 1958 census documented 170 Metis living in the Binscarth area.

Ste. Madeleine, Manitoba: For many decades prior to 1938, Ste. Madeleine was a traditional Metis community with over twenty large families. The Metis had homesteaded the land at Ste. Madeleine and the nearby Pumpkin Plain, north of St. Lazare, Manitoba since the 1870s. A mission had been set up there in 1902. However, under the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act, this land was designated to become community pasture, thus the community lost its town. Historically, the town was formed when Metis left the Red River area due to the actions of Wolseley's Red River Expeditionary Force. Other Metis moved to the area from Saskatchewan and Alberta after the Resistance of 1885.

In 1935, in the midst of the "Dirty Thirties," the Canadian government set up the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Act. The town of Ste. Madeleine and surrounding area called Pumpkin Plain was designated as pastureland. The Metis families who had their taxes paid up to date were to be compensated and relocated. However, because of the economic conditions of the time, few families had their taxes paid. The Metis were again forced to find a new home and they lost everything they had; their homes were burned, their dogs were shot, their church was to be dismantled and the logs sold to build a piggery. The priest from St. Lazare also sold the church bell and statues. When confronted by community members he said the money would not be returned and he was using it to build another church at St. Lazare. The plan to dismantle the church was foiled by Joe Venne and other community members armed themselves with rifles and confronted the crew sent to dismantle the church thus saving it. They then moved the family of Caroline and John Vermette into the building to protect it. By 1938, the once vital community had all but vanished. Today, all that remains of Ste. Madeleine are the stone foundations of the Belliveau School and the cemetery encircling the mound of grass where the church once stood. The wood from the schoolhouse was salvaged and

⁷ David G. Burley, *City and Suburb Housing in 20th Century Winnipeg*. Winnipeg Real Estate Board, 100th Anniversary, 2003.

now constitutes a major portion of the kitchen of what was the home of Yvonne and Fred LeClerc of Victor, Manitoba.

Stovepipe, Tuyau: The area around Pointe des Chênes or Grande Pointe des Chênes now Ste. Anne de Chênes was purchased by Metis and French settlers in 1852 from Na-sa-kee-by-ness (Flying Down Bird) also known as *Grands Oreilles* the Chief of the Roseau River Band. This was a preferred location for woodcutting because of the large oak groves along the banks of the Seine River. Father LeFloche, the priest from St. Boniface who ministered to the Metis at this location changed the name to Ste. Anne, a patron saint in Brittany, France. Later there was a road allowance tent community called Tuyau (pipe), Stovepipe, in the Ste. Anne area. This was inhabited by the families of woodcutters working in the forests to the east of the community.

Summerberry Marsh, Manitoba: This area is named after the Summerberry or Moose Lake River and is east of The Pas, Manitoba in the Saskatchewan River drainage basin. Trapping in the area was ruined by the development of the Grand Rapids Dam forebay.

In 2016 the Manitoba Metis Federation has reached an agreement with Manitoba Hydro that provided for the payment of compensation to identified trappers whose commercial trapping on the Summerberry Marsh was impacted by the operation of the Grand Rapids Generating Station.

There were five communities that were the management authority for Summerberry trapping. These communities were Grand Rapids, Easterville, Moose Lake, Cormorant and The Pas. The claims by trappers for the communities of Grand Rapids, Easterville and Moose Lake were settled first. A subsequent agreement will settle the claims for Summerberry trappers in the communities of Cormorant, The Pas and other trappers from across Manitoba who were invited by the management authority to trap on the Summerberry Marsh.

The Corner, Li Kwayn, Manitoba: The Corner was a Metis road allowance community near Binscarth on the Northeast Quarter of Section 34-19-29. The Metis from Ste. Madeleine were resettled here after their homes and personal possessions were burned and they were displaced from Ste. Madeleine which was located to the west across the Assiniboine River. This community was sarcastically called Fouillard Corner and another road allowance community set up to the south of this was called Selby Town, after the municipal officials responsible for the loss of Ste. Madeleine. With the loss of the Belliveau School the Metis were forced to attend school in Binscarth or the St. Hubert Mission School on Gambler Reserve. With the loss of the Mission of Ste. Madeleine Church many of the Metis began attending services at the home of Joe Bushie (Boucher), he donated four acres of land where they built St. Hubert Church, using what they could of logs from the Ste. Madeleine Church. A 1958 census documented 170 Metis living in the Binscarth area.

The families who were moved onto the Northeast Quarter of Section 34-19-29 were: Ambroise Fisher, Jimmie Ledoux, the Morrissettes, John (Jean) Fleury, Jack Boucher, George Boucher, Joe Venne, Pete Ducharme, William Smith, the Pelletiers, Louis Fleury, Mrs. Joe Bercier, and Nap Vermette.

Tin Town, Winnipeg, Manitoba: This was a Metis road allowance community located to the south of Rooster Town. Tin Town was south of Fort Rouge near today's McGillivray Boulevard which runs west off Pembina Highway. It was named for the metal used by the squatters to build their shanties. It was reported that baseball games were held between the residents of Rooster Town and Tin Town.

Thomas Metis Settlement, Manitoba: This was a Metis road allowance community located outside of The Pas. It was named after the Thomas family.

Umphreville or Humphreville Settlement, Manitoba: This was a Metis road allowance community on the north bank of the Saskatchewan River northeast of The Pas. It was named after John Umphreville (1820-1883), the son of "Great" Thomas Umpherville, grandfather of all the Umphervilles from Moose Lake to Prince Albert. Thomas was married to Hannah Turner, both were Metis. John Umphreville married Mary Brass (1821-1904) also Metis. A 1958 census documented 35 Metis living in this community.

Young Point Settlement, Carrot River Valley (Pasquia Settlement), Manitoba: This was a Metis road allowance community located nine kilometres just south of the Pas in the Pasquia Settlement. It was named after Josiah Young (Metis). He was the son of Edward Young (Cree) and Isabelle Constant (Metis). A 1958 census documented 42 Metis living at Young's Point.