

" Boharm - An Outpost of Empire 1882-1900 "

The stirring story of the settlement of the Canadian West is so well known to all that it scarce requires comment. The accomplishments achieved in the face of severa adversity by the pioneers of these plains, the hardships they endured, and the basic structure which they built for future Canadian development form a drama to which no pen can do justice. Such frontier towns as Boharm, outposts of Empire and experimental stations in the path of progress deserve lasting recognition in the records of the Dominion. The story which follows is an endeavour to provide for posterity an authentic account of the development of the community centring around Boharm, and to pay tribute to those early settlers whose unswerving faith and ceaseless toil provide a heritage of achievement and courage to which young Canada is proudly heir.

On the 22nd day of July, 1882, a quintette of potential homesteaders, R. K. Thomson, E. N. Hopkins, J. H. Cook, John Caverhill and Ben. Lundy, arrived at what is now the village of Boharm. They had travelled from Oxford County, Ontario, on the Canadian Pacific Railway as far as Brandon (the most westward point of the line at that time) coming the rest of the way in an ox-drawn covered wagon. The party, in search of a favourable location, arrived, after five weeks on the old Hudson's Bay trail, at what they considered a likely spot. The railway, approaching at the rate of five miles a day arrived there the same fall, and Boharm Siding was created. The township was not at that time subdivided, but the settlers discovered a stake just opposity the present site of the Boharm Church. Possessing a surveying outfit they laid two lines, one two miles south, and one six miles east, locating the sections along that route. It was township sixteen, range twenty-seven, west of the Second Meridian.

The time having now come for locating, R. K. Thomson and E. N. Hopkins chose section 20, and J. H. Cook section 22, while Messrs. Caverhill and Lundy decided on section 28. Each settler, to retain his squatter's rights, broke half an acre on each half-section and erected a sod shack. Settlement had begun.

At this time there was not a single farm-house as we would know one; the entire population of the Northwest Territories consisted only of buffalo, Mounted Policemen and Hudson's Bay factors. There was no railway, no telegraph, no government highways, none of the characteristics of civilization so well known to us all, and from all the rich fertile prairie land (than which there is none better in the whole world) there was not a bushel of wheat or of oats produced for market. Two score years have witnessed an amazing development, unequalled even by the settlement of the American West a half-century before. The entire plains are cultivated by industrious and expert farmers; there are innumerable towns and metropolitan centres; the prairie provinces are crossed by two trans-continental lines horizontally, and many others, vertically. And in this year, 1928, the prospects are bright for a crop exceeding five hundred million bushels of various grains. This colossal expansion can never again be duplicated, for the Canadian west was the last agricultural frontier.

About the same time, a small settlement sprang up around what is now Pioneer. John Hill, Lincoln Bastedo, Alex. Wilson, Andie Dalgarno, Ben. Smith, the Rathwells and the Rosses located in that district. The wives and families of these settlers, however, did not arrive until the following spring, on the heels of the railroad.

During the year 1883 the settlers spent their time, erecting buildings and breaking the land in preparation for seeding the following spring. 1884 was very dry, and the crops were negligible, but the settlers were undismayed and seeded again in 1885. The following period was the dryest in the history of the country, scarcely a drop of rain falling for eighteen months. In consequence, crops were a total failure.

The second Riel Rebellion which broke out at this time, in spite of the consternation and horror which it caused throughout the West, was by way of being a financial Godsend to many farmers of the district. Homesteaders were given the opportunity of hauling freight for the government to the troops in the north, and by receiving seven or eight dollars a day for their services and teams, were enabled to earn enough money to carry them over the winter. The story is told of one elderly Irishman, who rejoicing at this chance of earning money, declared "If this be war, may there never be payce!" The obstacles during these lean years, however, proved too much for many of the settlers, who pulled stakes and left the district in disgust. Indeed, not until 1891, after seven years of experimentation and cultivation, was there a good general crop in all the scattered districts.

In these early years none of the settlers really knew the soil or climate, and none knew the technique necessary for a productive agriculture. Experience, tedious and costly, was the only teacher. At first, in response to a very natural urge, each homesteader applied those methods with which he was familiar and which had been found

successful in his former home, but as years went on and crop failure was followed by crop failure, they found that a technique was necessary which was peculiar to the prairie regions. For many years the farmers used to draw their hay for miles from far-off hay sloughs, which was a gigantic task. Eventually they found that all the time they had plenty of much better hay on their own homesteads in the form of the short Buffalo grass. Horses, they learned, would thrive better on the prairie, after pawing through the snow and eating the prairie grass, than they would in the stable eating the best slough hay procurable. The discovery of the principle of summer fallow and the futility of fall or spring ploughing was another achievement acquired only at the expense of many a discouraging crop. The trail-blazers on the virgin prairie had to conquer not only drought, gophers, flying ants, electrical storms, forest fires and devastating winds, but a monster greater than all these, - Inexperience.

The only new settler who came in during this period was Joel Bate, who for many years directed the choir in the Moose Jaw Methodist Church. In 1886, however, Rev. W. C. Bunt was sent to Moose Jaw by the Methodist Church, and religious development in the vicinity dated from the arrival of this energetic cleric. Mr. Bunt would preach the morning service at Moose Jaw, get into his sulky and drive to Caron, sixteen miles away, eating his lunch en route. After conducting services there, he would return to Moose Jaw, stopping on his way to preach at Pioneer in the Hill or Bowden home, and reaching Moose Jaw in time to conduct the evening worship. The Boharm people were accustomed to drive over to Pioneer to attend these four o'clock services held in the Hill home.

The First School

In 1889 it was found that there were sufficient children (eighteen) in Boharm or near vicinity to form a School District, and confidence was felt that the required average attendance of six would be obtained. (These two requirements had to be fulfilled before the school would receive the liberal grant offered by the government). The School District was accordingly organized in 1889 and the building erected in 1890. The trustees chosen at this time were R. K. Thomson, E. N. Hopkins and John Porter - and the first teacher was Miss Babb afterwards Mrs. J. H. Grayson of Moose Jaw. The trustees were the architects and builders, and with the gratuitous assistance of an energetic bachelor, by name, George Paisley, the structure was raised. All work done on the building was without remunerations, and including equipment, cost the district less than one hundred dollars. It was not elaborate, but it served the purpose jointly of school and church, until 1898 when it was destroyed by fire, caused by a mosquito smudge. The first pupils to attend the Boharm School were Ben. and Grant Thomson; Will Johnston; Page, Eva and Robert Porter; Bob and Alex. Zess.

The First Church

The formation of the School district marked the beginning of Church work in Boharm. About the same time Wesley Church was organized, and the people at Pioneer for the most part attended services there, but several came down to Boharm. It might have been a coincidence, but perhaps a fore-runner of later religious growth in Canada that when these services first started, worship was conducted on Methodist and Presbyterian lines alternately with a Union Sunday School. The two first ministers were the late Dr. Clay and the late Dr. McLean, both of whom passed away within two weeks of each other at Winnipeg, in March, 1928. Dr. McLean, at the time of his death, was librarian of Wesley College, and Dr. Clay, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church. It was a privilege, an impetus and an inspiration to the religious life of the community to have two such outstanding divines point the way.

Simultaneously with the organization of the Church came that institution which exerted a splendid influence on the spiritual life of the community in after years, and which is still carrying on the good work, the Sunday School. The first Superintendent and Bible Class teacher was Mr. John Porter, at present residing at Dauphin, Manitoba. The late Mrs. R. K. Thomson taught the Primary Class for many years, and the inspiring influence of her personality will long be remembered by all who were privileged to study under her guidance. Following Mr. Porter, came Mr. Thomas Auger, who was succeeded by the late Mr. R. K. Thomson, who continued the splendid service for several years. The late F. W. Green, Charles Shepley, Richard Pascoe and George Paisley all contributed much to the significance and value of the Sunday School. The fine ethical standards maintained and the lives of Christian service led, by many men of the district, can be traced back to the environs of the Sunday School, which embraced not only the four walls of the school-house, but the entire district.

The Literary Society

In the early nineties a public meeting was called at the Boharm School for the purpose of organizing a Literary Society, and only one person present - Mr. E. N. Hopkins - had ever had any experience in conducting such a meeting. He was voted to the Chair. His opening remarks ran along this line: "My father was one of the pioneers in my native county in Ontario, and at any meeting I ever attended in the community he was the inevitable Chairman. The people of the district were dependent on him for, and regarded him as, their spokesman. As a result, none of the settlers had the opportunity of developing themselves as speakers or organizers, and I have always thought that my father made a grave mistake in allowing all such duties to fall on his shoulders. We in Boharm must not make the same blunder. I am prepared to take the Chair tonight, and on other evenings when it comes my turn, but at such times only, for unless each member does his fair share in organizing and conducting these meetings, our Society, from the viewpoint of mutual advantage, can never be a success." This policy was carried out during the history of the Literary Society, and thus it received its start along the lines of co-operation and divided responsibility, which proved a tremendous boon in the public life for which many of its members were destined.

The Literary Society developed within a very short time into a splendid educational centre. Current events were discussed and papers on subjects of vital importance to the country prepared by various members. The Muse was by no means neglected, and the works of the classical authors and poets were included in the exhaustive program of the Society. At intervals, Shakesperean plays were produced. In short, the intellectual qualities of each member were greatly stimulated - and the general level of thought raised throughout the community. The value of this organization cannot be too highly praised; it was a splendid demonstration of the possibilities of adult education. Three members of this society have been members of the Provincial Legislature; three have represented ridings in the House of Commons at Ottawa. Nearly all have served to a greater or less extent in the communities in which they established permanent residence. The names of others have become household words throughout the West, by virtue of their splendid work in the organization of the Grain Growers Association and the dairying industry. Can this record of achievement and service be a mere coincidence? The mathematical laws of probability refute such a conclusion; the intellectual contribution of the Literary Society played no small part in developing and stimulating the thought of these men who left the vicinity to become leaders in their chosen fields, and in their chosen homes.

Credit must be given to the ministers and teachers of the period, whose whole-hearted co-operation and unstinting assistance contributed so much to the success of the organization. Chief among these were Dr. Darwin and the Rev. Elmett, W. T. Cunningham and Mr. Middleton. Mr. Cunningham, who taught for several years following 1900 and who at the present time is principal of the King George School, is deserving of special mention in this regard.

The year 1894 was of special significance to the community, for it marked the arrival of a man destined to become of great influence and service to the district, - the late F. W. Green. Not only did he take an active and vital interest in all the community endeavours of Boharm Church, School and Society, but for years he was Secretary and organizer of the Grain Growers Association, and was a major factor in making that association the vast success it became. Even today the name of Fred Green commands great respect and reverence throughout the three prairie provinces.

As a last testimony to the beneficence of the Literary Society as a medium of community education, we must cite the Boharm-Moose Jaw debate. The citizens of Moose Jaw issued a challenge to the Boharm Literary Society, asking the organization to send a debating team of three men to oppose a trio representative of Moose Jaw. The challenge was promptly accepted, and the debate was held in the Moose Jaw Town Hall. The entire audience were the adjudicators. Under the Moose Jaw banner was a formidable array; - J. W. Sifton, Superintendent of Moose Jaw Schools; J. R. Green, an energetic school teacher; and the late J. E. Caldwell a progressive young lawyer of the city. The Boharm cause was espoused by the late F. W. Green, R. Grant Thomson, and James Pascoe, three farmers of the district. The Resolution "Resolved that ambition is more harmful than beneficial to mankind" was presented by Boharm, and opposed by Moose Jaw, and the audience, in the main citizens of the city and with every reason for being hostile, rendered an almost unanimous decision in favour of Boharm.

Owing to the magnificent crop of 1891, which we have referred to above, new settlers and their families, rapidly filled up the district. Mahlon Johnson, Alvan Thomson, Ab. Campbell, Robert Elsom, Chas. Shepley, Samuel Might, John Miller, John Ingles, Samuel Galey, the Horridges, the Field Brothers, Thaddeus Arnold, the Pascoes, the Doney's, the Lillecoes and the Greens were in the van of the incoming contingent. These gave new blood to the community, and served as a tremendous stimulus to the institutional activities we have mentioned above.

But the promises held out by the bumper harvest of '91 proved to be very empty, and a period of hard years with scanty crops followed. In 1892, it was fairly dry and only on good land was there any kind of a crop at all. 1893 was still dryer and crops were very light. 1894 was even worse, and many of the settlers were forced to rely on the government for their seed. This seed was not in the form of a dole or poor relief, but it was in the nature of a loan and the government took a lien on the settler's land for security. This year was also the dam-building period, a government undertaking. These dams were built for two purposes - to supply the stock with water in dry periods and to enable the farmers to earn a little money to tide them over the winter. In 1895, there was again a good deal of Government seed grain distributed, but the best farms only harvested fifteen bushels to the acre, the wheat selling at thirty-five cents. In 1896, the crops looked good, but there was considerable frost. 1897 was the transitional year, and marked the swing of the pendulum back to good crops. 1898 was a splendid year and the wheat sold at 60 cents. In 1899 the country emerged out of its pioneer chrysalis. The modern barn replaced the straw-roofed stable; the farmhouse replaced the homesteader's shack. Crops improved, and the price of land advanced. And the loyal tillers of the plains set out with renewed courage, with renewed optimism, and with renewed zeal into the modern period of development, expansion and prosperity.

During this social and economic development, the Church, in the successive hands of many ministers in the morning of their religious life, was undergoing a similar expansion. All of them have been written to for information concerning the events of their pastorate, and all have responded splendidly. After the pastorate of Drs. McLean and Clay in 1890 and 1891, the religious life of both Boharm and Carmel was in the able hands of the Rev. N. R. Gregory, in 1892. The following year, Rev. W. W. Abbot, B. A., preached at Boharm, Westview and Carmel. In '94 Rev. H. L. Smith preached at Boharm, Eastview and Coventries. He was followed by the Rev. Frank Wootton, who looked after the missions of Boharm, Eastview and Carmel in 1895. During the next year, 1896, Rev. Mr. Robinson superintended the same field. In 1897, Rev. Arthur Barner, at the present time Superintendent of Indian Schools for Alberta, was at Boharm and Cottonwood. In 1898, George Elmett preached at Caron, Boharm and Carmel, continuing his pastorate in 1899. The year marking the inception of the Twentieth Century saw the Boharm Church in the hands of the Rev. Dr. Darwin. This year witnessed the rebuilding of the schoolhouse. This structure was among the best rural school buildings in the Northwest Territories.

During this year the first organized choir was inaugurated by the purchase of an organ, which was admittedly superior to its predecessor the tuning-fork, even when the latter was sounded by the practised and expert hand of Mahlon Johnson, Boharm's leading tenor. Mrs. E. N. Hopkins was the first choir-leader, and her son, Erle, at the early age of nine years, the first organist. Mrs. Johnson and Miss Stevenson, sopranos; Mahlon Johnson, tenor; George Paisley, baritone and Samuel Might, bass, were the principal singers in the first choir, which has continued, in an augmented and improved state, to the present day.

In the replies from all these able men, there was one common note - memories retained through the passing of a quarter century of the hospitality, and generosity, and zealous devotion of their Boharm parishioners. The Rev. Frank Wootton says "The families of those days as I recall them were the Greens, Pascoes, Shepleys, Arnolds, Hopkins, Thomsons, Johnsons, Fowlers. I shall ever remember the kindness and hospitality of these people." The Rev. George Elmett, in a moment of reminiscence, remarks "I remember, too, the growing pains of those years, when they called for the best - and I tried 'as much as in me is' to give, and giving all without regret, there is left but pleasant memories to a man, burnt up with fevers, typhoids and winter chills, who is happy in the eve of life to have lived a Pioneer. We live in a different world to that which existed at the beginning of the twentieth century, but even in 1900 Boharm had Daylight Saving, organized sport, Community Church Union, Farmers organizations and held herself ready to move with a moving world. Yours with pleasant memories." We are pleased to note that in spite of the fact that many of these men now occupy the most desirable pulpits in Canada, they have such kind memories of their early pastorate, and wish to be remembered with best regards to their friends of early days.

Dr. Darwin, too, had vivid recollections of the choir and of the "Mutual Improvement Society". Mr. Abbot, receiving for his ministerial services \$286. per annum, remarks that this was hardly a lordly sum for a graduate in Arts, but small as it was, Mr. Abbot will recall that it was the highest salary paid to any minister in the district. Mr. Barner still remembers the long, long trail which winds from Pense to Caron - but years have shortened the distance and levelled the bumps on that road, and it is the friends made and the experience gained which he calls to mind most strongly. Rev. H. J. Smith, too, adds his quota of reminiscences to what has gone before. He perhaps recalls it the more intensely because it was his first mission field. He was fresh from the forge. His letter teemed with vivid experience and pleasant memories; there will always be a soft spot in his heart for Boharm, and for the parishioners of his first field.

The teachers in charge of the "bairns" in the same decade were of a calibre and

efficiency equal to that of the ministers. The following is a list, arranged in chronological order up to 1900:

- 1890 Miss A. Babb
- 1891 Miss McMillen
- 1892 Miss Barber
- 1893 Miss Sydney Simpson
- 1894 Miss Emily Green
- 1895 Mr. J. R. Green
- 1896 Mr. J. A. Munro
- 1897 & 1898 Mr. A. Campbell
- 1899 & 1900 Miss Ruth McClellan.

The best tribute which could be paid to these instructors is to be found in the record of their pupils. Many of these have first class certificates, several have University degrees, and all go forth into life with an education fitting them to be of service to their community and to their nation.

This outlines the development of the Boharm district up to the year 1900. We hope the progress of the succeeding decades will be dealt with in the same way, but this concludes the PIONEER period and ushers in an era of rapid expansion which is by no means ended this twelfth day of July, 1928.

Moose Jaw, July 12th, 1928.

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Property of:

Mrs R W Turner
General Delivery
Hoare Junction

1890
1891
1892
1893
1894
1895
1896
1897 & 1898
1899 & 1900

The best tribute which could be paid to those instructors is to be found in the record of their pupils. Many of these have first class certificates, several have University degrees, and all go forth into life with an education fitting them to be of service to their community and to their nation.

This outlines the development of the Bohemian district up to the year 1900. We hope the progress of the succeeding decades will be better than of the years 1890, but this concludes the PIONEER period and ushers in an era of rapid expansion which is by no means ended this twelfth day of July, 1928.

Moose Jaw, July 12th, 1928.