

Historic Relics Disclose Life Of Lord Selkirk Settlers

By Gordon Rajotte

Lying forgotten near a creek in North Kildonan are a millstone and a block of limestone with a hole cut in the top to form a basin. These precious historical relics of the Selkirk Settler days lie in the yard of an old, empty, weather-beaten house.

The house is the second one going south from the home of D. Y. Matheson, 151 Irving Place, west of Henderson Highway. The creek is Pritchard's Creek, the same creek that runs through the Rossmere Golf Course, a branch of it running to Lord Wolseley School. Some call it Brazier Creek.

Connected with the millstone is a water color painting that just recently became the property of every resident of Manitoba.

The story of how this water color painting fits in with the two relics, the story of the relics themselves, and the old house were buried in the past until this week.

Monday it was announced that Mrs. Guthrie Perrie, an executrix of the estate of Dr. Hugh John Robertson, had donated a large number of the doctor's paintings to the provincial legislative library archives. This meant the paintings became public property.

Dr. Robertson was minister of John Black Memorial Church from 1918-1932. When he retired he began to do water color paintings. A remarkable fact is that he was in his seventies when he took up painting.

Most of the scenes dealt with the early days in the West. He worked from pictures and any details he could gather from old-timers. One of the paintings donated to the library shows a windmill and is titled "Polson's Flour Mill, East Kildonan."

There was a Polson family living near the site of present-day Polson School, the school being named after them. D. Y. Matheson does not believe the windmill was on this site. He believes it was on the other side of the Red River because he thinks the Polson family once lived across the river, possibly opposite Trent ave., but moved over to this side.

Another painting shows a mill with a paddle wheel and dam and this is the painting which has a place in the story. It is

called "Matheson's Flour Mill, North Kildonan."

The mill was owned by Angus Matheson and may have been built around 1860. The dam and its mill were at 1025 Henderson Highway, near the land on which Albert

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Former Local Man Injured In Plane Crash In Germany

Two senior R.C.A.F. officers with distinguished wartime records, who call Winnipeg their home, were among those injured when a Beechcraft crashed in Germany Tuesday.

One of them, W/C Ashman, a veteran of almost 15 years with the R.C.A.F., is the son of Mr. and Mrs. W. Ashman, Lot 119, Henderson Highway, East St. Paul, and formerly of Gordon ave.

The injured airman's mother said Thursday morning that she had been officially notified her son suffered facial lacerations and possible back injuries in the crash.

During the war he served as a fighter pilot and on reconnaissance units. He was commanding officer of the famed Demon Squadron overseas and led that Wellington bomber unit in repeated raids on U-boats in the Bay of Biscay.

He received his early education at Lord Selkirk School and graduated in electrical engineering from the University of Manitoba in 1938.

This is W/C Ashman's first accident in all his airforce service. His wife and children live in Ottawa.

The Morse Place and District Community Club will have a movie picture show tonight at 8.

A whist and social evening will be held Friday in the clubrooms.

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Brazier made his home. His house was used up until a year or more ago by the Kildonan-St. Paul Health Unit.

Somewhere on the creek which winds through the property was the dam and paddle wheel with the mill beside it on the bank. The location may be south-west of the house towards the highway. A rise of land there could be the earthen dam and a walk leading up to the Brazier home may actually cut through the dam.

What Mr. Matheson and I found Wednesday when I called on him to talk about the mill is the subject of the next article.

Historic Relics Disclose Life Of Lord Selkirk Settlers

Second in a Series
By Gordon Rajotte

Last week's article mentioned a visit with D. Y. Matheson on Wednesday, April 8th, to talk about the old mill which used to be near Henderson Highway on the creek north of the hotel.

When I telephoned Mr. Matheson that Wednesday morning he said he used to see three of the stones from the mill lying about, but now he knew the location of only one stone.

It appears that when the mill shut down, the millstones were brought to the owner's home on Grandview st. in North Kildonan, a few doors south of Mr. Matheson, 151 Irving Place, a distant relative of the deceased mill owner.

The home of this relative, Angus Matheson, still stands — the old, empty house noted in the previous article. The owner's son, H. W. Matheson, lived in the same house. The property is owned by the son of H. W. Matheson who is M. H. Matheson, Ste. 5, Eden apts.

When I visited D. Y. Matheson that Wednesday afternoon we

walked over to the old house. Mr. Matheson had said on the telephone that the one millstone whose whereabouts he knew had been set up in a stand on the lawn of James L. Hadath, 154 Grandview, next door to the old house. We saw this stand on the lawn and went over to examine the stone it held. Then we went back to the yard of the empty house.

At the west end of the property was the creek which runs all the way to this point from the former mill site and the Rossmere Golf Course.

Just as we were turning away to leave Mr. Matheson spotted another stone. Under a tree by the creek, a green patch of moss growing on its edge, was a second millstone. It was much thicker than the other one on the lawn as it was the bottom stone of a pair.

The stone on the lawn, the top stone, was about four inches or more thick. It had an iron band around the edge to keep it from cracking under the strain of grinding.

We now had located a pair of millstones. What had happened to the third stone? We had no answer, but at least Mr. Matheson had found a second stone, when several hours previously the exact location of only one stone had been known.

Next week: Where the millstones came from, what the limestone block noted last week was used for, and a further glimpse of the past.

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INTERIOR and EXTERIOR

Historic Relics Disclose Life Of Early Lord Selkirk Settlers

Third in a Series
By Gordon Rajotte

The Angus Matheson millstones discussed in previous articles were cut out of granite rock at Grindstone Point, on the west shore of Lake Winnipeg, north of Riverton.

Grindstone Point is at the tip of a peninsula of land which juts out into the lake, bordered on the north by Washow Bay and on the south by Grassy Narrows and Hecla Island. The stones were brought down from Grindstone Point in Hudson's Bay Company York boats.

Stone masons cut grooves on the inner surface of the stones, that is, the grinding surface, so that as the grain was being ground up it would gradually work from the center of the stones out to the edges. Each stone has a large hole in the center which the shaft went through.

Some idea of their weight can be gained from the fact that D. Y. Matheson's father used to move them with a team of horses to a bridge over the creek. They were used to hold the bridge in place during the spring when the water was high.

In those days the creek drained off much more water to the river than it does now. Today the Springfield ditch diverts some of the water, and for other reasons it is not the creek it once was. It regained some of its old vigour during the 1960 flood, however, when it made its presence felt as far away as Morse Place.

Besides the millstones, I mentioned a limestone block. It has been hollowed out from the top to a point some inches down

in such a way that a deep narrow basin is formed. Grain was hulled by putting it in this vessel and pounding it.

Actually it was like a mortar and pestle, the limestone basin being used as the mortar. The limestone block stands beside the north door of the old vacant Matheson home.

What happened to the Matheson mill is a question I have not yet been able to answer. Was it just shut down, or did it burn down? Angus Matheson did not have the mill as his only source of income, because he farmed on the site of the old home.

In those days the farms ran back from the river in long narrow strips, the house generally being down by the river. This was mainly for two reasons. The river was the source of water, as it was not then in the state it is now, and it provided an avenue of escape in case of trouble with the Indians.

D. Y. Matheson thinks that there may not actually have been much to fear with regard to Indians because he went to school with some of them as a boy at Lower Fort Garry and found nothing to fear from either Indian children or adults.

* * *

Just after going to press last week I learned the present owner of the old house and property on which the relics lie, M. H. Matheson, had died suddenly on Tuesday, April 14. I felt a deep sense of shock and sympathy as that very Tuesday I had been talking to his wife and arranging for an interview with him.

Next Week: Something about the man who told me the story of the mill and its stones, D. Y. Matheson.

— COMING SOON —
WALT DISNEY'S

Historic Relics Disclose Life Of Lord Selkirk Settlers

By Gordon Rajotte
Fourth in a Series

The man who told me the story of the old mill and showed me its stones, D. Y. Matheson, is the great-grandson of a Selkirk Settler. The story of D. Y. Matheson is part of the history of these settlers.

In 1807 Mr. Matheson's grandfather, John Matheson, came out to this country to serve a five year term with the Hudson's Bay Co. At the end of his service he had the option of signing on again with the Company, but did not.

Instead, he went home and came back with his father's children and his father. His father was Alexander Matheson, the great-grandfather of D. Y. Matheson. They came over in 1815.

I have held in my hands the actual title to the land which Alexander Matheson obtained from the Hudson's Bay Co. — the same land on which his great-grandson lives today, although the boundaries have changed.

The title is dated the 24th of October, 1823. It is signed by Geo. Simpson, governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, with D. McKenzie and Wm. Henderson as witnesses.

On the 2nd of June, 1835, there is an entry on the margin of the deed to the effect that a certain part of the land was given over to a neighbor in exchange for another piece of property. The document is originally dated at Fort Douglas.

John Matheson's son was Rev. Alexander Matheson, father of D. Y. Matheson. Rev. Matheson preached at Lower Fort Garry on Sunday mornings. In the afternoon he preached at Kildonan. The man who took the morning service at Kildonan was Rev. John Black. In the afternoon he used to go up and preach at Fort Garry.

It was at Lower Fort Garry, the place where his father preached, that D. Y. Matheson was born and raised. He attended school there and some of his school mates were Cree Indians; in fact Indians were all part of the way of life around the Fort.

Some time ago Mr. Matheson was re-visiting the Fort and a gentleman asked him if he had ever been there before. Mr. Matheson told him he was born there. The gentleman didn't quite believe it. Mr. Matheson decided to prove it to him.

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Historic Relics Disclose Life Of Selkirk Settlers

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He showed him a part of the Fort where there are bars on the windows. It was there that the mentally ill were kept.

Mr. Matheson finished his schooling in the east, returning here in 1891. His family had gone there and then came back again.

On Monday I was talking to a person who was a boy at the time. He remembers people speaking of the Mathesons when they were in the east and saw them for the first time when they returned.

This boy I mention used to play down by the river. Like any normal boy he used to ask questions about things. Thanks to his questions, I have located the site of a second mill on this side of the river.

Up until I spoke to him Monday morning there was no definite proof that this second mill existed, although you will remember there was a painting of another mill mentioned in the first article.

Next week: The Second Mill.

Historic Relics Disclose Life Of Lord Selkirk Settlers

By Gordon Rajotte
Fifth in a Series

In the first article in this series I wrote of two paintings of mills by Dr. Hugh John Robertson, one titled "Matheson's Flour Mill, North Kildonan," and the other, "Polson's Flour Mill, East Kildonan."

Up until last week the Matheson Mill was the only one I had located. Up to that time, it appeared the Polson Mill was across the river and the title of the painting, which stated it was in East Kildonan, was misleading.

The painting of the Polson Mill shows a white windmill with four vanes, or sails. Now there was a windmill operated by Hugh Polson on the site of Luxton School in Winnipeg. He was one of the sons of Alexander Polson who had come over in 1815 and settled down some distance further north in the vicinity of Kilbride ave. in West Kildonan. Polson ave. in the North End is named after the family. This apparently was the windmill in Dr. Robertson's painting.

According to chapter four of "The Selkirk Settlers in Real Life" by R. G. MacBeth, M.A., at one time minister of Augustine Church, the settlers were grinding their grain into flour with querns, a hand mill using two stones. They may have used other methods as well.

Then the Hudson's Bay Company sent out an expert mill builder from the Old Country and he put up a windmill at Point Douglas for grinding. Hugh Polson made note of how it was constructed when it was going up and built one for himself on the site noted. He also built several others at various places. His

Matheson's water mill, both on this side of the river.

The Matheson mill is cited in "The Selkirk Settlers In Real Life" as one of the early water mills. D. Y. Matheson has a copy of this book which was published in 1897. It refers to three water mills, Inkster's, Tait's and Matheson's. The author goes on to state that the mills did not operate too well and there was often trouble with the dams.

About the only time they operated satisfactorily, so the author says, is when the streams were swollen with water from rains or melting snow.

Eventually the only use made of the mill sites was the washing of cattle, the cattle being driven into the mill pond, the book states. At any rate, the transformation of grain into good flour seems to have been somewhat of a problem at times. Next week: Afterthoughts and you.

SHRINERS WEEK-LONG CIRCUS STARTS MAY 9th AT AMPHITHEATRE

The 1953 Shrine Circus will open at the Amphitheatre on Saturday, May 9, and continue through to Saturday, May 16, with matinee performances on Saturday, May 9, Wednesday, May 13, and Saturday, May 16.

The three rings will feature such acts as Josephine Berosini, high wire artist; Marjorie Cordell and Joannie Day, trapeze acrobats; Unus, "the man who stands on one finger;" the George (Poodles) Hanneford Riding Family; the Five Antaleks, high perch artists; Hawthorne's educated bears and elephant; Glen Henry's

grandson is a Winnipeg lawyer of the same name whom I have talked to about the Polson Mill.

At the present moment I do not know if the Hudson's Bay Company erected the first windmill to serve those who lived in the area or primarily for its own use.

Thus far it seemed the Hugh Polson Mill was the one portrayed in the painting. However, last Monday, April 27, I had a chat with J. J. Polson, son of Rev. Sam Polson who lived on a piece of land which included what is now Polson School ground in East Kildonan. Rev. Polson and his father Angus farmed on this side of the river opposite Hugh Polson.

As a boy in the early 1890's — the boy mentioned in the last column — J. J. Polson used to play football in a clearing down by the river. There was a potato patch just west of what is now Henderson Highway which he used to pass by. He saw it being plowed. When the plow bit a little deeper into the soil than usual old wooden beams were unearthed. He asked what they were from. He was told that they were the remains of a windmill.

Mr. Polson says the site of this windmill, owned by Angus Polson, would be on the front lawn of Alex. Brown's home at 488 Henderson Highway, on the river side of the Highway near Ottawa ave.

As Hugh Polson across the river had built his own windmill and others, there is the possibility he helped his brother Angus to build his windmill.

This seems to indicate that Dr. Robertson's painting is correctly titled "East Kildonan" and that he meant this mill and not the one across the river.

There we have two mills, Angus Polson's windmill, and Angus

trained dogs and ponies; Helen Haag's chimpanzees; and George Keller's ferocious lions and tigers.

The clown platoon includes such circus headliners as Irving Romig; Joe (Blinko) Burch, George La Salle, Jackie Leclair and others.



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In the course of a conversation with J. J. Polson last week I mentioned the limestone block at the old Angus Matheson home in North Kildonan. Grain was hulled by putting it in the basin cut into the block and pounding it as mentioned previously. Mr. Polson said that the same sort of vessels were also made out of oak. I asked him if they used any special instrument to beat the grain and he said no. Apparently they just used a stick or anything convenient. He said that the grain, once pounded, was separated from the hulls, or chaffs as it is often called, by tossing the mixture up in the air. The chaff being lighter blew away, leaving the grain.

The process of separating the chaff from the grain is termed winnowing. The only type of grain mentioned by Mr. Polson as being winnowed was barley which they used in soup and other dishes.

I have been using the word grain throughout these articles in the broader sense to include all cereal grains as there is a possibility barley was not the only thing ground up in these vessels.

Mr. Polson said he had a limestone vessel at his home on Greenwood ave. He did not know there

were any others of the limestone type lying about until I mentioned the one at the old Matheson home.

He said he would have to make arrangements for someone else to look after the vessel after he had died. He felt the best way was for an institution to look after such a relic rather than an individual.

This was something that had struck me about the Matheson relics. What is going to happen to them? There may be other relics which are still around in Winnipeg and district but which have been forgotten. Soon they may be destroyed or as good as lost forever.

Besides relics there are also descendants of settlers who have memories about relics or about the early days which would be invaluable to historians. Some of these have been written down but there may be some things that would puzzle future historians which could be cleared up now.

Just what will happen to these relics and memories is up to you. Now is the time, tomorrow may be too late. If you are interested or know of any pioneers who would be, something can be done through the proper channels, the Manitoba Historical Society, the Manitoba Museum, the History Department of the University of Manitoba.

Perhaps you have some relic or knowledge of the Selkirk Settler days. If you are interested those are some of the organizations that would be glad to hear from you. Another one is the Hudson Bay Company Museum.

Do not hesitate to contact this paper if you are interested.

Some think history is dead, but history still has a great influence on the present day. The story of the past is still unfolding too. Since this series started it has been announced that new evidence had been found as to who were actually among those slain at Seven Oaks.

At the same time it should be kept in mind that everything we do today, everything in our way of life as it is now will some day be a part of history.

In conclusion, acknowledgments are made herewith to all those who helped make this series possible.

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