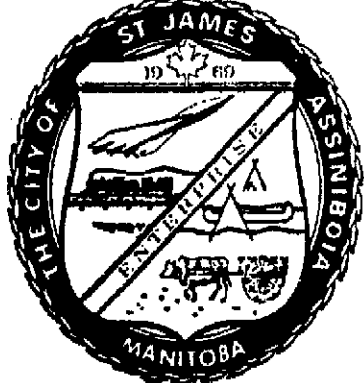


St. James-Assiniboia's development as a key industrial area was helped by the Winnipeg International Airport.



By RON CAMPBELL

St. James-Assiniboia, the largest municipality in Greater Winnipeg, one of the most historic and among the most prosperous, loses its official identity as a city with the coming of central city Jan. 1.

But this area, which in its name holds the historic beginnings of the province of Manitoba and within which have lived some of the province's most famous native sons, will continue to retain its distinctive identity.

The name "St. James-Assiniboia" will remain prefixed to the long-standing organizations of the area and the St. James-Assiniboia Chamber of Commerce will continue.

And the area will have its own community committee — called St. James-Assiniboia, of course.

Mayor A. W. Hanks says that Dec. 31 — the day before central city becomes an official fact — the council will meet at city hall, 2000 Portage Avenue, where a plaque containing the city seal will be unveiled.

Aside from these present-day reminders, the place of the municipality will be preserved in history.

Its history really began June 12, 1811. On that day, documents were signed in London — transferring "Assiniboia" from the Hudson's Bay Company to Lord Selkirk.

The name comes from the Assiniboine Indians — Assiniboine meaning "stone-cookers" — who came north in the early 1700s.

Lord Selkirk's "Assiniboia" consisted of 116,000 square miles, or 74 million acres, extending into the present-day provinces of Saskatchewan and Ontario to its western and eastern boundaries, up to what is now Swan River in the north and into the modern states of North and South Dakota and Minnesota to the south.

The British lord bought this acreage for the equivalent of \$2.50, and undertook to provide the Hudson's Bay Company with 200 servants yearly in the area, while developing a farm colony there.

Sept. 24, 1811, the first Selkirk settlers — 105 men packed into the rickety ship, *Edward and Ann* — disembarked at York Factory after 61 days at sea and from there they went down the water route to The Forks — the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers.

Miles Macdonell, first governor and chief magistrate of Assiniboia, formally took possession of the land Sept. 4, 1812, in a ceremony at The Forks. And June 12, 1813, the first council of Assiniboia met.

Lord Selkirk himself paid his only visit to the colony in 1817, arriving June 21 at Fort Douglas and leaving three months later.

A British-American agreement of 1818, sliced 30 million acres off the southern part of Assiniboia by running the U.S. boundary through it at the 49th parallel.

Selkirk died in the spring of 1820 at age 49, his bankrupt estate in huge debt from his colonizing ventures.

Early in 1834, the Hudson's Bay Company bought back what's left of Assiniboia from the Selkirk estate for \$425,000.

In 1841, the London committee of the Hudson's Bay Company reduced Assiniboia to a municipal dis-

trict, extending in a 50-mile radius from The Forks.

The parish of St. James was founded in 1849 on a grant of land from the company. Rev. W. H. Taylor, arriving there in September, 1850, is generally credited with giving St. James its name.

Eastward, down the Portage Trail running along the north bank of the Assiniboine River, was the tiny shack town later to become Winnipeg, built on the Red River flats.

These were the days when the settlers in this part of Assiniboia farmed narrow river lots, fronting on the Red and Assiniboine for 792 feet, then extending inland two miles, with hay-cutting rights two miles beyond that.

Surveyor George Taylor began the Old Settlement-Belt Survey in 1836, marking out some 1,542 lots for 12 miles up the Red River and 35 miles up the Red and 36 miles along the Assiniboine.

The land up the Assiniboine is preferred because it is higher and dryer, not subject to the severe flooding which often spells disaster for the settlers on the flats around The Forks.

Mr. Taylor's survey was the only one of the area in existence until after Confederation.

In these days, the population of the region was to a large extent nomadic, bearing during spring, summer and fall for the Portage and Pembina Trails on hunts for buffalo and other fur-bearing animals.

It was the fur trade, dominated by the Hudson's Bay Company, which provided the wealth of the region and its raison d'être. Farming was ancillary to hunting and in the early days was done full-time by only a small number of the settlers.

Buffalo, slaughtered by the hunters at first to sell on the clothing markets of Europe, became a primary source of belting as the Industrial Revolution hit Europe and the U.S.

Perhaps two legendary figures produced by that hunting culture lived in what is now St. James-Assiniboia.

The first was Cuthbert Grant, a dominant figure in Assiniboia and a legend in his own time until his death in 1834, when the legend became history.

Grant's greatest contribution in those days was perhaps the quasi-military organization he imposed on the big hunting parties.

During Grant's era, the Red River cart largely replaced the canoe as the method of going to and from the hunt out into the plains.

Using tactics taught by Cuthbert Grant, an Assiniboia hunting party of several hundred not only staved off but defeated by 2,500 Sioux warriors in the decisive Battle of the Grand Coteau in July, 1851.

The 77 riflemen, who pitted themselves against the Sioux in this battle, were from Grantown, near modern-day Headingley. Cuthbert Grant founded Grantown on the White Horse Plain in that area in the spring of 1833.

Taking place at the Missouri Coteau, which divided the Assiniboine and the Missouri River drainage basins, this battle — resulting in 34 Sioux killed — served to stop any further Sioux plans to take on the hunters of Assiniboia.

It was Grant also, in the days before the 1821 union of the Hudson's Bay and Nor'West Companies, who was a leader of Nor'West factions in the fierce fur trade competition between the two groups.

That competition culminated in the Battle of Seven Oaks June 19, 1816, a sort of unplanned confrontation between Nor'West hunters and Hudson's Bay men in which Francois Boucher shot governor Robert Semple dead. Final score: Governor Semple, one settler and 19 Hudson's Bay servants dead, as against two Nor'Westers, and all within 15 minutes.

Grant was part Scot and part Indian and he was a recognized Metis leader. So much so, that in the 1830s, the Hudson's Bay Company created a special title for him, Warden of the Plains, and paid him \$1,000 a year to fill the office. Thus Grant became an army chief of staff for the company on the frontier.

Another figure who loomed large in the pre-Manitoba days of Assiniboia, and who also lived in what is now St. James-Assiniboia, was James Mackay.

Mackay made his name as one of the successful hunters of the era and in 1862 he bought the homestead he was later to make famous as Deer Lodge, where he entertained such names as Lord Southesk, Captain Palliser and in 1877, the governor-general of Canada, Lord Dufferin, and Lady Dufferin.

He knew Cree and was as much at home among the Indians as among whites and all were welcome at Deer Lodge.

When the first session of the Manitoba legislature met March 15, 1871, Mackay was the speaker of the house.

After Mackay's death in 1878, Deer Lodge was bought by H. J. Chadwick. It became Chad's Hotel, perhaps the best-known



MAYOR HANKS

THE FINAL COUNCIL

St. James-Assiniboia city council, which disappears today, was composed of 13 members.

The members of the final council are:

Mayor A. W. Hanks
Ald. Walter Barnister
Ald. David M. Graham
Ald. W. A. Hallonquist
Ald. William J. Kay
Ald. J. Frank Johnston
Ald. Peter Moss
Ald. J. I. Forsyth
Ald. Donald P. Macdonald
Ald. Cam J. Mager
Ald. George C. Winkler
Ald. R. P. Winkler
Ald. Pearl McGonigal

banqueting and general gathering spot in the city from the early 1880s until well after the 1900s.

On the site today is Deer Lodge Military Hospital, which evolved from a military hospital established there in 1915.

Assiniboia was the first Manitoba municipality formed under the 1877 County Municipality Act of the legislature. Now consisting of 127 square miles, the new municipality had its first council meeting Feb. 14, 1880, the year when the settled part of the province was divided into municipalities.

The first warden was William Tait. In 1881, James Green, a member of the original six-man council, was elected warden. Alexander Murray was a perennial reeve of the municipality during the '90s and was reeve again beginning in '05.

After 1880, Assiniboia began to be whittled away until before it amalgamated with the City of St. James Jan. 1, 1969, it comprised a mere 27 square miles.

In 1881, part of it — the Fort Rouge area — was ceded to the city of Winnipeg.

In 1893, part of it joined the Rural Municipality of Rosser and in 1899, a southern section became part of the Rural Municipality of Macdonald.

Tuxedo got going in 1911, splitting off from Assiniboia, and the same was true of the Rural Municipality of Charleswood in 1913.

St. James, with a population of 12,000, separated as a municipality in 1921 and Brooklands, population 2,000, separated in 1922 as a village.

St. James became a city in 1956 and Brooklands a town in '61. The pair merged in 1967. Then, in 1969, St. James and Assiniboia amalgamated to form St. James-Assiniboia, a 45-square-mile area extending from St. James Street to half a mile west of Headingley jail along the north bank of the Assiniboine River. Total population of the amalgamated area is more than 67,000. This area of over 28,048 acres extends north from the river to Geyser Road.

St. James' first reeve was J. W. Godkin, heading a seven-man council. Today, Mayor A. W. Hanks of St. James-Assiniboia heads a 13-man council.

On the central city council, the area will be represented by George Minaker (Booth), Pearl McGonigal (Silver Heights), Dan McKenzie (St. Charles), Eldon Ross (King Edward), Douglas Stanes (Deer Lodge) and William Hallonquist (Kirkfield).

One of the attractive assets of the municipality is its revolving fund of \$6.5 million and additional reserve funds which bring the total to \$9.3 million.

These made St. James-Assiniboia one of the richest municipalities in Manitoba and contributed to making it one of the low-tax areas of the Greater Winnipeg area.

These reserve funds are used for local improvements and capital expenditures.

The reserves were built up after the Second World War, when industry, especially after 1950, began to flood into St. James. Under the guidance of city clerk Alex Reid, the man responsible for sale of municipal real estate St. James sold off the properties it had ac-

quired for taxes during the Depression. By the mid-1950s, St. James was running out of land to sell.

With amalgamation in 1969, new open lands for development were added, and a small amount of development land also came with the deal when Brooklands was annexed in 1967.

In common with other municipalities, St. James' financial picture in the '30s was grim — a consolidated debt of \$3.7 million in 1930, plus \$1.5 million in interest charges, all against an assessment of about \$4 million.

When St. James bonds became worthless, the province's municipal and public utilities board took over the finances, as it did with so many other municipalities of that time.

It was a tight financial situation for St. James until the late '40's. But by 1955, the municipal finances were in top shape — a \$30 million assessment against a debt of only \$2.4 million.

In 1971, the total assessment of St. James-Assiniboia was \$176,700,930, and revenue from property taxes is \$11,175,838.83.

A great asset to St. James, in terms of industrial expansion, and to the whole metropolitan area, has been the Winnipeg International Airport which, along with Canadian Forces Base, Winnipeg, occupies a land area of 4,500 acres.

It started as the 160-acre Stevenson Field, opened May 28, 1928. The field was named after First World War ace and pioneer Manitoba flyer, Capt. F. J. Stevenson, killed when his plane crashed near The Pas, Man., Jan. 5, 1928.

Construction of the modern airport terminal began in April, 1959, and the \$18 million structure was officially opened Jan. 17, 1964.

St. James-Assiniboia now realizes about \$1 million annually for the airport and CFB property, in the form of grants in lieu of taxes from the federal government.

St. James-Assiniboia is a happy, rich, low-tax municipality which won't have much to gain from centre city, at least in the immediate future.

It will have to throw its precious revolving fund into a single pot and with equalized tax rates, the residents will helplessly watch their mill rates climb.

Naturally, the municipal council wasn't ecstatic about the central city idea, though it never voted a resolution opposing it. Mayor Hanks came out publicly in favor of the nine cities recommended by the Manitoba government's local government boundaries commission for the Greater Winnipeg area.

When then-urban affairs minister Saul Cherniack was doing the rounds of Greater Winnipeg municipalities early in 1971 selling his New Democratic Party government's city plan, he had his hardest time in St. James-Assiniboia.

The citizens gave the minister a hostile reception.

But in these trying times, St. James-Assiniboians can console themselves with the glorious and colorful history of their area. The name will live on.

As Mayor Hanks himself said, "I don't see any reason why it shouldn't."

Louis Riel's Home Stands In St. Vital

By PAUL PIHICHYN

Over the last 150 years, St. Vital has grown from a settlement of Metis buffalo hunters to a major cosmopolitan suburban centre in Greater Winnipeg.

And the city's history has been marked by a number of events closely tied with the story of Western Canada.

Louis Riel once made his home in St. Vital and his brother, Joseph, was reeve of the municipality in 1891, 1893 and 1894.

The home where Western Canada's most famous revolutionary hero once lived still stands in St. Vital, and is still occupied by Riel's descendants.

The first record of a settlement in the area was in 1822 when Metis buffalo hunters moved north from the Dakotas and made their homes on the banks of the Red River south of the settlement at Upper Fort Garry.

In 1880 the rural municipality of St. Boniface was incorporated, and 11 years later the Catholic parish of St. Vital was added to the municipality.

The parish, at that time, included parts of what is now Fort Garry, on the west side of the Red River, as well as the area now included in the present city, and parts of the present St. Boniface.

The town of St. Boniface, north of St. Vital, had been incorporated and so to avoid any confusion, the name of the rural municipality of St. Boniface was changed to St. Vital in 1903.

There is some disagreement as to where the name St. Vital came from, but most local historians have agreed the area was named for Father Vital Grandin, a Roman Catholic priest and coadjutor to Bishop Tache of St. Boniface. Fr. Grandin at one time operated a school within the present city limits of St. Vital.

Across the river in Fort Garry is St. Vital Roman Catholic Church, and a school division further south is named Grandin.

Local newspapers recorded 1910 as a memorable year in the history of St. Vital. This was the year the first municipal hall was opened.

Where the municipal council met prior to this date is unknown. Minutes of earlier council meetings fail to record the site.

But the 1910 hall was located on River Road, near a ferry landing. This location allowed residents in the municipality living on the west side of the river to get to the hall to conduct their business.

However, the hall was moved a year later to another site at St. Mary's Road and Lennox Street.

The following year, 1912, the area on the west side of the river was separated from St. Vital and became the municipality of Fort Garry. Sections to the north were added to St. Boniface and the municipality took on its present boundaries — Carrier Street on the north, the Red River on the west, the Seine River on the east, and what is now the Red River floodway on the south.

In earlier years, St. Vital was a predominantly French-speaking settlement. Its first reeve, Victor Mager, was elected in 1880, and all subsequent Reeves until 1910 were French-speaking.

Reeve Mager remained in office until 1888. Then Simon Trudeau held the office until 1891, when Joseph Riel, Louis' brother, was elected.

Riel was defeated the following year, and Pierre Dumas became reeve. It was Riel again in 1893 and 1894, followed by a period of eight years when Dumas, and Mager, by now an old man, served alternate terms of office.

In 1910 Richard Wilson, the first English-speaking councillor, was elected. He convinced council that the minutes, and all municipal records, should be kept in both French and English.

Wilson became reeve in 1912 and a year later French was dropped entirely as an official language, and all municipal business was conducted in English.

Reeve Wilson was concerned about the future of St. Vital. He could see it was being isolated from the growing cities and towns to the north — Winnipeg and St. Boniface.



In 1912 he wrote in a local newspaper:

"St. Vital is one of the oldest settlements in the vicinity of Winnipeg of which very little is known by the general public. . . In fact, only a small percentage of the residents of Winnipeg could give an intelligent idea of its location."

Wilson is said to have been a popular reeve, who did much to have St. Vital recognized throughout the Greater Winnipeg area.

However, in 1918 he was defeated by Alex Todd, who was reeve until 1920. Then James Barton served a two-year term until 1923.

John Kelly was elected reeve in 1923, and his term in office was one of the stormiest in the municipality's history.

He was involved in a series of conflicts with his councillors.

Early in 1924 these disputes came to a head and he resigned after vetoing a decision of council to sign an agreement with the Winnipeg Electric Railway Company. The company was seeking exclusive rights to sell hydro-electric

power to the municipality. Council overturned his veto and Kelly felt he had no choice but to resign.

Herbert C. Seagram ran in the subsequent by-election and won. He remained reeve until 1926.

But that year St. Vital fell under the Winnipeg and Suburban Municipal Board — an early form of amalgamation.

Seagram served as St. Vital's representative on the board until the board was abolished in Dec. 31, 1927.

When St. Vital returned to municipal government in 1928, Leo Warde was the reeve.

H. G. Wyatt replaced Warde in 1931, and in 1933 George Elsey took office until 1938.

Two Reeves, Clark and Van Inderstine, held office between 1938 and 1945.

A. H. Leech, began his term in office as reeve in 1946, but provincial legislation in 1947 abolished the title reeve and he became Mayor Leech — the first mayor of St. Vital.

Elsworth Bole was mayor from 1949 until 1952, and he was succeeded by Harry Paul, who served until 1959.

Fred Brown was mayor of the municipality until 1961, and in 1962 when St. Vital achieved city status, Harry Collins was elected.

Mayor Collins served until 1966, when Jack Hardy took over. Mayor Hardy resigned in 1970 when he moved out of the province, and council elected Alvin Winslow as mayor.

St. Vital has remained a residential area throughout its history, and while it has kept pace with other area municipalities, it can boast no major industrial complex. It does have a large agricultural sector.

The population in 1917 was 1,800 and this year, within its 22 square mile area, it is over the 35,000 mark.

On Jan. 1, when its mayor and six aldermen are gone, due to creation of a 51-man central city council to cover Greater Winnipeg municipalities, St. Vital will retain an identity through its three-man community committee.

And service clubs and other organizations have no intention of removing "St. Vital" from their names.

The St. Vital Chamber of Commerce, for example, which has never been incorporated, recently applied for incorporation. It will retain St. Vital in its name.

One of the major community events in St. Vital is the Chautauqua Festival, which is held annually. It is sponsored by the chamber and other local groups.

A spokesman for the festival said in a recent interview that plans are for the event to continue, and application has already been made to the finance committee of the new city council for a grant toward the operating costs.

St. Vital city council ceases to exist after today. Members of the final council are:

Mayor A. A. Winslow
Ald. Florence Pierce
Ald. Richard Willows
Ald. J. M. Deniset
Ald. S. M. McMurray
Ald. Al Ducharme.

J. C. Stangl

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MAYOR WINSLOW

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IN 1909 THE POPULATION OF WINNIPEG WAS 122,390

IN 1971 THE POPULATION OF WINNIPEG IS 534,685

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