

EVIDENCE OF FRED S. LAWRENCE, JUSTICE OF THE PEACE OF FORT VERMILION, PEACE RIVER, HEARD BEFORE THE SELECT COMMITTEE, APRIL 3, 1907.

Mr. Lawrence, whose name is familiar throughout the west on account of his services in connection with original research and systematic exploration, explained that his father went out to the Peace river from Montreal in 1879, in the employ of the missions, becoming at once interested in the problem of making the missions and Indian schools in the Peace river, and the whole northern country self-sustaining. On account of the experimental work done in this desert country by his father and his family, they had come to be regarded as a freak family. His father succeeded with his experiments, so much so that witness got the idea into his head that it might be a good thing to try agriculture as a business, and follow it up by the milling industry. That is how the Peace river country at the present time is being known to the world as a grain-raising district, and not as a trapping or hunting settlement. The settlement of Fort Vermilion is in latitude $58\frac{1}{2}$, almost as far north as the northern part of Labrador.

It had been supposed for many years by the majority of the people of Canada as well as of the other parts of the world, that the country to the north of the present city of Edmonton is a wilderness, a country entirely unsuited for settlement, suitable only for Indians. One white man once said, it was no place for a white man, but witness could show that it was a fine country for white people to live in.

AGRICULTURE.

As an example of what the Peace river country can produce, Mr. Lawrence laid upon the table a sample of No. 1 Hard wheat, raised there last year. He explained that he had obtained the sample from the miller in charge of the Hudson Bay Company's roller process flour mill at Vermilion, who told him that it was an average sample of the 22,000 bushels he had in the mill at the time. It was not a selected sample, but only an average of the wheat in hand at Fort Vermilion.

The grain raised there last year and for some time past has been of the quality known as the Ladoga, a variety introduced there by the Lawrences, and obtained from the experimental farm at Ottawa, some years ago. It all started from a two-pound sample. They tried Red Fife and other varieties, but in the early times, not understanding the conditions of the soil and climate, they found the Red Fife and other wheats were not as successful as they wanted them to be, so they tried the Ladoga and Onega wheat. The Ladoga proved to be the best, and in the years following the first experiment they had enough seed to discard the use of other seeds, and sowed the Ladoga wheat exclusively.

Mr. Lawrence said he presumed that at the present time this variety of wheat, which was Ladoga, would be so different from the Ladoga wheat that is raised in Ottawa, that they would bear no resemblance to each other, because this wheat used to be a soft wheat, while the sample produced, and which was just as it came from the field, is called a hard wheat by men who understand milling.

Last year the witness tried four acres of Red Fife wheat, and sowed it alongside of the Ladoga, and it ripened on the same date as the Ladoga. He has cut spring wheat fully matured in 86 days.

As to the soil, many supposed that the Peace river valley, as a valley, was a low lying section of land in the bottom of the river. It is spoken of as 'The Valley' by many people, and they think that it extends from the mountains on to the Arctic ocean