

## The Hard Wheat Belt.

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## ANOTHER KLONDIKE.

The St. Paul Pioneer Press Correspondent on the Edmonton District.

The St. Paul Pioneer Press of Feb. 7th contained the following description of Edmonton district:

"Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, Feb. 4, 1898—After a week's stay in this Northwestern city I am not prepared to say that the new gold fields

Minneapolis and without duty it would be a formidable rival of the Minnesota No. 1 hard.

It should be borne in mind that as an agricultural district Edmonton is in its infancy. In speaking of Edmonton in this article I use it for convenience as covering the northern section of Alberta. The southern section of Alberta, including the Calgary district, is at present devoted very largely to stock raising, and but little general agriculture.

The population of the Edmonton district is placed at 20,000, but even so small a number is doubtless liberal. A very considerable portion of the farmers are from the United States, having been attracted here by the fertility of the soil. Iowa, Minnesota and especially the Dakotas have contributed handsomely to increasing the population of this part of Canada.

### IMMENSITY OF AREA.

The committee of the Dominion senate appointed to ascertain the possibilities of this great Northwest stated in their report that there is a river navigation of about 2,750 miles, of which 1,390 miles are suitable for stern wheel steamers, which, with their barges can carry 300 tons,

growth of potatoes, and 407,000 square miles suitable for wheat and other small grains. There are 860,000 square miles adapted for stock raising, 29,000 of which is open prairie, the remainder being more or less wooded. Of this they estimate 274,000 square miles, including the prairie, to be arable land. Here is, in the main, an unoccupied and fertile empire.

### PETROLEUM.

But even this is not all, as in another portion of the report the committee says:

"The evidence submitted to your committee points to the existence in the Athabasca and Mackenzie valleys of the most extensive petroleum fields in America, if not in the world."

The government is now engaged in sinking wells at Fort McMurray on the Athabasca river, 350 miles from Edmonton, and on the Pelican river, 120 miles from Athabasca Landing. Tar crops out on the surface at points along the Athabasca river in sufficient quantities to be gathered in its crude shape and used by the boat builders for caulking. This is a good oil indicator. The belief here is very general that great oil wells will be developed in this region by the government explorations.

The capacity of this country is estimated by the senate committee to be sufficient to support the combined population of Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Austria and parts of France and Russia.

### STATISTICS FOR FARMERS.

The average date of seeding is the middle of April and the harvest sometimes begins as early as the 5th of August, but the average date is about the middle of August. Haying begins about the 20th of July. Frost very rarely injures crops and usually only those late sown. The rainfall averages about 20 inches. The summers are cool and do not parch the ground, the mercury never going above 92 degrees and seldom as high as that.

The winters are long and cold, but the reports of extremely low temperature are based upon exceptional weather and are not the rule. It is the low range exceptions which have given Edmonton its cold reputation. With the exception that there is good sleighing; though not deep snow, I find the weather no more wintry than when I left St. Paul, and then it was exceptionally mild for Minnesota.

### YIELDS AND PRICES.

The average yield of wheat in 1894 was 37½ bushels to the acre and in 1897 it was 35 bushels,



Farm Scenes in Manitoba

so many are en route to explore are the greatest source of wealth to this section of country.

They will add to its wealth by the increased market afforded for agricultural products, but right in the soil of Northern Alberta is a wealth concealed, better even than gold mines and more easily attainable.

### THE SITUATION CHANGED.

By far the greater part of its century of existence Edmonton has been without means of reaching a market, and hence the inducement for agricultural development did not exist. Now the scene is changing. Railroads and the gold excitement combined have created a market and brought it to its doors.

Every man who goes North from Edmonton to the new gold fields (and they are going by the thousand) relies upon Edmonton for his base of supplies, and Edmonton in turn draws upon the surrounding country. The development of the Northern country will not be a transient affair like that at Dawson City, because people can live here. The gold excitement is the means to the end. It will bring thousands of people to the country to stay who would otherwise never have even visited it at all.

### REACHING THE KOOTENAY.

The great and already populous Kootenay district of British Columbia has been largely a sealed book, supplies going in from Spokane, Wash., but the railroad now being constructed through the Crow's Nest pass is practically an extension of the Calgary and Edmonton line, and affords direct communication from Northern Alberta to the cities, towns and mining camps of the Kootenay.

### SUPERIOR WHEAT

Thirty years ago, when Edmonton was a thousand miles from anywhere and several thousand from other places, I remember of samples of Saskatchewan wheat being sent to civilization and attracting marked attention by its superior quality. If within a marketable distance from

while the remaining 1,360 miles can be plied by light draft sea-going vessels.

The combined river and lake navigation covers 6,500 miles and could be connected with



Picnic Party in Manitoba

Victoria and Vancouver by way of the mouth of the Mackenzie, the Arctic ocean and Behring strait to the Pacific. The committee adds:

"It is now connected on the south by ninety miles of wagon road between Athabasca Landing and Edmonton with navigable water in the Saskatchewan river."

This brief statement shows the possibilities of an almost unlimited market for Edmonton.

The committee also states that this Northland has 656,000 square miles adapted to the

which is about the crop to be relied upon. Oats average about 50 bushels, barley 38½ bushels of 49 pounds, potatoes 300 and turnips 340 bushels. Wild hay yields two tons to the acre and sells for \$1 per ton. Wheat is bringing 60 cents, oats, barley and potatoes 25 cents each per bushel.

The sales of the 1897 crop already amount to 1,000,000 bushels of wheat, 1,500,000 oats and 300,000 barley. These yields are none of them exceptional, but according to past experience be relied upon for the future.