

# Manitoba.

## Oak Lake Country.

FERTILE FIELDS AND SCENIC BEAUTY.

A writer in the *Free Press* says: "The western portion of Manitoba is being rapidly settled and already gives promise of being one of the most prosperous sections of the province. Some parts of it are comparatively little known, yet merit more than a passing notice on account of the fertility of the soil and general prosperity attending the efforts of settlers who have gone in there within the last few years. The section of country around Oak Lake station, 165 miles west of Winnipeg, is a notable instance of this. Six years ago there were few if any settlers in that locality, but now there is the flourishing village of Oak Lake, and a thickly settled and prosperous farming community around it. The village which is shortly to be incorporated is in the municipality of Lansdowne in the county of Dennis, and has now a population of about 500 souls.

The soil in the vicinity is a fine sandy loam, the fertility of which has been fully established by the large quantity of grain that has been marketed at this point, in the last three years. Only a few years ago, it was the winter home of vast herds of buffalo that sought shelter in its forest glades and many bluffs. It was an historic spot in Indian life, and Hudson Bay traders yet living, recount interesting reminiscences of its aborigines. The buffalo are extinct, and the nomads too, save some 600 Sioux Indians who are exiles from Dakota as a result of the Custer massacre. Their reservation is a few miles northeast of Oak Lake, and a few days ago they had a great pow-wow in what is known as the dog feast. The region is known for its scenic beauty.

The prairie is undulating and covered with beautiful bluffs. The latter are interspersed at intervals with many beautiful farms covered, at this season, with countless numbers of stacks of grain. Herds of cattle and droves of sheep have replaced the buffalo, giving evidence, that settlers are fast realizing the importance of mixed farming. The Leland House and two other hotels cater to the needs of the farmers who market their grain at this point. There are two large elevators at the station; Ogilvie's having a capacity for 25,000 bushels of wheat, and that of Roblin & Armitage, room for storing 30,000 bushels. The principal feature of the place, however, is the magnificent roller mill of Leitch Bros., with a grinding capacity of 250 barrels a day. This is one of the finest mills outside of Winnipeg in the province, and has every modern appliance. There is a grain elevator adjoining the mill having a capacity for 35,000 bushels of wheat, and another warehouse that will store an additional 25,000 bushels. Threshing has already begun, and from 40 to 50 teams per day can be seen selling or storing wheat at the elevators. This average will keep up for the next three months, during which time some 500,000 bushels of wheat will be marketed. There are a number of fine stores in the village, Mr. E. Dickson, M.P.P.,

for Lansdowne, being one of the leading merchants. One is forcibly impressed in watching the farmers drive into town with the fine horses they own. The Messrs. Leitch, too, have some excellent horses. The writer of this sketch was treated to a drive some five miles north to the Assiniboine valley behind as fine a pair of thoroughbred horses as ever trod turf. The gait at which they travelled was a lively one, and the day being fine was heartily enjoyed, as was a subsequent drive of 15 miles to Virden. The Messrs. Leitch settled at Oak Lake in 1897, and success has rewarded their enterprise. Their fine establishment is a boon to the Oak Lake country and a credit to the province of Manitoba.

The scenery is very picturesque at the valley of the Assiniboine to the north, as well as around Oak Lake, a lovely sheet of water, some six or seven miles southwest of the town. The lake, now that shooting season has set in, is a resort for sportsmen from all parts of the province. Geese, duck and even swans are plentiful and the bluffs abound with chicken, making the region a veritable hunters' paradise. A singular incident has occurred owing to Plum Creek having become disconnected with the lake. Pike or jackfish that once were so plentiful, are now extinct, the Indians having fished all that remained. No regret is expressed at this, for when the new fish hatchery is in operation, a fine opportunity will be afforded for stocking this lake with whitefish, trout, carp and other good varieties of food fish. The lake is nine miles in length by four miles in width. There is a large French half-breed settlement and Belgian colony in the vicinity of Oak Lake."

## Town and Country Residents.

In a country like Manitoba that offers such peculiar advantages to those who have strength and capacity to enjoy country life, it is remarkable that so large a proportion of the population resort to the cities and towns. Probably one-third of the entire population is to be found in business centres, engaged in various occupations, some of the employments not always the most secure. The object or inducement is, in many cases, the hope of obtaining immediate comfort or suddenly acquiring wealth, and but little regard is had for future advantages, which this fine agricultural country offers so generously to individuals of industrious habits who desire to make comfortable homes and become independent. It might be thought that the opportunity that exists in Manitoba for securing on easy terms, cleared farms of three hundred and twenty acres each, capable of producing every ordinary article of food in constantly increasing abundance, would be an irresistible temptation, especially to young men who love free life in the open air, where even the exertion of strength is an enjoyment. The man who can skilfully and successfully manage a farm in Manitoba should rank high in the social scale, for he owns his own fields, his own houses, his own cattle and horses; he builds his own stacks and markets his own grain; his accomplishments are varied and of a kind that requires strength of body as well as an intelligent mind. The Manitoba farmer may not

talk so fluently and correctly as his cousin from the town, nor act so gracefully, nor dress so neatly, but he can engage in undertakings that would appal a resident of the city. He can curb and control the wildest and most untractable horses; he can survey a vast field of grain and with his powerful team and ready binder lay the whole in well bound sheaves in a remarkable short space of time. In advancing the settlement and in stimulating the progress of a country, the farmer takes a place in the front rank and all others follow in his footsteps. The doctor, the lawyer, the merchant, the minister, the school teacher, the builder, the blacksmith, the manufacturer, and even the locomotive on the railway, must follow or accompany the farmer and his plow, which feeds the world. When the cost of the farmers outfit and the varied character of his labors are considered, the agriculturist cannot be considered a poor or an uninforming man, for when he takes his seat on a costly binder to which three valuable horses are attached, and proceeds to cut a hundred acre field of wheat, he really drives a more expensive carriage and a more splendid team, over a more valuable road, than that owned or taken by the wealthiest gentleman in the land.—*Pilot Mound Sentinel*.

## Grenfell, Manitoba.

From the *Brandon Mail*.

This is to a large extent an English town, and surrounded by an English settlement, though to the north there is a well settled, prosperous German settlement. The Germans, as a rule, did not bring means, but they are rapidly acquiring them, many of the number will be wealthy. In the south are situated the English settlers for the most part. Many of the number brought in considerable means, and are receiving annual remittances, from the land of shekles and fat beef. Every year augments the number so that the "roll of sovereigns continue." Many of the latter are fast acquiring the ways of successful agriculture in the country, though still retaining the usages and customs of the Old Country and indulging them here as well as circumstances will permit. "The 'are and the 'ound" is a favorite amusement.

The town itself is really one of the most progressive along the line. There was a time when the hotel accommodation used to be a terror to the travelling public; but this is now effectually changed, as Mr. R. A. Copeland has erected one of the best buildings in the Canadian Northwest. In size it is practically 60x66 feet, two-stories high, though the rear part consists of two wings with an alley way between. The building is made of granite stone, and contains 35 bedrooms, and other apartments in proportion.

The educational institutions are a good school under Mr. McLeod; English, Methodist, Presbyterian and Baptist churches under the Revs. Beal, Love, McLeod and Marshall respectively.

There are here lodges of Orangemen, Templars and a flourishing Agricultural Society with a hall of their own and a membership of 80. Messrs. Lake and H. Coy are president and secretary-treasurer.