

SASKATOON'S RAPID GROWTH

Has Been Accompanied by Increased Prices of Land—
The Subdivision Game—Business Men and
Conditions of To-day

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The conditions prevailing in the real estate market at Saskatoon have given rise to the unfavorable reports which have been circulated with respect to the general business situation there, and it is worth while to discuss briefly those conditions and their relation to the whole commercial scheme of things. In so doing one must bear in mind the position that the city has occupied since its wonderful progress began about ten years ago.

It has practically sprung from nothing to a commercial centre of more than 25,000 people, all within a decade, and it has been compelled to depend largely upon its own experience at it went along.

The growth has been accompanied by many advances in prices of land. Let us see what the history of Saskatoon's real estate activity has been. In the early days it was possible to buy lots on the principal thoroughfares at \$10 to \$50 per front foot. A year later it was possible to sell them at \$20 to \$100 per foot. The new purchasers could hold for a year and sell out at practically twice the amount they had paid. As many of the transactions were on the basis of "one-third down, balance in one and two years," the actual profits in some instances were as high as 500 per cent. on the sum paid over.

Growth Attracts Manipulators.

The reason for all this upward movement in values was the growth of population in the city itself and in the country surrounding it. Naturally the opportunities there attracted wide attention, and Saskatoon came to be known as the place where investors, even those who operated on a small scale, could secure huge returns in a very short space of time.

As the city grew and the values of central property rose, however, the opportunities diminished. By the time lots on the main streets were selling at \$500 to \$1,000 per foot a fairly large sum was needed to do business. The profits were as heavy, for the men who had enough money to invest in that sort of land, but the general run of investors could not fulfil the financial requirements.

The residential streets of the city aroused interest when the central property began to shine in the thousand dollar class, and for some years the profitable experiences of land buyers were repeated there. They piled investment on investment until the prices reached a limit where the smaller operators could no longer participate.

In the meantime the sub-division game was being played to the full extent of the law. Farms were surveyed into lots for miles in all directions from the city, and these were represented as offering the same chances for profitable investment as did the real lots near the business district. And it was in this connection that the legitimate land business received its most severe blow. It was impossible to prevent the manipulation of bald prairie and the exploitation of it among thoughtless or ignorant people as Saskatoon lots. From all parts of the continent individuals jumped into the sub-division business because they saw so many chances for picking up easy money from incredulous speculators.

Blooms Once in a Hundred Years.

Hundreds of people who heard or read about the marvelous advances in prices of Saskatoon property have attempted to "get rich quick" by purchasing a lot in that neighborhood.

It is not necessary to say that a large proportion of the money invested in that way has been planted where pecuniary vegetation is slow and uncertain. We have heard of the century plant which blooms once in one hundred years. By the time the next blooming occurs, some of the sub-divisions that are supposed to be near Saskatoon will be in a position to return dividends to their owners.

In the meantime the losers will be sore on Saskatoon, and on the West in general.

While the individual losses sustained by speculators in sub-division stuff are serious enough, they are only the natural result of the operations that were conducted when money was so easy. Some of the men who made money in handfuls while the craze was at its height were fitted by training and business experience for only menial occupations, but their pretensions were ridiculous. It was these characters who were picking up the remittances of careless people in other parts of the world, and they are now joining in the chorus of declamation and distress.

All this is history, although some of it is comparatively recent. The main fact of the real estate situation in Saska-

toon, is that the people who are doing legitimate business there are the ones who condemn most bitterly the scandalous exploitation of farm lands as town lots.

If one-half the money that has been sunk in outside sub-divisions had been invested in the city, in land or in ordinary commercial enterprises, the results to the community and to the investors would have been gratifying in the extreme. The keenest critics of the wild-cat performances are, as I have intimated, the people who have something at stake in Saskatoon itself. They are devoted to their city and to its interests.

They think that it has justified its existence, and they are proud of every stage of that existence. As a wholesale and manufacturing city it has its future in its own hands, and there is nothing which can prevent it from playing an important part in the further up-building of the West. But at no time will the business of buying and selling real estate be promoted to a position among the leading industries.

Confidence in Saskatoon's Future.

I made a point of asking dozens of responsible men in Saskatoon for their opinions on the general commercial outlook, and found all of them imbued with a strong confidence in the future of the city, immediate and distant. Comparisons with the activity of 1912 they regarded as misleading, because there was an abnormal volume of business twelve months ago. They deplored the antics of the wild-catters and felt disappointed at the unwarranted criticisms of Saskatoon that had been spread abroad as a consequence of the illegitimate exploitation of sub-divisions. But they regarded the sudden collapse of this movement as a good thing for the city and country generally. The lesson may have been a painful one, but it had many advantages.

These business men's opinions were based on the observations they had made in the management of their own establishments, and they knew their subject. It was easy to understand why Saskatoon had made such great headway.

In addition to the benefits and bounties conferred by Nature, the human element there is an asset of enormous strength. Any impressions I may have had as to the sound position occupied by Saskatoon were confirmed by conversations with the men who do things there. They are more deeply interested in the permanent soundness of Saskatoon's real estate than any outside investors can possibly be.

They themselves own most of the property, and when they tell me they are pleased with the situation, it is easy to infer that even in the land market conditions are satisfactory.

TORONTO HAD FIRE PREVENTION DAY

Toronto's Mayor, Mr. H. C. Hocken, issued the following proclamation re a Fire Prevention Day:—

Whereas the Canadian Fire Prevention Association have requested that a day, to be known as Fire Prevention and Clean-up Day be proclaimed; and the medical officer of health, chief of fire department, and the property commissioner have reported that this is a step in the right direction, and that a considerable amount of good can be accomplished by this means. They, therefore, recommend that the last Friday in April be set apart for this purpose, and that on this day and the following day the merchants and manufacturers of the city and citizens generally be requested to have removed from their premises all accumulations of inflammable and combustible waste materials, and that in the following or first week in May a general inspection be made by the fire department for the purpose of ascertaining what has been done, and those who have failed to comply with the requirements above outlined.

And whereas the city council have, on the recommendation of the board of control, authorized me to issue a proclamation requesting the observance of the said day in the manner indicated.

I, therefore, in compliance with the wish of the council, proclaim Friday, April 25th, 1913, as Fire Prevention and Clean-up Day, and do hereby respectfully and urgently request our manufacturers and merchants and the citizens generally to co-operate with the city authorities in removing or destroying all accumulations of waste material and to have a general cleaning up of their premises.

The fire department will make a general inspection during the following or first week in May to ascertain to what extent the request herein made has been complied with, and in all cases of non-compliance to urge and insist upon the observance of the reasonable provisions of this proclamation.

In witness whereof this proclamation is made public, and citizens are hereby requested to take notice and govern themselves accordingly.

Grand Forks has reorganized its board of trade on broader principles than it has worked under heretofore. Mr. Fred Clark, formerly of Port Hope, is president, and Mr. Barlee, secretary.