

From that time until 1812, Thompson remained with that latter company, serving them as a trader, but chiefly interested in making surveys wherever he went. From 1805 onward, his efforts were chiefly devoted to the Columbia River district, which he reached from Rocky Mountain House at the head of the North Saskatchewan. He returned from the Northwest in 1812. During the following two years he made his map of that country from the notes he had collected during the previous twenty years.

It was at this time that the Earl of Selkirk secured a controlling interest in the Hudson Bay Co. and had them cede him a large tract of land in the Red River valley for the purpose of founding a colony. It is unnecessary to restate the details of all the misfortunes which followed that colonizing effort. The settlement became involved in the savage conflict between the North-West and Hudson Bay companies, as well as suffering from misfortunes of natural origin which overtook it. In spite of these difficulties and repeated set-backs, by 1821, when the two rival companies were finally united, the colony had become firmly established. Its population was largely augmented at that time by the settling there of many of the employees of the two companies whose services were no longer required when they became one.

Red River Settlement

As already stated, the Red River settlement was formed on a large tract of land ceded by the Hudson Bay Co. to Lord Selkirk in 1811. It became known as the District of Assiniboia. Its government consisted of a governor appointed by Selkirk (or afterwards his executors), and a council (called the Council of Assiniboia), composed of the leading citizens of the settlement.

In 1835 the land rights were returned to the Hudson Bay Co. and continued under their control until purchased by Canada in 1868. Under the jurisdiction of the company, the Red River settlement was governed by a governor and a council, both appointed by the company, although the council consisted largely of the leading men of the settlement.

As surveyors, we are chiefly interested in this first settlement in the west in connection with the surveys of the lands occupied by the settlers, and the men responsible for those surveys. These men were really the pioneers in the work upon which we, as Dominion land surveyors, are engaged.

Fidler's Experiences and Surveys

One of the earliest surveyors connected with Selkirk's colony, was Peter Fidler. Like Thompson, Fidler came to America as an employee of the Hudson Bay Co., probably arriving at York Factory about 1793. But he remained in their employ as a trader and surveyor.

An interesting incident regarding him is given by the Abbé Dugas. In 1809 he was sent with 18 men to open a trading post at Isle à la Crosse in opposition to the North-West Co. The first winter there he was fairly successful in trading. But the North-West Co. did not approve of the mild methods of their agent at Isle à la Crosse which allowed Fidler this measure of success. They sent Duncan Campbell to take better charge of the North-West Co. interests in that region. Campbell immediately asked for more men and built a house a few rods from Fidler's post. Here he installed a gang of particularly bold and lawless men to interfere with the Hudson Bay Co.'s trade and to harass the company's men. Their firewood was stolen, their fishing lines were carried off at night, they were bothered if they went out to hunt, and they found their fishing nets, their main source of livelihood, cut to pieces. Finally the North-Westers became so bold that they came to Fidler and his men and ordered them in a formal manner not to stir out of their fort again. Being overpowered by their superior numbers accompanied by such acts of violence, Fidler was compelled to leave Isle à la Crosse, and the North-West Co. burned down his fort a day or so after he had gone.

Fidler appears to have gone to the Red River district soon after this incident and to have made an early map of that region. Lord Selkirk, in his instructions in 1811 to Miles MacDonell regarding the founding of the colony, refers to

a certain point on the Red River as marked in Fidler's survey. He seems to have been connected with the settlement almost from its inception. In the summer of 1814 he was employed by Miles MacDonell in laying out lands. He made the survey of the boundaries of the District of Assiniboia and a map of the Selkirk settlement. In 1814, in writing to Selkirk, Miles MacDonell says: "We require to have a permanent surveyor that would keep a regular office, and Mr. Fidler might answer the purpose. His Indian family is some objection to him. He is far from being a well-polished man and is not well liked by the people, but I think him a well-meaning man. I set off to-morrow for York. Mr. Fidler takes charge of matters here until my return."

Fidler was a member of the Council of Assiniboia for some time. He died at Norway House in 1822. During his life he accumulated a small library, which in 1848 was incorporated in the public library of the Red River settlement. Vol. 69 of the Selkirk papers contains his journals and his meteorological journal and astronomical observations.

It is interesting to note the instructions for surveying contained in the memorandum of guidance made by Alexander MacDonell as agent for Selkirk's executors in 1821. They set forth that in laying out lots a base line ought to be taken and marked out parallel to the general course of the river without reference to the points or bends; and the boundary lines between lots drawn at right angles to this base line to the river on one side and to the extent of the Indian grant, or two miles back, on the other; all lots to have a front of 8 chains on this base line.

Kempt's Early Town Planning

Another surveyor connected with the early days of the settlement was William Kempt. He came out from Scotland as surveyor for the colony at £100 per annum and took up the work where Fidler had left it. In 1882 he laid out lots on Image Plain, and the following year drew a plan of a village on the Assiniboine River. Thus, at this early date, we find an example of the practice of town planning, or possibly an attempt to solve the problem of a community settlement.

Governor Bulger wrote of Kempt: "He is surpassed by no man I have ever known in zeal and industry in the performance of his professional duties." During the period of two months from Governor Bulger's departure until the arrival of Governor Pelly, Kempt was assigned the nominal charge of the colony. He subsequently returned to Scotland and resumed his profession there.

In the records I have had an opportunity of consulting no further surveyors are mentioned in connection with the settlement until 1841, when George Taylor became surveyor and superintendent of works at a salary of £12/10 under the Board of Public Works. It seems probable, however, that before this time there must have been a surveyor constantly in the colony. The office to which Taylor was appointed was abolished in 1844.

Other Surveyors at Assiniboia

For some time after that there appears to have been no regular surveyor at the Red River, for in 1854 the council of the settlement applied to the Hudson Bay Co. for the appointment of a good surveyor. In the following year the council resolved "That a public land surveyor be appointed with a salary of £25, and that he shall be authorized to charge not more than 7s. 6d. each day he is employed by private individuals." William Inkster was appointed.

Mr. Inkster's appointment does not seem to have proved universally popular. The Canadian population were dissatisfied with him, as they could not understand him. He was, therefore, warned that his services under the agreement above mentioned should cease at the end of May, 1856. There must have been some further objections to his work as a surveyor, however, for, when on the 27th May, 1856, it was agreed by the council that two surveyors should be appointed, Roger Goulet was appointed to that part of the settlement south of the Assiniboine River, while it was left to the governor to appoint one for the north side of the river. Apparently, the council at the same time considered they had been