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Flood Prevention Projects to Protect Winnipeg

Unless Works Are Constructed to Control Flood Waters of Red River of the North, Next Inundation at Winnipeg May Cause Damage Totalling Millions of Dollars—Reservoirs, Dykes and Channel Improvements Proposed

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DEVASTATING floods of the Red River of the North in times past have swept over the plain on which the city of Winnipeg now stands, and unless protective works are provided to control or confine these floods in future, the next inundation will cause widespread damage and losses which will total millions of dollars.

The cycle of meteorological conditions which has kept the city of Winnipeg free from these terrible inundations during the recent period of its rapid growth and development, must give place to the natural agencies which, at more or less regular intervals, caused the early floods. While it is not yet possible to predict the actual year in which a flood of given height will occur, yet observations on the Tiber at Rome dating from 413 B.C. to the present, on the Danube at Vienna for the last 1,000 years, on the Seine at Paris for 300 years, and on many European and American rivers for shorter periods, show that floods on any river occur at more or less regular intervals, and while the worst flood may only occur once every thousand years, yet there are

1809, 1826, 1852 and 1861. There have also been spring freshets or high water, such as that of 1860, 1882, 1897, 1904 and 1916, but these were confined within the banks of the river at the city, though on the upper reaches of the river, much flooding occurred.

While there is record of two floods higher than that of 1852, yet this flood probably gives the best idea of these deluges, as in that year the country was becoming settled and records were better kept. Even to-day, visible records remain, as one can yet see the floor in the Convent Building at St. Boniface, over which canoes floated in May, 1852.

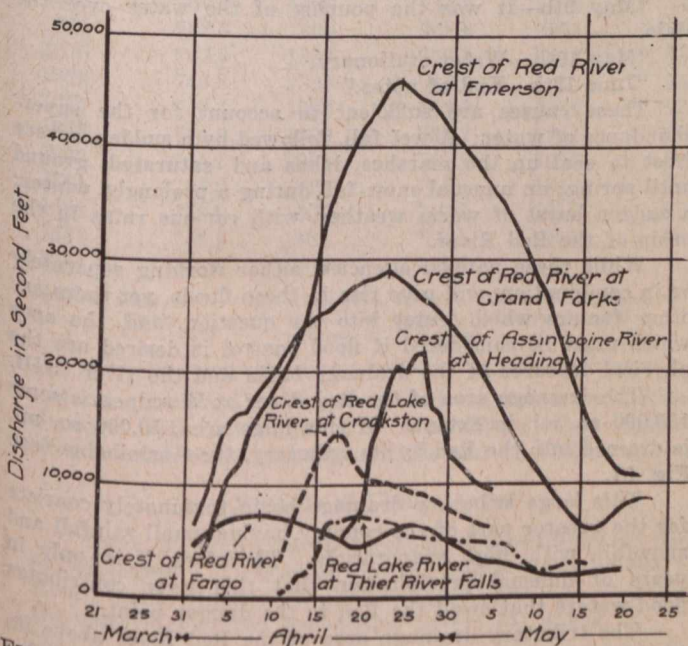


FIG. 1—DIAGRAM SHOWING THE 1916 FLOOD OF THE RED RIVER

other floods which very nearly approach the maximum and for all practical purposes equal it. Such floods as these occur in periods varying from 3 to 100 years.

The records of the Red River show that the plain on which Winnipeg is built has been covered with flood-waters for periods of two weeks or more in the years 1776, 1790,

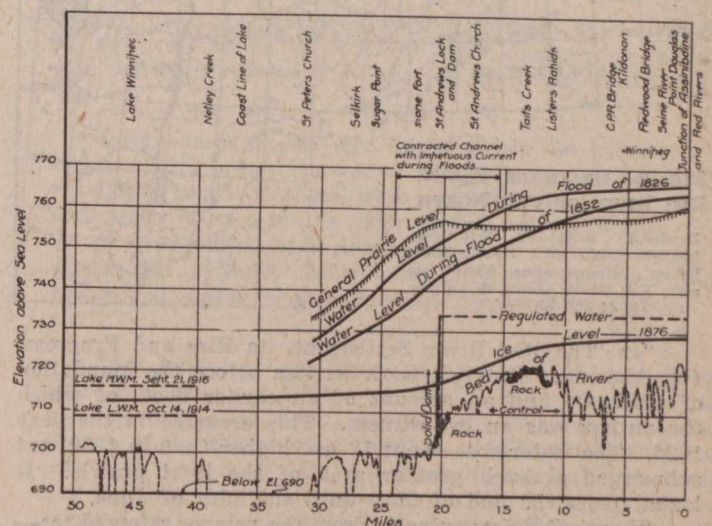


FIG. 2—PROFILE OF RED RIVER FROM CITY OF WINNIPEG TO LAKE WINNIPEG

A very comprehensive description of this flood is given by Sir Sanford Fleming in his report on the Canadian Pacific Railway, 1880, page 265:—

"During my visit to Manitoba, I was favored with an interview with the Archbishop of St. Boniface. His Grace has resided in the country for a long series of years, and has had the advantage of witnessing the annual freshets, as well as several of the inundations. His Grace was good enough to afford me the benefit of his local experience. In the year 1852 the river overflowed its banks and completely submerged the level prairie for several miles on each side. The water rose until it stood at least 3 ft. 6 ins. above the general surface of the ground around the Palace of St. Boniface, and it seemed like a vast lake, extending in all directions. The whole country was submerged from Minnesota north to Kildonan. The site of the city of Winnipeg was completely under water, and the nearest dry land in that neighborhood was at Burke's farm, some four miles