

A portrait of Saskatchewan, granary of the world

Two western provinces, Saskatchewan and Alberta, are celebrating their seventy-fifth anniversaries this year. In this issue, Canada Weekly is honouring Saskatchewan; Alberta will be given special attention in a forthcoming edition.

The province of Saskatchewan is almost rectangular in shape and has a total area of 654,420 square kilometres (251,700 square miles), 81,946.8 (approximately 31,518) of which are covered by fresh water.

Most of the northern one-third of the province is underlain by the Precambrian-rock formation typical of the Canadian Shield, of which it forms a part. It is characterized by innumerable lakes and rivers, wide areas of muskeg and swamp, extensive forest growth and intermittent outcroppings of rock. The southern and most populated part of the territory is essentially a great plain, interrupted only occasionally by ridges and valleys, vestiges of glacial erosion.

The province is trellised by three major river systems, all of which empty into Hudson Bay: the Assiniboine, the north and south branches of the Saskatchewan River and the Churchill River.

Saskatchewan enjoys a dry climate which compensates for the extreme variation in temperature between the summer and winter. The constant sunshine makes the winter more bearable and the summers pleasant. The province is known for its clear blue skies and magnificent sunsets. Temperatures vary between 38° Celsius in summer and -45° Celsius in winter.



Grain elevators at Meacham, Saskatchewan

The over-all precipitation ranges between 27.5 and 37.5 centimetres (11 and 15 inches) in the plains. Regina receives an average of 1.25 metres (about 42 inches) of snow a year.

Population

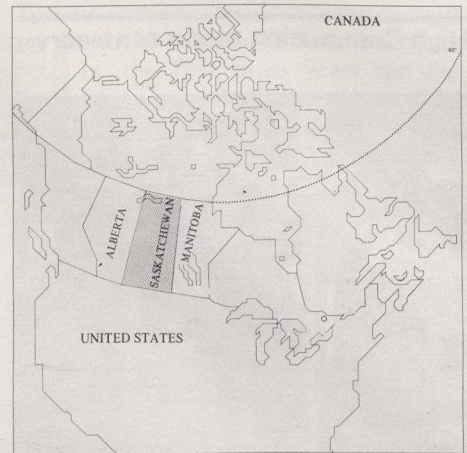
The first inhabitants of Saskatchewan are believed to have been Stone Age Indians who came from Asia about 30,000 years ago. Grouped in bands, they survived by hunting and gathering from the land. The first European explorers and fur traders who reached the north of what is now Saskatchewan encountered the Chipewyans. The Blackfoot were the undisputed rulers of the western forests and plains, while the prairies and plains that were home to the buffalo were the territory of a band whose name remains in western toponymy, the Assiniboine. Later the Cree, a nomadic people, became the dominant band in the province.

In the wake of the explorers, the fur-trading companies set up their posts, many of which have become the cities and towns of today. The Métis, of mixed Indian and European ancestry, who came from the Red River Valley in Manitoba, were among the first people to settle in the province.

In 1872 the Dominion Government adopted its free homestead policy. Drawn by this offer, immigrants came from all over the world to settle in the province.

The advent of the Canadian Pacific railway in 1882 again helped to swell the number of colonists, creating new towns and villages. There are 11 cities in Saskatchewan today. The largest, Regina (population 154,107), is the provincial capital and a training centre for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The University of Saskatchewan is located in the second largest city, Saskatoon (population 135,231). The other cities are: Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Swift Current, Yorkton, North Battleford, Estevan, Weyburn, Lloydminster and Melville.

Saskatchewan has a population of about 945,000 spread almost evenly through its urban and rural areas. Ethnically speaking, the inhabitants are mainly of British origin, then German, Ukrainian,



Scandinavian, French, native Indian, Dutch, Polish and Russian, together with others of non-European extraction.

Agriculture

Grain-growing and cattle-raising have always been the primary industries. Even today, agriculture is the province's greatest source of revenue.

Almost half the improved land in Canada lies in Saskatchewan, where almost 46 per cent of the total land area is used for agriculture. Saskatchewan produces about 60 per cent of all Canadian wheat, recognized as one of the best in the world, and also most Canadian rapeseed and rye. It is also a major producer of barley, oats and flaxseed.

Cattle have always played an important part in the development of the West and they account for 14 per cent of current agricultural revenue. In 1976 there were 2.91 million head of livestock in the province. Saskatchewan also raises other farm animals such as pigs, sheep, chickens and turkeys.

During the past 20 years, diversification and increasingly advanced technology have changed the agricultural picture in Saskatchewan and enlarged the size of the average farm.

Mining resources

Mineral production in Saskatchewan goes back to the beginnings of settlement when coal was mined on the banks of the Souris River near the present town of Estevan; 400 tons were mined in 1887 compared to more than 2 million tons today. All the coal produced is lignite and large-scale strip mining techniques are used. Workable reserves are estimated at 36 billion tons.

The northern region near Flin Flon on the border between Manitoba and Saskat-