

PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE

NOTES BY A COMMERCIAL CORRESPONDENT.

The progress made in this country during the past quarter of a century is almost startling, and few, if any, places can show more growth and improvement than the town of Portage la Prairie, situated on the main line of the Canadian Pacific railway, 56 miles west of Winnipeg. The name Portage la Prairie was given to the spot by the fur traders, many of whom in travelling between Fort Garry and the country to the north of Prince Albert and Edmonton, came up the Assiniboine river to this point and Portage across to Lake Manitoba, thus avoiding the long and dangerous rapids near the mouth of the Saskatchewan river. The Hudson's Bay Company early erected the post here, which is still to be seen, and is one of the "sights" shown to visitors.

When Immigration began to set in to this country one of the first sections to be settled was the Portage Plains, of which this is the centre and principal market town. It was not long before this district became known far and wide for the great crops of wheat produced, so much so, in fact, that the Portage Plains became the standard by which, in later days, other districts were judged as to their value for farming purposes. Soon the homesteads were all taken up, and with the filling up of the country the town of Portage la Prairie began to grow, and as the farmers increased the area of land under cultivation and got into better circumstances the merchants of the town enlarged their stocks and others started in business, so that as the farming community now living on the Portage Plains is considered to be among the wealthiest in Manitoba, so are the stores of Portage la Prairie regarded as among the best in the province. It is some years since a census was taken, and it is, therefore, difficult to state just what the exact population of this town is now, but it is safe to say that it will crowd the 4,000 mark pretty close.

The main business street is a very wide thoroughfare, almost too wide in

cularly pleasant place in which to visit or live.

It has exceptionally good railway accommodation. Being on the main line of the Canadian Pacific railway it has direct connection with the east and west. The Manitoba and North Western railway, for which this was the headquarters for many years, runs through a good section of country, and brings a considerable amount of business to this point. The Northern Pacific railway has a branch from Winnipeg. This was recently extended in a northwesterly direction and a branch also built north to the shores of Lake Manitoba. In connection with this latter branch it might here be mentioned that it is the understood intention to make a summer resort at its terminus at the lake and an hotel and cottages are to be built this summer and every accommodation furnished to campers and other visitors. The Canadian Northern Railway Co's trains for the Dauphin and Swan river districts also start from here. As a result of the excellent railway facilities a large business is transacted with outside points.

With a reputation such as Portage la Prairie has gained as a grain centre we would naturally expect to see some flour mills, and in this respect we find that it is well served. The Lake of the Woods Milling Co. has a very fine flour mill of over 700 barrels daily capacity. This mill was erected in 1882 by the Portage Milling Co., from whom it was purchased in 1891 by the Lake of the Woods Milling Co., who remodelled it thoroughly, doubling the capacity. Everything about the place is kept marvellously clean and the engine room would be a revelation to most engineers. Employment is given to about thirty hands.

A. Brown & Co., of Toronto, last year purchased the mill and elevator of the Farmers' Elevator Co. They have changed the machinery considerably, enlarging the capacity from 200 barrels to about 250 barrels per day. Adjoining the mill is an elevator of 125,000 bushels capacity.

Metcalf & Son have an oatmeal mill of 100 barrels daily capacity. Rolled

and Northwestern and other lines centering here. From May until the end of December last year 105,000 pounds of butter were made and shipped out, principally to British Columbia points. The capacity of this plant is 2,000 lbs. per day and a larger business is looked for this season.

All the different lines of business are well represented. G. B. Housser &

additional stock the Lafferty block, on the opposite side of the street, has been secured and is being fitted up for that purpose.

The premises of the Hudson's Bay Co. are among the finest here. This company has earned a name for keeping the best grades of goods, and their stock at this point can well uphold this reputation. The premises are very



Merchants Bank Building, Portage la Prairie

Co., lumber dealers, have been in business here many years and have been extending their operations until now they have branches at MacGregor, Bagot, Macdonald and Willow Range, in addition to their large yards at Portage la Prairie. In connection with the lumber business they have a planing mill.

Last year the Keewatin Lumber Co. bought the lumber yard of Wm. Armstrong and J. M. Taylor's planing mill and lumber yard. The Rat Port-

handsome and the interior is laid out in a manner calculated to display the stock to good advantage.

The T. A. Garland Company, who have carried on business here for many years in the west end, last year moved their building into the business part of the town. Before occupying it again, however, they had it remodelled and enlarged, making it now 150x52 feet, with three stories and basement. The different floors are fitted up in very elegant style, a special feature being the glass counters and large mirrors, which show off the stock to great advantage. Down the centre of the millinery department mirrors have been placed so that it is impossible to look in any direction without seeing some stock. The entire building is occupied by this firm and a general stock is kept.

Morrow Bros. are among the younger merchants here. A little over two years ago they opened out in the general store business and have succeeded in working up a nice trade.

T. & W. Miller, hardware merchants, have been in business here for twenty-five years. About a year ago they erected a solid brick, two storey block, 60x105 feet, which they are now occupying. This gives them one of the best stands in the town.

There are a great many other good stores here which we would like to make special mention of did space permit. There are two brick yards, pump factories, foundries, two tri-weekly, and a daily newspaper, etc.

The Bank of Ottawa, Imperial and Merchants banks have branches here, which is an indication that a large amount of business is transacted.

By courtesy of the proprietors of "The Manitoba Liberal" we show in this issue photo-engravings of some of the principal buildings here.

The court house was built about six years ago. It is a very handsome brick building and well laid out inside. Adjoining it is the jail.

The town hall is of brick. In it are the council chambers, police station and a public hall.

The fire hall is a solid brick building erected about six years ago. A volunteer brigade is available when required, and the equipment for fighting fires is very complete.

The land titles office is a substantial brick building of one storey.

Possibly the finest building at this point is the post office, which was erected a few years ago at a cost of about \$30,000. It is of Calgary stone and is a very handsome structure. In



Lake of the Woods Mill and Elevator, Portage la Prairie

fact, as it does not show off to advantage the buildings lining either side, many of which prove to be, on close observation, much larger and handsomer than a first glance would indicate. A wide street has its advantages however, and the whole town gives the impression to a visitor of "roominess." This place has many natural advantages to make it a pretty spot. It is built near the Assiniboine river, the banks of which are lined with trees. It would be hard to find a prettier drive during the summer than that along the slough road to the old Hudson's Bay Co. fort, and this is only one of the many pleasant drives to be had here. Great care has been taken also in planting trees and gardens and laying out lawns around most of the residences, so that during the summer months this town is a parti-

oats, oatmeal and rolled wheat of a superior quality are supplied by this firm.

While the Portage Plains are known as among the best wheat producing districts of the world we must not overlook the fact that it is also well adapted to mixed farming, and in some sections a great deal of attention is given to cattle raising and dairying. Along the shores of Lake Manitoba are a large number of settlers who grow very little grain, but devote their energies principally to cattle breeding, dairying and fishing, and in many other parts more or less attention is given also to dairying and stock raising. The Portage central creamery was started in the spring of 1890 by J. Bousfield, who had a creamery at Brandon, but moved his plant to this point with the object of getting the trade off the Dauphin, the Manitoba

age Lumber Co. also established a branch last year under the management of A. R. Stevens, late of Cypress River. They erected a shed 20x330 feet and will handle lumber and building materials of all kinds.

Among the stores we find several with very heavy stocks. J. & E. Brown have been in business here for thirteen years. Two years ago last fall they moved into their present commodious quarters, which were built specially for them and planned so carefully that few, if any, improvements could be suggested. The building is 75x80 feet, three stories and basement, all of which is occupied by them with the exception of the top flat. They handle all the lines usual to a general store, as well as organs, pianos, farm implements and live stock. The implement branch is just being added this spring, and to accommodate this