

EVIDENCE OF HENRY ANTHONY CONROY, OF THE DEPARTMENT OF INDIAN AFFAIRS, INSPECTOR UNDER TREATY NUMBER EIGHT, HEARD BEFORE THE SELECT COMMITTEE, FEBRUARY 25, 1907.

Mr. Conroy stated that he had been annually travelling through this northern country for about eight or nine years. He starts in along the Athabaska river, from Athabaska Landing, which is about 100 miles from Edmonton, and goes up the river to the junction of the Little Slave river, thence visiting all the Indian reserves in the treaty district.

AGRICULTURAL LANDS.

Mr. Conroy explained that the banks of the Little Slave river are flatter than those of the Athabaska. They are not high. Say from Moose river, there is some good agricultural land, some open country. In fact in the opinion of the witness, the most of it, when the timber is cleared off, will be all good for agriculture. When you get up to the southeast end of Lesser Slave lake, the country around there, up to the valley of the Swan hills, is a beautiful country, some parts of it heavily timbered, while other parts are open. Mr. Conroy drove through there last fall. There is some prairie and some beautiful grass. The finest grass in the world grows there, blue top, some of it six or seven feet high. He drove through hundreds of acres of it last fall that was at least six feet high in most places. It has a regular river bottom, and the Swan hills are back about twelve miles from the lake. The basin all the way around the lake is a beautiful country in the opinion of the witness.

THE BLUE GRASS COUNTRY.

The blue grass grows on the high land—blue joint as they call it. It will not grow in sloughs. It is very good grass. It does not generally grow on damp lands. You can get land up in that country where there is no sod in it. You can kick the sod right up, and you can get hay just as thick as it can stand. Witness would not be surprised to learn that four tons an acre could be got off the land, from the looks of it. This grass cures standing in some places, but the great trouble is that year after year it breaks down and the other grass grows up between it, so you could not cut it very close if you wanted to, because there is the old hay at the bottom. Where some of the pioneers cut the hay they burn that portion off, and in the spring it grows up clear, and they can mow it with machines. There is a good deal of open country in that district all around the south side of Lesser Slave lake.

When you get up about 40 miles north of Lesser Slave lake, between that and Whitefish lake, about 44 or 45 miles, there is 20 miles of a rolling prairie country, which appeared as though it had at some time been burnt and the poplar timber burnt off. The feed on the bunch grass there is excellent, and the hills all slope to the south. The opinion of the witness is that it is one of the finest pieces of agricultural country in that district.

Sturgeon lake is about 110 miles southwest from Whitefish lake, which has a wide fringe of low ground. In high water Mr. Conroy had seen it covered with water, but the last four or five years the water has been low in that country, and this low country has been covered with hay. It is not the blue joint grass nor is it the bunch grass; it is another species of hay. Witness did not know what to call it, but when cut it made good hay, and it grows about two feet high and just as thick as it can grow through