

An Epoch Marking Ceremony

Written for The Western Home Monthly by a participant.

Of all the sites chosen for trading forts by the Company of Gentlemen Adventurers trading into Hudson's Bay, none was more ideal than that of old Fort Edmonton. They seemed to have an almost uncanny instinct, those who served the "Company," for laying the foundations of great commercial centres.

Fort Edmonton, overlooking the mighty Saskatchewan, and holding the key of the mysteries of the Great White Land, exerting an ever-growing allurements and interest, for:

Still the horizon calls, the morrow lures; Still hearts adventurous seek the outward trails.

was destined to be the centre of one of the most rapid developments the world has ever seen. The whitewashed walls of several long, low buildings were enclosed by a palisade, for the natives were not always friendly, and frequently only a minute line divided safety from direct peril. The most dangerous period was probably that between 1870 and 1886, for the terrible devastation wrought in the tribes by smallpox, the disappearance of the buffalo, and the disturbance and ill feeling for which Riel was responsible, had made Indians very difficult to deal with.

In the meantime, however, Fort Edmon-

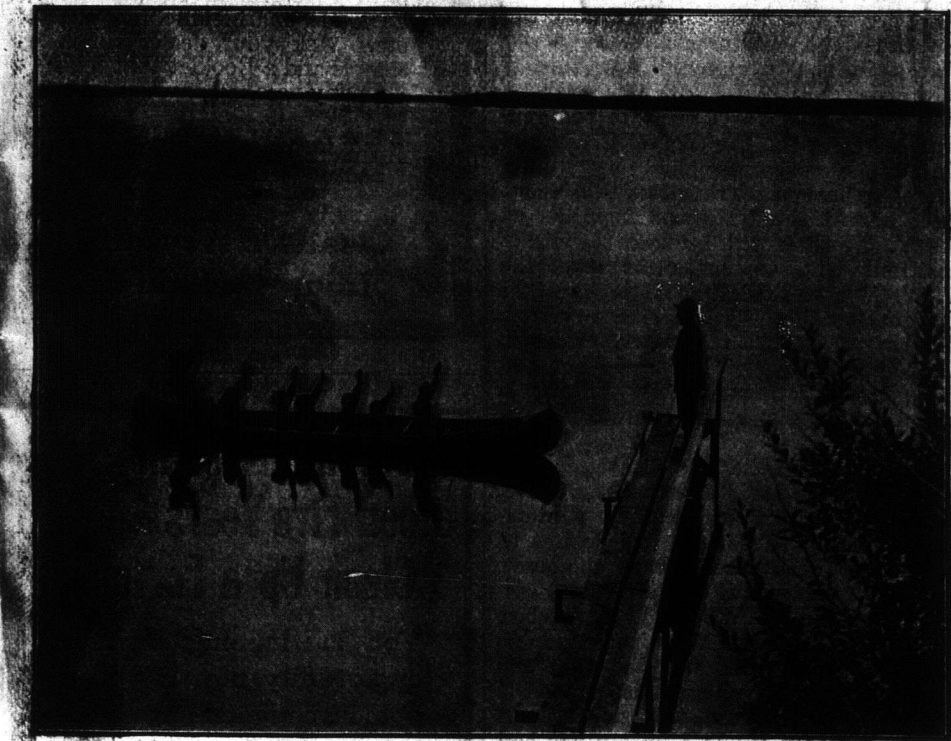
proconsuls, (for did not they stand for the Crown in the wilderness?) gathered in corners and argued the politics of half a century back. Women, who as delicate young girls, had graced court ballrooms in the Old Land, who then considered swooning their best accomplishment, had grown up strong and supple and fearless, and danced through the never-to-be-forgotten Big House Lancers as women of the highest type of heroine, women who would scorn to swoon, even in the face of the most harrowing dangers and trials.

But the Big House saw other scenes; and there were times when the dwellers in it dared not go to the river's bank for water.

During one of these sieges, the water famine became so acute that the Factor decided to dig a well within the confines of the fort. Over a hundred feet deep was the well when finished, but it saved their lives.

When the railroad came in, a new era commenced. The trading posts lost their old importance and need for being; and a day came when the Big House was but a memory. But Fort Edmonton became a great city, the capital of a province, and the home of thousands, drawn from all over the earth.

On Tuesday, September 3rd, 1912, a



A Happy Party on Buffalo Lake, Mirror, Alta.

ton had become one of the most important forts of the North West; for the riches of the North were coming more and more into the coffers of the Hudson's Bay Co.

It was a memorable and never-to-be-forgotten night when the first detachment of Royal North West Mounted Police arrived. The chief factor's new home, the "Big House," had just been completed. It stood on a high hill overlooking the old site. The Indians and the traders and the hunters and the "coureur de bois" came for thousands of miles. From many a soule of the southland, from many a wooded river of the northland, from the frozen expanse of the Great Arctic Circle, to view the Big House they foregathered. A small force of three hundred men in uniforms devoid of gold lace, but impressive with the scarlet tunic of the British Army, had come hundreds of leagues, first as soldiers to quell a rebellion and to rid the North West of the horrors of Indian wars; secondly, to clamp law and order firmly on the Territories.

Some are yet living who remember that three-day celebration when the Big House was thrown open freely to all. The walls were hung not with tapestry, but with furs of untold value, trophies of the hunter and the trapper were everywhere. Haughty Indian chiefs stalked through the rooms, remarked "How" as they glanced at the red-coated representatives of the Great White Mother over the Big Waters; factors, grown white-haired and bearded in the Company's service, impressive with the dignity of

ceremony took place which marked with great historical interest another epoch in the North West.

A building magnificent from a structural and architectural point of view has been built on the site where formerly the Big House stood (in fact the central point of the massive dome is directly over the hundred-foot well of the olden days), overlooking a plateau 30 feet below and commanding a wonderful view of forest, plain and river. It is built on the impressive lines of the classical models, following the lines of the Corinthian order. In this building will the laws of Alberta be made.

To those of the older generation particularly the ceremony of opening the Parliament Buildings had a special significance. A cordon of helmeted police kept the road up Parliament Hill free for the carriages of Their Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of Connaught and the Princess Patricia. Among those standing on the steps to receive them was the first Premier of Alberta, Hon. D. Rutherford, who goes down in history as the shaper of the destinies of the infant province. A guard of honor of the 101st Fusiliers and the Boy Scouts presented arms as the royal party arrived, the National Anthem being played by the band. There followed a historic scene, for it was not merely an official duty performed by the son of a hundred kings, but another imperial stake planted.

As the Minister of Public Works presented His Royal Highness with the key



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