

THE HISTORY OF BRANDON.

At a point some 20 miles north-west of the junction of the Assiniboine and Souris rivers, upon the banks of the former, and where its winding course is beautifully fringed with timber, and the valley of its winding is hemmed in on the north and south by gentle prairie slopes near the spot, now identified for all time by the crossing of the Assiniboine by the great Canadian Pacific Railway, stands one of the marvels of the progress of emigration in what so lately was termed the "great lone land," the City of Brandon.

"No legend hoary nor ancient story" can be recited concerning this, now famous city; her history, so far as dates are concerned is extremely limited, the figures 1881 and 1882 confine the records of the past of Brandon. The name of Brandon will however bear a retrospective view of some extent. The geographical situation of the locality being so near to the Souris and Assiniboine Rivers, two of the principal watery highways of the North-west, warrants the supposition that the district has been passed and re-passed time out of mind, and from a few records it has been possible to glean the knowledge that for nearly a hundred years Brandon has had a habitation and a name.

After the treaty of Utrecht in 1713 which closed the great Duke of Marlborough's campaign, a French officer of distinction named La Verandrye with his family left France for the French colony in Canada. Some twenty years after this the same individual with his sons and an intelligent Indian guide might have been seen on the north-western shores of Lake Superior studying a route which the Indian had traced on a sheet of birch bark, of a projected exploration expedition into the great north-west. It is recorded that they put their design into execution and by the year 1735 they had passed Rainy Lake, Lake of the Woods, down the Winnipeg River to Lake Winnipeg and up the Red River so far as the junction of the Red with the Assiniboine River, and had erected in that neighborhood a position of defence called Fort Rouge. From this point they proceeded westward up the River Assiniboine and by the year 1738 they were occupying another erection of their making, Fort la Reine, near the present site of Portage la Prairie. By the year 1742 these explorers had passed westwards up the Assiniboine as far as Souris mouth, and then had ascended Souris River as far as the grand Coteau de Missouri. From which we can gather without the least presumption that our immediate locality, its hills, its woods and its waters had doubtless afforded subsistence to the indefatigable hunters of the now justly celebrated exploring party of La Verandrye. From this time onward the route which La Verandrye had opened up was more or less frequented by French fur-traders until it became a regular channel for the fur trade, and so important had the fur trade become in this particular locality that the employees of the North-west Fur Company deemed it necessary to erect a trading post near Souris mouth. The North-west Fur Company was formed by a party of Montreal merchants in 1783, such men as the Brothers Frobisher, Simon McTavish and Alexander McKenzie being leading spirits in it. The operations of the company were very extensive and it is said that at one time as many as 5,000 of their servants were threading the various paths of this great country in the pursuit of the fur trade. In the year 1794 the Hudson's Bay Company, being stimulated to greater activity by the success of the North-