

ON THE
PRAIRIE SECTION
OF THE
Grand Trunk Pacific

**CANADA'S NATIONAL
TRANSCONTINENTAL
. . . . RAILWAY**

IN MANITOBA, SASKATCHEWAN AND ALBERTA

For information respecting Town Sites and Farming Lands for actual settlers along the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway application should be made to the Land Commissioner of the Railway Company at Winnipeg, Man.

MONTREAL, QUE.

JUNE, 1908

New Townsites on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway.

More than 100 new townsites are being established along the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway between Winnipeg and Edmonton, as shown on the accompanying map, which include the five railway division points of Rivers, Melville, Watrous, Biggar and Wainwright. As the country through which the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway passes is acknowledged to be the most fertile section of the entire North-West, all of these new towns are situated in good farming or stock-raising districts, and lots can now be obtained at any of the points named by application direct to the Company's Land Commissioner, at Winnipeg.

A full description of the character and resources of the country will be found in the following report:

REPORT OF PROF. J. MACOUN

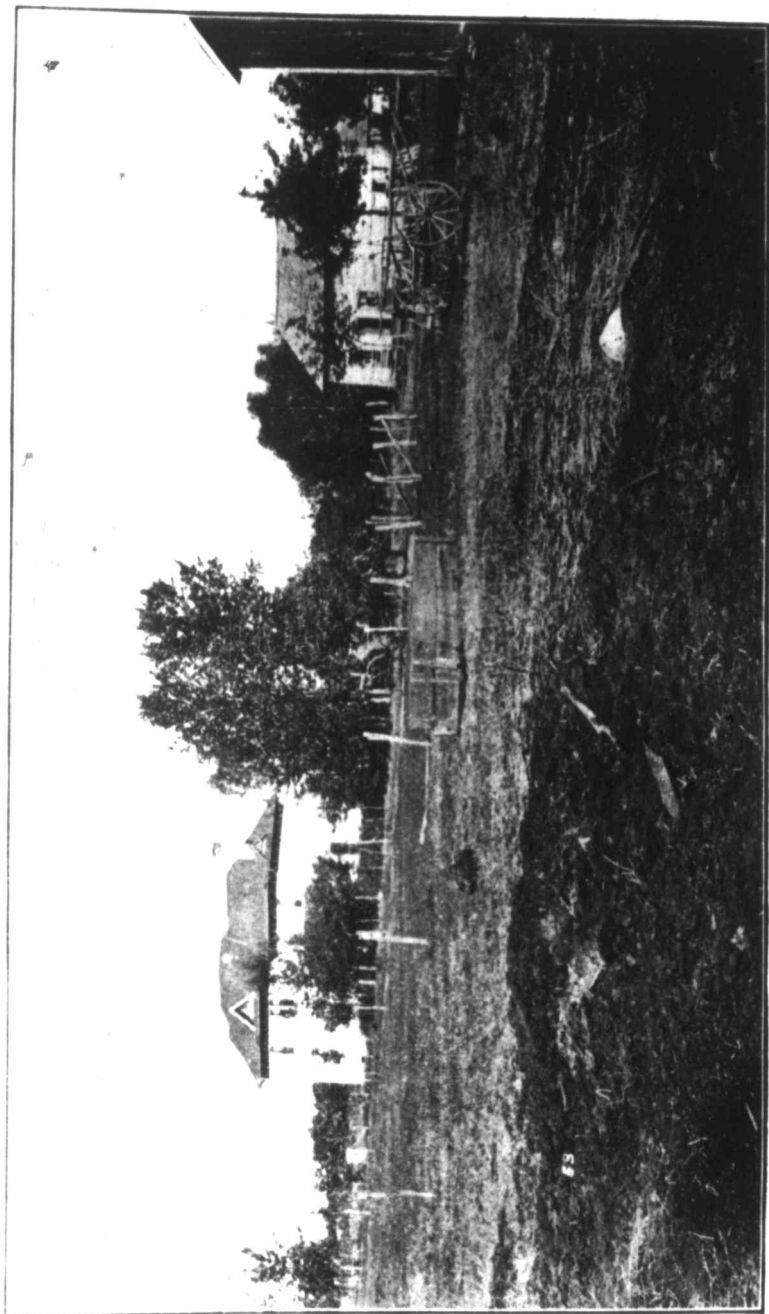
of the
Dominion Geological Survey Dep't, on the Natural Resources
of the Country along the Prairie Section
of the

GRAND TRUNK PACIFIC RAILWAY

EARLY in May, 1906, I received instructions to proceed to Portage la Prairie, and from thence to make an examination of the country on both sides of the Grand Trunk Pacific as far as Edmonton, Alberta. Besides making notes on the agricultural capabilities of the districts passed over I was also to pay attention to the natural history and make collections of plants, birds and mammals. The appended summary will show, in brief, the results obtained:—

Personnel of Party.

I left Ottawa, June 1, and proceeded to Portage la Prairie. My party consisted of Mr. William Herriot, of Galt, Ont., who assisted me with the botany; Mr. George Atkinson, of Portage la Prairie, who came as cook and ornithologist, and Mr. Ben. Younghusband, who had charge of the horses. We were ready to start on June 8, but owing to continued wet weather we did not leave Portage la Prairie until June 11.



The Old and New Homestead—Western Canada.

Thirty-Four Years' Development.

On August 3, 1872, I had been at Portage la Prairie with Mr. Sandford Fleming and found only the Hudson's Bay Company's post, and no settlement beyond Rat Creek. Beyond that creek extended an unbroken, deserted wilderness to Edmonton. Seven years later, when I again passed through, the country settlements were being formed at many points east of Fort Ellice, (near Lazare on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway) and on the publication of my report of 1879, a rush took place to the Qu'Appelle Valley, which has since grown until now a continuous wheat field extends for fully 200 miles. The conclusions regarding the fertility of the soil which I published in 1872, 1879 and 1880 have been practically illustrated by the results obtained by actual experiment. At this time, it is conceded by all observers that the growth of grain throughout the whole of what was formerly called the "fertile belt" is no longer an experiment, but an actual fact and can be relied on for all time. This being a known fact, my work in Manitoba was merely one of comparison with the line of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which lay to the south of the Grand Trunk Pacific. Keeping this in mind, I took the road from Portage la Prairie and passed through Bagot, McGregor, Austin and Sidney (and where are now located Caye, Deer, Exira and Firdale on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway), at which point we left the road and kept on northwesterly, passing near Gregg, Justice and Knox to Forrest. From thence we passed near Levine, Rivers and Myra, camping on Oak River. All the country traversed up to this time had been long settled and, with the exception of the sand hills, was nearly all fenced and occupied. The Grand Trunk Pacific from Portage la Prairie to Rivers passes through the most fertile part of



Out Field—Western Canada.

the district about ten miles north of Carberry, and will draw much traffic from this rich region.

Rich Land Everywhere.

Owing to the absence of roads and the destruction of the old trails, we found it very difficult to get across the country, but this enabled us to see more of the land, and my constant record was rich soil and immense wheat fields. From our camp on Oak river we passed northwesterly to Hamiota, through an almost continuous wheat field, in which are now situated the Grand Trunk Pacific stations from Norman to Lazare, and for nine miles beyond on the way to Birtle the same character of country was observed.

After leaving Hamiota we decided to reach the mouth of the Qu'Appelle by way of Birtle, as south of this point the Grand Trunk Pacific takes the valley of the Assiniboine. Owing to the heavy rains and bad trails we found much difficulty in forcing our way to Birtle. We were well repaid, however, as we were able to traverse many miles of country sparsely settled, but naturally rich, though at present wet and much broken up with ponds and marshes.

Along Grand Trunk Pacific Route.

Our information as to routes being inaccurate, we went from Birtle to Fort Ellice and had to return to the east side of the Assiniboine, and go up the river to St. Lazare where the G. T. P. crosses over to the mouth of the Qu'Appelle. Here we encountered an awful thunder storm, when the rain fell in torrents for twelve hours. On June 29, we crossed the river and travelled by way of Spy Hill, Redpath, Riversdale and northwesterly, to Yorkton. Here we obtained supplies and passed westward to near Willowbrook and thence to Hirzel, where we again reached the G. T. P. From this time forward

we were never more than ten miles from the proposed line until we reached Edmonton, and most of the distance was on the engineer's trail.

All the country from the Assiniboine westward to Touchwood and over twenty miles beyond is more or less covered with wood, although there are often great stretches of prairie interspersed with it. Ponds, marshes, rich bottoms and often numerous lakes are scattered without order throughout the whole country. Owing to the heavy rains of June and early July there was a super-abundance of water as far as Touchwood, but west of that there was a marked change.

Everywhere the soil was rich, chiefly black loam, and wheat, and all other crops were most luxuriant. In the Beaver hills, the soil was excellent and wood was most abundant. At the Indian mission near Touchwood, we found excellent wheat and in the garden at the Post all the vegetables of the finest quality usually found in eastern gardens. For twenty miles after leaving Touchwood, the G. T. P. passes through hills or rolling country all of which could be cultivated, and will be when communication is opened up. This district has many settlers now, and will soon fill as all the soil is good.

Varied Conformation.

After leaving Touchwood the hills began to flatten out and there was less wood and brush and more prairie. Settlers' huts could be seen in all directions after the prairie was reached, and about five miles beyond its eastern limit the G. T. P. took a straight course for one hundred miles to Saskatoon. This one hundred miles is almost all prairie and as far as the eye can see in all directions from almost any point, nothing meets it except grass and flowers and occasional homesteads, where there are



A Western Canada Farm Scene—Village in Distance.

settlers who are established on the open treeless prairie. All the crops were good, no matter in which direction we went, and the opinions I held of this same region in 1879 were amply fulfilled in 1906. There is practically no bad land, and the alkaline flats or "bad lands" of former writers are the best wheat fields of to-day. On these extensive prairies the settler's first work is the erection of a sod house and the digging of a well, and then he is established. Fine oats, barley, potatoes and sometimes wheat were found on last spring's breaking, and some settlers would have nearly all they needed for the winter on land broken this year.

When we reached Saline Creek, or the discharge of Quill lakes, we turned north for nearly two miles, and found excellent wheat, and settlers who had been there for several years. West of the creek the land continued good right up to Boulder (Stony) Lake. Owing to white mud flats at the south end of this lake, we were obliged to travel around the north end of it. Passing up the east side of the lake, the soil became sandy, but the crops were equally as good as those on heavier soil.

After passing round the head of the lake we had four miles of boulders to cross where the land was useless as the stones were quite close together. Passing these the country continued level for ten miles, then we passed through a belt of poplars and willows and from them into a series of bare hills containing much gravel. After the hills, we crossed a wide plain lying south of Little Manitou lake. On this plain the soil was dry but rich, but water was scarce and wood was altogether wanting.

An examination of Little Manitou Lake was made. It was found in a deep valley with a margin of boulders on the south nearly a mile broad. The surface in the vicinity of the lake was very dry and stony

and this was the characteristic for the next ten miles, and few settlers had taken up land. After this the character of the country changed, the grass became long and green, and in numbers of places the grass on the open prairie had been cut for hay, and great stacks were seen on every hand. From this to Saskatoon, a distance of over forty miles, the land was almost all fit for the plough and much of it had been taken up within the last four years.

Owing to the change in color of the soil from a black to a brown loam, eastern people would be tempted to speak slightly of the land, but in no case did poor crops appear, and at the Frank settlement, twenty miles east of Saskatoon, we passed through fields of wheat as fine as any we had seen in Manitoba. The soil contains a certain percentage of sand, which, instead of being detrimental, according to a leading farmer in the district, is beneficial, as it withstands drought better and heavy rains are not injurious. Frost has never done any damage, and my opinion is that the soil is a naturally warm one and the heat is retained at night instead of being radiated as in the case of black soils. I was constantly struck by the remarkable luxuriance of everything grown in the country between Saskatoon and Touchwood, a distance, as the crow flies, of 125 miles. Wheat, oats, barley, flax and potatoes were constantly good, except where they were very late in being planted or sown.

Suitable for Wheat Growing.

I am quite safe in saying that all the land from Touchwood to Saskatoon is suitable for wheat-growing except the stony tracts around Boulder Lake and Little Manitou Lake. Nearly all the country is level or gently rolling and fit for the plough, and the Grand Trunk Pacific will open up

an immense extent of wheat lands which would otherwise have no outlet.

When we were at Saskatoon, during the last week in July, scores of houses were in course of erection. Having obtained the necessary supplies and made some repairs to harness and waggons, we started west on the afternoon of July 28, and drove sixteen miles. Our way led through the Smith settlement (where are now located the Grand Trunk Pacific Stations of Farley, Grandora and Hawoods), in which there were many excellent farms, and where immense wheat fields met the eye on every hand. This old settlement, Summerdale, stands next, in my mind, to the splendid farms we saw north of Carberry, in Manitoba. Passing through the settlement, we saw fields of poor wheat among the very best, and learned from a farmer the cause. The spring was cold and backward and all wheat looked well when it came up, but that on the best worked land seemed to get chilled at the time of the cold rains in May, as it never recovered.

The country which we travelled over was thickly settled for about ten miles, after which it became more or less sandy, with alkali flats for five miles. Then for twenty miles to the crossing of Eagle creek (Kinley) there were many settlers. Beyond the creek there were very few settlers, but the land seemed suitable all the way to the Bare Hills. This district has little water and no wood, and west of it is the Bare Hills district, so named because they are without tree or brush for many miles. The soil in the Bare Hills is very good, and few of the hills are too steep for the plough, so that in time they will be settled. The characteristic soil of the country is a light-colored, sandy loam changing to brown.

A drive of fourteen miles brought us to a big spring on the western side of the hills. The trail

through them is not difficult, and the western side has abrupt hills with much sand in them. The afternoon drive was very varied in character, as the soil changed from a light, sand clay, with many saline lakes and ponds in the depressions. Scarcely a bush was seen and no trees. The Eagle hills lie to the north, but were too far off to be seen.

Salt Deposits.

We now entered on a series of salt ponds and lakes, among which is Whiteshore Lake, so called on account of a white incrustation on the shore left by the evaporation of the water. Both here and on all parts of the prairie we found the saline water always in the deepest depressions, and good water in ponds where the land was elevated. All the country covered by drift has either good water on the surface or it can be obtained by sinking wells, which are seldom over thirty feet deep. If a well should be sunk through the drift into the clay below, bad water is the certain result.

Ponds only a short distance apart, but on different levels, were often found containing sometimes good water and sometimes bad water. The bad water was always on the lower level.

The forty miles beyond Whiteshore Lake to the head of Tramping Lake was all prairie, altogether without trees, and having very little good water on the surface. For the first twelve miles the country was very dry and the grass short. Its surface was undulating and the soil apparently very good. After passing through a series of low hills we came on a level plain that extended all the way to the head of Tramping Lake. As we neared the head of the lake the grass became greener, but neither water nor brush was noticed until we reached the ravine at the head of the lake. Wells had been dug in the

ravine by settlers living close by, but the supply of water was meagre. Considerable breaking has been done since spring, when most of the settlers came in, but the oat crop was scanty, although potatoes looked well. South of Tramping Lake many houses could be seen, and the settlement seemed older. The settlers met with were invariably from the United States, and all seemed pleased with their prospects.

At Tramping Lake the country is almost a dead level, and as a consequence there is neither wood nor water, except a few willows in the ravine and the shallow wells spoken of above. These conditions prevailed until we neared Kill Squaw Lake, when the depressions became deeper and occasional bushes and some poplars were seen. Around this lake there are immense hay marshes a very few feet below the general level of the prairie with its crisp and dried up grass. After passing around the hay marshes we worked around more to the north and could see a line of high ground running around to the northwest. It was now evident that we had passed over a height-of-land and had begun to descend over a very uneven surface towards the west. As we approached the head of Round Valley the land dipped considerably, and at the Grand Trunk Pacific construction camp we came on a fine spring of good water, evidently from sand hills which extended to the south.

At the Railway Crossings.

Round Valley is the crossing place of the branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway extending from Saskatoon to Wetaskiwin, and the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway coming from Saskatoon to Edmonton. From Saskatoon to this point we could never tell which railway we were passing along. The crossing takes place at Unity on the Grand Trunk

Pacific at the east end of the valley, the Canadian Pacific Railway taking the south side and the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway the north side. On the south side there is a range of low sand hills, and on the north there is a level plateau of excellent soil extending towards Battleford.

The line of the Grand Trunk Pacific passes down the valley from Round Lake for about four miles, when a range of hills is reached. Passing these we found a hilly country with good water and a fair supply of wood. As we approached Lake Manitou the country became rougher with numerous sand hills, but generally the soil was good and many extensive tracts of good land were passed. Wood and water were abundant and the country is well suited for mixed farming.

Good for Stock Farming.

Eye Hill Creek valley is well suited for stock farming as there is an abundance of water and wood and extensive hay marshes in many places, especially south of Lake Manitou. The country south of Lake Manitou is very much broken and rises into ridges and high hills with narrow valleys between. There is plenty of wood and water, and a luxuriant vegetation towards the lake. For ten miles after this we were travelling westerly through series after series of sand hills and patches of burnt woods. At last we passed the hills and reached a rich rolling country and lunched at an engineer's camp exactly on the 4th principal meridian, the boundary between Saskatchewan and Alberta. Before we reached the camp even the highest hills bore a very luxuriant crop of grass and were well suited for the plough. After leaving the camp there was a constant improvement in the country; the hills became less steep and the valleys wide enough to make good farming lands. There was not a settler on the whole twelve



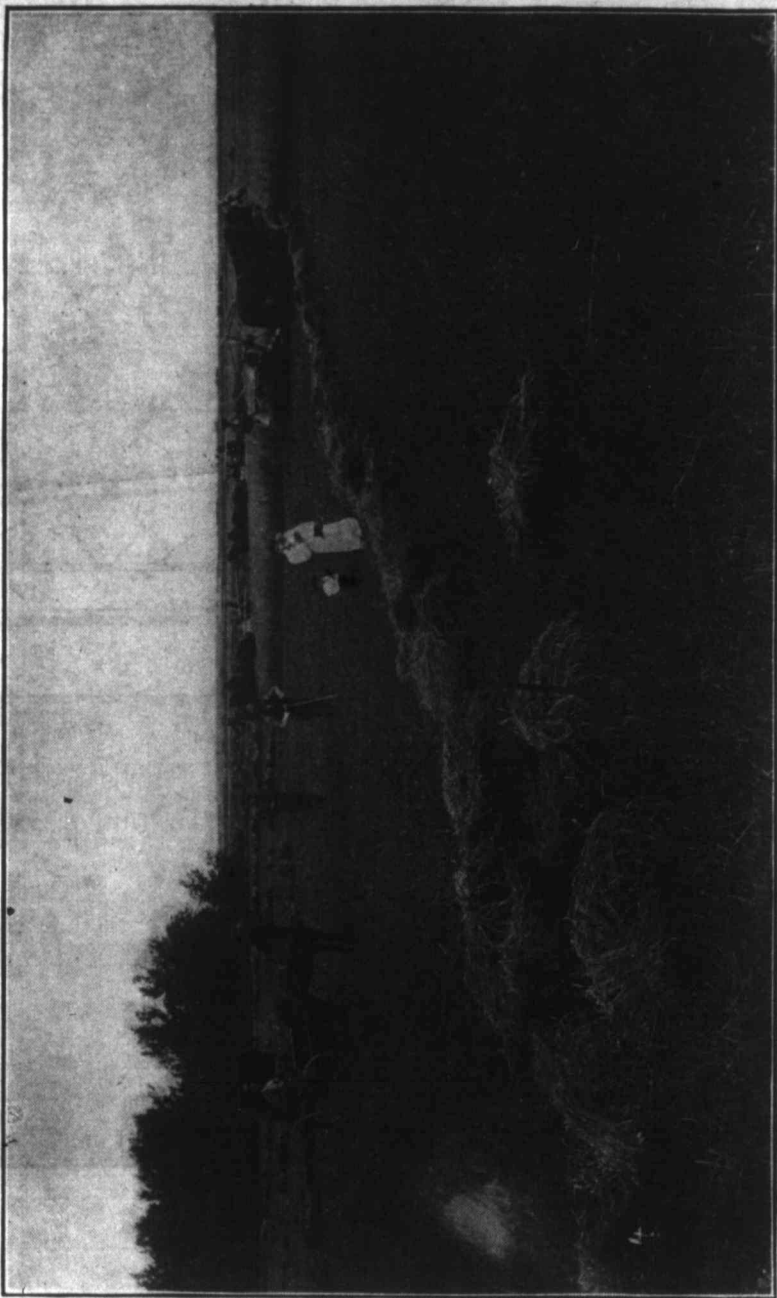
Three Miles of Wheat Fields—Western Canada

miles to Ribstone Creek, yet we were delighted with it, and there was wood and water and a fairly level country. The vetch and pea vine formed thickets that were almost impassable.

We camped on Ribstone Creek, on section 2, township 43, range 2, west of the Fourth meridian, near what is now Chauvin on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. The creek was found to be about twelve feet wide with banks from four to six feet high. Its valley frequently expands, and there are fine hay bottoms, becoming continuous farther west. The settlers west of the creek had cut hay, and oats on this spring's breaking were fairly good—fully ripe on August 12. During the 13th we passed up Ribstone Creek and saw numerous settlers just making a commencement, and all were pleased with their prospects. After passing through four miles of sand hills we recrossed Ribstone Creek, near what is now Edgerton on the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway, and found the whole valley a continuous hay meadow. We saw no settlers, and hay was being cut in only one or two places, until we reached the location of Mr. George Hunt, where we camped. His location is an ideal one for a stock farm, as he has high sand hills, with wooded ravines to the south, while to the north he has the extensive meadows along Ribstone Creek and his ranch house is on a beautiful lake of fairly good water.

From the third crossing of Ribstone Creek, between Heath and Greenshields on the Grand Trunk Pacific, to Battle River, a distance of 20 miles, the land is all fit for settlement, and much of it is taken up, though few settlers were seen. Some fields of excellent oats on spring breaking were noted and many haystacks were observed. Evidently the country had changed very much for the better, and continuous settlement was only a matter of time.

Battle River flows in a deep, narrow valley at the crossing, but the land on both sides at prairie level is excellent, though water on the surface is scarce owing to the lack of depressions. Along Grattan Creek the land is much broken by ravines leading into the creek, but a mile or two back of the creek



Harvesting—Cutting Wheat—Western Canada

the whole country is fit for settlement. Passing westward from Grattan Creek the country becomes much broken, but the soil was good and there were many ponds of fresh water. Later the hills became more elevated, with deep depressions, but before we camped the hills had flattened out, considerably, and we entered on a splendid farming country where settlement had only begun last spring.

Growing Vegetables.

Our camp was in township 47, range 12 and section 22, west of the Fourth Meridian, between Philips and Meighan on the Grand Trunk Pacific. In every direction from this camp we found first-class soil, plenty of ponds, and land all fit for the plough, with sufficient wood for fuel. We had now reached the outskirts of the settlements, and from this time forward we were never out of sight of houses except in Beaver Lake Hills. In a garden at Thomas Lake we found all kinds of vegetables growing in perfection: Indian corn, squash, pumpkins and cucumbers. The corn was almost fit for the table and the cucumbers were ripe on August 19. On this date we had a slight frost, but it did no harm, and hardly touched the potato tops.

From our camp to the west side of Beaver Hills Lake, a distance of about sixty miles as the crow flies, was more or less settled, and all the oats and wheat were ripe and some of them in stack on August 22. Almost all the land was fit for the plough, and in many places there were large settlements, where the land was fenced in and the roads graded.

The district around the south end of Beaver Hills Lake, which is fourteen miles long and eight broad and whose waters are quite fresh, is very rich and beautiful, and at no distant date will be one of the finest in Alberta. The lake has no banks and rich lands slope down to it on all sides.

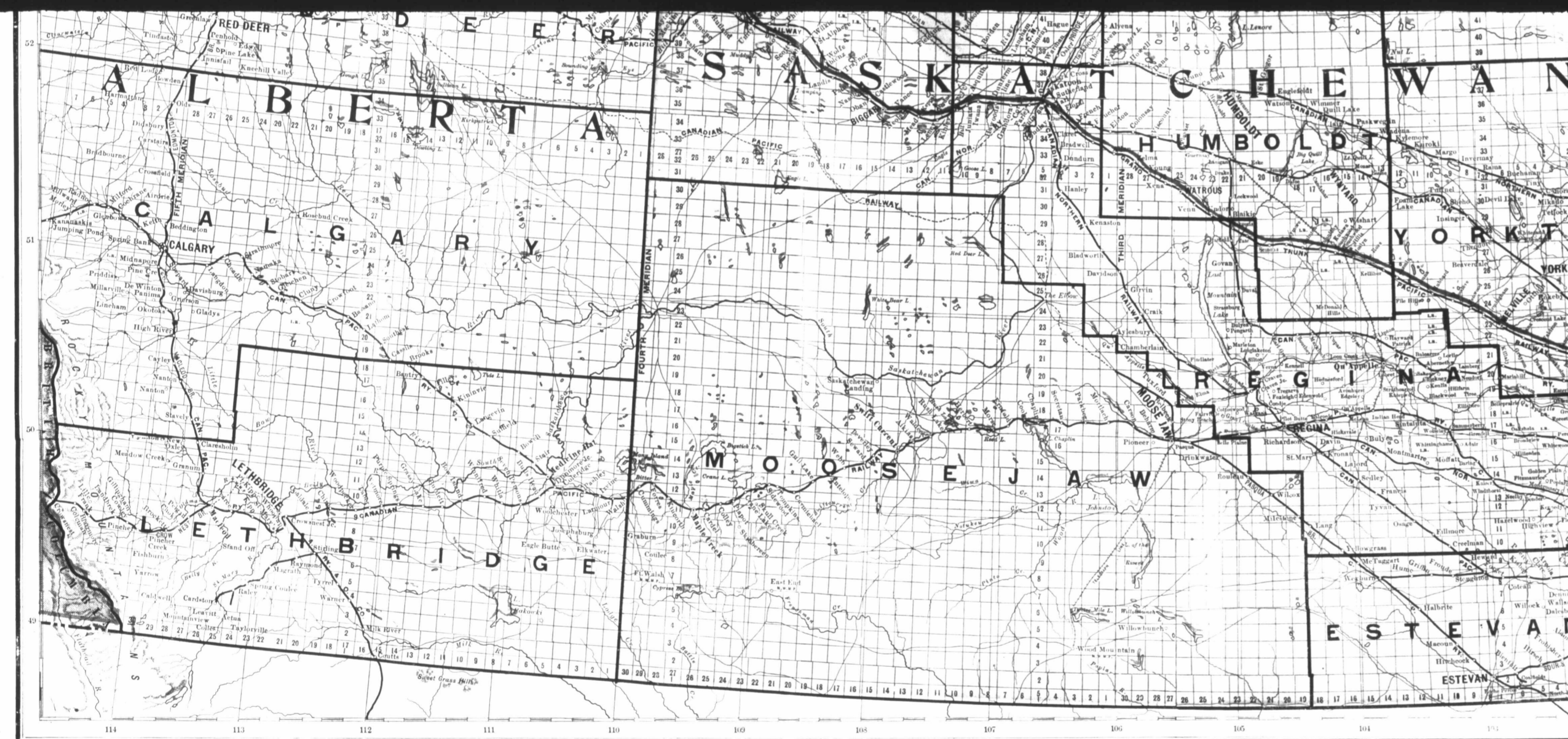
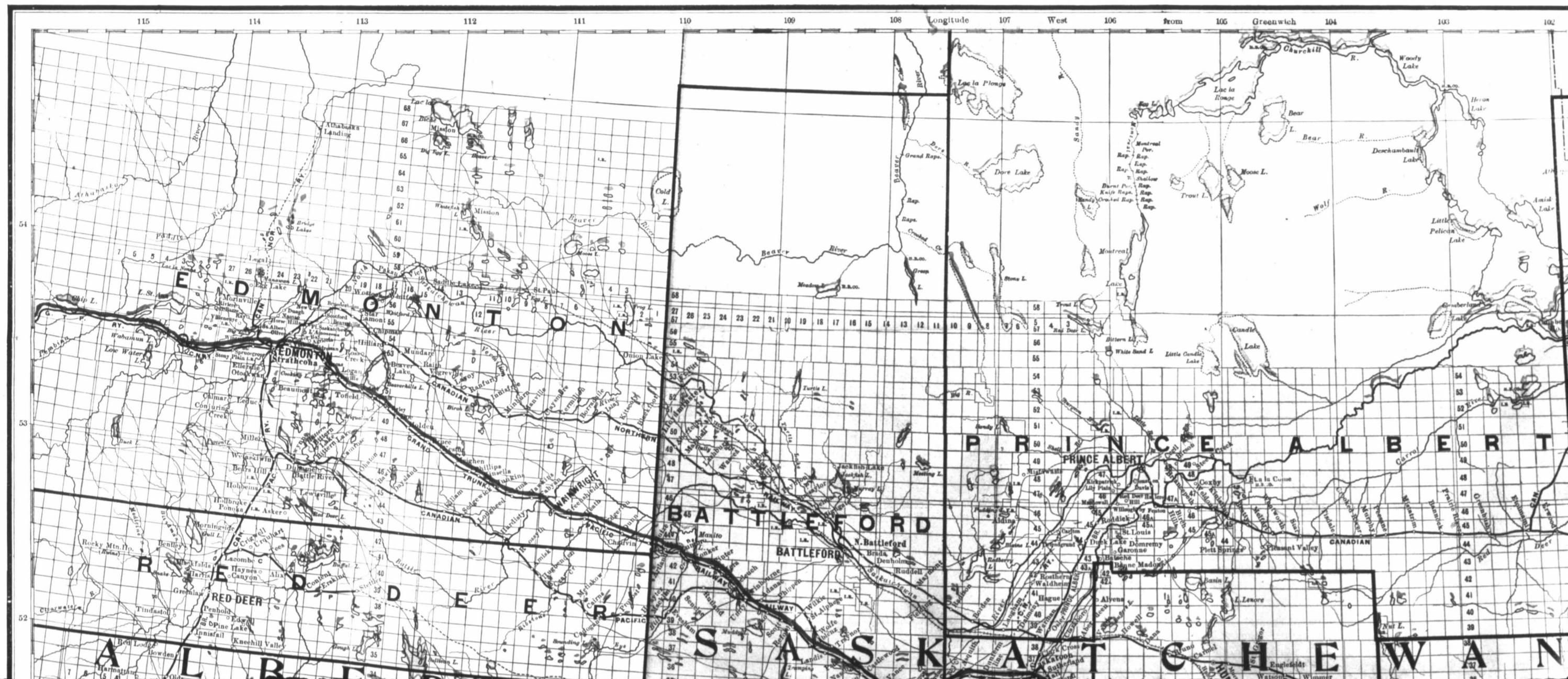
A twenty mile drive through Beaver Lake Hills forest reservation brought us to Base Line road, and along this we travelled rapidly to Edmonton, where we arrived on August 24. Ottawa was reached on September 2.

Edmonton Bulletin, March 9th, 1907.



THRESHING IN THE WEST.

ON THE PRAIRIE SECTION
OF THE
GRAND TRUNK PACIFIC RAILWAY
MANITOBA,
SASKATCHEWAN AND PART OF ALBERTA
Showing the Dominion Land Districts

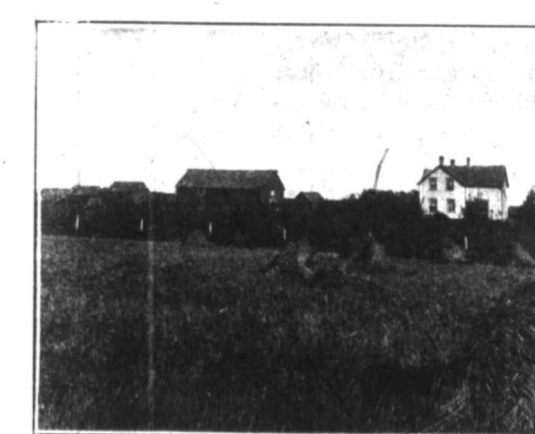
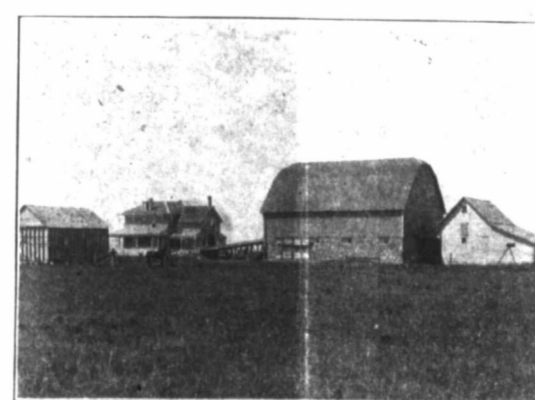
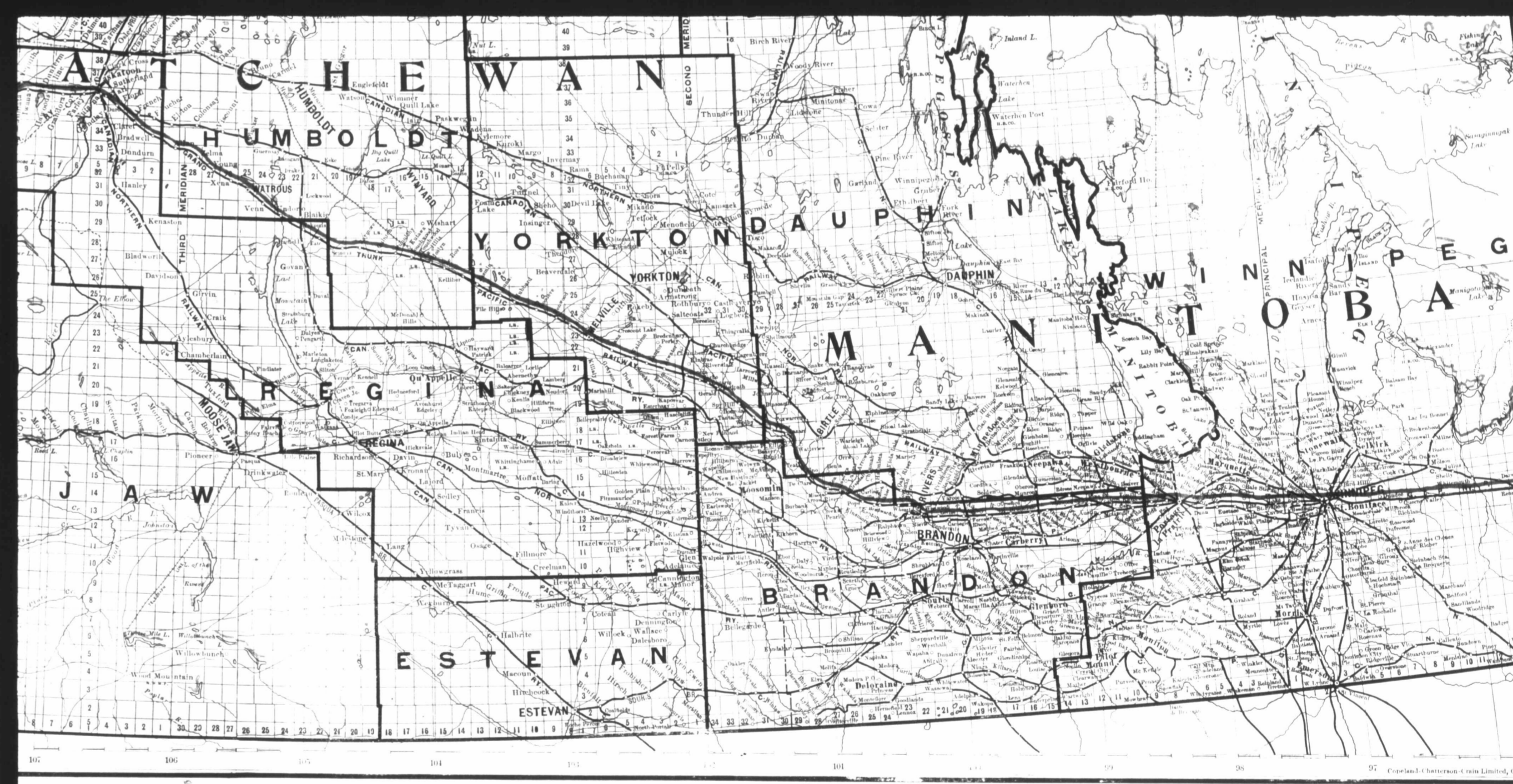
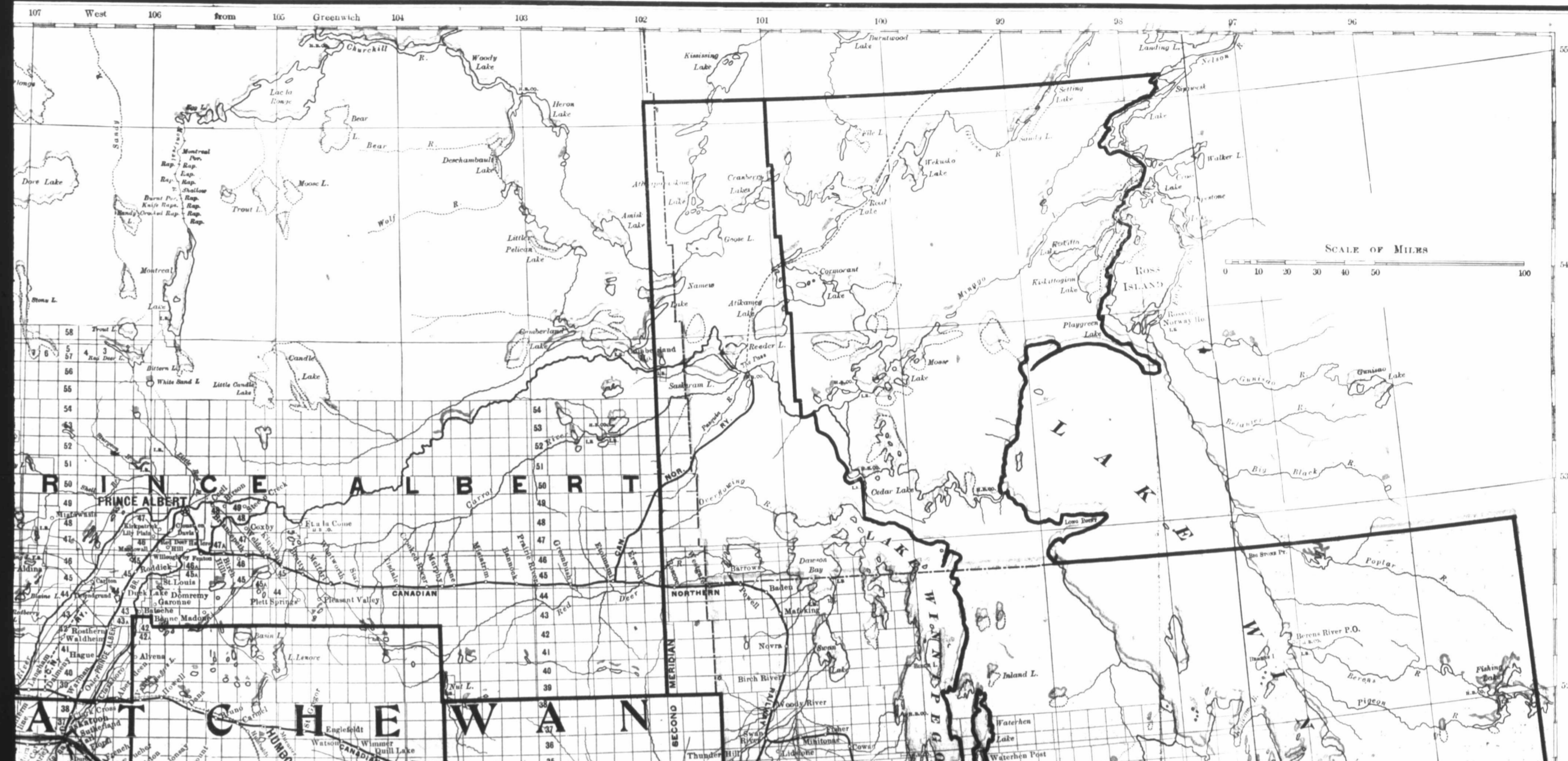


SOME WESTERN CANADIAN HOMES

ON THE PRAIRIE SECTION
OF THE
GRAND TRUNK PACIFIC RAILWAY
MANITOBA,
SASKATCHEWAN AND PART OF ALBERTA
Showing the Dominion Land Districts



THRESHING BY ELECTRICITY



SOME WESTERN CANADIAN HOMES