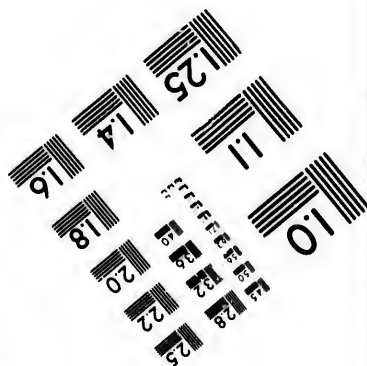
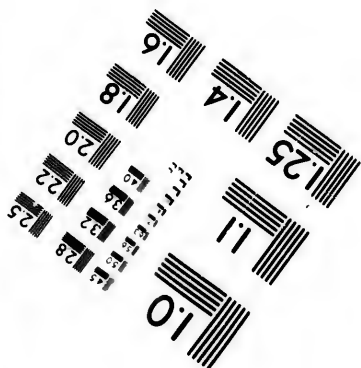
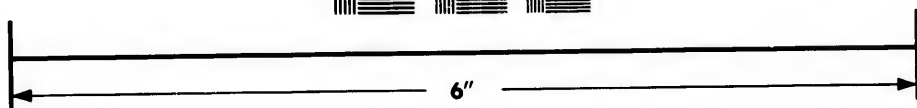
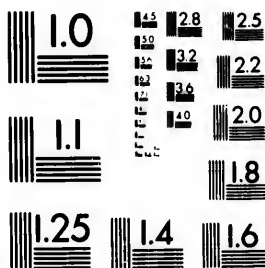


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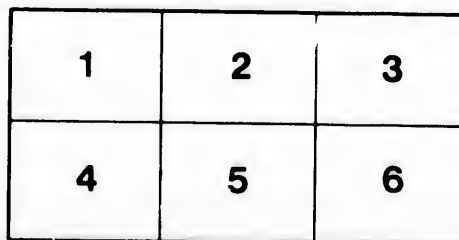
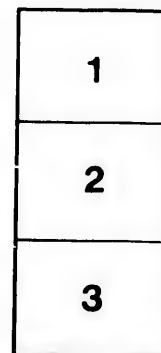
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A Well-Known Family of Old
Red River.

By REV. DR. BRYCE.

MANY of the people of Winnipeg know the pretty spot at the bottom of Rupert street on the banks of Red River, now enclosed as a pleasure resort. Its name "Colony gardens" is a memorial of the founding of Selkirk colony some eighty years ago. Lower down the bank, and not far from the present residence of Mr. Alexander Logan, was the old Fort Douglas built by Lord Selkirk's agents, and the spot where the gardens now are was occupied by the first houses erected for the colony. These, according to a map of the time, now in the possession of the writer, were burned by the Northwest Company in 1815. The gardens with their tall trees and pleasant outlook on the river became the property of one of the best known men of Red River of old, Alexander Ross, for a long time Sheriff of Assiniboia. The old house,

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still to be seen among the trees, was the centre of much that transpired in the old days, for the Sheriff occupied the unique position of being in the confidence of the Hudson's Bay Company, the rulers of the land, and also of being thoroughly in touch with the people of the Red River settlement. He was as real a Highlander as any man of Kildonan, and by marriage was closely related to the native population of the land. A man of ardent nature, of fair education, and somewhat assertive disposition he became not only a social leader of his time, but also an author of some considerable note. A short sketch of his life seems appropriate. Alexander Ross was born in the year 1781, somewhere in the Glenelg or Kintail district of the western Scottish highlands. In 1802 he sailed as one of a party of many hundreds of immigrants who, divided among three ships, came to Canada, painfully toiled up the St. Lawrence, and settled in the Glengarry district in Upper Canada. Young Ross taught school for some time in the Upper Canadian settlements, but in 1810 joined the Astor Company, and sailing around Cape Horn landed on the Columbia river, which flows into the Pacific ocean. Three years later the Northwest Company bought out Astor's American Fur Company, and Ross was appointed in charge of a post at Oakinagan. It was somewhat amusing to read in copies of Sir George Simpson's letters, which the writer saw a short time ago that the Governor was of opinion that Ross would make a better school teacher than for trader, and so called him for this purpose from the hill tops of Oakinagan to the prairies of Red River. It was in 1825 that this transfer took place, but the experiences of the preceding fifteen years led to the publication of the "Adventures of First Settlers on the Oregon," and in 1855 of the "Fur Hunters of the Far West"—most interesting works of adventure. The Highland trader had not wholly mis-employed his time at Oakinagan. Here he had fallen in love with the attractive daughter of a great chief of the mountains, her he had married, and his eldest children were born in Columbia. Under orders from the Governor, with his family, he journeyed overland by the toilsome pass and trail till he found rest

in what Governor Archibald used to call the "paradise of Red River." To the earlier residents of Winnipeg "Granny Ross" as she was affectionately called was well known. She was a woman of much shrewdness and intelligence and was for many years a devoted Christian. The writer was in the habit of often calling in to see the kind hearted old lady and of having a talk about the former days. Her husband had died in 1856, and she was probably ten or twelve years his junior, for she only passed away some nine years ago. The Ross family was a large one, consisting of eleven sons and daughters who grew up. No doubt James was the best known. He had graduated in Toronto University in 1857 with very high honors, having taking the gold medal in Modern Languages. He was for years on the editorial staff of the *Toronto Globe*, and was then well known to the writer. On his return to his native Red River after the Riel rebellion he was appointed by the Provisional Government as Chief Justice. He did not long survive the entrance of Manitoba into Canadian Confederation. Shortly after, a younger brother, Alexander, a young man of brilliant parts, who had been educated in Upper Canada College, Toronto, passed away prematurely.

No doubt the thing for which Sheriff Ross was best known was the active part taken by him in founding the church of his fathers on the banks of Red River. Any one anxious to know the religious struggles of the people of Red River may find them graphically depicted in his "Red River Settlement" (London, 1857). No doubt the author was a partizan, but his book is all the more readable on that account. The original people of Selkirk settlement always maintained that Lord Selkirk had promised to send them a clergyman of their own faith. It was on this pledge that the petitions, requests and complaints ably presented by Sheriff Ross were based. The isolation of the country and somewhat repressive rule of the Hudson's Bay Company at the time led to many disappointments. At length Rev. John Black came as the spiritual guide of Ross and his co-religionists, and the zeal with which the Sheriff, then 70 years of age, filled the place of an elder is



J. WALKER'S SHEEP RANCHE, BOW RIVER, ALBERTA, 1891.

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very noticeable in the church records of the time. A few years after his arrival the pioneer missionary Mr. Black was married to Henrietta, daughter of Sheriff Ross. The writer well remembers the force of character, ability and kindness of this noble mother in Israel, who died nearly 20 years ago, leaving a well known family. Sheriff Ross was so closely connected with the church that it was no wonder that another daughter of his was married to the pioneer Presbyterian Indian missionary Rev George Flett of Oknase. Mrs. Flett, who has been a most useful helper in the civilization of the Indian women of her mission, is the only survivor of the eleven children of Sheriff Ross.

The strip of land enclosed in this city between William and Alexander streets was the old Ross estate. We were able to recognize the names of William the eldest son, of his wife Jemima still surviving, of James, and Ross all upon well-known streets of this city, until the act of vandalism by which the late city council replaced the street names with numbers. Intelligent citizens hope to have these, as well as the names of the other city pioneers soon restored.

We do well to keep in mind the names and memories of the old Red River people who did anything for Selkirk settlement. It is true the settlement was crude and primitive, but there were many noble men and women who worked for the elevation of a community which had many disadvantages, and which but for them would have seriously deteriorated. The Hudson's Bay Company was the central figure of those times. It was very far from being perfect, but it is a question whether any other great organization, begun solely for the purposes of trade, ever did as much for the maintenance of honor and the good of the people. In the Selkirk settlement, the offspring of the Hudson's Bay Company, there was no more notable name than Ross.

Attorney—"How do you fix the time of the murder as at midnight?"

Witness—"Because there were no policeman anywhere around at the time."

