



## Historic Resources Branch Report

### **ASH HOUSE**

### **FORT DE LA FRENÈRE**

## **PROPOSAL**

A historical marker should be erected at the site of Ash House which is located on the S.E. quarter of 12-6-24.

## **HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

Until 1793 the North West Company enjoyed a monopoly on trade with the Missouri and Souris River areas from the Company's Pine Fort location. This fort, established in 1785, was situated on the Assiniboine about fifteen miles below the Souris mouth.

In 1793, Ronald Cameron, a free trader, established a trading post near the junction of the two rivers with hopes of intercepting the Pine Fort trade. Cameron's play proved to be successful, because in the same year, 1793, the North West Company sent an agent to that area. The expanding Hudson's Bay Company did likewise and within two years, five camping interests were represented at the Souris mouth. To cope with the fierce competition, the North West Company established its Ash House or Fort de la Frenière upstream on the Souris River in 1795.

David Thompson, on route to the Mandan country, stopped at this site on December 7th and 8th, 1797 and passed it on his return trip in the following year. At this time Ash House was uninhabited which suggests that it was occupied for less than two years. Thompson said of the outpost (in his narrative of the Journey) "It had to be given up from its being too open to the incursions of the Sioux Indians." The Ash House site is relatively close to the Yellow Quill Trail which the Sioux would have used in their travel. Alexander Henry, Jr. repeated Thompson's trip to the Mandans in 1806 and stopped near Ash House in July.

The present site was discovered by a number of interested people from Southwestern Manitoba in 1931. The only archaeological evidence that suggested the existence of a fort on the site was the presence of a pile of stones in an otherwise stone free location. The lack of evidence may be attributed to the short period of occupancy. All plans for construction were probably abandoned when the location's vulnerability to the hostile Sioux was realized.

Mr. McMorran in his booklet, *Souris River Posts* argues for the validity of this site.

Latitudinal readings, taken by Thompson on his two days stay at Ash House, coincide with the location of the stone pile beside the Souris River (49 degrees, 27 minutes and 32 seconds).

#### **LAND STATUS**

The site is on private land near Hartney, Manitoba on the S.E. corner of 12-6-24. It is within five chains of road allowance (publicly owned, but not as yet opened up). The area of the right-of-way and site would be fairly small, about five acres. Purchase of this small area would not block access to the balance of the land by the private owner. Ash House is close to a road allowance. Having purchased this site, the opening of an access by existing road allowances and by purchased access right-of-way could be left for a later date.

#### **FIELD NOTES (C.B. Gill)**

This site was also visited on November 4, 1964. The location is on the low bank of the river and is subject to flooding. It has tree cover consisting mainly of green ash, a tree which is found usually in moist sites, often along low river banks. There is an old river channel behind the site, and since the site is inside a river bend, it might at times be well protected by water.

No trace of human occupation was found, and the pile of stones mentioned by Mr. McMorran was not noticed. Mr. McMorran, however, has sent a photograph of the site showing the stones.

## **SEPTEMBER 21, 1931 - FREE PRESS**

### **FORT DISCOVERED NEAR LAUDER, MANITOBA**

Ash House, built in 1786 by Northwest Fur Trading Company, found by Souris Party

Souris, Manitoba, September 21st -

A search for the site of Ash House, a fort built in 1786 by the Northwest Fur Trading Company, commenced about 25 years ago by S.H. Forrest, K.C. was completed when the buried ruins of the trading post were discovered a few miles north of Lauder, last Thursday. E.G. Hetherington, G.A. McMorrان, H. Forrest of Souris and George Landreth of Lauder accompanied Mr. Forrest.

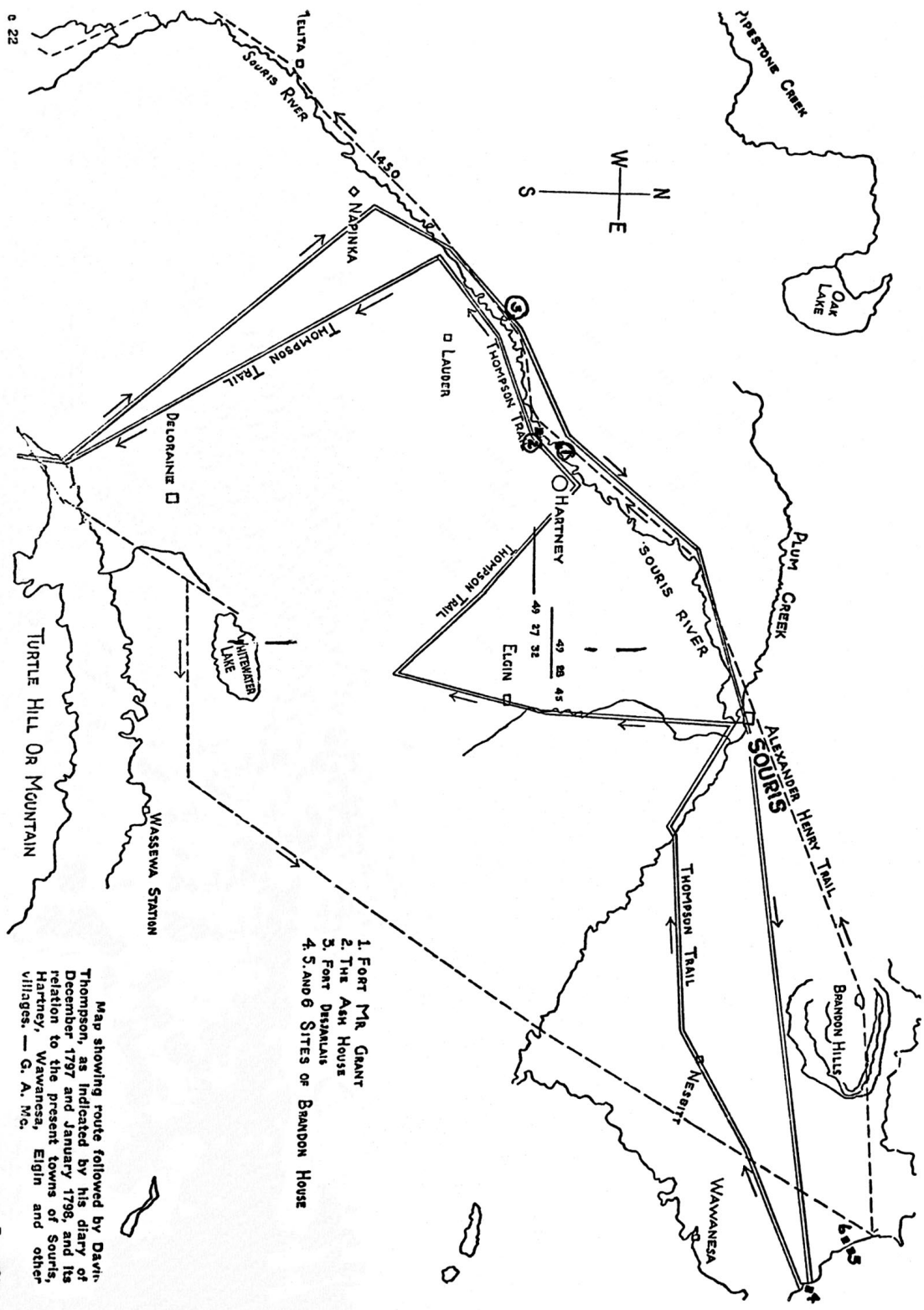
Earlier in the week with Mr. Justice Mentague of Winnipeg and Miss Landreth they had visited the site of another old fort on the northwest quarter of the same section, 31-5-24. Messrs. Forrest and Hetherington had before that located the site of Fort Grant about two miles west of Hartney. The sites were hidden by earth, ashes, prairie grass and trees, only protruding bones and the excavations for cellars marking the spots, but after searching several oak pickets, remains of the stockade were discovered at various points.

Dr. D.A. Stewart, of Ninette sanatorium and past president of the Manitoba Historical Association, with Col. Dave Wright, of St. John, New Brunswick, have been interested in the search with Mr. Forrest and have co-operated in obtaining information regarding the probable location of these old forts.

**Note** - The date used in the newspaper article, 1786, for the establishment of Ash House is no doubt wrong. In Mr. McMorrان's booklet, it is given as 1795.

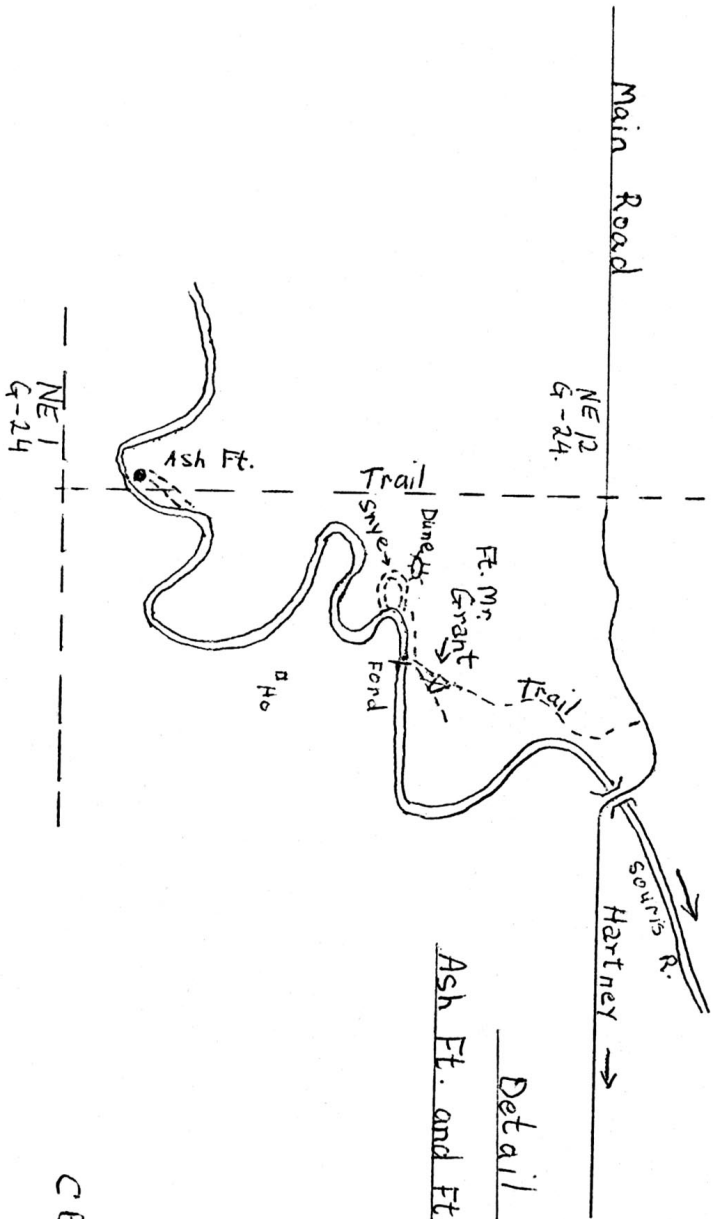
## **POSSIBLE MARKER LOCATIONS**

- a) the site of old Cartwright, 18-2-14W - see Appendix I
- b) the first crossing of the Souris River, 27-2-27 - see Appendix II
- c) at Wakopa, either with connection to existing cairn and plaque, erected by Rural Municipality of Turtle Mountain or at P.T.H. #3 at the corner of the main highway and the second class highway that leads to Wakopa - see Appendix III
- d) at P.T.H. #3, a mile south of the new town of Deloraine, Manitoba - see Appendix IV



Map showing route followed by Davin Thompson, as indicated by his diary of December 1797 and January 1798, and its relation to the present towns of Souris, Hartney, Wawanesa, Elgin and other villages. — G. A. Mc.

M A P #2



Detail re  
Ash Ft. and Ft. Mr. Grant

CBG 22-2-66