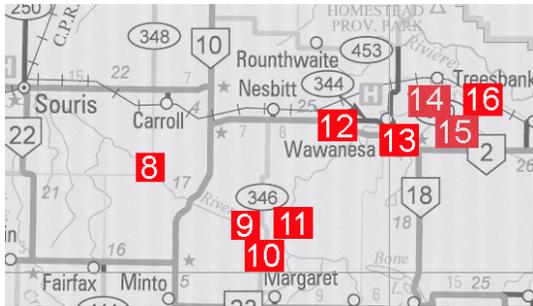


The Souris River

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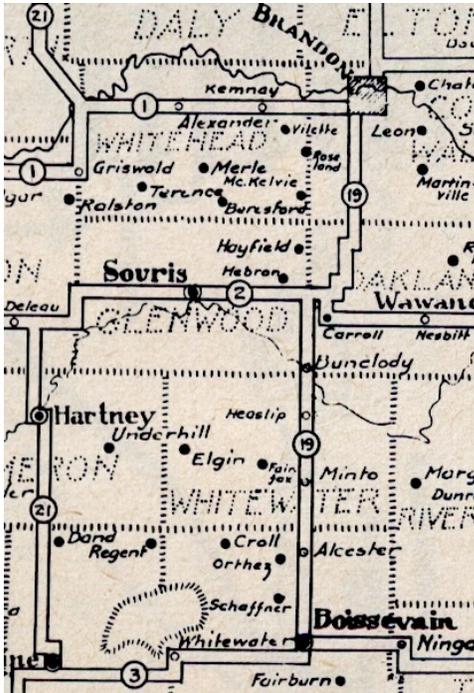
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Souris River: Bunclody

Sometimes a town or village is on a main route... then it isn't.



Main roads in the mid-twenties.

Transportation patterns are always subject to change. Many of the pioneer towns in Southwest Manitoba were on rivers. Water and wood were essential and on the Souris Plains both were in short supply, except along the rivers. So the first prairie roads connected the new settlements. The next revolution in transportation was the railway. Railway builders didn't care about connecting the new settlements. In fact most railway companies preferred to establish stations where the land was cheapest - away from the new pioneer villages. They created towns.

When the time came to build the first highways, however, their purpose **was** to connect established towns.

That helps to explain why the main road from Brandon to Boissevain (Highway 19 on the map from 1926), passes through Bunclody, and today's Highway 10 takes a slightly different route.

Towns didn't always survive.

The community had its beginning when George McGill and James Copeland settled with their families along the banks of the Souris River in 1881. A school was built in 1884 and George McGill, the Secretary-Treasurer was given the privilege of naming the school. He chose the name of the district he left in Ireland.

The first church services in the Bunclody district were held in 1883 in the home of Mr. James Copeland and later moved to the school in 1886 and held there until the church was built in 1908.

There were two ferries in operation in the 1880's. Like so many settlements of the time, it started as a Post Office in a farm home. Soon a School and a Church were established. It wasn't a commercial centre with a grid of streets - it was a community.

But it was near a place where travellers crossed, on a direct route south from Brandon to the Deloraine area.

The Osborn Ferry: 49.535990. 100.056085 ...or a bit east. 49. 538508. 100.052341



From this aerial shot it looks like the road from the north used to keep going straight right up to the river. Old crossing, ferry site, or the temporary bridge mentioned below? Or all three?

In 1893 the first bridge was built, this was a pile bridge. In 1902 the river was very high and all the bridges from Souris to Wawanesa were taken out with the ice flow in the spring.

In 1903 the first span bridge was built. It had to be rebuilt a few times, but was used until 1937. Up until then its plank floor had to be replaced every few years. There were generally one or more loose planks that rattled every time a car crossed.

The bridge that followed was built in 1937. The design was the same as the last one, but treated timber was used. The deck was made of "two by eights" spiked together and then covered with asphalt. The river was quite low that summer, and east of the present bridge a temporary bridge was built from the north bank over to the island, and a grade from the island to the south bank. This was used while the new one was being erected.

In the winter of 1959-60 the present cement bridge was built. This was erected on the east side of the old bridge. In that way they were able to use the old one until the new one was finished. Before the railing was put on, the old bridge was moved over onto the new one, and then it was pulled off, one half being moved each way.



High water in 2012 exposed the abutments of the previous bridge.

By 1901 when nearby towns of Souris, Minto and Wawanesa had railway stations and elevators, Bunclody might well have disappeared from the map.

But the community had been given a reprieve when the Brandon, Saskatchewan and Hudson's Bay Railway, a subsidiary of the US Great Northern, built a line from St. John North Dakota to Brandon. They selected Bunclody as a place to bridge the river. Then a station and an elevator were established. So when the province started designating highways in the 1920's, it was logical to put the southern route from Brandon through Bunclody.

This a good example of the way railroad decisions impact settlements, and thus, transportation patterns.

There was a long-established crossing east of where the Highway 10 now crosses the Souris River. (See the Sheppard Crossing story in the next chapter.) The railway surveyors rejected that site where the valley is both deep and wide.

Upstream a few kilometres the southern lip (right side in the photo) of the valley, although steep, brushed right up against the stream, while the gentle slope on the north side could be crossed with a modest embankment. To get there, the line bends westward as it approached the Souris and follows the curve of the river.



The abandoned rail bed and the centre support footing of the bridge were readily visible from the air in 2001.

The elevator and station established on the south side of the river was called Bunclody, a name already in use for a nearby School and Post Office.



Crossing the Souris at Bunclody - it was a better crossing but it was also a major project.

So Bunclody was on the highway. Here's what changed.

The rail line, built in the days of rather unrestrained expansion and optimism, never did make any money. The depression worsened the situation and only pressure from the government

kept it open until 1936 when a mail contract ended. It was simply no longer a viable enterprise, if it ever was. The tracks were torn up in 1937 after there were no offers for the purchase of the line.

The last train ran on June 14, 1936. Brandon railway historian Lawrence Stuckey remembered, with apparent feelings of nostalgia, the day when he and a friend waved to the engineer for the last time.

Bunclody once again became merely a pleasant scenic riverside location on a grid road.

It made sense to reroute highway traffic between Brandon to Boissevain to the crossing at Riverside where a new traffic bridge was built in 1929. That route became the Highway 10 we use today. You can still take a short detour and turn west off of Highway 10 at Highway 2 and turn south on Bunclody road (Rd. 114) and drive the old route along grid roads. Bunclody is still worth a visit. As you begin the descent towards the river stop and look west.



This is just of many places near the Bunclody site where you can get a look at what is left of the old rail embankment on the north side of the river. Stop at the park on the south side of the bridge and see the heritage display. Wander up the hill to see where the rail line crossed the road and see the site of the elevator and the station.

The McGill Ferry was three kilometres upstream
49.54625 100.08618

The next image offers two possible sites of the McGill Ferry.



Souris River: Sheppard's Ferry and Bridge

N49.49828, W99.98280

When railway service reached the new town of Brandon in late 1881, transportation patterns in the Southwest Corner changed abruptly. For those travelling from the US and heading for places like Deloraine and Melita, it was worth your while to proceed past Emerson to Winnipeg then take the train to Brandon. It was a bit out of your way but it saved several days, compared to taking the Boundary Commission Trail.

New routes meant that new services were required. Someone with an entrepreneurial frame of mind would see that. Stopping places, stores, post offices and ferries would all be something a traveller might need. John Sheppard saw that right away.

The crossing at Riverside - directly between Brandon and the Turtle Mountain Settlements - became an important and busy route.

In the late summer and fall there are lots of shallow crossings, but spring was the best season to start a new homestead, and although there were adventurous souls who floated wagons and swam horses across - this was tricky. A ferry was the best solution, and there was money to be made by setting one up.

John Sheppard knew just the spot - almost directly between Brandon and Wakopa - near a place we now call Riverside. He and his family came to the region in 1882.

The ferry he established not only helped settlers make that first trek but, but perhaps more importantly, also made shipping grain and transporting supplies to and from Brandon much more viable.

Early pioneer accounts often mention the crossing.

"... there were ferries, one at Souris City on 16-7-17, three miles upstream from the present site of Wawanesa, and one first called Sheppard's Ferry, later Heaslip's Ferry, on 21-6-19. When the river was high, one corner of the ferry was let loose from the bank and the current carried the ferry across. In low water it had to be pulled all the way, hand over hand on a cable. Quite

often travellers had to wait a day or more until the ferryman could take them across. (Trails and Crossroad to Killarney, Garland, 1967)

Beginning in 1885, one by one, the communities in the Southwest Corner got their rail service, and by 1910 almost every farmer was within ten kilometres of an elevator. Life was transformed. What had essentially been an almost subsistence existence became viable agribusiness.

At the same time it ushered in a new era in terms of lifestyle. What had once been a four or five-day journey was now a day trip by train.

The introduction of the car brought another revolution in transportation freedom. With the development of a system of roads, the trip to Brandon became even easier. No waiting for the train, you came and went at your convenience.

There was still the Souris River to cross, but when bridges began to replace the ferries, they cut more time off of the trip.



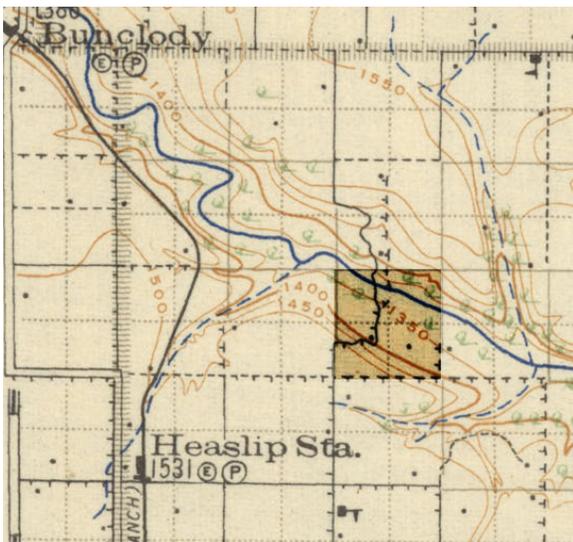
The bridge at Sheppard's Crossing

A wooden bridge was built in 1904, right near where the ferry had operated, just a short distance downstream from today's crossing.

There appear to be three trails leading south from the river. The bridge road was the one on the left. In the centre of the river there are remains of a bridge support. The abutments on each side are readily identifiable today. My recent observations at the site found a few spots to the right (east) of the bridge that would be suitable for a ferry landing.



The road, which would become the first route of Highway 10, appears to go a bit out of its way to use the crossing. Was the bridge built there because there was already a road to the ferry site? Or was the main factor the suitability of the crossing?



The bridge site in 2014.

The bridge was a pretty elaborate design for the time, with substantial abutments allowing good clearance.

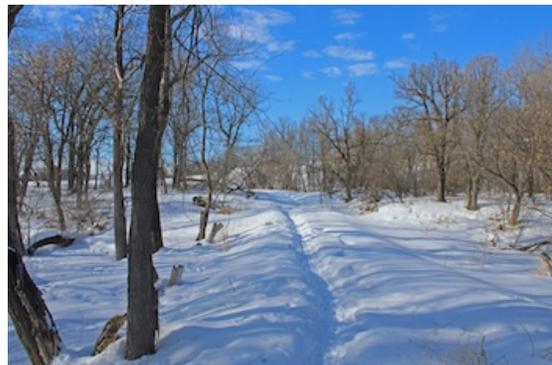
In this case it wasn't the river that led to the abandonment of this site. It was another issue with those first wooden bridges. The builders couldn't have anticipated the loads they would bear as farm machinery evolved.

The bridge was damaged when Tom Nesbitt's steam tractor fell through while crossing in 1928. As the tractor started to break through, Tom was able to jump off and watch from the abutment as his tractor sank into the stream – where it stayed. Boissevain resident Keith Tufts, whom I interviewed a few years back, remembered the site as a good swimming hole in the 1930's and 40's and that the tractor was still visible.



Another view of the site, highlighting the abutment on the south side.

This was a well built example of a bridge from the early 20th century. I recently walked to the site from the existing Riverside bridges in the winter and found it very easy to trace the route of the old roadway leading north,



The road north

A new concrete arch bridge was completed in 1929. This crossing became a popular recreation spot with a dance hall, ball diamond, a store and gas station. The Old Highway #10 crossed the bridge and proceeded straight up the hill running parallel to the current Highway, which runs a bit to the west.



The Riverside Bridge - built 1929

The current bridge was built in the late 1960's, leaving the old bridge and the access to it in place. The former bridge is still in pretty good shape and held up well in the floods of 96 and 2011. One suspects that the newer bridge was not about safety, but more about upgrading Highway 10. finding a more direct spot to cross the valley.

Liskum Campbell Park was created on the site. The next time you're passing by, stop and take a walk around – it is a beautiful spot.



To Recap...

1. Sheppard's Ferry site.
2. First Bridge
3. Trail south to Boissevain
4. Second Bridge, Riverside Dance Hall
5. Old Highway #10
6. New Bridge

Souris River: McKellar's Crossing

N49.46201, W99.87377



Alexander Henry Jr., on his way back from the Missouri River in 1806, crossed the Souris at a spot he called "The Grand Passage" and indicates that it was a few miles above "a considerable bend". If you stand upon the Margaret Bridge and look west, I believe you are looking at the crossing he mentions.



A good place for a ford can be a good place for a bridge. Especially if established trails are already there.

A bridge at McKellar's Crossing was first considered by Riverside Council in 1894, but was delayed for lack of funds. \$1000 was set aside with plans to erect the bridge in 1897.

That bridge was carried away in an ice jam in 1902. Council approached the province for aid and a new bridge was built in 1909.

A new steel bridge was built in 1927. It seems likely the new approaches were built at that time.



Traces of the first approach from the north are quite visible on Google Earth.



The old road bed climbing out of the valley on the north side.



McKellar's is another example of a bridge that seems to have been built to last. Pictured here during the flood of 1976.

Souris River: Lang's Crossing

N49.459766 W99.844165 W



An equestrian group maintains trails in the large Wildlife Management Area that stretches along the west side of the river south of Wawanesa. It is also a popular spot for hikers and off-road enthusiasts.

In the past it was an important crossing point for settlers, especially before the railway arrived at Boissevain in 1885 and Deloraine in 1897.

Earlier than that the crossing was used by Red River Metis hunting parties in their semi-annual treks to the bison herds which by the 1850's had retreated southwards to Montana.

The Hind Expedition in 1858 made this observation:

" A continuation of the valley of the Souris- extends in a direction nearly south-east towards Pembina River, with which it is said by the half-breeds 'to interlock. Three lakes visible from our camp were said to be the sources of the Pembina River; "

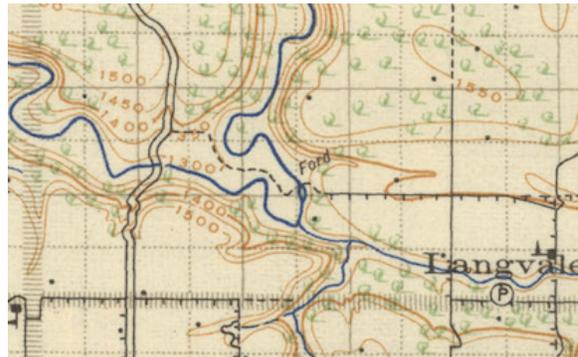
In the early settlement period, travellers going south or southeast from Brandon had to cross the Souris River. Just south of where Wawanesa is today, a small villages called Souris City offered a ferry, and for a time, a bridge. A bit south of that on property settled by George Lang there was a nice level point at the bottom of a nice set of rapids that offered fairly easy crossing except in very high water.

People heading east towards Ninette or Belmont would likely choose Souris City, while those going towards Holmfield or Killarney would be better served at Lang's.

The combination of better rail service and better roads soon made the crossing less popular, and building a bridge here was never considered.



Another view of the crossing in the spring - there can be quite a difference in water levels. Our prairie rivers can be challenging in the spring.



The trail and ford are well marked on this map from 1922.



The view from above

The path down the steep incline on the west (top) side of the crossing is etched deeply into the valley wall.

Souris River: **Souris City**

N49.57723, W99.73178

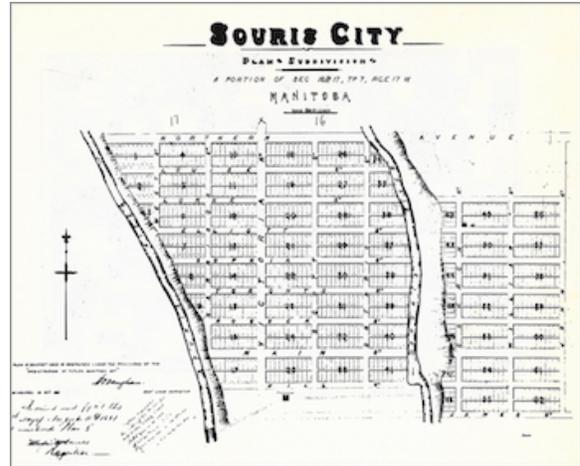


Souris City was located near the bottom left of this shot. The site is about two km southwest of Wawanesa. The Highway #2 Bridge is visible on the top left.

At its birth, Souris City was one of many speculative “cities” that came with the Manitoba Land Boom in 1880-82. The survey plan, which was ambitious even for these times of wild speculation, included parts of two sections of land and planned lots on both sides of the river, but the actual settlement was in the southwest corner of that deep loop in the river, and at its best was a somewhat scattered village with its buildings strung out along the river bank.

Before the railway, the old trails were used for trips to market grain in Brandon, for mail delivery and stagecoach service. Souris City’s position on a main trail depended upon having a river crossing. A bridge was a top priority. The first hastily constructed one was washed out in 1884. It had been built in 1882 by the Souris City Co. the owners/managers of the town site. This was before Oakland Municipality was established. By 1884 the municipality was beginning to take responsibility for such things. Although a communication in the South Cypress News mentions contacting the said company regarding a Cable Ferry. Local legend has it that the bridge was swept away by ice laden waters the evening before a government official was supposed to have presided over the Grand Opening. In any case it didn’t last long and a ferry service was quickly reestablished. It operated daily from six am until 8 pm, and the rate was 25 cents per team and 10 cents a pedestrian. (Return free of charge on same day, 6 am - 8 pm.) In 1884 the Oakland Council decided that they would “allow” the “Toronto Company” to put the bridge back subject to council supervision.¹⁴ A notice in the Sun from March of 1885 reads; “In the matter of the

Souris City bridge its control has been taken over by the Municipality of Oakland, pending a settlement of the cost of such care and maintenance between all the municipalities interested.



Souris City Plan from “The Prairie W.A.S.P.” by J.A.D. Stuart

A new bridge with a removable span was built at some point. The centre span could be removed during spring breakup to avoid destruction. It was, however, costly to maintain, and as far as we know the settlers to the south didn’t pay any of the costs. Oakland ratepayers paid an annual bridge bill until 1889.



Souris City was near the centre of this photo.

By that time the writing was on the wall for the future of Souris City as a budding metropolis. All the hopes of the town site had rested on the possibility of a rail crossing. The problems were twofold. First; the CPR had a deal with the Canadian Government that no competing line would be allowed south of its main line for 25 years after the construction of that line. This

meant that they were in no hurry to satisfy the needs of smaller markets in newly settled areas. Second; even if lines were constructed to the south there was no guarantee that the Souris City site would be chosen. By 1886 only three or four businesses remained.



As of 2000, there was still evidence of a bridge.

Unlike several other towns that have slowly disappeared over decades, the demise of Souris City was swift and certain. The municipality had already decided to cut some of the losses by dismantling the expensive bridge and using the parts in culvert construction programs at various points in the municipality. Community focal points shifted to both the newly formed village of Wawanesa, and to the nearby local school / church district of Cheslea.



Note the *place names* in this map from 1886. Souris City and Millford were the only villages in the region - the other names denote Post Offices.



On this map from 1892, Souris City has disappeared.



Another look at the region.

Souris River: **Wawanesa**

South "Black Bridge" N49.59353, W100.68875

Rail Bridge: N49.59381, W 9969042

North "Red" Bridge: N49,59720, W99.67840



Wawanesa is located in a sharp loop of the Souris River.

1. Abandoned rail line entering from the southwest
2. Rail line exiting southwards before turning west
3. North access road and site of the "Red Bridge"
4. North access road and "Black Bridge", now closed
5. Railway Bridge site

In 1888 the Northern Pacific Railway made the decision to build a line from Morris to Brandon. It was obvious that the line would cross the Souris River at some point near the settlement of Souris City. Selecting the exact location for a bridge was important, and it must have been a challenge as the river valley was deep and steep in the region. Often railway engineers would go quite a bit out of their way to find an "easy" crossing. Anyone who has driven into Wawanesa from the Highway #2 entrance and enjoyed the view from the cliffs on the aptly named "Cliff Street", might wonder if they couldn't have found a more gentle approach. Just a few kilometres downstream, towards Treesbank for instance?

But build here they did, and they had to do a bit of twisting and turning to create a grade acceptable to a locomotive.

They created the Village of Wawanesa. The railway is long gone, but the village still thrives.



A bridge was finished in 1889 and in 1903 it was modified with a span below for horse and carriage traffic. Ward Fawcett, born in 1891, remembers the crossing vividly. "Many teams," he said, "balked at the approach and went off down the embankment, rather than cross. It was the scene of a number of spills." The horse and carriage part of the bridge was replaced in 1908 with the construction of the "Black Bridge" nearby.



The sign on the supports reads, "Do not go faster than a walk"



In 1924 the greatest disaster on the line occurred. As the train was crossing the bridge, the structure collapsed, plunging a number of cars to the river below, and killing one man. The

engine managed the crossing only through the quick action of the engineer, who realizing the danger uncoupled the rear cars.

Of course any mishap on a rail crossing had serious consequences for rail service down the line. There are no easy detours, the line needed to be fixed, and fast. The CN opted to rebuild without the traffic bridge component. That bridge served until the rail line was abandoned in 1984



The new bridge was less impressive to look at but much stronger. It lasted until the rail line closed.



Part of the structure remains

A steel bridge (the Red Bridge), was constructed in 1891-92, to enable farmers from the north to get to town. Previously they had used the ford just below the present dam.



The Red (North) Bridge

1908 a 150-foot long steel through truss bridge was built. Locals called it the "Black Bridge," The floods of 2012 & 2013 rendered it unsafe and it was closed to vehicle traffic. As there are two other access points to the village it has not been replaced or repaired. It is open to pedestrians and cyclists



The Black Bridge



The bridge today.

Souris River: **Treesbank Bridge**

N49.62798, W99.59883



This concrete bowstring bridge over the Souris River south of Treesbank was constructed in 1921. It was known locally as the Vane Bridge after the Vane farm adjacent to the river on the southwest side.



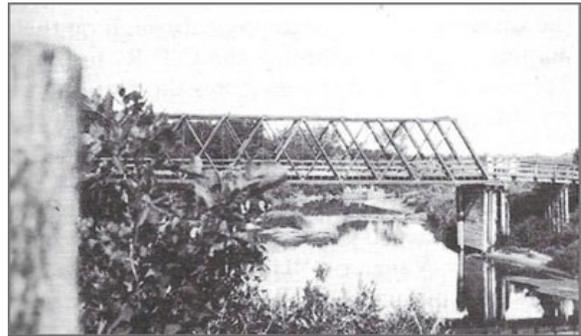
The flood of 1976 damaged one of the three arches and a new section was put in place.



The flood of 1976 damaged several Souris River bridges



The bridge collapsed completely during the flood of 2011 and has not been replaced. Photo by Travis Evertard



The first Treesbank Bridge

Souris River: Millford Village

N49.621565, S99.537819

The former village of Millford, near present day Treesbank, is not far from Brandon, but it is quite a drive since the Treesbank Bridge over the Souris River was washed away in 2011.

The decision not to rebuild the bridge is part of an ongoing trend. Rural depopulation and better roads means that there just isn't the demand that there once was for convenient crossings. But the site is worth the extra miles.



The village of Millford was located near the centre of this photo.

Why Local History Matters - a Brief Editorial

As a teacher and a student of history, I knew a bit about Nellie McClung and her role in the battle for Women's' suffrage. I had read a few of her works of fiction, at least one of which is set in what I assumed was a fictional town named Millford. I counted myself well informed in general. But what I didn't know, what my high school and university history courses had neglected to tell me, was that she grew up just a short distance from my home town. I had no idea that in the numerous times that I had driven down Highway #2 in the Wawanesa area I had passed within sight of the school yard where she got her early education, within a few kilometres of the homestead where she grew up. In fact I knew distant relatives of hers, (there still are quite a few in the area) before I knew anything about her early life. I had no idea that Millford was a real place and that it was her home.

I repeat. I didn't learn about Millford from any of the many textbooks I had read or courses I had

taken

I learned about the local connection to the Nellie McClung story while researching, of all things, canoe routes. In trying to learn more about the country I was passing through I started examining the dozens of Local History volumes, the sort produced in virtually every community by local committees of volunteers. I discovered that there were many forgotten town sites along the rivers and that their names were unfamiliar to me. Millford was one of them. Local histories of the Glenboro and Wawanesa area led me to her memoir "Clearing in the West", the best introduction anyone could have to this unique place.

The Millford Story

The town was the brainchild of a Major R.Z. Rogers from Grafton, Ontario. He happened to have a brother-in-law, Mr. E.C. Caddy who was to lead a team of Dominion Surveyors to Southwest Manitoba in 1879. He asked him to keep an eye out for a site for a sawmill and gristmill. His dream was to start a new community and to profit from the next wave of expansion to the west.

The plan worked for a while...

It was the first real village south of the Assiniboine in Southwest Manitoba and a very important place until the CPR Branch line stopped after reaching Glenboro and that site became the commercial centre. For a short time however it thrived and was an important stop for settlers on their way south and west.

Major Rogers was a determined entrepreneur and the townspeople in general were not easily discouraged by temporary setbacks. Like settlers in other riverside communities, they were not prepared for the unpredictability of the rivers. The heavy spring runoffs caused great difficulties. Being new to the west they probably weren't ready for the variation in water levels that occur in the dry prairie climate where most of our rivers are that in name only except for the heavy spring run-off. They also had no way of knowing that they had arrived in this new land just in time for two of the wettest years it has ever experienced. A bridge over the Souris River was built in 1882 giving farmers south of the river easier access to Brandon but only one

team went over the bridge before a spring flood washed it away.



From the "Map of South-West Portion of the Province of Manitoba" - 1885

Of all of the names on this map, Millford was the only settlement that was actually a town. The other sites were post office locations established in farm houses.

Imagine their surprise when what appeared to be a tiny stream (Oak Creek) in the summer of 1881, became a destructive torrent in the spring of 1882 and swallowed the newly built bridge. It was soon rebuilt.

Virtually every local history book published in Southwest Manitoba contains several accounts by pioneers mentioning Millford. Many settlers passed through on their journey to their homesteads. Many came by steamboat from Winnipeg or from the railways station in Brandon. They stopped at the nearby Land Titles Office to register for their homesteads. They stopped at Millford to get supplies, or to rest for the night.

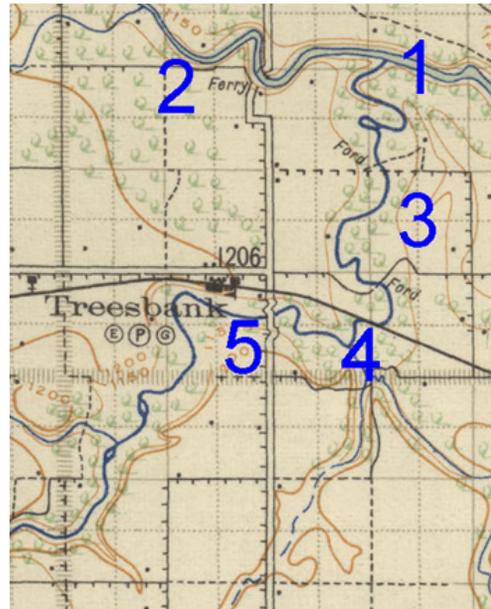
The village of Millford was where Oak Creek enters the Souris, a site that would depend upon viable crossing points.

An Unhappy Ending?

The truth was that a town needed a railway to survive. The irony is that in 1891 a CPR Branch was extended from Glenboro through to Souris and it passed right by the townsite. By that time it was too late to save Millford.

As early as 1886 when the line reached Glenboro and appeared stalled there,

townspeople felt they could wait no longer. The gristmill had closed in 1885. The centre with the rail line would be the advantageous place to do business. People simply packed up and moved, often taking the buildings with them. The village of Glenboro was virtually started with buildings moved from Millford.



The neighbourhood....

1. The Souris River enters the Assiniboine from the south.
2. The Treesbank Ferry
3. The Souris River was forded at two locations north of Millford (1880- 1900)
4. Village of Millford (1880-1890)
5. Former Treesbank Bridge



The fact that several photos exist of Millford in the early 1880's confirms it's status as one of the more important early settlements. (Photo - Archives of Manitoba)

Souris River: Millford Rail Bridge

N49.62789, W99.57183



The Millford Rail Bridge in the 1890's (Photo - Archives of Manitoba)

Two approaches to crossing a deep valley.

The Souris River in the Millford area meanders through a wide valley. In crossing such a valley the main consideration is that you have to avoid a steep grade. You can do this by angling down the side of the valley, crossing the stream and then angling up the other side.



That's what the CNR did in 1901 when they built the Lenore Branch. To get from Pendennis to Wheatland they had to cross the steep valley of the Little Saskatchewan.

That often involves several extra kilometres. (See Cossar Crossing in Part 4)

The alternative is to span the valley directly with a long trestle bridge. If you look at the map again you see that the Grand Trunk Pacific crossed the same valley near Rivers in a very direct manner.



In the Millford area, the CPR railway crossed the Souris with a long trestle bridge just a bit to the northeast of Millford and the new village of Treesbank (top right), was established.

To increase the stability of trestle bridge railway builders often fill the part of the span that isn't over the actual river. The centre portions of many of the first generation of trestle bridges were replaced by concrete and steel structures, beginning in the 1920's.



Filling the trestle in the 1890's



In Millford, what had been a very lengthy trestle was now a long embankment reaching right up to the edge of the channel, with a steel centre span on concrete pillars.



The bridge after damage caused by the flood of 1976.

The line was closed in 1983 and the rails were removed, but the structure remains.

Yet another editorial...

We've abandoned many rail lines in rural Manitoba. Some of that was inevitable as trips to the elevator became much easier when you traded your horse drawn wagon for a truck. We built a lot of lines based upon one mode of travel - where a trip to town of ten miles was an all day journey. No one foresaw just how quickly automobile age would change everything.

We also may have built a few too many lines to start with in the name of competition and boundless optimism.

Abandoning some lines made sense - up to a point. But the railway companies needed the farmer's business so they were in some ways willing to accommodate. The fact that there was still a bit of competition helped.

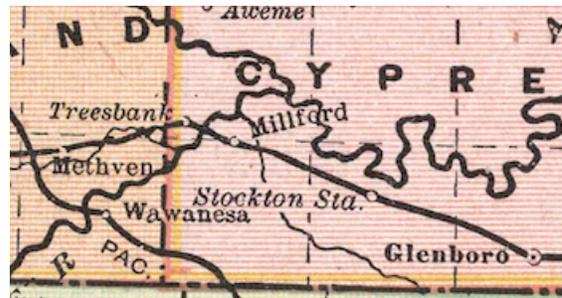
That seemed to change. In the next round of rail line closures beginning in the late 50's it seems that the railways had the upper hand and farmers had no choice but to drive the extra distance when their local elevator closed.

Like it or not we have 100's of kilometres of idle rail beds. Some have been saved as hiking trails and many more could be. The line from Neepawa to the Saskatchewan border near Russell is a great example. The abandoned bridge at Clearwater is another. The bridge at Millford pictured here would be an ideal part of such a trail.



This site is less than a kilometre from a great access point near Treesbank

The lines that once connected communities by one mode, offer a great way to see the country by another.



This section of the abandoned rail line would take one through some beautiful country with plenty of opportunities to side trips into the Assiniboine Valley.

Many of these abandoned railway and road crossings, and the approaches to them would make components of great hiking trails. Isn't it sad that we've torn so many of them down and/or removed access to them. Check out what the community of Clearwater did with their rail bridge in Chapter 5.

A recent article in the Canadian Geographic Magazine (Nov.Dec.2025) highlights some examples of such initiatives across Canada.