

TRAIN TRACKS



STORIES FROM A RAILWAY TOWN

RIVERS, MANITOBA

BY KEN STORIE

TRAIN TRACKS: Stories from a Railway Town



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Based upon work commissioned by the Rivers Train Station Restoration Committee,
with the support of the Government of Manitoba.

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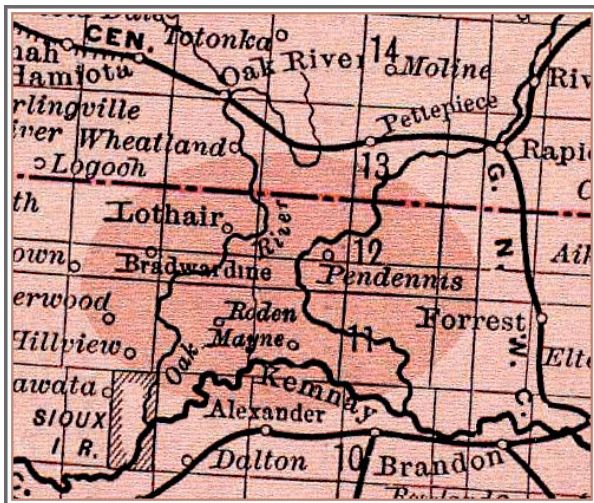
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Setting the Stage

Starting in the late 1870's, a trickle of adventurous souls led the way into the deep valley of the Little Saskatchewan River, where they found ample water and wood. Until 1879, settlement focused on the new town of Rapid City and the settlement of Odanah, where Minnedosa would grow. By 1880 a few settlers approached the Rivers district taking the steamboats up the Assiniboine to Grand Valley or Hall's Landing, north of Oak Lake. Most of these early settlers came from the Ontario and the British Isles, with Scotland particularly well represented. The arrival of the railway to Brandon in late 1881 brought many more.

For the first twenty years after farming operations commenced, the area was characterized by communities centred around a post office, usually in a farm home. After the first few harvests, schools began to appear, followed by a few churches and perhaps a general store.

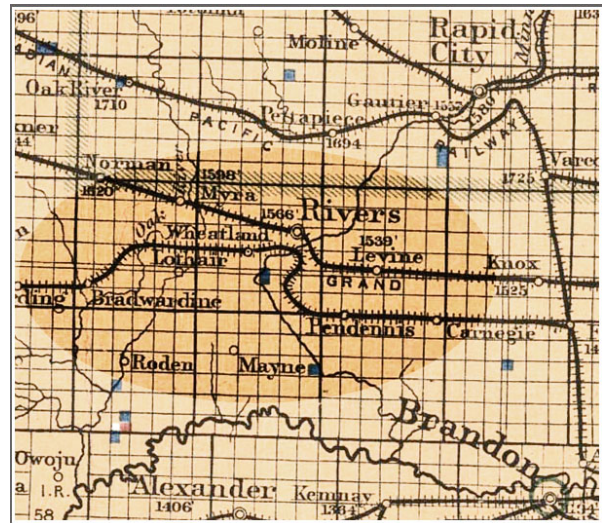


Communities such as Tarbolton, Roseville, and Ancrum became well known without becoming villages. Wheatland and Bradwardine were simply post offices in their early days, although Bradwardine did have a store. Other communities were known only by their schools, with Harrow and Hunter being early examples.

No towns were surveyed or built. Nearby centres, first Rapid City, then Brandon, served as both markets for produce and outlets for supplies. For over twenty years, surely a record in southwestern Manitoba, no railway crossed what had become the Municipality of Daly. Perhaps having Brandon nearby allowed for a certain level of contentment. A progressive municipal

government, active community leaders and school district boards, provided the services that settlers needed.

By the end of the settlement era two sets of railway tracks crossed the district. In 1902 a CPR branch line connected the municipality with Brandon and spawned the towns of Wheatland and Bradwardine as well as the hamlets of Carnegie and Pendennis. The establishment of both retail services and elevators made life easier for everyone. It was progress, but perhaps not a big readjustment in social, cultural or economic life.



The decision of the Grand Trunk Pacific to build a line across the prairies brought substantive and lasting change to the area. The line proceeded parallel to the CPR main line in an almost straight line from Portage westward, so close to the competition that, although stations, sidings and elevators were placed at regular intervals, few new towns were required. But at the crossing of the Little Saskatchewan there was a need for a significant service centre. A real town was required and almost overnight Rivers, named after a director of the Grand Trunk Railway. Sir Charles Rivers-Wilson, went from being farmland to a carefully planned and substantial urban centre.

The implications for the entire region were far-reaching. With the establishment of rail service and retail establishments, trips to Rivers replaced trips to Brandon. The nearby settlement of Wheatland on the rival CPR branch line was eclipsed. The railway jobs attracted people from a wide variety of places, broadening the social and cultural makeup of the region.

The First Nations – Rivers is on Treaty 2 Land

This volume is about the Town of Rivers, and as such is about the creation of a community by people of European origin, many of whom came from Ontario with roots in the British Isles. They were commonly referred to as settlers or pioneers. In a sense, all those terms apply, but they might need some clarification.

The terms “settlers” and “pioneers” seems to imply that they were in some way the first ones here, but we all know that they weren’t.

The first settlers came here over ten thousand years ago. And for the same reasons; to make a better life for their families and communities; to leave behind situations that they thought could be improved upon; to seek adventure and to satisfy that human urge to see what is over the next hill,

We needn’t forget that for the families that endured the hardship and obstacles that stood between their life in Ontario and a new life here, it was a big deal, they were adventurers at heart, and it was a new land... to them. They accomplished big things.

At the same time, more than ever, it is important to remember that there were others here before us.

Rivers is on Treaty II land. Treaty II was signed by Ojibway and the Government of Canada in 1872. At various times prior to that it had been home to Cree and Nakota people.

It was the Dakota who were here when the first Euro-Settlers arrived. The Dakota have roots in southern Manitoba and Saskatchewan that go back centuries, but most of the Dakota who still live in Manitoba today are descendants of those who came from the United States: some in 1862 after a failed uprising in Minnesota, and others after 1876, when their leadership role in defeating Colonel Custer’s Seventh Cavalry had earned them some powerful enemies. To this day the Dakota haven’t signed a Treaty with the Government of Canada. They were however allocated reserves, although the Treaties provided reserves based upon 160 acres per family the Dakota only received 80 acres per family.

A group under the leadership of Wabadista had settled the land lying between the Little

Saskatchewan and Assiniboine rivers, more particularly described today as Township 11, Range 21. One of that group was John Crow who worked with the North West Mounted Police as a scout.



This map from 1876 shows the proposed Dakota reserve.



This map from the same era is less specific.

Some accounts indicate that The Dakota participated significantly in the selection of the location of their reserves; and that they rejected this site in favour of two smaller reserves, one on the Assiniboine river north of where Griswold would be located, and another at Bird Tail Creek, near Fort Ellice, close to where Birtle would be located.

Early Euro-settlers would have routinely encountered travellers, hunting parties and other Dakota people. They would have found ample signs; trails, campsites and other reminders of the first inhabitants of this land.

The Roseville Mission Hall – A Practical Pioneer Project

In pioneer times there were two main highways west, the Assiniboine River and the Fort Ellice (or Carleton) Trail. The first homesteaders to arrive chose the best land they could find close to one of those highways. Latecomers had to range out a little farther. Once here, there were two huge considerations when choosing that homestead, over and above the suitability of the land itself. Land near streams had both water and wood, the essentials for getting started, so those spots were taken first. The territory running along the east side of the Little Saskatchewan valley was desirable for all the above reasons.



About midway between Brandon and Rivers, at the junction of Road 65 N and 117 W, there is a well-tended cemetery with a cairn dedicated to the Roseville Congregation and the first church in the area.

In some ways the story of the church is typical, a story repeated across the prairies. The first services were held in homes with itinerant Ministers. In this case Reverend John B. Sargent from Brandon was sent out by the Anglican Church to Rapid City and he used to walk out to the J.C. Cousin farm.

Next, a group would start planning and raising funds for a church. In this case Dick Cousins got the ball rolling.

Then someone might help by donating land. In this case it was the James Varcoe family, and they included enough land for a cemetery as well.

Here the story departs a bit from the standard pattern

All congregations were anxious to build a church, but money was in short supply. The solution was to cooperate, so four denominations decided to share

the facility. The Anglicans, Baptists, Methodists and Congregationalists would each supply the Minister on one Sunday of each month.

They called it the Roseville Mission Hall, and the spirit of cooperation went well beyond the sharing of the space. The funds and collections were all pooled and managed by a joint treasurer. Most parishioners joined heartily in the services whether it was their particular denomination or not.

Once the Mission Hall was established and serving the community, the story moves back to a familiar pattern.

The building was renovated and expanded. Sunday School classes, concerts, meetings of the Circle of Kings Daughter's, Ladies Aid, Women's Auxiliary and Junior Auxiliary, and sometimes picnic suppers were held. The 25th, 50th, 70th and 100th Anniversaries have been celebrated.



The final chapter was played out as rural depopulation and improved roads made it more convenient to amalgamate with the Churches in town. In 1983 a special service took place to unveil and dedicate a cairn, which now stands in Roseville Cemetery. A newspaper report in 1888 takes issue with the claim by their neighbours from Tarbolton that their district's new church was the first church in the municipality. The writer, Fanny Varcoe, informs us that their church was built in 1884, that indeed, the first wedding in the building took place on Dec 16, 1884, and that by 1888 there were five internments in the cemetery. And so the victory, a decisive one, goes to ...Roseville.

From Ancrum to Bradwardine

On Highway 259, about fifteen kilometres west of Rivers at the junction with Road 354, there is a well-tended graveyard with an iron gate marked "St. Matthews Ancrum Cemetery". Visible from the road, a bit to the north at the site of the former English Museum, sits St. Matthews Church, moved there from south of the Cemetery where it had stood for eighty-five years. A bit to the south, a stone cairn by the roadside commemorates Ancrum School.



That, and memories, are about all that left of a town that never was.

The district had been settled since 1881 and In 1900, when the Great Northwest Central Railway proposed to cross the region, the original plan included a railway station at the location. At that time it was just the school, church, a Canadian Order of Foresters Hall and one small house, originally intended as a manse. But if a station were to be placed there, commercial growth would surely follow.

But the site was on valuable land, and when the Common family offered a right-of-way on their property, just to the west, free in exchange for the right to sub-divide and sell lots for a town site, the siding was located on the future site of Bradwardine.

The site switch was a common tactic used by railway companies to minimize costs by obtaining cheaper land.

Bradwardine

Whereas Ancrum was a community that never became a town, Bradwardine is community that moved to become a town.

It actually had quite long history by the time the railway arrived. John Parr opened a store and became the first postmaster at "Bradwardine" in 1884. A Methodist Church and Cemetery had also been established. Parr's original "Bradwardine" Post Office closed and relocated several kilometres to the east to the where the new village was created.

That was about all the moving that had to happen.



The original village plan consisted of four blocks and included a school site.

The Forester's Hall was moved from its Ancrum location to Bradwardine shortly after 1902. It doubled as a school, then as a residence during WWII, and finally as a hall for the Canadian Legion.

Soon after the first train arrived, the village had the full range of pioneer-era services arranged along the railway line, the most vital of which would be the elevator constructed in 1903 by the Ogilvie Company. Two other elevators followed with the Pool Elevator, built in 1927, standing alone today. Bradwardine School was built in 1905. A Presbyterian Church was built to serve that denomination. A lumberyard, blacksmith shop and a hotel soon were in business.

A private bank was opened by a Mr. Dickson and it was later taken over by the Bank of Hamilton. The vault still marks the spot, just south of the elevator.

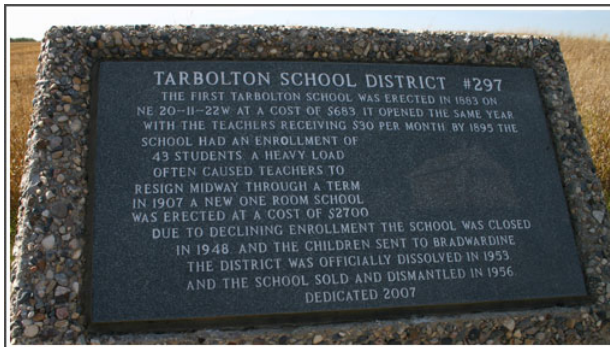
Sometime around 1910 a fire destroyed much of the main business district, and although the town continued to grow, the commercial sector never really recovered from that setback.

Tarbolton Church – An Enduring Link to the Past



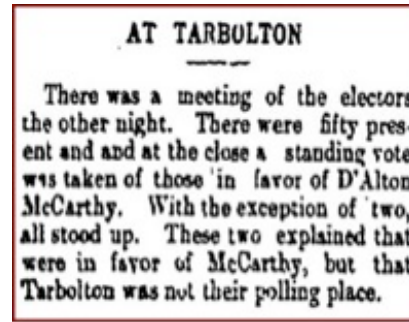
Tarbolton is another community that is remembered for its church. The district was well settled and served by Tarbolton School as early as 1883, and Roden Post Office, established in 1887, when they built the Tarbolton Presbyterian Church in 1888. It stands today on a gentle knoll, overlooking its attractive well-tended grounds and cemetery. That property was donated by James Sibbald and a generous donation from J. W. Wedderburn and some of his friends from Scotland helped finance the Church. The congregation had been established for some time, meeting in the school.

The first schoolhouse had sixteen pupils of all ages and grades up to grade eight in its first years. Like many pioneer schools, it wasn't open all year but closed from December 1st to April 1st. The pupils enjoyed only two weeks of summer vacation.



It was struck twice by lightning and on one strike a world globe, hanging from the ceiling, was split in two. Luckily, the children were on their way home at the time.

The region's Post Office was called Roden. It would have been common for a district to be identified by the name of its post office. That is the name usually found on the maps. But in this case the name Tarbolton was already well established so it took precedence, as seen here in this Brandon Sun notice from 1888.



June 18, 1896 - Brandon Sun

Tarbolton – not on the map but worthy of a byline in the Brandon Sun

Time passes, buildings crumble, old trails are overgrown; but the Tarbolton Church and its attractive Cemetery remain a very real connection to the community formed here long ago.



The Little Saskatchewan, A River Interrupted

From its source in Riding Mountain National Park, the Little Saskatchewan River soon enters a deep valley and twists and turns its way through Elphinstone, into the man-made lake at Minnedosa, past the scenic site of the old siding at Riverdale, over another dam at Rapid City, and into Lake Wahtopanah. Up until that point it swings back and forth across its deep valley, flowing strongly in springtime, down to a trickle in the fall. For the last twenty kilometres it becomes (especially in springtime) another river, as it descends to the Assiniboine in a series of rapids.

In a way it is two rivers. The river that was, and the river today. Lake Wahtopanah, is just the most recent of our efforts to bend the river towards our needs.

It was never a transportation route like the Assiniboine, but the advent of settlement spurred intensive logging in Riding Mountain and the river was ideal for transporting logs. First to a sawmill established by the Hudson's Bay Company at Elphinstone, next to Rapid City, and soon all the way to Brandon.

Dams

Dams back up a reliable supply of water for the dry seasons. By 1910, a dam was constructed just south of Rivers to ensure a dependable supply of water for railway steam engines.

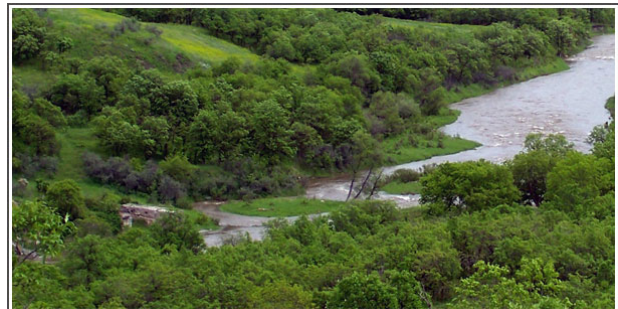
The other reason for building a dam is to provide consistent water power for gristmills and sawmills. Accessible and more reliable steam power was soon available for those uses, but rivers were then harnessed to supply the next revolution in energy – electricity. The first effort in Manitoba to harness waterpower to produce electricity happened right here, on the Little Saskatchewan, between Rivers and Brandon.

Generally called the “Ten Mile Dam”, the Brandon Electric Light Company built it in 1900. The success of the Brandon Power Station may have prompted a similar effort at Minnedosa, where in 1911 a second hydro project was constructed on the river. The dams were left in place after other sources of power became more efficient, to become swimming and camping sites.



The paths of these two dams crossed in 1948 when the Minnedosa dam was breached, flooding the downtown and causing such a torrent that it destroyed the Ten Mile Dam, far downstream. Because the Minnedosa dam had proven so beneficial as a recreational site, it was repaired. The Ten Mile Dam was left to disintegrate.

As of 2019 the concrete foundation of the powerhouse remains on the east side of the river. But a pattern was set.



Today, once the water spills over the dam at Rivers, the river has reverted to its old self between here and Brandon. It has become a favourite for paddling enthusiasts, providing western Manitoba's best stretches of whitewater and scenic river valleys.

Kirkham's Bridge – Through the Years

River crossing, swimming hole, campground, community ... and more.

For the prairie farmer in pioneer times, the river was both a necessity and an obstacle. Many farmers had land on both sides, and while crossing in late summer was easy enough, what was sometimes a mere nuisance, could be deceptively dangerous.

During the spring flood of 1897 while the Kirkham's Bridge was washed out, Walter Chapman had some ploughshares that he wanted to take across the river to Joe Kirkham to be sharpened. He swam the swollen river empty-handed, no problem, then returned for the shares. He strapped them on his back and stepped back into the river, but this time the river proved to be too swift and the load too heavy, so a life was lost.



Today, the former picnic spot is a great departure point for a river trip.

In the early days, when the need of a convenient way to cross the river became apparent, surveyors were sent to locate a suitable site for a bridge. In 1895 they arrived at the William Chapman home and after many measurements, they decided that the best location for the bridge was due west of his farm buildings. The bridge was named "Kirkham's Bridge" after the Kirkham family who had settled on the west bank of the river. All went well until the spring floods of 1897, when it washed out. Better footings had to be found. About 500 metres downstream suitable hardpan on which to support the piles was discovered, so the entire structure was floated down river and reconstructed on the site of present bridge. In 1906 a new steel bridge was erected.

During the 1930's this became a favourite spot for

school picnics, community ball games, and other forms of entertainment. Hundreds of people gathered here on Sunday afternoons to bathe in the cool water of the river and to enjoy a few hours of relaxation while visiting with friends and neighbours. Mr. Baker who now lived the Kirkham farm, and his family operated a small "booth", which did a thriving business, selling drinks and snacks.

For years the Boy Scouts and Cubs have made this pasture their summer camping ground. Many Brandon citizens also pitched tents here, where they could enjoy the quiet unspoiled beauty of this scenic spot. Gradually the crowds at Kirkham's Bridge diminished, due to the accessibility of newer and larger resorts, and the advent of World War II. In 1951 a channel was cut in the river north of the bridge to allow a graded road to be built through the valley. This straightened the river for a short distance and changed the scenery to some extent.

The Sixties and the Seventies brought activity once more to the area when the Riverdale Hospital Aid Auxiliary and Kirkham's Bridge WI revived interest in the picnic area. They served a cold plate supper each summer, beginning in 1964 and on into the Seventies. As many as three hundred enjoyed the meal under the shade trees and of course the visiting. At the same time ball games were popular once more in the area.

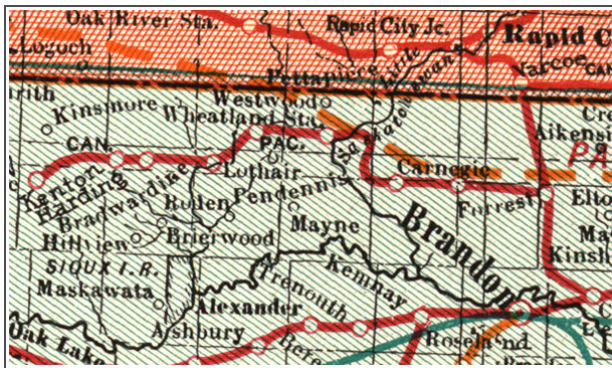
When the new Kirkham's Bridge was constructed in 1979-81 the lovely sandy river bottom was ruined and thus the huge, well loved stone no longer an attraction.

Mr. William Baker, son of Mr. Jack Baker, was the first one to drive a truckload of grain across the new Kirkham's Bridge, just as his father had delivered the first load across the 1906 bridge.

The Lenore Branch - Rail Service at Last!

As the district was becoming settled between 1880 and 1890, there was a boom in new railway line construction across western Manitoba.

In 1890 the Great Northwest Central began a service linking the CPR Main Line at Brandon to towns to the north. To facilitate the steep climb up out of the Assiniboine Valley it actually connected west of Brandon and angled gently up the slope before turning north. The CPR later took over this line, as it did with many others.



In 1902 the GNCR added a branch at Forrest that went west as far as Lenore, bringing much appreciated service.

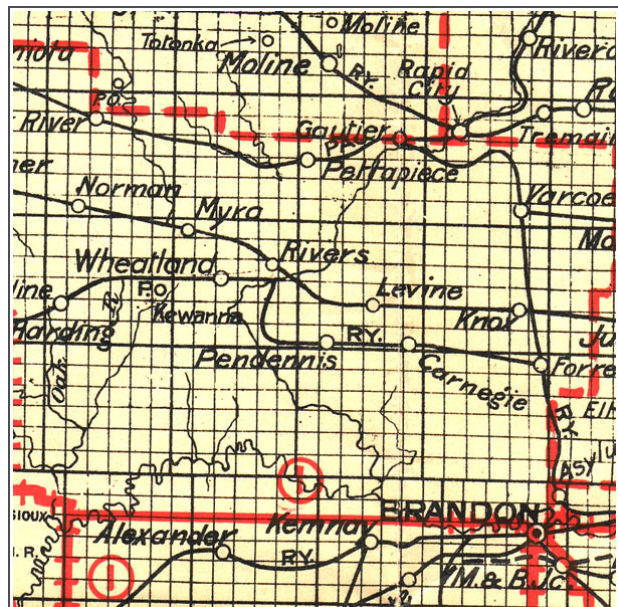
Carnegie

The first stop was Carnegie, selected for no other reason than the business decision to provide elevators every 8-12 kilometres. The land was purchased from William Carnegie, said to be the second cousin of industrialist and philanthropist Andrew Carnegie. Before long it had a post office, two elevators, and a blacksmith shop, along with a section house. Watt's General Store served the small community and the outdoor skating rink hosted a pretty fair hockey team. The post office closed in 1960 and nothing remains at the site but a cairn along the old railway grade.



Pendennis

The next stop was Pendennis. In this case the name was already there, or nearby, identifying a post office located near a crossing of the Little Saskatchewan River. As often happened, the Post Office moved, taking the name along with it.



The map shows all the rail lines that eventually crossed the region. But between 1902 and 1908 the Lenore line was the sole link to the rest of the province. Notice how that line takes quite a jog to the north before crossing the river and heading west again?

Railways will go to some lengths, literally, to find the easiest place to cross a river. Surveyors look for a gentle grade and a short crossing. At the crossing, near the original location of Pendennis, they built a water tower and a siding called Cossar Crossing.

The site was really close to Wheatland, in fact was sometimes referred to as the Wheatland Crossing,

and would have been established because of the ready supply of water at the river.



The Cossar Crossing site today.

Wheatland however did become quite a town. Like Pendennis, it had existed as a post office for some time in a location quite a distance to the north. Had the Grand Trunk Pacific not decided to build its line so close, and to establish a divisional point at Rivers, Wheatland would naturally have become the service centre for the region.



At one time, the Canadian Pacific Railway ran tri-weekly mixed freight and passenger trains on the Forrest/Brandon to Lenore line. The line has been long since abandoned, the rails have been removed, and the railway lands returned to agriculture. The little villages of Carnegie and Pendennis are gone while Wheatland and Bradwardine have a few scattered buildings.

The Grand Trunk Pacific – A Transcontinental Dream

The busy Canadian National Railway line which passes through Rivers, carries both freight and passengers from coast to coast. The line has its origins with the Grand Trunk Pacific, a wholly owned subsidiary of the Grand Trunk Railway, which established the Town of Rivers as a divisional point on its new line in 1908.

As the twentieth century approached, railway operations in western Canada were under the control of the Canadian Pacific, which in 1885 had completed its cross-country line, and by the Canadian Northern, which had begun the start of a second transcontinental. The Municipality of Riverdale was served the Great Northwest Central Railway Lenore Branch beginning in 1902.

The Grand Trunk Pacific Railway was established to build a line from Winnipeg to the Pacific. It was a time of seemingly endless prosperity and growth, and its creation was encouraged by the newly-elected Liberal government of Sir Wilfred Laurier at the urging of Sir Charles Rivers-Wilson, Chairman of the Grand Trunk Railway. Construction began on the Canadian Prairies in 1905.

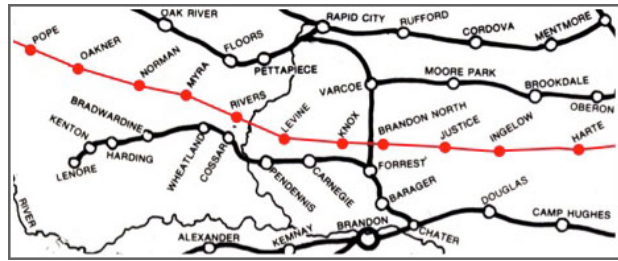
Because the GTP received no federal grants, it purchased forty-five thousand acres of land for eighty-six townsites. It advertised them as “towns made to order.”

The first mention of the new town of Rivers in the media came on July 22 when the Brandon Sun headline declared: “RIVERS WILL BE GOOD TOWN”. The article went on to report that the track had proceeded 75 miles west from Portage and that the first divisional point would be called Rivers. “It is expected to be quite a centre.”

Under General manager Charles M. Hays, the company pushed its line west. The Grand Trunk Pacific was for a relatively short time a very influential factor in the development of Western Canada. This vital connection to the rest of the country forever changed life in Rivers and area.

Construction proceeded west to Saskatoon, Saskatchewan in 1907, Edmonton, Alberta in 1909, and through Jasper, Alberta into the Yellowhead Pass crossing the Continental Divide in 1910-1911. The last spike ceremony heralding completion of the rail line across the prairies, and through the

Rocky Mountains to the newly constructed seaport at Prince Rupert, British Columbia, was held one mile east of Fort Fraser, British Columbia on April 7, 1914.



The ABC Railway

In Manitoba villages with either sidings or stations were created in alphabetical order, starting just west of Portage la Prairie with the siding known as Arona and continuing with Bloom, Caye, Deer, Exira, Firdale, Gregg, Harte,...

Rivers in 1907 – The Waiting Game

The town of Rivers as it existed in 1907 was in a unique position. It was waiting, perhaps with some understandable impatience.

What had started as a “tent and shack” encampment in preparation for the arrival of the new rail line, had already evolved into a main street and several houses. Businesses like R.S. McKenzie’s Store and The North American Lumber Yard were up and running, assured that the town was the place to be. Everyone now knew that the Grand Trunk Pacific was to build a station and establish a Divisional Point, and that would mean construction, lots of it, and with that employment and growth.

The shops in the new town were so popular with local farmers that they often stayed open until near midnight. Business was somewhat fuelled by the temporary income local people they got building railway grades.



Locals found work grading the line.

Prosperity was what it would mean. The future promised a busy community, and a truly important connection to the rest of the country.

Promoters were selling lots through newspaper ads in the cities. The place was booming, yet waiting for the real boom.

The problem was the river. The tracks that would link the town to Winnipeg and beyond had to cross that river. I’m sure it couldn’t happen fast enough for the people who had already decided to make this new town their home.

In the meantime freight has to be sent by way of Pettapiece on Great Northwest Central branch running about ten kilometres to the north, or Wheatland on the CPR Lenore branch nearby to the west, then hauled by team and wagon. Passengers could get out at the end of the line, on the other side of the Little Saskatchewan, ford that

gentle stream, and walk the few kilometres to the town. Mail came by way of Wheatland about three times a week.

But before the first passenger train arrived in late September of 1908 the town had stores, a newspaper, cafes, a post office many other services. They were already planning schools, churches and public buildings.

When the first train arrived, they would be ready.



Construction of McKenzie’s Store in 1907.

The Fine Art of Crossing the River

Railway builders must have loved the prairies.

A train hates a steep grade, in fact a rise of even 2 metres for every hundred travelled (a 2% grade) is considered unacceptable. The whole efficiency of the locomotive is lost if you have to provide enough power to just step on the accelerator like you would in a car to get over the hill. For the builder, negotiating hills and valleys in such a way that we keep the trains on a low grade add great cost to the process of railway building. That's why a rail line is sometimes diverted several kilometres to avoid the expense of going over a hill or through a valley.

So when the earliest railway builders arrived on the prairies, say, at Winnipeg, and started travelling west, over those flat plains towards Portage, they must have been quite happy.

The job of the railway construction crew is to take that path of least resistance and work with it. That means it's a process of levelling using what came to be known as cuts and fills. For small hills you cut a path through so that the tracks run through an excavated section lower than the surround ground level. For modest depressions or ravines you build up the grade.

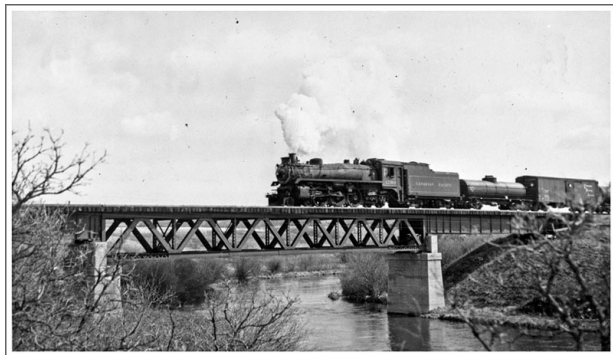
That will get you across much of the prairies.

Designing the Bridge

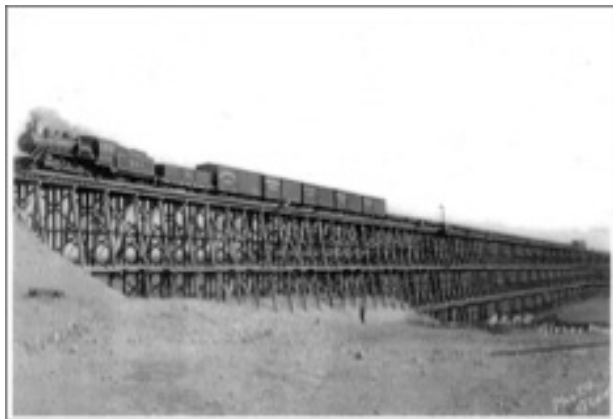
The Little Saskatchewan is a little river in a big valley, a valley left over from the huge streams that drained the meltwater from the last ice age. There are two accepted ways to cross a deep valley. Method #1 is to plot a gentle decline along the edge of the valley, cross the river on modest bridge, then plot an equally gentle climb up the other side. This can take one on quite a detour.

Or one can cross at the top by building a bridge from rim to rim of the valley, far above the stream.

The Little Saskatchewan had already been crossed once in this area, by the CPR. Comparing their former bridge at Cossar Crossing and the current CN Bridge near Rivers shows the difference in height.



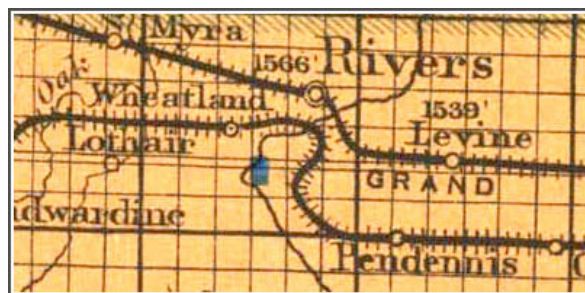
Cossar Crossing. Photo courtesy the McKee Archives, Brandon University



The Rivers Trestle

The CPR twisted and turned to find a low crossing, while the Grand Trunk Pacific used a more direct route and a high bridge.

Both companies selected virtually the same "good crossing" – less than a kilometre apart.



Two crossings of the Little Saskatchewan, Method #1 on the Pendennis – Wheatland line, Method #2 at Rivers.

The Promise Becomes a Reality

Finally, in the fall of 1908, the first train pulled in to town. Before long regular passenger, freight and mail service was scheduled.



Rivers in about 1908

The GTP specifically dictated some elements of town design. Street were to be twenty metres wide. Prime locations were reserved for banks and hotels.

Because the new town was in the midst of well populated and productive farmland there was a burst of construction as commercial enterprises sprang up to meet the growing needs. The usual banks, general stores, drug and jewelry stores appeared. Some of these would naturally be housed in quickly erected-frame buildings, but because the economic importance of the town seemed quite secure many substantial commercial and residential building appeared in those first years. Some of those, like the original Grand Trunk Station and the Alexandra Hotel have been lost, but other such as the Imperial Bank of Commerce, Knox Presbyterian Church, and the fine houses beside it remain in use today.

While the Grand Trunk Pacific may not have been successful as a National enterprise, locally it was an important stimulus to the economy, a convenience to the citizens, and an influential factor in the lifestyle of the region. The Town of Rivers owes not only its very existence to the railway, and great deal of its character and success came directly down those rails.

The Process

With the exception of towns located on the CPR main line such as Carberry and Oak Lake, most rural centres in western Manitoba followed a similar development pattern. Settlers came and established farms. Transportation was by foot, ox cart, and horse-drawn wagons. Delivering products to market was difficult and prosperity hinged on the arrival of a railway branch line.

They waited. In Melita, to the south, they waited for about ten years, in Birtle to the north they waited

about seven. Settlers in the Rivers area occupied a middle territory between the original CPR main line (1882) to the south and the newer northern line (1885) through Minnedosa. Although this presented some hardship, settlement was progressing.

In 1902, the much-anticipated CPR Lenore Branch line connected the district to Brandon and the main CPR line. The accompanying establishment of both retail services and elevators made life easier for everyone. It was progress, but perhaps not a big readjustment in social cultural or economic life.

It was the second railway endeavour that would have the largest impact on the economic and social development of the area.

The second line established Rivers as the important centre of the region.



Second Avenue during the building boom that followed the arrival of the new rail line. Photo courtesy the Archives of Manitoba.

Almost overnight Rivers went from being farmland to hub of economic activity.

The implications for the entire municipality were far-reaching. The railway jobs attracted people from a wide variety of places, broadening the social and cultural makeup of the region.

This vital connection to the rest of the country forever changed life in Rivers and area.

Connected – Train Service Begins

The fall of 1908 must have been an exciting time for the people of Rivers. Many of them had been here for about a year, establishing businesses and homes.

In 1908 a mile-long trestle bridge, the longest of its kind in Western Canada, was completed.

A special train arrived carrying GTP Vice-President F.W. Morse who promised a loading platform would be soon built.

The status of Rivers as a divisional point on the new railway was evident in the scale of construction that took place.

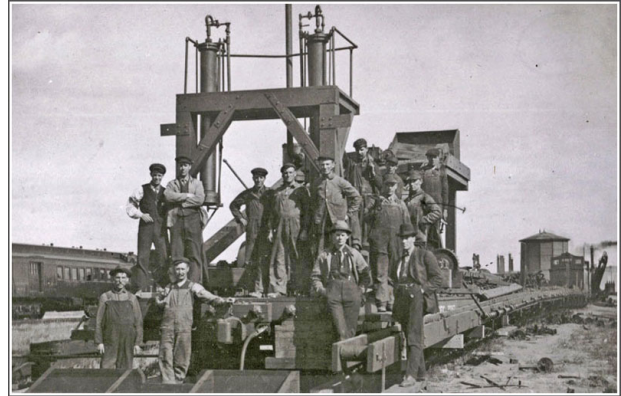


Soon a new two-story depot complete with stood at the foot on Main Street. It was the most impressive railway building in western Manitoba. During the construction of the line it also served as offices for the Engineering Dept.

The Roundhouse and related shops and terminal yards were extensive and employed over 250 men during the busiest period.

On Sept 21, the first GTP passenger service began between Winnipeg and Wainwright Alberta with a two-weekly timetable in each direction. The Brandon Sun reported on the complete schedule under the heading: GRAND TRUNK PACIFIC NOW IN OPERATION." It added that, "There is a train agent on each train who sells tickets, receives orders for cars required for loading, and attends generally to business at stations where there are no agents."

Mail for the first time was brought from Winnipeg by GTP on Oct. 5. The town now had service direct from Winnipeg and via the CPR at Wheatland. W. Buggy was the first GTP Agent



A large contingent of maintenance staff kept the trains running.

The new rail line brought politicians. Clifford Sifton and T.C. Norris, of Laurier's Liberal gov't took full credit, with Sifton claiming that the Conservatives had opposed building the line. Conservative candidate T. Mayne Daly came claiming a Conservative government would be committed to the GTP.

Executive head Charles Melville Hays and General Manager F.W. Morse also visited.

It was a busy year.



Second Street 1908 - a work in progress

A First Class Train Station

The Grand Trunk, like the other railways, generally relied on a fairly small number of standardized station plans. For Rivers, the company chose a more ambitious design, reflecting Rivers' status as a divisional point on the railway's main line through the West, and showcasing the quality of the Grand Trunk Railway's building program. The stations in Melville, Saskatchewan, Edson, Alberta, Sioux Lookout, Ontario and Redditt, Ontario, are similar in design and likewise are examples of the rare GTPR, custom-designed, "special stations".



It was indeed more than just a station.

It housed the first Canada Railway News Company restaurant west of Winnipeg. Sabbath services were conducted in the waiting room, conducted by men of the gospel from Bradwardine and Wheatland.

It included living quarters for the families of the first Company Agent F. W. Buggie, as well as, at different times, a railroad clerk, and station restaurant managers.

From its location at the base of Main Street this impressive structure dominated the skyline the thriving new town.

THE LINE'S "NO. 1" C.R.N.
Restaurant

•

Readied to serve the
earliest G.T.P. rail - travellers,
the initial

Canada Railway News Company Limited

Restaurant west of Winnipeg was opened
in Rivers on Saturday, August 24, 1908.

The "C.R.N." was chosen to provide dinner to participants of this region's first hockey game. It was the selected eating-place of Rivers' first bachelor-army, that now far-off Christmas season . . . Here the "Station Restaurant" quickly became a local institution.

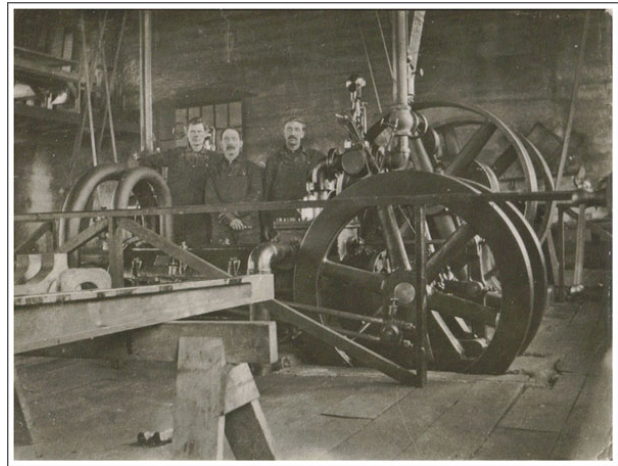
Railway Facilities – Keeping the Trains Rolling

Railway towns were designed for convenience. The station was the focal point and the main business area and hotels were positioned nearby .



Water and coal were the twin fuels that kept the steam engines running. Modern yards were already seeing the introduction of labour saving efficiencies such as the coal dock, and a mechanized refuelling station.

A good water supply was essential, especially in a large operation such as Rivers. That is why riverside locations are ideal. Water to fill the tower came from a dam about a kilometre to the south from a dam on the Little Saskatchewan River.

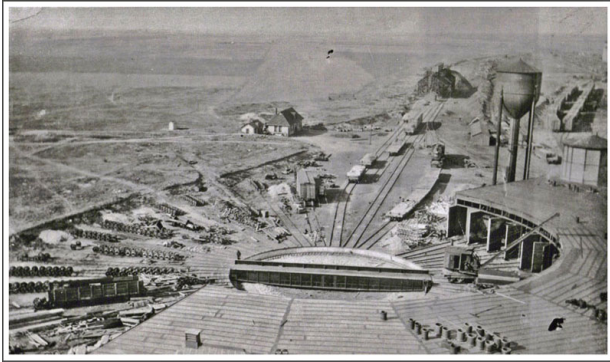


The Rivers Yards were a busy place, employing dozens of people for each shift. These were steady, well paying jobs that helped build the community.



This aerial view of the Rivers Yards shows the main features.

The Roundhouse – A Service Station for Trains



As a divisional point of the new Grand Trunk Pacific, the town of Rivers underwent a considerable building boom as the GTP began the construction of buildings to service the many locomotives that would be passing through. By 1909 up to 300 people were employed in railway operations.

As simple as their designs were, engines needed regular maintenance. Boilers needed special attention and occasionally had to be re-built. Catastrophic explosions could occur in a faulty boiler.

The most important and unique structure was the Roundhouse. Roundhouses or Engine Houses are large, circular or semicircular structures that were traditionally located surrounding or adjacent the tracks. They are maintenance and repair shops for locomotives. Along with the adjacent coal dock and water tower they were Service Stations for trains.

The defining feature of the traditional roundhouse was the turntable.

The main structure was a series of stalls, arranged in a semi-circle. Each stall was connected by a track to the edge of the turntable. The turntable allowed a locomotive or other rolling stock to be directed towards the proper stall and turned around for the return journey when the work was done.

How else would you turn and park five tonnes of steel?



Some 250 to 300 men were employed in Rivers during the early railroad operations at this point. Pictured here are some members of the machine department.

The first roundhouse, built in 1908, was updated in 1918, and although there was a serious fire soon after that, the building was saved. Other mishaps occurred. A tornado destroyed one end of the building in 1935 and a storm buckled part of the roof in 1940, but these setbacks were quickly overcome.

These unique and indispensable buildings became obsolete as diesel engines replaced steam power. These new engines required much less local maintenance. Rivers building remained a vital part of the railroad operation until the 1950's and was torn down in 1962.

Accidents Happen - Workplace Safety Through The Years

It was accepted that there were dangers in a railway job. The development of rail transportation was part of the much larger industrial revolution that began with the invention of the steam engine. These new machines brought new dangers to the workplace, and developing safety procedures that took this new technology into account were some time coming.

The process of building railways, bridges and other large-scale infrastructure often brought workplace accidents. Using and maintaining that infrastructure involved complex machinery and time pressure; two things that can get one into trouble.

Rivers, being a busy railway centre, saw its share of train wrecks, mishaps and close calls.

The first accident on record happened in 1908 when twenty-two year old Samuel White had one leg severed by a locomotive and later died. The throttle had been defective according to a coroner's inquest, which also noted that no ash pit was provided in the Rivers yard for the safety of those who cleaned out locomotive ash pans. The railway company was found guilty of gross negligence.

In 1913 a yard engine and two cars crashed over the end of the coal dock after the locomotive throttle refused to function, causing serious injuries to brakeman George Hile and forcing engineer Joe Rymal and D.J.D. Ellis to jump for safety.



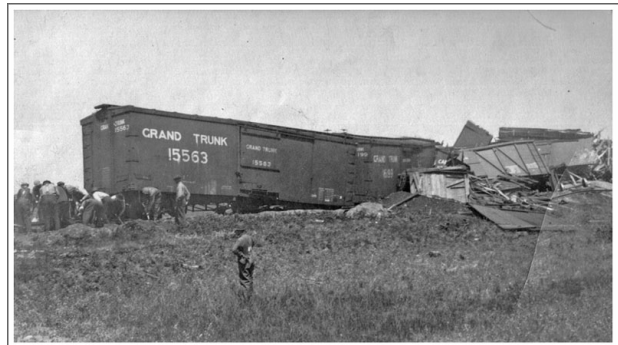
Brandon Sun, August 30, 1913

In 1919 C. W. Angel suffered painful injuries when an electric magnet capsized in the railway yards and fell upon him.

The deepening depression saw the railways used

as free transportation as men moved across the land seeking work. They often disembarked from freight trains at this point; hurried calls on local households for handouts were followed by a dash to catch the next outgoing transport. On New Year's Day, 1931, one such traveller, a woman travelling with her son, while trying to board a moving box-car, slipped and fell beneath the wheels.

In 1951 a head on crash of two freights occurred on the outskirts of Rivers, no one was hurt, but the damage was dramatic.



A dramatic collision in 1951.

Out of Steam – The End of an Era

The era of the steam locomotive was coming to an end in the early 1950's. New diesel engines were faster and stronger. They didn't require the types of local maintenance that the roundhouse and yards had been providing. For a time these new engines used local makeshift facilities in the roundhouse, but soon new liquid fuel tanks replaced the coal dock and the roundhouse was no longer vital to operations.

Rivers was still a busy place. No less than twenty-eight crews (one hundred and forty men) were operating between this point between Winnipeg and Melville. An average of sixty carloads of ballast material were being taken from the railway's gravel pit on a daily basis, as roadbeds needed constant attention.

But what we today call "downsizing" was inevitable. In 1954 twenty-three men - four roundhouse and eighteen car-department employees - received termination notices from the Canadian National.

Another result of the increasing advances in locomotive technology was that railway operations became centralized, and as a result the divisional point was transferred to Terrace, and eventually all maintenance was relocated to Prince George, BC and Edmonton, Alberta.

So through the fifties there was a recurring series of lay-off and cuts as CN "rationalized" its operation to fit the new technologies and new realities.

The town witnessed the razing of the Canadian National coal dock, and the lifting of rails that once served the car department, backshop and fuel stockpiles.

In 1958 the railway removed the sixty-foot high smokestack, a landmark above the roundhouse. In 1961 the building was sold to Structural Fabricators Ltd., which held its "open house" there the following year, but soon had the building demolished.



The final days

It all Started in Rivers – The North American Lumber Story



News of plans of the Grand Trunk Pacific to build a railway across the Prairies was well reported across North America. By 1906 work was underway and businessmen from far and wide saw opportunities. The general route was known and there came a time when one could be pretty sure that a new town would arise near the crossing of the Little Saskatchewan River. Several Manitobans made plans to move and get in on the ground floor so to speak.

Some came from Brandon and Rapid City. R.S. McKenzie came from all the way from Portage.

Even farther away, in the northwestern corner of North Dakota, plans were being made. Edward A. Konantz, owned the Citizen's Lumber Company of Bow Bells. In 1906 he enlisted the help of Charles Lee as a general Manager and established the North American Lumber & Supply Company.

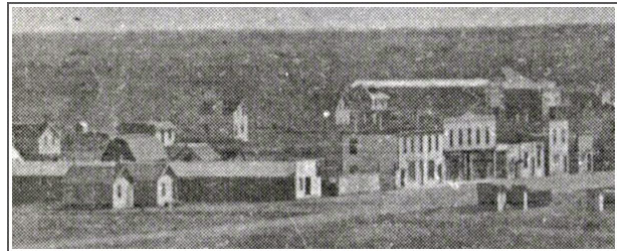
As the name might suggest, they had big plans.

So while it might seem odd that they picked the newly conceived town of Rivers in Manitoba, to open their first Lumber Yard, it actually made a lot of sense. The town was destined to be someplace. Spots on the new rail line made it easy to get supplies and there would be a lot of building going on.

That's the way it worked out in Rivers. In 1907 it was barely a town at all – but that meant that it had a lot of growing to do. By the fall of 1908, Rivers had dozens of new buildings, the new lumber yard was doing a great business, and by the end of that year the partners had established 16 more yards,

with a total of 19 yards in place by the spring of 1909.

The first yard at Rivers was located on First Avenue and opened in 1907, before Grand Trunk Railroad accepted shipments into Rivers. Materials both for construction of buildings and for stock were hauled from Wheatland. They started making sales at Rivers after mid-summer of that year. Charles Lee remained as General Manger for many years.



This view of Rivers in 1908 shows the North American Lumber Co., near the centre, on Second Street.

North American Lumber suffered through the Great Depression along with the rest of Canada, but by 1936, 56 yards had survived the worst part of the depression.

Through the '40s and '50s, the company continued to grow and diversify, establishing even more of a presence in rural Manitoba and Brandon.



The original buildings were replaced in the early 1950's, and when the operation was taken over by Home Hardware in 2018 it was the oldest established business in Rivers.

*Adapted from The North American Lumber Co. Website
<http://www.mywestman.ca/community-news/6787-canada-s-1st-north-american-lumber-started-in-rivers>

McKenzie's - a Rivers Institution

In the summer of 1907 it was obvious that Rivers was the place to be. The newspaper in nearby Rapid City noted, with regret one supposes, that a few of the citizens in that well-established town were considering a move. The word was out. Opportunity was knocking.

R. S. McKenzie had come from Portage la Prairie and opened the first store. Like many of the newcomers who were about to arrive, he would have had to disembark on the south bank of the Little Saskatchewan River, ford the shallow stream, and then walk the last mile into town. Material for the store he was building would have to be hauled by team and wagon from nearby Wheatland. Business was good. By the next year he was already expanding out of his recently built store. He took over a corner block from hardware merchant Thompson.



By 1910 his General Store had become a "Departmental" store. In 1912, the business passed over to his son: the enterprise was renamed the Jas. A. McKenzie Departmental Store.

In 1913 James A. McKenzie began to take a leadership role in the community and was elected to council.

As World War 1 progressed many of the towns young men were off to war and as G. Barker in his History of Rivers puts it this way:

"two Rivers' ladies (Mrs. J. Blake and Mrs. J. Warren) had departed for England and munition-factory work - transitions which gave concern to merchant J. A. McKenzie who (after staff depletion

due to enlistments) decided to take no chance on losing his book-keeper, and married her."

Over the years the business prospered and moved with times. The Rivers Banner noted improvements over the years. In 1940 the entire second floor was renovated. There was expansion in 1946.



In the Community

Both R.S. and his son J.A. followed the tradition of community service that typified rural business leaders. R.S. was very influential in the decisions around building the first school. When the Rivers Banner noted that in 1909 at an event marking the opening of Shannon Hall, they mention that the musicians included, J. A. McKenzie. Decades later, in 1962 he was still active in musical presentations.

A Pioneer

AMONG THE PIONEERS!

— ★ —

Yes, the name, McKENZIE'S, is tradition in this community, for it has been part of it since the beginning.

From a small shopping centre catering to the needs of a lusty infant, McKENZIE'S has grown with the district that today serves thousands of customers from a wide radius.

McKENZIE'S can be proud of Rivers' past achievements . . . hopeful of its future accomplishments,

— ★ —

McKENZIE'S

SINCE 1907

The Bank of Commerce Building

Prefabricated kit buildings were all the rage in the early part of the last century.



A town needs a bank and in Rivers the topic was discussed at one of the earliest council meetings in 1908. When merchants pledged their support, the Canadian Bank of Commerce began business in Rivers in the newly constructed Korman Block. They soon decided erect their own building and they wasted no time. The decision was made in the spring and the handsome new building was open in July.

How was that possible?

The building is one of the few that remain from some seventy prefabricated wooden branches opened by the CIBC across the Prairies in the boom years before World War I. They were based on a standard design, and shipped by rail from Vancouver by the B.C. Mills Timber and Trading Company. The components, including numbered pre-painted panels, arrived at Rivers in two boxcars and were said to have been erected by a crew on a prepared foundation in two days.

The two-storey design was a nice addition to the town's rapidly expanding business district. Located on the corner of 2nd Avenue and Main Street, near the railway facilities that sustained the town, the building has seen several transformations, most recently to a private dwelling, reflecting the evolution of the local economy.

The main floor contained the banking hall and manager's office, with a concrete-encased vault at the rear. The upstairs had generous living quarters that could be used by the bank manager and his

family or as communal housing for the bank's junior staff.

The Bank served the community and prospered until the "Dirty Thirties" when both drought and depression hit the prairies. It closed in 1935.

Rivers was without a bank for over a decade. Local businesses helped to pick up the slack by acting as cheque cashers. The Royal Bank of Canada set up a small branch, in a different location, in 1948. A brief item in a 1938 Rivers Gazette noted that the building: "is being fixed up and we understand that will be used as an office by the Rural Municipality of Daly." When renovations were completed, the main level contained a council chamber and a doctor's office. After about 1950 it housed a few private businesses before being converted as housing.



Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent on the steps of the old bank, then serving as the Civic Offices. It still occupies its highly visible spot on the corner.

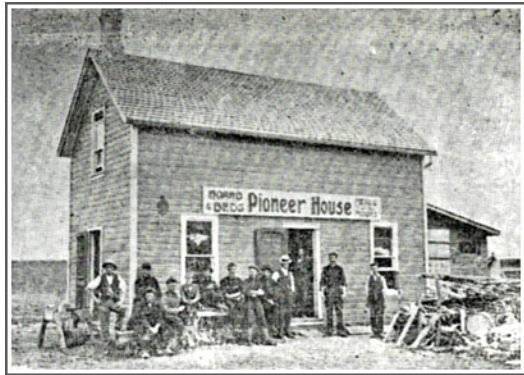
The Rivers Bank Robbery – A Foiled Attempt

The bank escaped a possible robbery attempt in August 1927. A man named Jim Durno, one of a number of aliases, arrived in town by train and slipped into the building's basement that evening. The town's constable, M. W. Coldicott, lived next to the bank and noticed the man acting suspiciously.

The constable called bank manager R. M. Tucker to see if he was expecting a tradesman or a caretaker to visit. He wasn't. Tucker called the bank and the ringing is said to have startled Druno, causing him to flee. Waiting outside was Coldicott who discovered that the man had a loaded pistol in his possession, though no safe-cracking tools.

The culprit was arrested and convicted.

The Ups and Downs of the Hotel Business



In 1908, before the railway arrived, the Pioneer House was open for business. The prominent sign on the modest gable-fronted frame building promised Board & Bed ...Meals and Rooms.

The proprietor "Admiral" E. Harkness encouraged newcomers to drop anchor for a "good square meal." There were a lot of new people in town and they needed a place to stay.

Hotels have almost vanished from smaller rural towns. We have cars, the roads are good, there is not much need for an overnight stay. But in the early days even smaller towns had a hotel. Booming towns like Rivers had a few.

Before the end of 1908 the Pioneer House had competition. In fact, the Rivers House, owned by G. B. Somerville had already begun a sixteen-bedroom extension to his existing establishment.



The Rivers House –1908

By 1909 Somerville's petition for a liquor license had provoked controversy in town. It was approved, then revoked after a public outcry. It was again approved upon appeal in 1910. By then the

business was re-named the Cecil House.

Battles over temperance; the battles of the "drys" and the wets", were a recurring feature in Rivers and elsewhere in rural Manitoba.

Walter Dynes bought the Cecil in 1912 and then purchased some lots across from the depot with plans for a new larger brick building.

The battle over liquor permits continued until the Province enacted prohibition in 1916. With the initial building boom over, and with the War having taken away many young men, the end of the liquor trade spelled doom for hotels. Dynes had to abandon his newly built hotel before it was even opened. Ownership of the property reverted to the town.

In 1921 T. E. Shore of Winnipeg purchased the vacant "monument to prohibition".

It was to be called the Shore House, and the grand ball planned to celebrate its opening was almost cancelled, when drayman James Taylor's team bolted during furniture unloading operations. After this somewhat shaky start the business proceeded to thrive. In 1923 you could get board and room there for \$35 a month.

Re-named the Alexandra it invited farmers to make use of the wheat market and stock-yard quotations they made available; they opened a tea-room and the Good Eats Cafe operated for a short time until the owners received a \$200 penalty for breach of the temperance act - and then lost their license.

In 1928 prohibition ended and the Alexandra Hotel beverage room doors swung open. The building was "modernized" in 1940 and an annex added in 1949 and more renovations completed in 1959.



The Alexandra was constructed in 1913. Its location, right across from the Station, and its distinctive style, made it a landmark.

Strike! Labour Unrest in Rivers

Labour unrest is not something many small towns are likely to experience, but with a national operation such as a railway, what happens in one part of the country affects the staff across the land.

The Grand Trunk Pacific had been in operation on the prairies for only a few years when a widespread strike hindered operations.

The strike was declared on Oct. 10, 1911 by machinists and boilermakers. Work ceased across the prairies as far as Edmonton. The GTP workers felt that they deserved the same pay and working condition as their counterparts in the CP and CN operations. That meant a nine-hour day and a minimum of 45 ½ cents per hour.

Strikes in a small town where everybody knows their neighbours are especially disruptive. Things get more personal.

The other complication is that the railway created Rivers. The workers who came here to work were not entering an established town so much as creating a town. They were part of it from the beginning, not outsiders brought in to work. Non-railway townspeople would tend to side with the workers rather than the management.

But there were bound to be some disputes. In one case some striking workers took alternate work painting and that was not well received by those already engaged in that work.

GTP general assistant C. Warman, had this comment (or threat) published in the local paper:

"If the railway is in trouble, the town usually sides against it. If there is rioting, they are more likely to consort with the rioters than with the railway and the authorities endeavoring to preserve the peace...Retention of the shops at Rivers or at any other terminal of the Grand Trunk Pacific may depend in no small measure upon the attitude of the people who inhabit these terminal towns."

In other words, if the town wanted to keep the advantages that go with having the shops here, they had better be more "understanding".

The more damaging effects of the strike might never have reached this small town except for the introduction of strikebreakers from the outside.

The Brandon Sun on Oct. 18 reported that 100 strikebreakers from Montreal had reached Rivers and that the new workers would replace those out at various points. It notes that, "The strikers here are orderly, but the bringing in of strike breakers is strongly resented." The report was an exaggeration as only about ten boilermakers and two machinists were sent to Rivers, but as one might expect, there were a few incidents.



By 1911 Rivers was a busy place.

One of the Strikers' in the local press commented that, "we could not have called a strike at a better time. The Company's power is now in deplorable condition. Of course, the public is suffering and we are sorry for the public. . .strike-breakers do not know the meaning of truth. . ."

Despite these exchanges, the small close-knit community no doubt expected little more in the way of drama. That made it all the more shocking when one altercation between a strikebreaker and a striker escalated into gunfire and death. It seems that a strikebreaker, when confronted by a striker, produced a pistol, and in the scuffle that followed shots were fired killing one and injuring another. Such altercations were certainly the exception, and for the most part, the town weathered the storm by waiting it out.

It took some time, and over a year had gone by before the end was in sight. In December of 1912 representatives of the GTP strikers, including William Renton from Rivers, met with the Minister of Labour in Ottawa about the strike, which had now lasted fourteen months. It was settled shortly afterwards, with the strikers gaining most of their demands.

Murder and Mayhem at the Cecil House

Rivers was still a very new town when it became the centre of a murder investigation and trial.

In late 1911, the effects of the ongoing strike by Grand Trunk Pacific employees was having its effect on the community of Rivers and tensions were running high. Arthur Alford was a former boilermaker's helper at the GTP shops in Rivers, who now worked as a night porter at the Cecil Hotel on Main Street.

On the morning of December 20th, he and Jack Gibben, a striker, met Alf Smith going out the door.

According to Mr. Gibben's testimony, he asked Mr. Smith if he was working at the shops and when the answer was "yes" he asked if he was aware that he was "scabbing". At that point Smith pulled out a gun and when Gibben and Mr. Alford tried to take it away from him, shots were fired. Gibben sustained two serious wounds and Alford was fatally shot.

His testimony was somewhat corroborated by the bartender, Mr. Ving who recalled that he had heard someone say something like "He's got a gun" or, "Get that gun." before shots were fired.

The trial was held in the spring of 1912, just after Gibbens was released from the hospital where he had been recovering from his wounds.

The prosecution contended that Mr. Smith without serious provocation began firing a revolver. Mr. Smith claimed that he was attacked and had used his weapon to defend himself.

The prosecution's case relied heavily on testimony of strikers and those admittedly sympathetic to the strikers.

Mr. Gibben insisted under oath that they had not attacked Mr. Smith before he had produced a gun, and that they were trying to merely get the gun away from him when shots were fired and Mr. Alston was mortally wounded.

But Gibben was revealed to be something of a rover, who at some times worked under an assumed name. The accusation was that he was an "agitator". He did admit to knowing ahead of time that Smith was a strikebreaker and to wanting to confront him after noticing him in the bar. He

admitted to wrestling him to the ground and kicking him, but insisted that all this happened after the gun was produced.

Mr. Gibben admitted that he had been part of a group that did harass some strikebreakers but denied that Alston was any harder on strikebreakers than anyone else, just sympathetic to the strikers.

Tim Slattery, another union member, testified that when he came on the scene Smith was being held down by Gibben and Leary while Alford lay helpless and wounded. Dr. Schwann, who had been called to the scene, recalled that when he arrived the prisoner was being held down and that he observed severe bruises on his head.

Other witnesses such as Police Constable Conrad Matthews, testified that Smith was well acquainted with revolvers such as the Smith and Wesson 32 caliber pistol he had, and that he wouldn't have fired it accidentally.



The Cecil House, on the right in this photo, was the site of the altercation that ended in the death of Arthur Alford.

In his summation to the jury Prosecutor, Matheson reminded them that although Gibben had no right to accost Smith and question him, if Smith pulled a gun we must assume he was responsible for Alston's death.

Despite provocation, went his argument; Smith had no right to shoot. He said, "It is permissible in Texas, Colorado or Virginia, but not in Manitoba."

In the end, the jury was unable to conclude that he had intended to commit murder and acquitted him, but the locals, especially union members, were not convinced. When Smith laid charges against Gibben and three other men in connection with the hotel incident, that case was dismissed.

The Story of the Chapman Museum



Ab & Harriet Chapman didn't set out to create a museum. It just started with collecting stuff, like the five-gallon crockery jug they found while dismantling the old Carnegie Store. The collection grew and in 1967, as a tribute to Canada's Centennial, they used an old bunkhouse on their farm as sort of display room.

"We came to know the fun and rivalry of Auction Sales, We found ourselves the recipients of gifts from folk who didn't want to throw old, unused articles away, but who wished them to be kept undercover. "

When they needed more room, the Pendennis Railway Station, which they had purchased for use as grain storage, seemed like an obvious choice.



Pendennis Station at the Chapman Museum

Before they knew it they had sixteen buildings that represented the scope of the region's history. The collection included five one-room schools, a store, a few houses and a church. In those buildings were treasures that tell the story of the times.

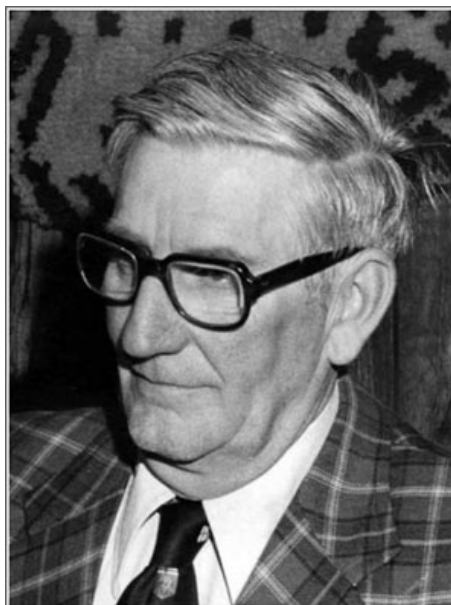
Things like; a collection of glassware and china, a huge Bible with an inscription on the cover showing it was given as a gift in 1756, a "Grain Growers Guide", from September 10th, 1919, a GTP baggage wagon, a feed cooker or pig scalding, a Raleigh's peddler's carrying case from 1921. It was an array of farm and domestic equipment that documented prairie life at the turn of the 20th

century. Eventually the operation of the museum was taken over by their daughter and son-in-law, Lois and Gordon Allen.

At its peak, the museum averaged over 400 visitors per year. Schools, Churches and Sunday Schools, Cubs, Senior Citizens, and Pioneer Groups were regulars.

In 2014, the museum closed after forty-seven years of operations.

Ab Chapman - Farmer, municipal official, archivist.



Born on the family farm near Rivers on 3 February 1918, Ab was a Councillor and Reeve for 42 years, and was President of the Union of Manitoba Municipalities (1974-1979). He was instrumental in the building of Riverdale Hospital at Rivers and was its first Chairman; was the first President of WestMan Regional Development Limited at Brandon;

In recognition of his exemplary community service, he received the Manitoba Golden Boy Award in 1964, the Spirit of '70 Citation in 1970, and many such citations thereafter including induction into the Manitoba Agricultural Hall of Fame. He died on 7 August 2013 and is buried in Roseville Cemetery.

Law & Order in Rivers - From Town Constable to a Modern Police Service



In the early days, Law and Order was a local matter. Towns established Police Departments, generally consisting of a single constable. Crime wasn't an everyday occurrence and that took care of things.

As we "progressed" into the modern age many towns turned their law enforcement over to the RCMP.

Rivers is a bit unique in that it maintained its municipal police (established in 1913 before the town's incorporation) for over a century!

Rivers wasn't like most prairie towns. Because of its quick growth, the ready employment attracted an influx of workers from all over. It was a bit more urban in that way and crime was, at the very least, perceived as an issue.

The need for police was at the forefront in a 1908 meeting. As early as 1909 Constable Howard was requesting Village Council to provide a "regular lock-up". Records show robberies, thefts, and assaults during a time in which a "Frontier Mentality" prevailed.

By 1911, the council was making local statutes to control such things as order, morality, and animal control.

By 1917, the town had recorded its first automobile theft. On the other hand, Council began to strongly question paying the fee of \$1000.00 per year for police protection when only \$31.50 in fines was collected.

In those days, a citizen in need would call the Constable's house and his wife would signal with a "window blind down or up" method to let him know he had a call waiting.

Things were quieter during the early 1930's, and between 1931 and 1938 Rivers couldn't afford a regular Constable, and turned to the Provincial

Police, and later from the RCMP, to address problems such as rowdiness on Halloween and minors driving in town.

In 1938 Council passed a resolution to look for a retired RCMP officer to police the town and also approached the Province about an RCMP Detachment.

In the 1940's the British Commonwealth Air Training plan brought 2,200 officers and men to the region. The Base was staffed with its own compliment of Air Force Police and Provost Corps, but Rivers was their playground. The need for policing continued.

In 1979, the town hired a second Constable and a 3rd part-time constable was added in 1994.

Until 1979 Rivers Police members were expected to provide their own cars for patrol use. In 1979, a market Ford Granada was purchased by the town for Police use.

Constables have been assisted by trained volunteer Auxiliary Constables since 1991. These dedicated volunteers receive training and experience in exchange for their time. Many Rivers PD members have gone on to other police careers with other police agencies.



The first Rivers Police Car.

Until recently the Rivers Police Department was a modern fully equipped operation serving a town of 1200 people, which is considered the "hub" of the surrounding area.

The Rivers Police Service was dissolved in 2024 after 111 years of service, with policing duties transitioning to the Blue Hill RCMP.

Sources: Walter Chernos and Michael Turnbull (Published in the Manitoba Yearbook, 1998)

An Incident at the Bell Crossing

Adapted from a Memoir by Bill McFadden



The “Bell Crossing”, a few kilometres southeast of town, used to be on the main road from Rivers to Brandon.

It was a dangerous crossing where the railway line curves and enters Grant’s Cut. Because of the curve and the cut, road traffic didn’t have a good view of oncoming east-bound trains. To solve that problem, just to the east side of the crossing there was a post about twelve feet high which consisted of a steel pipe about six inches in diameter. Near the top were cross arms similar to the cross arms seen at rail crossings today. But above the arms on the top of the post there was a large steel bell. This very loud bell was activated by oncoming trains just as signal lights are activated today.



The curve where the railway line heading east begins the descent into the valley.

The McFadden farmstead was just north east of the Bell Crossing. In winter of 1935 Chester McFadden sent the hired man, Tom Ivory, to the Alexander area to bring home an Aberdeen Angus bull he had recently purchased. It was a large animal – about 800 kilograms. Tom set out on a cold winter day with a team of horses and a sleigh box to bring the animal to its new home. In those days, people traveling by horse drawn cutter or sleigh often did

not stick to the road allowances but traveled across farmers’ fields. That afternoon Tom was nearing home with his load. He had come cross-country to a point near the farm, but the field he had crossed was fenced and he had to stop and open a gate to get back on to the road just south of the crossing. And after driving his team through the gate he had to stop and walk back to shut the gate. While doing that something startled the unattended team and they ran away, bull in tow. As horses will do- they headed for home. As they came to the crossing, they didn’t quite hit the centre. One horse went on each side of the bell post, and with the momentum of the sleigh and bull they sheared the steel post off at ground level. The team and bull survived, but for a period of time the Bell Crossing had no bell. Chester’s son Bill recalled years later that. “... they didn’t sue my father for damages. If an accident happened today causing that much damage to their property they likely would.”



The old crossing and the approach is to the right of the modern overpass.

In the summer of 1938 an overhead bridge was built just a few yards to the west of the crossing so the crossing was no longer needed and the bell was removed. In the 1954 Highway 25 was completed and it became the main road from Rivers to Brandon and points to the south and east.

Whistle Stops: Train Stories Through the Years

Medical Emergencies

In 1908 Dr. Schwalm was called to the railroad yards where a young Samuel White lay seriously injured. He'd had one leg severed by a locomotive's wheels. A special train was commissioned to carry doctor and patient to Portage la Prairie. Despite the effort they weren't able to save him.

A Local Connection

The effect of the loss of the Titanic in 1912 was felt around the world. One of the many notables who were lost that day was Grand Trunk Pacific president Charles Melville Hays. In Rivers, all work ceased, as the Company's shops became, during a memorial service, a place of worship. A rather unique tribute in history was paid to the man's memory as every wheel on Canadian and United States affiliated lines, stopped turning.

A Busy Year

1925 seems to have been a busy year at the station as the town greeted thousands of visitors by special trains. Celebrities such as His Excellency Lord Byng, paid particular attention to ex-servicemen and then requested a school holiday. A large group of teachers from eastern Canada paused here. Three trainloads of Elks visited with their lodge band and offered an impromptu musical performance. A Knights of Templar special came next.

Silk Trains

As the economy developed, the trains carried a wider assortment of goods, stocking stores with consumer items from around the world. Trains proved especially valuable where time of delivery was crucial. The Silk Trains were a good example. Speed was essential because the railways paid a high daily insurance while the cargo was being transported. In 1925 a silk train stopping in Rivers took ninety-two seconds between the stop, examination, and change of locomotives before wheels were once more whirling the live cargo towards its New York.

In 1927 Rivers witnessed the largest silk assignment ever to cross the Pacific Ocean. Two, trainloads of eleven cars each tested here, briefly,

as locomotives were changed and equipment checked before the \$7400000 cargo continued on its way.

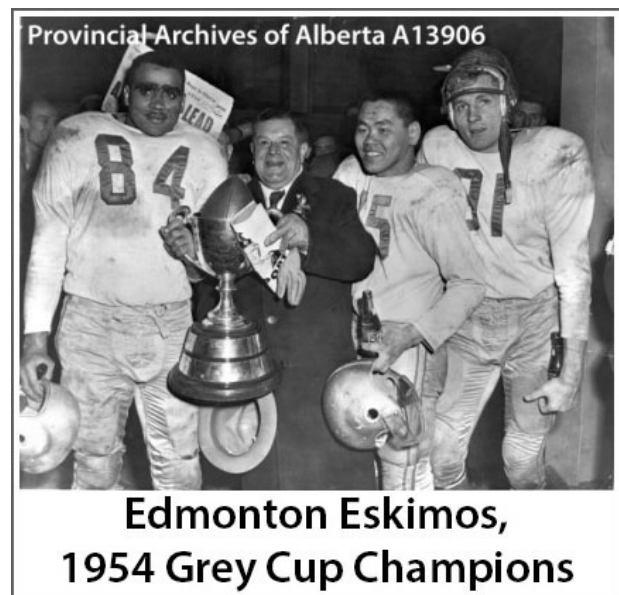
Unexpected Visitors

In 1930 the Rivers Banner reported on the visit of a "Know Mississippi Better" train, and the short stop of a special train carrying CNR president Sir Henry Thornton and other railway officials.

In 1952 Rivers Airfield came in handy when a plane carrying one hundred American newsmen couldn't land in Winnipeg due to fog. They landed in Rivers where a special train took them on their way.

The 1954 Grey Cup Train

We older football fans remember hearing about the special Grey Cup Trains that took eager fans across great distances to watch their team play for the championship. Old timers in Rivers remember the Edmonton Eskimo Grey Cup Special stopping here going and returning. The homeward bound football fans, cheered by their team's victory were accorded bagpipe music and offered, in return, a piece of the goal-post to Mayor Stratford.



The town gained souvenirs including a piece of a goal post presented to the mayor, Mr. Stratford. Locals still remember the chocolate bars with "Edmonton Eskimo" wrappers being handed out.

James Sibbald - Grandson of a Trafalgar Veteran

A census of the Town of Rivers in 1910 would show what a diverse group of people lived here; people from all over – each with stories to tell. Some of those stories would connect us to notable events, the sort we learned about in our history classes.

James Sibbald was one such pioneer.

He was grandson of the Midshipman James Sibbald who was born in Leith, Edinburgh, Scotland and was a Master's Mate aboard the HMS Victory commanded by Admiral Horatio (Lord) Nelson at the Battle of Trafalgar on October 21, 1805.



The British won that battle, but a musket ball fired by a French sharpshooter hit Nelson and he died soon after learning that the day was won.

Young Sibbald's role as Master's Mate kept him close to his commander as he was with him as he lay dying. It was he who placed his kit bag under the Admiral's head to comfort him.

Community Service

James Sibbald was an example of the sort of leadership that created and sustained communities. He seemed to be involved in everything.

He served on the first Tarbolton School Board 1883. He represented his district on the first Daly Council in 1884. He was the second Roden Postmaster and served from 1888 to 1896. He was a Justice of the Peace for many years.

His most lasting legacy rests in his involvement with Tarbolton Church and Cemetery. He was on the Church Committee that decided to build the Church and establish the Cemetery. and he donated the land.

But if we remember him as the "Trafalgar Hero's Grandson", that's OK too.



Admiral Nelson

Royal Visits Through the Decades

There are many advantages to living and working in a town that sits on a trans-continental railway line. Easy access to the rest of the country, and easy access to goods from around the world are obvious benefits. Along with that connection comes diversity – a population that is less static and more varied.

And of course – you get more Royal Visits.

It started early.

The Duke of Connaught, the youngest son of Queen Victoria was on the initial Royal train to pass over Grand Trunk Pacific lines.

In 1923, H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, the future King of England, disembarked from the train and walked the ties for the last mile as it approached Rivers.

In 1939, for the first time in history a reigning monarch visited Canada. In Rivers, a royal visit committee was set up to request that the train bearing Their Majesties would stop here. The petition was granted and plans were made for school children to participate and a memorial service which would follow the royal visitors' departure.

The royal coaches stopped briefly at the station, but the train was moving when the King, clad in dressing-gown, appeared on the receding coach platform, to wave his greeting.



The people of Hope B.C. were able to welcome the both of the royals, the folks in Rivers were not so lucky

The train-arrival time was set back an hour, failed to dampen the enthusiasm of some fifteen thousand persons waiting patiently, truckloads of children and hundreds of automobiles (which had travelled throughout the night from northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan points) were pouring into Rivers.

50000 people were on hand to welcome Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip in 1951. Early citizen Mrs. Jean Sinclair had the honour of meeting the Princess.



In 1958 a more unusual visit occurred. As Her majesty Elizabeth the Queen Mother passed over Rivers en route to Australia and New Zealand, Canadian Joint Air Training Centre aircraft rose in salute while Her Majesty replied to the radioed greetings of the commanding officer.

Supporting the Community

The GTP had an interest in the success of the towns they created. To that end they often contributed to meeting the needs of the town and community.

When the town needed a school the GTP provided a block of railway land at for half-price.



The newly-completed school.

In response to another early request, land for the cemetery was donated by the GTP. Land for a park was also allocated.



Rivers Cemetery – set on GTP land over a century ago.

For a time, the GTP offered free transportation to men and trees (to be gathered from Eastern Canada) to beautify the town.

The Rivers Gazette, July 10, 1919 proclaimed Bylaw 120 & 121 for the funding of an electrical distribution system off the generator at Grand Trunk Pacific. This is how Rivers received its first electricity.

The electrical plant had been established to meet the needs of the rapidly expanding railway operation and was made available to supply the town as well, an arrangement that lasted until 1943 when the Canadian National Railway power plant ceased to function and the Railway decided not to continue that service. The Manitoba Power Commission took over.

The railway's need for a dependable water supply was also of benefit to the town. The water accessed through the dam, pumphouse and water tower was made available for town use with the town picking up the expense of installing the necessary connection.

Into the Future

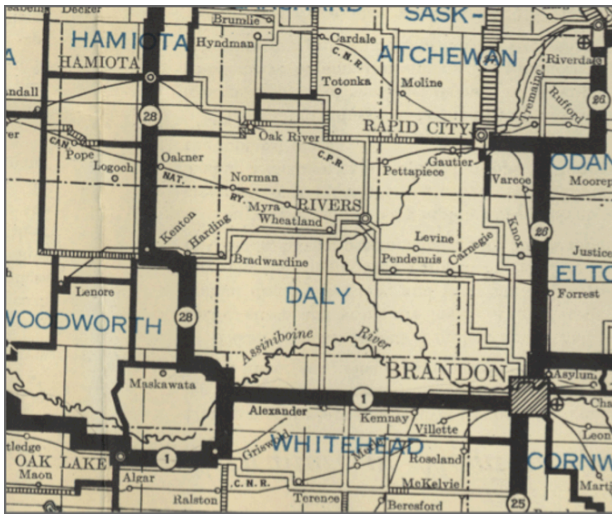
Aside from the intentional benefits the railway provided to the Town Of Rivers, there are other lasting, if unintentional legacies.

The gravel pits established by the CNR on the east side of town, that once provided for decades of rail bed maintenance and upgrades are now reborn as the Rivers Millennium Park and the Wetlands Centre of Excellence.

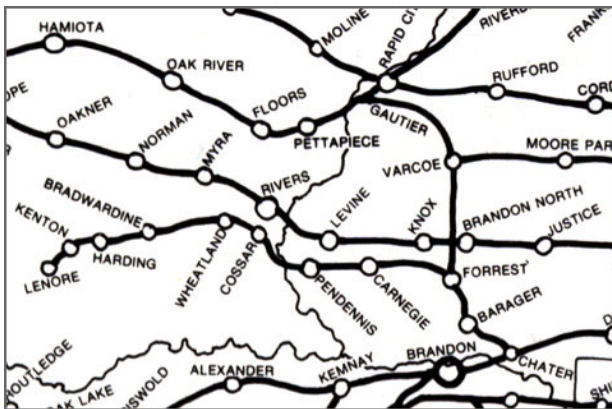


Changes and Challenges: Railway Services Evolve

On July 12, 1920 the GTPR was placed under the management of Canadian National Railways (CNR) and in 1923, was completely absorbed into the CNR. This had little effect on day-to-day operations in Rivers as the CN remained committed to maintaining service and upgrading both lines and facilities as needed. The changes that were to come were nationwide changes related to the increased use of the automobile for personal travel and trucks for freighting.



This road map from 1930 shows the network of main roads. Increased use of cars led to better roads, which led to increased use of cars, and the cycle continued. Before long railway use was declining.



Rail line expansion reached its peak in western Manitoba by about 1915. This 1935 map shows the extent of rail development. The first rail abandonment began in 1936. Grain shipment kept elevators and thus rail lines open for

a time but with larger truck and even better roads farmers were able to transport grain longer distances. Another factor was the better maintenance of roads – particularly the practice of plowing in the winter.

The result was that, one by one, prairie towns lost, first their stations and passenger services, then freight service, and finally their elevators. This was all part of a more general re-structuring that rendered smaller communities less necessary and less viable, while concentrating services in larger communities like Rivers.

Rivers was on the main line. So the closure of the lines running parallel to the CN line, to the south through Wheatland and Bradwardine, to the north through Pettapiece, only increased the traffic in Rivers

Along with the closure of rail lines came new advances in technology. Diesel engines didn't require the intensive maintenance essential for steam engines. Coal docks, water towers, and roundhouses became obsolete. Beginning in about 1950, jobs were being eliminated.

So while railways remained vital for the movement of freight, the importance of the railway to the local economy declined.

RCAF Station Rivers



Base construction – a huge project with a wide-ranging economic and social impact.

While the decision by the Grand Trunk Pacific to establish a Divisional Point at Rivers created the town, a second decision, much later, added new life to the community. Just as Rivers was recovering from the Great Depression, the establishment of the Air Force Base just outside of town played a huge role in the next decades.

The very identity of Rivers as a “Railway” town was somewhat replaced by the role of the Base. People from all over Canada were transplanted into the municipality. The impact of both the railway and the Air Force base continues to be felt today, long after each ceased to be a force economically.

The story of RCAF Station Rivers is central to the identity of the town of Rivers, and as such will be the subject of another project. However, an outline of the story must be introduced here. The railway story and the Air Force Base story are linked. The direct trans-continental rail link to ports in Eastern Canada was essential to this part of the Rivers story.

We were far from the front...but connected.

The British Commonwealth Air Training Plan saw 130,000 personnel from Great Britain and the Commonwealth graduate from 107 training schools across Canada. The impact of that decision was lasting and transformative.

RCAF Station Rivers opened May 1942 when No. 1 Air Navigation School re-located to Rivers from RCAF Station Trenton, becoming No. 1 Central Navigation. As the war progressed, Rivers also became a training centre for Army pilots, parachutists and flying instructors from the Army, RCN and RCAF. Additionally, the Royal Canadian Corps of Signals and the Air Dispatch School made

Rivers their home.

By the time No. 1 CNS disbanded in August 1945, a combined total of 11406 Commonwealth navigators had been trained here

That was a huge contribution to the Allied war effort.

A Peacetime Role

RCAF Station Rivers remained open after the war, becoming part of the post-war RCAF. For the next two decades it served a variety of training functions,

The Army Aviation Tactical Training School provided pilot training to Army aviators, as well as helicopter instructor training for the Army, RCN and RCAF. No. 6 Signal Regiment, Royal Canadian Corps of Signals and the Air Support Signals Unit provided communications duties at Rivers.

The Canadian Parachute Training Centre, established at Camp Shilo in 1942, merged with the Airborne School of the Canadian Joint Air Training Centre and relocated to RCAF Station Rivers, making the station Canada's main para-training centre.

These and other functions came and went over the years. As a result of the Unification; RCAF Station Rivers was re-named CFB Rivers.

CFB Rivers was declared surplus to defence needs and as a result, the station closed in September 1971.

In September 1972, the land was turned over to the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development for use as an industrial training centre for Manitoba First Nations, the Oo-Za-We-Kwun Centre. The Rivers Gliding School, a summer Air Cadet glider camp opened at the former base in 1974, remaining until 1984, when it re-located to CFB Gimli.

The very identity of Rivers as a “Railway” town was somewhat replaced by the role of the Base. People from all over Canada were transplanted into the municipality. The impact of both the railway and the Air Force base continues to be felt today, long after each ceased to be a force economically.

The Rivers Dam and Lake Wahtopanah

The Rivers area is known throughout the Province as a great spot for camping, boating and fishing. Lake Wahtopanah, a ten kilometre long lake just east of town is, naturally, the focus of these activities.

Large lakes are rare on the plains in southwestern Manitoba, so it should come as no surprise that this one is man-made.

Also known as Rivers Reservoir, it was created in 1960 to supplement water supplies for irrigation. It also provides the water supply for the town of Rivers, stock watering and ample opportunities for recreational use. The reservoir is long and narrow, filling the valley of the Little Saskatchewan River. The deepest point is about fifteen metres. A metre-square gated conduit regulates the flow. Excess flow passes over a 34 metres wide spillway. The reservoir stores about 200,000 cubic metres of water and covers an area of about six and a half square kilometres. The drainage area is about 3,300 square kilometres and extends well into Riding Mountain National Park.

The building of the dams are undertaken after a careful assessment of the water storage implications. In this case the Municipality of Daly first raised the issue in 1947, supported by the Town of Rivers and the Rivers Agricultural Society and the Rivers District Chamber of Commerce. After studying the issue, the Manitoba Government asked the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration and the Canada Department of Agriculture to investigate the feasibility of constructing a dam. Work began in 1958.



The opening ceremonies attracted a large crowd.

In addition to providing a reliable water supply, and

attracting fishermen, campers, and outdoor enthusiasts, the dam is very important in controlling water flow, both in dry periods when the river flow almost stops, and in wet years when flooding can be a problem.



The spillway.

Rivers Provincial Park

The creating of the reservoir naturally led to the creating of a Rivers Provincial Park. This park consists of 38 hectares of mixed grass prairie, and the campground is located on Lake Wahtopanah. The name is a from of a native word watopapinah meaning “canoe people.”



The view from the beach at Rivers Provincial Park

Restoration & Renewal

By 1960, the Golden Age of railway travel was over. Increasingly, people were choosing the flexibility of the family car or the speed of air travel. Travelling by rail remained an option in the more densely populated part of the country, but on the prairies the numbers just weren't there to keep passenger trains running on the branch lines.

Nationally, traffic peaked during World War II. By the 1960's passenger service was no longer profitable for CN and CP. The federal government stepped in with subsidies and a level of service was maintained.

By 1977 passenger numbers were down below five million (compared with a wartime peak of 60 million). The Canadian Government created in VIA Rail Canada in 1977 as a national passenger rail company.



The Stationette

The following decades brought cuts in service across the country despite periodic efforts to revitalize rail travel in general.

As we moved into the new millennium, there was a resurgence of interest in rail travel as an environmentally sustainable transportation option. Since 2012 there have been no major service cuts, and some innovations and improvements.

We now see the possibility that the Rivers Station, idle for all these decades, may be reborn as a transportation hub for a new generation.

The Rivers Train Station Restoration Committee members are dedicated to the Restoration, Renovation & Rejuvenation of the Rivers Train Station to a viable property for heritage preservation and economic development. To ensure the Community & Area have an opportunity to Connect with the Past while creating a Vision for the Future.

The station is a now federally designated heritage site.

The method of restoration will be carried out following the most environmentally efficient criteria making this Canada's first 'green' heritage train station!

Funding for restoration is being made possible through grants, corporate and individual support, as well as fundraising.

VIA Rail Canada has sited Rivers as the only boarding station west of Portage la Prairie into eastern Saskatchewan, and between the north and south Manitoba borders.

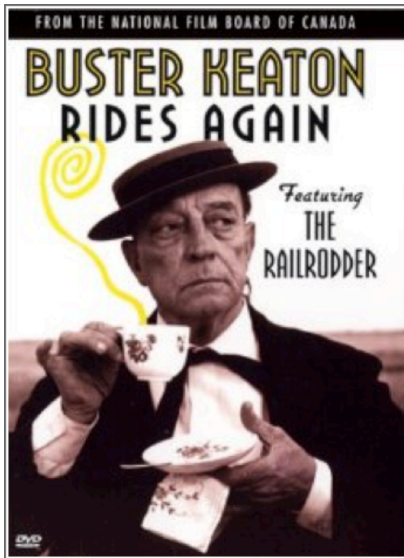
So the story is not over. It began with the decision by the Grand Trunk Pacific to cross the Little Saskatchewan River here and to create a divisional point. It continued through decades of progress, setbacks, and more progress.

It continues.



Rivers celebrates its railway heritage in a variety of ways as it continues to look forward.

The Railrodder - Buster Keaton Comes to Rivers



This short film starring Buster Keaton was one of the last films of Keaton's long career. As "the railrodder" he crosses Canada from east to west on a railway track speeder. True to his genre, the film is full of sight gags as Keaton putt-putts his way to British Columbia. Not a word is spoken throughout, and Keaton is as spry and ingenious at fetching laughs as he was in the days of the silent slapsticks" (From the NFB Promo)

The crew and star of The Railrodder spent several days filming in Rivers at the trestle bridge.

The film crew arrived in Rivers on September 28, 1964 in a special coach that left the transcontinental train, which was shunted on to a side track directly across from the station.

Mr. and Mrs. Keaton hosted the Mayor and Chamber of Commerce at a special dinner in their railway car and Mr. Keaton made an appearance at the Rex Theatre where one of his early films, "When Comedy Was King" was showing.

Mr. Keaton and the film board also attended a reception at Mayor F.D. and Mrs. Taylor's. The Boy's Pipe Band formed an honour guard at the mayor's residence to greet the guests. Later the Keatons were guests at a duck dinner hosted by the town in the Masonic Hall, where they were presented with a large symbolic key to the town and an engraved plaque," (Mr. Keaton had expressed an interest in having a Canadian duck dinner before setting out for Canada.) Local hunters donated 30 ducks, which were prepared by the caterer J. Ruml.

Deputy Mayor Mrs. J. Gilchrist presented a corsage to Mrs. Keaton. The Manitoba Travel and Convention Association presented Mr. Keaton with a "Manitoba Golden Boy's" award.

The Keaton's privately expressed their appreciation for the hospitality

Keaton had toured Canada extensively as a Vaudeville performer before making his first motion picture in 1917.

The film is Keaton's first documentary.

A quote from the article "On the Rails" (From Eighteen Bridges; Stories that Connect)

At one point in the documentary (which itself is a black-and-white tribute to a vanished Canada) the citizens of Rivers, Manitoba gave Keaton the key to their city. A painfully shy man who loathed public appearances, especially when he was the centre of attention, Keaton was nonetheless moved nearly to tears by the gesture. A kilted band had piped him and his wife into the ceremony (O Canada of the kilts and Manitoba mayors handing out keys!), and even this quaint homage humbled the great comedian. The emotion on his famously-stoic face is deeply moving to witness now. He had lived large for a long time, and his life, like The Railrodder, was approaching its terminus. The blend of the comic and tragic, the blend that defines our lives, is writ clearly on the private Keaton's face as he blinks at the citizens of Rivers, and writ with even greater clarity on the screen Keaton's back as he stands on the shores of Boundary Bay and gazes westward.



SOURCES, INSPIRATION & EXPLORATION



SOURCES

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Porridge and Old Clothes, Eileen M./ Scott, 1982

Tarbolton Pioneer Trails 1880-1969

Kirkham's Bridge: From generation to generation

Hold Back the Dam - the story of the May 4, 1948 collapse of the Minnedosa Spillway.

The Story of Rivers, G.F. Barker



INSPIRATION

Thanks to:

Donna Morken and the Rivers Train Station Restoration Committee

<https://archive.riverstrainstation.ca/>



EXPLORATION

The Grand Trunk Pacific in Rivers, Manitoba

The Sekine Story

The Story of the Chapman Museum

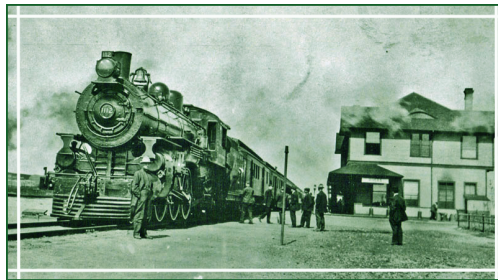
Available at: www.virtualmanitoba.com

CFB Rivers Virtual Tour

<https://archive.riverstrainstation.ca/collection/cfb-rivers-virtual-tour/>

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TRAIN TRACKS



STORIES FROM A RAILWAY TOWN

RIVERS, MANITOBA

BY KEN STORIE

2026

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