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## Manitoba

The Adventist Message was first proclaimed in the Province of Manitoba by canvassers. To C. H. and Addie Richards belongs the honour of being the first to circulate the printed page. They arrived in the province on July 17, 1889. The work of the canvassers for the years 1889 to 1891 was successful both financially and in the soul winning. At the General Conference session in March 1891, it was reported that \$8,000 worth of books had been placed in Manitoba in the previous two-year period. It was also stated that when the canvassers began their work, there was not known to be a single Sabbathkeeper in the province, but by the time of the conference, thirty or forty had begun its observance (page 80).

Neil McGill claimed to be the first person to become a Seventh-day Adventist in the Province of Manitoba. A canvasser sold a copy of *Thoughts on Daniel and Revelation* to a Mr. X living in North Dakota, near the Manitoba border. Mr. Y, living in Manitoba, near the North Dakota border purchased some hay from Mr. X. Before Mr. Y left the house where he had secured the hay, Mr. X gave him the book which he had recently purchased. Mr. Y took it home and gave it to his neighbour, Neil McGill, who was an active class leader in the Presbyterian church. As a result of the study of this book, McGill and several of his class accepted the Advent doctrines (80).

These believers, converted through reading a book, were organized into the Wakopa Seventh-day Adventist Church by C.W. Flaiz. This took place sometime between April 1, when Flaiz was located in Manitoba, and November 28, 1893, when his report to the church appeared in the *Review and Herald* (81). In a report published in the *Review and Herald*, July 14, 1896, it states that there were 96 members in Manitoba at that time. The organization of the Manitoba Churches into a conference took place in 1903 (82).

## Saskatchewan

George Ross of Winnipeg decided to take a little trip out as far as Regina. Enroute, he stopped at McLean to visit a friend who had taken up a half-section of homestead. Before returning to Winnipeg he signed up for the other half section next to his friend's. The following year, the Ross family took up residency on this land. In the fall, Mr. Ross, who was a printer, returned to Winnipeg to work. While there, his interest in the Adventist teachings was aroused by a close friend who was receiving literature from California. The two men studied together that winter. By spring, Mr. Ross was deeply concerned spiritually. In this frame of mind, he returned to his family and prepared to put in the new crop.

On Friday, he and his son George were out in the field. Every little while the father would stop and talk about the Sabbath. He was troubled in mind. In his distress he asked his son, "What do you think about me finishing my work before I obey the Lord?"

"I know what you would say if you told me to do something and I said I will when I get ready," was the boy's prompt reply. That was just the answer he needed. About four p.m. the father announced that they were quitting work so that they could get cleaned up for their first Sabbath. The Ross family were therefore the first Adventist believers in the Province of Saskatchewan. They began observance of the Sabbath in May 1887. This family became the nucleus of the second church in Saskatchewan. It was organized on April 1, 1906 (117).

When the brethren in Saskatchewan convened in Bulyea, July 11-12, 1912 for the annual camp meeting, delegates to the conference session appeared from seven churches: Waldheim, Rouleau, Hillesden, Swift Current, Fenwood, Hodgeville, and Provincial. At this session, the Saskatchewan Conference was organized. It had been the Saskatchewan Mission since January 1, 1907 (120).

## Battleford Academy

Battleford Academy came into existence in 1916. The academy building was built originally to the house the



Battleford Academy about 1921 or 1922

government established at that time. After the C.P.R. reached Regina in 1883, the seat of government in the Northwest Territories [formally consisting part of today's Saskatchewan] was transferred to that city. The buildings at Battleford were converted into an industrial school. In 1915 the Saskatchewan Conference leased the property from the Dominion Government and later they purchased it outright. Because of the school's historical significance, it often entertained notable visitors. On November 14, 1917, the governor-general of Canada at that time, the Duke of Devonshire, was accompanied to the school by government officials on all levels (213).

There was a farm of 565 acres attached to the academy, about 100 acres of which were under cultivation. The first year of enrollment was 114. From that time until 1929 the enrollment only dropped

once below 128. For two consecutive years it actually exceeded 160. In 1929 it dropped to 90 and a year later to 65. The depression had hit the prairies and competition from Canadian Junior College was also very keen. What was even more unfortunate, the leaders of those days withdrew their support from the institution. The school was closed after the 1930-31 academic year (213-214).

## Hard Times

Hard times hit the Manitoba Conference during the early twenties. At the biennial session in 1922, the conference president noted that during the previous year it had been necessary to reduce their small labour force by half (85). The depression brought further disbanding of churches. In fact, by the time the union with the Saskatchewan conference was effected in 1932, there were only 8 churches left: Fort William, Icelandic, Inglis, Port Arthur, Whitemouth, Winnipeg English, Winnipeg German and Winnipeg Ukrainian (88).

The creation of the Manitoba-Saskatchewan Conference was a matter of expediency. Many churches in Saskatchewan had suffered from an exodus of their members. Drought and the depression had discouraged many and forced them to leave the province. Out of 29

churches listed in the Saskatchewan Conference report of 1922, nine were not listed ten years later. These were Carmichael, Estuary, Burstall (possibly S. Estuary), Lonesome Butte, Swift Current, Riverhurst, Queen's Centre, Sonningdale and Dundurn. A number of others were becoming so small that they too might easily have been disbanded. At the end of 1932, there was a membership of slightly more than 2,100, over 600 of whom had belonged to the old Manitoba Conference (127).

The decade from 1942-1952 was a period of statistical stagnation, as had been the previous decade. From forty-three churches in 1941, the numbers dropped to thirty in 1951 (128). Although there was no appreciable growth in the conference membership, new churches appeared. The first was at Quill Lake on May 29, 1948. The second new church established during the period of 1942-51 was at North Battleford, in which there had previously been a church at the time of the Battleford Academy. When, however, the academy was sold, that church disintegrated. Finally, on July 3, 1948, they were organized into a church (129).

New houses of worship were erected in both provinces from 1952-61. In Winnipeg, the German speaking believers erected a new church which was dedicated on February 10, 1955. Another church was dedicated for worship in Winnipegosis on September 26, 1959. Several new churches were also erected in Saskatchewan. The first was in Saskatoon. It replaced the structure which was dedicated in 1948. New members realized its inadequacy and began planning for a larger, more suitable building. On February 19, 1955, the church was dedicated. The Canora congregation which had been in existence fifty years finally consecrated a church home on September 14, 1957 (130).

The decade beginning in 1962 opened very auspiciously. The Winnipeg English congregation constructed a new school. Regina opened a new church June 17, 1962. A place of worship was also completed and dedicated in Prince Albert (131). ☺



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