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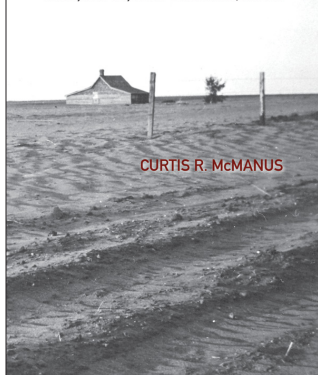
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## Happyland

A History of the "Dirty Thirties" in Saskatchewan, 1914-1937



### HAPPYLAND: A HISTORY OF THE "DIRTY THIRTIES" IN SASKATCHEWAN, 1914-1937

by Curtis R. McManus

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# Notes

## INTRODUCTION

- 1 *Prairie Echoes of Hatton: A Story of Hatton and Surrounding Area* (n.p., 1983), 1–3.
- 2 *Saskatchewan Archives Board* (hereafter SAB) MA, 11(a) Papers of the Department of Municipal Affairs, Disorganized Village Records, Village of Hatton: Council Minutes, 1922–1934, 3 May 1922, 10 June 1922.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 4 November 1922.
- 4 William Wardill, *Sand Castles: A Story of Dryland Settlement* (Eatonia, SK: Seagrass Specialties, 1996), p. 69.
- 5 *Prairie Echoes*, p. 38.
- 6 Village Records, 23 October 1924. Hatton was settled in large measure by Russians and German-speaking Russians. According to writer Timothy Egan, “they liked to sing and kept the floors of their houses clean enough to dine on.” In fact, Egan observes of these immigrants, “Dust inside the house was something they would not tolerate.” See Timothy Egan, *The Worst Hard Time* (New York: Mariner Books, 2006), p. 60.
- 7 David Jones, *Empire of Dust: Settling and Abandoning the Prairie Drybelt* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1987), p. 281, see note 63.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 21 April 1925.
- 9 *Prairie Echoes*, p. 3.
- 10 Village Records, 10 June 1922. Outside Regina city hall, there is a memorial to those pioneers who settled the early west, including Chinese people. The memorial provides a fascinating glimpse into the reasons why some Chinese fled their home country and the freedom they found in Canada. The memorial retells the story of a Chinese man who cut off his queue, or top-knot, a traditional sign of obedience to China’s foreign Manchurian rulers. The man’s friend was aghast and said, “they [court officials] will come and slice off your head.” But the man replied, “let them come and find me.”
- 11 *Prairie Echoes*, pp. 4–7. The figure of 800 people is an estimate provided by former resident Mrs. Laura Phaff and likely represents the population of not only the town but also the immediate surrounding area. Estimates from the Department of Municipal Affairs place the town’s population at somewhere around 200 people.

- 12 Golden Prairie, *History of the Golden Prairie Community*, (Medicine Hat, AB: Val Marshall Printing, 1983), p. 83.
- 13 *Richmond's Heritage: A History of Richmond and District, 1910–1978* (Richmond: Richmond Historical Society, 1978), p. 305.
- 14 Village Records, 8 January 1929.
- 15 *Ibid.*, October 1932.
- 16 *Ibid.*, January 1932.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 1 June 1933.
- 18 Margaret Munro, "Geologists Discover 'footsteps' of Dunes," *Regina Leader-Post*, Thursday, 5 November 2009, p. B-5.
- 19 *Captured Memories: A History of Alsask and Surrounding School District* (Altona, MB.: Friesen, 1983), p. v.
- 20 Curtis McManus, "Happyland: the agricultural crisis in Saskatchewan's drybelt, 1917–27," University of Saskatchewan, MA thesis, 2004 (unpublished).
- 21 E. Wheaton et al., "Agricultural Adaptation to Drought (ADA) in Canada: the case of 2001 to 2002," Saskatchewan Research Council, May 2007, p. iii.
- 22 Curt McManus, "History, Public Memory and the Land Abandonment Crisis of the 1920's," *Prairie Forum* 33, no. 2 (2008): 257–74.
- 23 R.L. Carefoot, *History of Golden Prairie*, p. 16.
- 24 David Jones, *Empire of Dust: Settling and Abandoning the Prairie Drybelt* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1987).
- 3 *Drybelt* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1987), 10, 21.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 10.
- 5 Lewis G. Thomas, *The Prairie West to 1905: A Canadian Sourcebook* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1975), 224.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 224.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 225.
- 8 Pierre Berton, *The Promised Land: Settling the West, 1896–1914* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1984), 206.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 207.
- 10 Thomas et al., *The Prairie West to 1905*, 226.
- 11 David Breen, *The Canadian Prairie West and the Ranching Frontier, 1874–1924* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 51–52, 168.
- 12 Thanks to University of Saskatchewan history professor Dr. Brett Fairbairn for making this suggestion.
- 13 Breen, *The Canadian Prairie West*, p. 58. Breen adds that this allegiance "remained an enduring characteristic of the region's political structure until well after the turn of the century." One could add that it is still very true today.
- 14 Thomas et al., *The Prairie West to 1905*, 226.
- 15 W.A. Waiser, *The New Northwest: The Photographs of the Frank Crean Expeditions, 1908–1909* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1993), 1, 9–11, 47–50.
- 16 Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), 237, 245.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 245.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 245, 249.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 245.
- 19 Barry Potyondi, In *Pallier's Triangle: Living in the Grasslands, 1850–1930* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 1995), p. 67.

## 1: THE DESCENT

- 1 Canada, *House of Commons Debates*, 23 June 1908, 11143–11144.
- 2 David C. Jones, *Empire of Dust: Settling and Abandoning the Prairie*

- 20 Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2004), p. 56.
- 21 Wallace Stegner, *Wolf Willow* (New York: Penguin, 1992), p. 221.
- 22 *Prairie Crucible: The Roads of History* [Bingville, Jenner] (Altona, MB: Friesen, 1991), p. 377.
- 23 Debates, 14 March 1907, 4690, see also Martin, 'Dominion Lands', 162–64.
- 24 Ibid., 23 June 1908, 11142.
- 25 Martin, 'Dominion Lands', 162–64. The Kincaid Act would be followed by other legislation after 1910 that encouraged the development of stock-raising homesteads, in effect, turning much Nebraska land back to a cattle preserve.
- 26 Jones, *Empire of Dust*, 134–35.
- 27 Ibid., 135.
- 28 Angus MacKay, "Preparing Land for Grain Crops in Saskatchewan." Pamphlet #3, Experimental Farm for Southern Saskatchewan, 1910, p. 2.
- 29 W.R. Motherwell, "Dryland Farming in Saskatchewan," excerpt of an Address Delivered at the Fifth Annual Dryfarming Congress, 5 October 1910, p. 2.
- 30 As cited in Jones, *Empire of Dust*, p. 138.
- 31 *Saskatchewan Archives Board* (hereafter SAB), GR-44, R-5–2, Papers of F.H. Auld, A.F. Mantle, "Progress in Western Agriculture," 1911.
- 32 MacKay, "Preparing Land," p. 2.
- 33 Motherwell, "Dryland Farming," p. 2.
- 34 MacKay, "Preparing Land," p. 2.
- 35 Gordon Barnhart, *Peace, Progress, and Prosperity: A Biography of Saskatchewan's First Premier, T. Walter Scott* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2000), p. 24.
- 36 See Martin, 'Dominion Lands', pp. 164–65.
- 37 *Debates*, 14 March 1907, p. 4699.
- 38 Ibid., p. 4715.
- 39 Ibid., p. 4727.
- 40 Ibid., 23 June 1908, p. 11145.
- 41 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1908, 75–80.
- 42 Ibid., p. 78.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 E.W. Stapleford, "Report on Rural Relief Due to Drought Conditions and Crop Failures in Western Canada," Canada, Department of Agriculture, 1938, p. 31.
- 45 Canada, Department of Interior, *Annual Report*, 1908 (Ottawa: C.H. Parleeme, 1909), p. xiv.
- 46 *Captured Memories: A History of Alsask and Surrounding School District* (Altona, MB: Friesen, 1983), p. v.
- 47 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1908, p. 93.
- 48 Canada, Sessional Papers, Department of Interior, *Annual Report*, 1908, vol. XLIV, No. 10, "Report of the Dominion Lands Agent," p. 33.
- 49 Ibid., p. 4.
- 50 Randy Widdis, *With Scarcely a Ripple: Anglo-Canadian Migration into the United States and Western Canada, 1880–1920* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), p. 294.
- 51 Ibid., p. 295.
- 52 Canada, Sessional Papers, 25, vol. XLV, no. 16, 1911, xx.
- 53 Ibid., xx. Delaware was the first state admitted to the Union. Its motto is "Liberty and Independence"; the state motto for Alabama is the historically pungent "We Dare Defend Our Rights." Saskatchewan has "Land of Living Skies."
- 54 Karel Bicha, *The American Farmer and the Canadian West, 1896–1914* (Lawrence, KS: Coronado Press, 1968), 88.

- 55 Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 25, vol. XLV, no. 16, 1911, xxix.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 25, vol. XCLVII, no. 18, 1913, xx.
- 57 *Ibid.*, xxii.
- 58 *Ibid.*, 25, part 1, vol. XLVIII, no 19, 1914, xxiv; see also 25, part 1, no. 19, 1915, xxiv.
- 59 *Prairie Crucible*, pp. 153–54.
- 60 Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 25, part 1, vol. XLVIII, no. 19, 1914, xi. We shall return to this idea of “Progress” at a later stage in the book.
- 61 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1907, p. 116.
- 62 *Ibid.*, 1908, 76.
- 63 *Ibid.*, 1909, 78.
- 64 *Aneroid: The Rising Barometer, 1905–1980* (Altona, MB: Friesen, 1980), p. 196.
- 65 Fred Wilkes, *They Rose from the Dust* (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1958), p. 97.
- 66 This story was communicated to the author during a telephone conversation, 5 March 2010.
- 67 Communicated to the author during an interview with Mr. Ralph Mutter, Wednesday, September 1 2010.
- 68 *Richmond’s Heritage: A History of Richmond and District, 1910–1978* (Richmond Historical Society, 1978), p. 225.
- 69 *Ibid.*, p. 225.
- 70 *Coronach from the Turning of the Sod: The Story of the Early Settlers in the RM of Hart Butte No. 11* (Winnipeg: Intercollegiate Press, 1980), p. 229.
- 71 *Ibid.*, p. 258.
- 72 *Coronach*, p. 296.
- 73 *Richmound*, p. 305.
- 74 *Coronach*, p. 296.
- 75 *Aneroid*, p. 92.
- 76 Wilkes, *They Rose from the Dust*, p. 97.
- 77 James Gray, *Red Lights on the Prairies* (Calgary: Fifth House, 1995), pp. 7–15, 199–204.
- 78 *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- 79 *Richmound*, p. 270.
- 80 *Coronach*, p. 258.
- 81 *Richmound*, pp. 257, 272.
- 82 Interview with Mr. Ralph Mutter, September 1, 2010.
- 83 *Aneroid*, p. 196.
- 84 Canada, *Sessional Papers*, 25, part 1, vol. XLVIII, No. 19, 1914, viv–x.
- 85 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1909, p. 75.
- 86 *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- 87 Alberta, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1909, p. 45.
- 88 *Ibid.*, p. 69.
- 89 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1909, p. 94.
- 90 “Mossback” and “Sodbuster” were (and perhaps still are) pejorative terms applied to the settler by cattle ranchers.
- 91 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1909, p. 91.
- 92 *Val Echo: A History of Val Marie* (Val Marie: Val Echo Publishing, 1955), p. 16. This short book was written by the teachers and pupils of the school at Val Marie.
- 93 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1910, 68.
- 94 *Ibid.*, 68.
- 95 Alberta, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1910, 42.
- 96 *Ibid.*, 42.
- 97 *Ibid.* See also Bicha *The American Farmer*, 96. Bicha notes that during the eighteen-year period of his study, 1910 was the year when the American exodus out of the dry lands was highest. Of course this does not

- take into account the number of Americans who fled after 1917.
- 98 Alberta, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1910, 229–30. It is of more than passing interest to note that Saskatchewan did not maintain a publicity commissioner similar to Alberta. Interesting because it is one more way that the differences between the two provinces is revealed in addition to how each government would handle the same circumstances during the coming droughts of the 1920s.
- 99 Canada, *Sessional Papers*, vol. XLVI, no. 17, 1912, p. 51–53.
- 100 *Ibid.*, 23–25.
- 101 Canada, *Sessional Papers*, vol. XLVII, no. 18, 1913, p. 32.
- 102 The percentage figures are based on the number of homestead applications being filed versus the number of cancellations being filed in each year.
- 103 Canada, *Sessional Papers*, vol. VI, no.19, 1915, 45–47.
- 104 *Ibid.*, pp. 44–46.
- 105 *Ibid.*, p. 45.
- 106 *Ibid.*, p. 31.
- 107 Canada, *Sessional Papers*, vol. XLVI, no. 17, 1912, 18; Canada, *Sessional Papers*, vol. XLVII, no. 18, 1913, 16.
- 108 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Reports*, 1914, 106.
- 109 *Ibid.*, p. 113. This average was calculated using the yield returns of all crop districts except districts three and six.
- 110 *Ibid.*, p. 113.
- 111 *Ibid.*, p. 111.
- 112 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1914, pp. 106, 108. Auld was soon to replace Mr. Mantle as deputy. Mr. Mantle signed on as Major in the 68<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force. He would die in the war.
- 113 Golden Prairie, *History of the Golden Prairie Community* (Medicine Hat, AB: Val Marshall Publishing, 1968), p. 16.
- 114 *Harvest of Memories: RM 134 and Shamrock* (Regina: Focus Publishing, 1990), p. 337. The Bassendowski's trek from the Old World was, like many other pioneers, a long and interesting one which, one must reluctantly admit, seemed to have a descending arc: Germany–New York–Montreal–Winnipeg–Regina–Moose Jaw–Herbert–Shamrock.
- 115 *History of Golden Prairie*, p. 83.
- 116 "Wheat in Shot-Blade" *Kindersley Clarion*, 25 June 1914, p. 1.
- 117 *Medicine Hat News*, 20 July 1914, p. 1.
- 118 "If You Want Work," *Kindersley Clarion*, 30 July 1914, p. 1.
- 119 "Additional Relief Work to be Done by Government," *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 2 October 1914, p. 1.
- 120 *Medicine Hat News*, 2 June 1914, p. 1.
- 121 *Ibid.*, "Homesteaders to Get Work in Harvest," *Medicine Hat News*, 23 July 1914, p. 1.
- 122 *Ibid.*, 4 August 1914, p. 1.
- 123 *Ibid.*, "Provincial Government Will Assist the Homesteaders," *Medicine Hat News*, 1 August 1914, p. 1.
- 124 *Ibid.*, p. 2.
- 125 Interview with Mr. Ralph Mutter, September 1, 2010. There is a prodigious amount of natural gas exploration in the Hatton area these days. Thanks to Mr. Kelly Mutter for suggesting that nearby Bitter Lake may in fact have been so named because of the amount of gas in the water-table.
- 126 *Aneroid*, p. 205.
- 127 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1914, p. 9.
- 128 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

- 129 “Premier Scott Comes to Aid of Farmers,” *Kindersley Clarion*, 27 August 1914, 1.
- 130 *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- 131 “Help for Settlers,” *Maple Creek News*, 27 August 1914, p. 2
- 132 *History of the Golden Prairie Community*, p. 1.
- 133 “Comes to Aid of Farmers,” *Kindersley Clarion*, p. 1.
- 134 “Too Much Heat, Not Enough Rain,” *Maple Creek News*, 23 July 1914, p. 1.
- 135 Barnhart, *Peace, Progress and Prosperity*, 89.
- 136 *Ibid.*, 74.
- 137 *Ibid.*, 77. Thanks to University of Saskatchewan history professor Bill Waiser for explaining Scott’s beliefs about the connectedness of agriculture and the future of Saskatchewan.
- 138 Conservative Party of Canada, “Relief for the Western Settler” (Ottawa: Federal Press Agency, 1914), 2.
- 139 “No Cancellations to be Accepted,” *Kindersley Clarion*, 13 August 1914, p. 1.
- 140 “Relief for the Western Settler,” p. 2.
- 141 The figure for 1914 relief aid given by the province was \$8,655,698. See Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Reports*, 1943, p. 160
- 142 E.W. Stapleford, “Report on Rural Relief Due to Drought Conditions and Crop Failures in Western Canada,” Canada, Department of Agriculture, 1938, p. 31.
- 143 “Relief for the Western Settler,” 1. Italics in the original.
- 144 *Ibid.*, p. 2. The RNWMP needed to purchase at least one thousand horses in 1914.
- 145 “Action Necessary to Help Settlers,” *Maple Creek News*, 23 July 1914, p. 1.
- 146 “Help for Settlers,” *Maple Creek News*, 27 August 1914, p. 1.
- 147 “Relief for the Western Settler,” p. 2.
- 148 “Help for Settlers,” *Maple Creek News*, 27 August 1914, p. 2.
- 149 See Jones, *Empire of Dust*, for an exploration of this story. Suffield, near Medicine Hat, is still used as a training ground for the British Army. Prince Harry trained in the Suffield block.
- 150 “Report of the Ranching and Grazing Investigation Commission” (Ottawa: Department of Interior, 1913), pp. 1–3.
- 151 *Ibid.*, p. 4
- 152 *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- 153 Martin, ‘*Dominion Lands*’, pp. 179–80.
- 154 Breen, *The Canadian West*, pp. 188–91.
- 155 James Gray, *Men against the Desert* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books), p. 12.

## 2: “IN THE THRILL ZONE OF THE ONRUSHING CALAMITY”

- 1 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1916, 10. Auld replaced A.F. Mantle, who perished while fighting in the Great War. Major Mantle fought with the 68<sup>th</sup> Battalion of the Canadian Expeditionary Force.
- 2 *Ibid.*, 120.
- 3 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Reports*, 1918, 111; 1919, 104.
- 4 The Teachers and Pupils of Val Marie High School, *Val Echo: A History of Val Marie* (Val Marie: Val Echo, 1955), p. 25.
- 5 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1920, n.p. See introduction.
- 6 Alberta, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1918, 128. While Saskatchewan established a royal



- commission in 1920, the Alberta government established aid offices at Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, and Youngstown to provide settlers with the “necessities of life.” See Alberta, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1919, p. 10.
- 7 Carl Anderson, “‘Dominion Lands’ Policy, Drought, and Saskatchewan’s Better Farming Commission,” *Saskatchewan History* 61, no. 1 (2009): 4.
- 8 *Saskatchewan Archives Board* (hereafter SAB), R-261, 23-1-3, “Papers of the Deputy Minister,” J.H. Veitch to Charles Dunning, 18 February, 1920.
- 9 *Ibid.*, L.J. Harvey to Charles Hamilton, 19 July 1920, p. 1.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 1.
- 11 SAB, Ag. 2-7, Papers of Department of Agriculture, “Correspondence re: Movement of settlers, 1922-1925,” CNR Freight Agent E.A. Field to F.H. Auld, 25 July 1923.
- 12 SAB, “Report of the Sub-Committee,” 2.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 5.
- 14 SAB, R-261, 23-1-3, Vietch to Dunning. pp. 1-2.
- 15 *Ibid.*, “Copy of Resolutions of the Better Farming Conference,” p. 167.
- 16 Saskatchewan Archives Board, “Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Farming Conditions, 1920,” pp. 10-11. This statement by Mr. Spence was not true. Summer-fallow was not “forced” on anyone. Soil exhaustion had been long known as one of the disadvantages to summer-fallow. Mr. Motherwell and Mr. MacKay both knew of it at least as far back as 1910, likely much earlier.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 10-11. That the province also had to be forcibly frog-marched into financing some form of experimental research is suggested when the dithering Premier Dunning explained to the Legislative Assembly in 1919 that “it does not appear that the provincial government should undertake the establishment of experimental farms in competition with the federal government.” See Journals and Sessional Papers, Legislative Assembly of the Province of Saskatchewan, Session 1919-1920 (Regina: J. W. Reid, 1920), 18 December 1919, p. 55.
- 18 Report of the Royal Commission, p. 16. Spence was borne in Scotland, one of many Scots who contributed to the formation and development of not only Canada but also Saskatchewan. He held many senior Ministerial positions in the provincial government before ultimately finishing his career as first director of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation administration. He is a member of the *Saskatchewan Agricultural Hall of Fame*
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 44.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 11.
- 21 Anderson, “Saskatchewan’s Better Farming Commission,” p. 17.
- 22 John Bracken, *Dryland Farming in Western Canada* (Winnipeg: Grain Growers Publications, 1921), 2. Bracken would later become the premier of Manitoba.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 174.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 301.
- 25 SAB, R-261, F23-1-1, Keelor to Department of Agriculture, 23 May, 1921.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 *Richmond’s Heritage: A History of Richmond and District, 1910-1978* (Richmond: Richmond Historical Society, 1978), p. 165.
- 28 SAB, R-261, F23-1-1, Keelor to Auld, 22 July 1921.
- 29 *Ibid.*
- 30 *Ibid.*, Auld to Keelor, 27 May 1921.
- 31 *Ibid.*

- 32 Alberta, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1922, "Report of Mr. James Murray," p. 18.
- 33 SAB, R-261, f 22.15, "Drought-General."
- 34 "Agricultural Trains Not To Run This Year," *Regina Morning Leader*, 17 May 1923, p. 3.
- 35 Saskatchewan, Journals and Sessional Papers, Legislative Assembly of the Province of Saskatchewan, Session 1919–1920 (Regina: J.W. Reid, 1920), 18 December, 1919, p. 55.
- 36 Saskatchewan, *Journals*, 1921–1922 (Regina: J.W. Reid, 1922), 24 January 1922, p. 69.
- 37 "Agricultural Trains Not To Run This Year," p. 3.
- 38 *RM of Big Stick Archives*, (Golden Prairie), "Minutes of RM Meetings, 1920–1984," 5 August 1922. This particular problem would be solved in part by the now-ubiquitous three-strand barbed wire fence found throughout the south plains of rural Saskatchewan.
- 39 *RM of Maple Creek Archives* (Maple Creek), "Minutes of Council Meetings, 1921–1972," 25 February 1923.
- 40 *RM of Clinworth Archives* (Sceptre), "Minutes of RM Meetings, 1912–1981," 3 June 1922.
- 41 *Ibid.*, 4 February 1922.
- 42 *Ibid.*
- 43 SAB, R-261, F23-1-1, Keelor to Premier Martin, 27 July 1921.
- 44 David C. Jones, *Empire of Dust: Settling and Abandoning the Prairie Drybelt* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1987), 130.
- 45 SAB-R, R-261, F23-1-1, Martin to Auld, April 1921.
- 46 Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1950), 211.
- 47 *Ibid.*, 211.
- 48 *Regina Leader*, 4 May 1886, p. 1; Jones, *Empire of Dust*, 24. See also Jones, *Empire of Dust*, 21, for the Department of Interior pamphlet that reflected the belief that rain followed the plough; the pamphlet reads, in part: "Magician's wand never produced more striking effect than did the placing of a pair of steel rails over the stretch of the prairies southwest from Saskatoon."
- 49 Jones, *Empire of Dust*, pp. 21, 24.
- 50 "Schuler Column," *Medicine Hat News*, 16 July 1921, p. 3.
- 51 William Wardill, *Sand Castles: A Story of Dryland Settlement* (Eatonia: Seagrass Publications, 1996), p. 70.
- 52 SAB, R-261, 23-1-1, Sargeant to Auld, 14 July 1921.
- 53 *Ibid.*
- 54 *Ibid.*, Harvey to Auld, 11 August 1921.
- 55 *Ibid.*
- 56 *Ibid.*
- 57 See, "Relief for Dried out Farmers," *Kindersley Clarion*, August 28, 3; "I.O.D.E. Form Committee to Help Needy," *Kindersley Clarion*, September, 1924.
- 58 *RM of Clinworth Minutes*, 3 February 1923.
- 59 Jones, *Empire of Dust*, p. 113.
- 60 SAB, R-261, 23-1-1, Auld to Harder, 9 August 1921.
- 61 *Ibid.*
- 62 "Fall Rye," *Medicine Hat News*, 19 August 1921, p. 2.
- 63 SAB, R-261, 23-1-1, Murphy to Hamilton, 10 July 1926.
- 64 *Ibid.*, Hamilton to Herzu, 1926.
- 65 *Ibid.*
- 66 SAB, Ag. 2-7, Honens to the Department of Agriculture, 26 March 1923.
- 67 The Kongschuhs fled Russia in 1902, just a few years before small-scale revolt prompted Tsar Nicholas to

- introduce a kind of parliament to Russia for the first time in 1905. The revolution of 1917 would be more thorough-going and far-reaching. The quote on the Bolsheviks can be found in J.F.C. Wright, *Saskatchewan: The History of a Province* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1955), p. 212. Wright also offers the not-entirely-un-truthful observation that “some militant leaders in the Saskatchewan agrarian movement mouth[ed] Marxist phrases fed them by dedicated members of the Communist Party of Canada, most of whom would see Bolshevik Russia only in books and illustrated propaganda pamphlets.”
- 68 SAB, Ag. 2-7, “Application for Free Shipment of Settler’s Stock and Effects from Points in Dry Area.”
- 69 *Memories of Cluny* (Winnipeg: Inter Collegiate Press, n.d.), pp. 457–59.
- 70 *Ibid.*, pp. 457–60.
- 71 *Ibid.*, p. 461.
- 72 *Ibid.*, p. 465.
- 73 *Ibid.*, p. 457.
- 74 *Ibid.*, pp. 458, 463. That the Kongschuhs prospered in Cluny is indicated by the fact that there are fully fifteen branches of the Kongschuhs in the Cluny history book.
- 75 SAB, R- 261, F23-1-1, Schmidt to the Provincial Government, 16 July 1921.
- 76 *Tears and Thanksgiving: The RM of Benson No. 35* (Altona, MB: Friesen, 1981), p. 307.
- 77 *Ibid.*, p. 869.
- 78 SAB, R-261, F-23-1-1, Auld to Thomas Lannan, 22 July 1921.
- 79 *Ibid.*
- 80 Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-261, f22.15, “Drought-General,” Memo for Auld, 24 November 1919.
- 81 *Captured Memories: a History of Alsask and Surrounding School District* (Altona MB: Friesen, 1983), pp. 304–5.
- 82 SAB, M-13 14 f1, Huelskamp to Dunning, 8 July 1922.
- 83 *Ibid.*, pp. 2–4.
- 84 *Ibid.*, Dunning to Huelskamp, 14 July 1922.
- 85 *Ibid.*
- 86 *Ibid.*, Memo to Premier Dunning, 28 August 1922.
- 87 *Ibid.*, pp. 2–4.
- 88 *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- 89 *Ibid.*, p. 3. The comment that it was a federal responsibility was not isolated to Smith but was apparently government policy. MLA George Spence (former head of the Royal Commission) asked Agriculture Minister Charles Hamilton in late 1921, a year and a half after the completion of the Better Farming Conference, what Hamilton’s government was doing to implement the recommendations of the BFC. In what would become a typical reply, Hamilton explained that most of the recommendations of the commission were a federal responsibility, such as grazing lands, second homesteads, and the withdrawal of certain lands from settlement, etc. This technically correct though very narrow and limited reasoning excused the province from almost anything. Hamilton did not mention anything about evacuating settlers, also a recommendation of the commission. See Journals, First Session of the Fifth Legislative Assembly of the Province of Saskatchewan, Session 1921–1922 (Regina: J.W. Reid, 1922), 15 December 1921, p. 24.
- 90 Masonville was a postal sub-division that served a dozen families in the Alsask district. Anton had named it in honour of his wife’s maiden name: Mason.
- 91 SAB, M6, Y-0-4, “Drought Areas,” Huelskamp to Dunning, 22 April 1923. pp. 2121–2122.

- 92 Ibid., Auld to Dunning, 28 April 1923, p. 2123.
- 93 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1923, p. 13.
- 94 SAB, M6, Y-O-4, Huelskamp to Dunning, 13 May 1923, p. 2125.
- 95 SAB, M-13, 14, f1, Internal Memo, Department of Agriculture, 10 November 1922.
- 96 Ibid.
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 Alberta, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1924, pp. 20–21.
- 99 SAB, Ag., 2-7, G.H. Smith to Auld, 6 January 1923.
- 100 Ibid., Auld to A.E. Hatley, 9 January 1923.
- 101 Ibid., Smith to Auld, 13 January 1923.
- 102 Ibid., Hatley to Auld, 23 January 1923.
- 103 Alberta, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1924, p. 21.
- 104 Jones, *Empire of Dust*, p. 214.
- 105 Ibid., p. 214.
- 106 SAB, M-13, 14, f1, Cory to Dunning, 26 January 1923.
- 107 Ibid., Internal Memo, Auld to Dunning, 31 January 1923.
- 108 Ibid.
- 109 Ibid.
- 110 Ibid., Hamilton to Cory, 29 January 1923.
- 111 Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-261, f22.15, “Drought-General,” Black to Auld, 13 December 1921.
- 112 Anderson, “Saskatchewan’s Better Farming Commission,” p. 17.
- 113 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1923, pp. 13–14.
- 114 SAB, M-13, 14, Stewart to Dunning, 29 April 1924.
- 115 Ibid.
- 116 SAB, M-13, 14, Stewart to Dunning, 29 April 1924.
- 117 Ibid., 2.
- 118 Ibid., Auld to Stewart, 31 May 1924.
- 119 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Reports*, 1925, p. 238; 1926, p. 250; 1927, pp. 259–60.
- 120 Anderson, “Saskatchewan’s Better Farming Commission,” p. 17.
- 121 Jones, *Empire of Dust*, p. 117.
- 122 Ibid., p. 117.
- 123 Department of Agriculture, *Annual Reports*, 1925, p. 12.
- 124 Jones, *Empire of Dust*, p. 33.
- 125 Ibid., 13.
- 126 SAB, R-261, F23-1-1, Stonehouse to Auld, 27 March 1922.
- 127 Jones, *Empire of Dust*, p. 204.
- 128 *Prairie Crucible: The Roads of History* (Altona, MB: Friesen, 1991), p. 154.
- 129 John Archer, *Saskatchewan: A History* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Books, 1980 ), p. 153.
- 130 Ibid., p. 153.
- 131 Bylaws for Rural Municipalities in the Province of Saskatchewan (Saskatoon: Western Municipal News, 1910), pp. 23, 76, 96–97.
- 132 Ibid., 4.
- 133 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* [translated by George Lawrence] (New York: Harper-Perennial, 1968), p. 62.
- 134 Ibid.
- 135 Saskatchewan, Department of Municipal Affairs, *Annual Report*, 1918, p. 8.
- 136 Ibid., 8.
- 137 Jones *Empire of Dust*, p. 121.
- 138 Saskatchewan, Department of Municipal Affairs, *Annual Report*, 1921, p. 5.
- 139 *The Story of Rural Municipal Government in Alberta: 1909–1969* (n.p., n.d.), p. 51.
- 140 Ibid.

- 141 *RM of Clinworth Archives* (Sceptre, Saskatchewan) "Minutes of RM Meetings, 1912–1981" (hereafter Clinworth Minutes) December 1921; see also *RM of White Valley Archives*, "Minute Book for RM of White Valley #49 from March 1916–December 1921" (hereafter White Valley Minutes #1), 5 January 1920, p. 178.
- 142 White Valley Minutes #1, 5 January 1920, p. 178.
- 143 Clinworth Minutes, 1 February 1919.
- 144 Ibid., 6 March 1920.
- 145 Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-261, f 22.15, "Drought-General," Memo to Dunning, 19 January 1920.
- 146 Clinworth Minutes, 6 March 1920.
- 147 Sceptre, *The Past to the Present: 70 Years, 1909 to 1979* (Seceptre-Lemsford Historical Association, 1979); see entry under "Lawton, William."
- 148 Ibid., 14 January 1922.
- 149 Ibid., 18 March 1922.
- 150 Jones, *Empire of Dust*, p. 101.
- 151 White Valley Minutes #1, 5 March 1921, p. 264.
- 152 *RM of Reno Archives* (the trailer behind the RM office, Consul, Saskatchewan) "Transfer Ledger, 1918–1923"; see relief notes under Tab 'R.'
- 153 Ibid., "Transfer Ledger, 1924–1932," Relief notes under Tab 'R.'
- 154 *RM of Big Stick Archives* (Golden Prairie, Saskatchewan), "Seed Grain Advances Register, 1919–1920," 2–23.
- 155 White Valley Minutes #1, pp. 174–75
- 156 Ibid., 24 January 1920, 181–83.
- 157 Ibid., 21 February 1920, 193.
- 158 Ibid., 197.
- 159 Saskatchewan, Department of Municipal Affairs, *Annual Report*, 1921, p. 8; 1922, p. 5. See also Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1943, p. 169. The total value of relief aid supplied in 1920 was \$356,215.00, a decrease from the \$2.2 million spent in 1919. See *ibid.*
- 160 "Pay your Taxes," Kindersley *Clarion*, 5 October 1922, p. 3.
- 161 Ibid., 3.
- 162 Ibid., 3.
- 163 Jones, *Empire of Dust*, p. 155.
- 164 Ibid., p. 155.
- 165 White Valley Minutes #1, 7 August 1920, 233.
- 166 Ibid., 3 April 1920, p. 210.
- 167 Ibid., 4 February 1921.
- 168 Saskatchewan, Department of Municipal Affairs, *Annual Report*, 1921, p. 6.
- 169 *RM of Big Stick Archives* (Golden Prairie, Saskatchewan) "Minutes of RM Meetings, 1920–1923" (hereafter Big Stick Minutes), 4 February 1922.
- 170 Ibid., 6 May 1922.
- 171 Big Stick Minutes, 5 August 1922.
- 172 Ibid.
- 173 Ibid., 3 February 1923.
- 174 Ibid., 8 July 1922.
- 175 Ibid., 5 July 1922.
- 176 White Valley Minutes #1, p. 288.
- 177 *RM of Maple Creek Archives* (Maple Creek, Saskatchewan) "Minutes of the RM Meetings" (hereafter Maple Creek Minutes), 7 February 1925.
- 178 Ibid., 31 July 1922.
- 179 *Rural Municipal Government in Alberta*, p. 82.
- 180 Clinworth Minutes, 5 February 1921.
- 181 Jones, *Empire of Dust*, p. 157.
- 182 Ibid., p. 157.
- 183 Clinworth Minutes, 16 September 1924. Councillor Ducie's brothers were Barnardo Boys; see *The Past to the Present*, "Ducie, William."
- 184 Ibid.
- 185 Big Stick Minutes, 23 March 1923.
- 186 Ibid., 3 October 1925.

- 187 Ibid., 5 January 1924.
- 188 *RM of White Valley Archives*, “Minutes Book for RM of White Valley from January 1922–1936” (hereafter White Valley Minutes #2), 3 January 1922, p. 8.
- 189 Clinworth Minutes, 4 February 1922.
- 190 Ibid., 1 April 1922.
- 191 “Coleville Grain Growers After Another Bank,” *Kindersley Clarion*, 24 August 1922, p. 1.
- 192 Ibid., p. 1.
- 193 Clinworth Minutes, November 1920.
- 194 David C. Jones, “Schools and School Disintegration in the Alberta Dry Belt of the Twenties,” *Prairie Forum* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1978): 4.
- 195 Reno Minutes, Letter – Insert to Minutes, 23 February 1922.
- 196 Ibid.
- 197 Jones, *Empire of Dust*, p. 183.
- 198 Reno Minutes, Letter – Insert to Minutes, 23 February 1923
- 199 Ibid.
- 200 SAB, MA, 11(a), Disorganized Records of the Village of Hatton, 1922–1934, February, also October 1924.
- 201 Jones, *Empire of Dust*, p. 185.
- 202 Big Stick Minutes, 2 April 1921.
- 203 Big Stick Minutes, 2 February 1926.
- 204 Maple Creek Minutes, 25 November 1922.
- 205 Ibid., 27 March 1922.
- 206 Ibid.
- 207 Clinworth Minutes, 2 August 1924.
- 208 Jones, *Empire of Dust*, p. 188.
- 209 Clinworth, 3 January 1922.
- 210 Ibid., 24 April 1924.
- 211 Reno Minutes, 3 December 1921.
- 212 “Provincial Government Arranges for Reopening of Schools in Drought Areas,” *Medicine Hat News*, 19 August 1921, p. 1.
- 213 Jones, *Empire of Dust*, p. 197.
- 214 Ibid., p. 197.
- 215 Ibid., p. 196.
- 216 Big Stick Minutes, 4 March 1922.
- 217 Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-261, f 22.15 “Drought-General,” memo to Premier Martin, 12 April 1921.
- 218 Big Stick Minutes, 4 March 1922. See also Clinworth Minutes, 5 November 1921.
- 219 Ibid., 4 March 1922.
- 220 Ibid.
- 221 Reno Minutes, Insert, 22 July 1921.
- 222 Ibid., 3 December 1921.
- 223 White Valley Minutes #2, 286.
- 224 Ibid., 286.
- 225 *Rural Municipal Government in Alberta*, p. 52.
- 226 Ibid.
- 227 Clinworth Minutes, December 1921.
- 228 Big Stick Minutes, 2 July 1921.
- 229 SAB, R-261, F23-1-1, Auld to G.R. Murdoch, 14 November 1921.
- 230 *RM of Reno Archives*, “Tax Sale and Redemption Record, 1921–1925,” (missing front cover and bearing no identifying marks) the 419 figure derives from a calculation of the total tax sale entries in this log.
- 231 SAB, MA-3, Records of the Department of Municipal Affairs, “Seed Feed and Relief: 1921–1924,” J.J. Smith to E. Erikson, 12 October 1921. The government assumed responsibility for debt collection only after the RM had failed in that regard. In other words, the loans were guaranteed.
- 232 Ibid., Erickson to Smith, 17 October 1921.
- 233 Ibid.
- 234 Ibid.
- 235 Ibid., MacDonald to Smith, 29 October 1922.

- 236 SAB, Ag., 2.7, Papers of the Department of Agriculture, "Correspondence re: Movement of Settlers, 1922-1925," Eastfield to Auld, 25 July 1923.
- 237 *Town of Maple Creek Archives* (Maple Creek, SK) "Tax Sale and Redemption Record, 1915-1925" (hereafter MC Tax Records), pp. 1-3.
- 238 *Ibid.*, 12-21.
- 239 Saskatchewan, Department of Municipal Affairs, *Annual Reports*, 192, pp. 26-33; 1926, pp. 26-39. Historian Barry Potyondi notes that the Maple Creek district experienced a 62 per cent homestead failure rate, with 32 per cent abandoning their farms between 1920 and 1930. *In Palliser's Triangle: Living in the Grasslands, 1850-1930* (Saskatoon: Purich Publishing, 1995), 93. The tax-sale records for the RM of Maple Creek were unavailable.
- 240 See, for example, White Valley Minutes #1, 5 June 1920, 230-32.
- 241 Big Stick Minutes, 2 October 1926; 2 April 1927.
- 242 *RM of Chesterfield Archives* (Eatonia, Saskatchewan) "RM of Royal Canadian: Lands Sold and Redemption Record, 1924 to 1932," pp. 1-20.
- 243 *Ibid.*; see "Purchaser" columns.
- 244 Saskatchewan, Department of Municipal Affairs, *Annual Reports*, 1920, pp. 26-37; 1926, pp. 26-33.
- 245 Clinworth Minutes, 1 November 1926.
- 246 *Prairie Echoes of Hatton: A Story of Hatton Saskatchewan and Surrounding Area* (n.p., 1983), p. 3. This is one of the very few references made to the land abandonment crisis of the 1920s in local community history books. Often, what seems to happen is that people assumed that the land abandonment problem in their RM affected only their RM.
- 247 There have never been any wider connections made.
- 248 Clinworth Minutes, 16 September 1924.
- 249 *Ibid.*
- 250 SAB, R-5-9, Papers of F.H. Auld, "An Agricultural Policy for Saskatchewan," Radio Address, 22 November 1926, p. 3.
- 251 *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 4.
- 252 *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- 253 *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- 254 *Ibid.*, "The Mixed Farming Committee Report," 14 February 1925, pp. 2-8.
- 255 *Ibid.*, "Some Problems Relating to the Use of Sub-Marginal Lands," Public Address, 1934, p. 2.
- 256 *Ibid.*, 1.
- 257 Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-261, f22.15, "Drought-General," C.P. Wright to F.H. Auld, 3 April 1925.

## INTERLUDE: A COLLECTION OF ABSURDITIES

- 1 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Papers of Charles Dunning, M6, Y-O-4, "Drought Areas," p. 2133.
- 2 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Department of Agriculture, Field crops branch, Ag.3, f112, Relief, 1929-1936.
- 3 "South Country Farmer Insane," *Swift Current Sun*, 26 May 1914, p. 1.
- 4 "Suicide of [\_\_\_\_\_]," *Swift Current Sun*, 7 July 1914, p. 1.
- 5 "Prominent Glidden Farmer Commits Suicide on Dominion Day," *Kindersley Clarion*, 8 July 1937.
- 6 "A Cure for Drunkenness" advertisement, *Maple Creek News* 17 May 1914, p. 5.
- 7 Pinto Creek Minutes, 22 June 1937.

8 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Papers of Charles Dunning, M6, Y-105-1(a), "Canadian Railway Branch-lines: General, September 1922 to January 1926" Pim to Dunning 32784, 1922, p. 1. The letter is riddled with, and hobbled by, exclamation points.

9 *Report of the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations-Saskatchewan*, 1937, p. 295.

10 Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-261, Deputy Minister's Files, Royal Commissions and Committees of Inquiry, f23-1-1, Kirk to Dunning, 13 October 1921.

11 Ibid. Thanks to Bill Waiser for pointing out that Kirk may not have been delusional but may have very well seen in his dream a vision of the South Saskatchewan Dam project of the 1960s.

12 Deer Forks, *Minutes of RM Meetings*, 2 January 1935.

13 Ibid.

14 Swift Current *Minutes of RM Meetings*, 3 February 1937.

15 Saskatoon *Star Phoenix*, "Relief Office of Government Here Closed as Saving," 1 September 1934, p. 1.

16 *Richmonds Heritage: A History of Richmond and District, 1910-1978* (Richmond: Richmond Historical Society, 1980), p. 273.

17 David Jones, *Empire of Dust: Settling and Abandoning the Prairie Drybelt* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1987), p. 53.

18 *Richmonds Heritage*, p. 273.

19 Ibid., 274.

20 *Aneroid: the Rising Barometer 1905-1980* (Altona, MB: Friesen, 1980), p. 171.

21 Toil, Tears and Thanksgiving: the RM of Benson No. 35 (Altona, MB: Friesen, 1981), p. 868.

### 3: HARD TIMES

1 Bruce Hutchinson, *The Unknown Country: Canada and Her People* (Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1943), p. 294.

2 John Archer, *Saskatchewan: A History* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1980), p. 226.

3 Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), p. 386.

4 James Gray, *Men against the Desert* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1968), p. 45.

5 Archer, *Saskatchewan*, p. 228.

6 Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House, 2004), p. 294.

7 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Agricultural Statistics Branch, R-266, I-Relief Files, 1 Relief Statistics for Rural Municipalities and Local Improvement Districts, 1919-1946, file-a, see file for RM #75.

8 Ibid.; see file for RM #231.

9 Gregory Marchildon and Carl Anderson, "Forgotten Farmer-Minister in R.B. Bennett's Depression Era Cabinet," *Prairie Forum* 33, no. 1 (2008): p. 80.

10 SAB, R-266, I-1. See file for RM #273 and RM #183.

11 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, p. 96.

12 Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, p. 389.

13 *Prairie Echoes: A Story of Hatton Saskatchewan and Surrounding Area* (n.p., 1983), p. v.

14 E.W. Stapleford, "Report on Rural Relief Due to Drought Conditions and Crop Failures in Western Canada," Canada, Department of Agriculture, 1938, p. 86.

15 Barry Broadfoot, *Ten Lost Years: Memories of Canadians Who Survived*



- the Great Depression* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1971), p. 37.
- 16 *Harvest of Memories: RM 134 and Shamrock* (Regina: Focus Publishing, 1990), p. 295.
- 17 *Aneroid: The Rising Barometer* (Altona, MB: Friesen, 1980), p. 377.
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 154.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 116.
- 20 Fred Wilkes, *They Rose from the Dust* (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1958), p. 179.
- 21 Broadfoot, *Ten Lost Years*, p. 41.
- 22 Canada, House of Commons *Debates*, 1938, vol. 1, p. 319.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 319.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 319. Central Canadian farmers did not, as a general rule, use summer-fallow.
- 25 Archer, *Saskatchewan*, p. 215.
- 26 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Reports*, year ending April 1929, p. 9.
- 27 Timothy Egan, *The Worst Hard Time* (New York: Mariner Books, 2006), p. 87.
- 28 Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, p. 384.
- 29 Hutchinson, *The Unknown Country*, pp. 294–95.
- 30 Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies*, p. 387.
- 31 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1931, p. 9.
- 32 *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- 33 *Ibid.*, 1932, p. 8.
- 34 Archer, *Saskatchewan*, p. 220.
- 35 Waiser, *Saskatchewan*, p. 293.
- 36 *Report of the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations – Saskatchewan* (Ottawa: 1937), hereafter called the Rowell-Sirois Report, p. 291. As the Commissioners point out, the SRC likely thought that fruits and vegetables would be supplied through other relief agencies and so they felt no need to supply duplicate services. As it was, if you were on SRC relief, this is what you would receive: potatoes, beef, pork, fish, butter sugar, rolled oats, salt, tea, coffee, jam or honey, beans, pot barley, corn meal, yeast, baking powder, pepper, soap, coal oil, matches, “epsom salts and saltpetre.” See *ibid.* p. 291.
- 37 *Ibid.*, p. 291.
- 38 *Ibid.*
- 39 Saskatchewan, Department of Public Health, *Annual Reports*, 1938, pp. 218–19.
- 40 See H. Blair Neatby, “The Saskatchewan Relief Commission, 1913–1934,” *Saskatchewan History* 3, no. 2, (1950): 41-51.
- 41 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Agricultural Statistics Branch, R-266, “Reestablishment Assistance,” f10, 3 and 4, “Tables of Relief Services Advances.”
- 42 Neatby, “The Saskatchewan Relief Commission,” p. 41.
- 43 *Ibid.*, p. 42.
- 44 E.W. Stapleford, “Report on Rural Relief Due to Drought Conditions and Crop Failures in Western Canada,” Canada, Department of Agriculture, pp. 33–34.
- 45 Neatby, “The Saskatchewan Relief Commission,” p. 43.
- 46 Deer Forks, *Minutes of RM Meetings*, 2 July 1930.
- 47 *Ibid.*, February, 1933.
- 48 Archer, *Saskatchewan*, p. 221.
- 49 Deer Forks Minutes, February, 1933.
- 50 Burstall, *Treasured Memories: A History of Burstall and District*, (Burstall: Burstall History Book Committee, 1983), pp. 13–17. Messr’s Alex and Peter Lomow, brothers of Leon, wrote this fascinating tale for the Burstall Community History book. The exceptional prose of the story is remarkable because English was their second language. The Burstall-Hatton-Leader district

- attracted a huge influx of not only Russian settlers, but German-speaking Russians who had settled in Russia during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.
- 51 Deer Forks Minutes, 2 April 1933.
- 52 SAB, Ag. 3, f112, "Revised Maximum Credits for Petrol Products," 1935.
- 53 Deer Forks Minutes, 5 August 1937. Permission was required in those days to cut wood in certain areas.
- 54 Mankota, *Minutes of RM Meetings* (hereafter Mankota Minutes), 7 October 1933. According to Mr. Mike Sherven, the administrator for the RM of Mankota, the coal mines (there were three of them) were abandoned and shut down in the 1940s. Few traces remain and to gain access one must traverse a rigorously bumpy section of trail that runs through a PFRA pasture.
- 55 Gray, *Men against the Desert*, p. 60.
- 56 *Memories of Cluny* (Winnipeg: Intercollegiate Press of Canada, n.d.), p. 458.
- 57 "Darcy Hande, Saskatchewan Merchants in the Great Depression: regionalism and the crusade again Big Business," *Saskatchewan History* 43, no. 1 (1991): 21.
- 58 *Ibid.*, p. 22.
- 59 Pinto Creek, *Minutes of RM Meetings*, 5 September 1931.
- 60 Mankota Minutes, 2 December 1933.
- 61 Advertisement, *Kindersley Clarion*, 30 September 1937, p. 4.
- 62 Hande, "Saskatchewan Merchants," p. 23.
- 63 Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, "Moral Standards Collapse Under Depression Strain," 7 July 1937, p. 5.
- 64 Pinto Creek, Minutes, 5 October 1929.
- 65 E.W. Stapleford, "Report on Rural Relief Due to Drought Conditions and Crop Failures in Western Canada," Canada Department of Agriculture, 1938, p. 87.
- 66 Rowell-Sirois, p. 292. Under the SRC, settlers were allowed a maximum \$9.00 a year for clothes for an adult, \$6.25 for a boy, \$5.25 for as girl. By 1937, the annual allotment had increased to \$14.00 to a maximum of \$140.00 for "a family of 20."
- 67 L.M. Grayson and Michael Bliss, *The Wretched of Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), p. 33.
- 68 *Harvest of Memories: RM 134 and Shamrock* (Regina: Focus Publishing, 1990), p. 453.
- 69 *Aneroid: The Rising Barometer*, p. 127.
- 70 *Coronach from the Turning of the Sod: The Story of the Early Settlers in the RM of Hart Butte No. 11* (Winnipeg: Inter Collegiate Press, 1980), p. 243.
- 71 *Ibid.*, p. 243.
- 72 Hutchinson, *The Unknown Country*, p. 293.
- 73 *Ibid.*, pp. 293-94.
- 74 Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, "Moral Standards Collapse Under Depression Strain," 7 July 1937, p. 5.
- 75 Stapleford, "Report on Relief," p. 87.
- 76 Saskatchewan, Department of Public Health, *Annual Report*, 1921, p. 76.
- 77 *Ibid.*, 1924, p. 96.
- 78 *Ibid.*, 1929, p. 81; 1932, p. 92; 1934, p. 96.
- 79 *Ibid.*, 1938, p. 114.
- 80 *Ibid.*, 1929, p. 81. See also *ibid.*, p. 76. Of the 680 illegitimate children born in 1932, 353 were born in the rural areas. See *ibid.*, 1932, p. 93.
- 81 *Ibid.*, 1929, p. 81. In examining the ages at which young women got married in the 1930s, it was found that there was a continual back-and-forth between two demographic groups with the highest instances of marriage. For women, it vacillated between young girls in the 15 to 19 age group, and young women in the 20- to 24-year-old age group. For men, alas, there was only consistency: the

- 24-year-old age group was always and consistently the demographic from amongst which the highest number of men were married each year.
- 82 In 1932, there were seven illegitimate children born to girls under fifteen and young German girls mothered three, the highest number of any one single ethnic group. There were 233 illegitimate children born to young girls between the ages of 15 and 19 and again the Germans had the most at forty-two; there were 259 illegitimate children born to young women in the 20–24 age group, with the Germans again producing the most at fifty-four. See *ibid.*, 1932, p. 93.
- 83 *Ibid.*, 1921, p. 87.
- 84 *Ibid.*, 1929 p. 98.
- 85 *Ibid.*, 1932, p. 115; 1938, p. 133.
- 86 *Ibid.*, 1924, p. 80; 1938, p. 133.
- 87 Stapleford, “Report on Rural Relief,” p. 87.
- 88 *Prairie Echoes: A Story of Hatton and Surrounding Area* (n.p., 1983), p. 71.
- 89 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Department of Agriculture, R-261, Drought-General, f22.15, W.H. March to F.H. Auld, 2 May, 1932.
- 90 Swift Current, *Minutes of RM Meetings*, 2 September 1933.
- 91 SAB, MA, f5, Special File, Memo, Department of Municipal Affairs.
- 92 Pinto Creek Minutes, 18 February 1933.
- 93 *Coronach*, p. 244.
- 94 *Harvest of Memories*, p. 455.
- 95 *Ibid.*, p. 455.
- 96 *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- 97 Saskatchewan, Department of Public Health, *Annual Report*, 1938, pp. 218–19.
- 98 *Ibid.* See also *ibid.*, 1936, p. 196.
- 99 SAB, R-261, f22-15, Deputy Minister Innes to Deputy Minister Auld, 28 July 1931.
- 100 James Gray, *Men against the Desert*, p. 19.
- 101 Saskatchewan, Department of Public Health, *Annual Report*, 1938, pp. 220–21. In 1929, eighty-five males killed themselves, as compared to ten females. Amongst the victims, there were eight boys and one girl under fifteen; twenty-four single men between the ages of 25 and 44; twenty-four married men and three married women between the ages of 45 and 64. The most common form of self-execution for men was death by firearms (29) and for women, the majority (3) preferred self-strangulation.
- 102 Rowell-Sirois Commission, p. 291.
- 103 *Harvest of Memories*, p. 435.
- 104 *Richmond’s Heritage: A History of Richmond and District* (Richmond: Richmond Historical Society, 1978), p. 271. The three exclamation points are in the original.
- 105 *Ibid.*, p. 166.
- 106 *Coronach*, p. 243.
- 107 *Ibid.*, p. 243.
- 108 Gray, *Men against the Desert*, pp. 48–49.
- 109 *Harvest of Memories*, p. 512.
- 110 *Aneroid*, p. 144.
- 111 *Coronach*, p. 112.
- 112 *Ibid.*, p. 112–13.
- 113 Bret Quiring, *Saskatchewan Politicians: Lives Past and Present* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2004), p. 190.
- 114 Norman Ward and David Smith, *Jimmy Gardiner: Relentless Liberal* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 174–75.
- 115 *Coronach*, p. 197.
- 116 *Aneroid*, p. 165.
- 117 *Ibid.*, p. 190.
- 118 Swift Current Minutes, 16 March 1935.

- 119 Neatby, "The Relief Commission," p. 56.
- 120 Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, "Few People Moving Out of the Southern Drylands," 19 September 1934, p. 3.
- 121 Neatby, "The Relief Commission," p. 56.
- 122 *Harvest of Memories*, p. 55.
- 123 Ibid., p. 55.
- 124 Neatby, "The Relief Commission" p. 56.
- 125 Mankota, *Minutes of RM Meeting*.
- 126 Swift Current Minutes, 2 May 1936.
- 127 *Harvest of Memories*, p. 55.
- 128 Ibid., pp. 55, 57.
- 129 Ibid., p. 56.
- 130 Big Stick, *Minutes of RM Meetings*, 3 July 1936.
- 131 Ibid., 10 October 1934.
- 132 SAB R-266, I-1 a, "Relief Files," see #141.
- 133 SAB R-266, I-1 "Relief Files a," see RM #230.
- 134 Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-266, III Subject Files, f4, Drought Committee, 1946, "Relief Services Advances."
- 135 Ibid., "Rural Population, Total Relief Feed and Fodder, 1929/30-1938/39."
- 136 SAB R-266, #10, 3/4 "Synopsis of Expenditures of Agricultural Relief, 1907-1941."
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- 142 Big Stick Minutes, Monday, 5 January (or October?), 1931.
- 143 Neatby, "The Saskatchewan Relief Commission," p. 50.
- 144 Ibid., p. 50.
- 145 Clinworth, *Minutes of RM Meetings*, 4 January 1934.
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- 150 Deer Forks Minutes, 5 January 1931.
- 151 Ibid., 6 July, 1932.
- 152 Ibid., 3 December 1930.
- 153 Neatby, "The Saskatchewan Relief Commission," p. 45.
- 154 Deer Forks Minutes, 5 October 1932.
- 155 Saskatchewan Archives Board, R-261, 22-13-1, "Agricultural Re-Establishment," Statement Issued by T.C. Davis in Connection with Disposition of Crop in Saskatchewan.
- 156 Ibid.
- 157 Pinto Creek Minutes, 6 August 1932.
- 158 Swift Current Minutes, 15 July 1932, 7 September 1935.
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- 164 Big Stick Minutes, 6 December 1930.
- 165 Clinworth Minutes, 3 August 1936.
- 166 E.W. Stapleford, "Report on Rural Relief Due to Drought Conditions and Crop Failures in Western Canada," Canada, Department of Agriculture, 1938, pp. 55-56.
- 167 Rowell-Sirois, p. 278.
- 168 *Aneroid*, p. 376. The Rowell-Sirois Commission determined that "it has become impossible for pupils

- in rural districts either to drive to nearby town schools ... or to board in town in order to secure a high school education." See Rowell-Sirois, p. 279. So, Mrs. Schmidt's observation that she was teaching sixteen-year-olds in grade six was likely helped along by the fact that there was simply nowhere else for these kids to go.
- 169 *The Story of Rural Municipal Government in Alberta: 1909-1969* (n.p., n.d.), p. 162.
- 170 *Richmound*, p. 352.
- 171 *Ibid.*, p. 352.
- 172 *Ibid.*, p. 165.
- 173 Clinworth Minutes, 5 July 1937.
- 174 Pinto Creek Minutes, 7 October 1933.
- 175 Clinworth Minutes, 5 April 1933.
- 176 Swift Current Minutes, 26 March 1932.
- 177 Mankota Minutes, 1 June 1935.
- 178 Russell, "The Co-operative Government," p. 86.
- 179 *Ibid.*, p. 87.
- 180 Big Stick Minutes, 5 December 1931.
- 181 *Ibid.*, 15 July 1935.
- 182 Clinworth Minutes, 3 October 1932.
- 183 Swift Current Minutes, 5 September 1931.
- 184 Pinto Creek Minutes, 4 June 1932, 2 July 1932.
- 185 Big Stick Minutes, 5 February 1937. These parcels of land were likely a part of the effort in the 1930s to classify lands as suitable/unsuitable and signed over to the Land Utilization Board, which would then turn the blocks of land into community pasture.
- 186 Editorial, Swift Current *Sun*, "Be It Resolved," 27 July 1937, p. 4.
- 187 Big Stick Minutes, 4 November 1935.
- 188 Russell, "The Co-operative Government," p. 87.
- 189 Wallace Stegner, *Wolf Willow: A History, a Story, and a Memory of the Last Plains Frontier* (New York: Penguin, 1990), p. 129.
- 190 *Ibid.*, p. 133.
- 191 *Ibid.*, pp. 133-36.
- 192 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Department of Municipal Affairs, "Radio Address Given by Mr. Matte on the Work of the NSRB, January 31 and February 14 1939," MA.3, f-8, p. 5.
- 193 Deer Forks Minutes, 6 May 1914.
- 194 SAB, R-266, #10, 3/4, "Copy of a General Letter to Rural Municipalities Advising of the Organization of Relief Camps," 30 August 1930. A "straw boss" is an overseer selected from amongst the men.
- 195 Saskatchewan, Department of Highways, *Annual Report, 1931/32*, p. 8.
- 196 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
- 197 *Richmound*, p. 243.
- 198 Highways, *Annual Report, 1930/31*, pp. 6-10.
- 199 Swift Current Minutes, 2 November 1929.
- 200 Mankota Minutes, 5 July 1930.
- 201 Big Stick Minutes, 2 August 1930; 4 October 1930.
- 202 Pinto Creek Minutes, 2 December 1933.
- 203 *The Story of Rural Municipal Government in Alberta, 1909-1969*, p. 10.
- 204 Swift Current Minutes, 20 September 1930.
- 205 Pinto Creek Minutes, 2 August 1930.
- 206 SAB, R-266, "Copy of General Letter."
- 207 "The way it was: highway work camps," *The Western Producer*, 10 February 1977.
- 208 *Ibid.*
- 209 Big Stick Minutes, 15 July 1935.
- 210 Golden Prairie, *A History of the Golden Prairie Community* (Centennial History Group, 1968), p. i.

- 211 Swift Current Minutes, 1 June 1935.
- 212 Mankota Minutes, 14 July 1932.
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- 214 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Department of Agriculture, R-370, f1, "Dominion-Provincial Agreements," Road Work, 1937.
- 215 Neatby, "The Saskatchewan Relief Commission," p. 52.
- 216 *Ibid.*, p. 52.
- 217 Department of Highways, *Annual Reports*, 1931/32, p. 9.
- 12 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report*, 1934, see "Agricultural Relief Services" in introduction to report, n.p.
- 13 SAB, R-266, Department of Agricultural Statistics, Re-establishment Assistance "Settlers Effects Shipments" Ledger.
- 14 *Ibid.*, "Movement of Settlers Effects Under Special Rates, January 1, 1930–December 31, 1935."
- 15 Saskatchewan Archives Board, Department of Municipal Affairs, MA.3, f8, Radio Address Given by Mr. Matte on the Work of the NSRB, 31 January and 14 February 1939, pp. 2–3.

#### 4: EXODUS

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- 6 T.J.D. Powell, "Northern Settlement, 1929–1935" *Saskatchewan History* 30, no. 3 (1977): p. 93.
- 7 James Gray, *Men against the Desert* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Books), p. 194.
- 8 Powell, "Northern Settlement," pp. 87, 89.
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- 19 Canada, House of Commons *Debates*, 1937, vol. 1, p. 436.
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- 38 *Ibid.*, p. 120.
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- 47 Gray, *Men against the Desert*, p. 31.
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 11 Ibid.  
 12 Ibid., 1929, pp. 175–76.  
 13 Ibid., 1938, pp. 220–21.  
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 15 Ibid., 1934, p. 188.  
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### 5: THE WRECK OF '37

- 1 E.W. Stapleford, "Report on Rural Relief Due to Drought Conditions and Crop Failures in Western Canada," Canada, Department of Agriculture, 1938, p. 37.  
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- 21 *Ibid.*, "Conditions Very Bad in Saskatchewan Say Officials," 29 June 1937, p. 1.
- 22 Letter to Editor, Medicine Hat *News*, 29 June 1937. p. 3, 5.
- 23 Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, 16 August 1937, p. 7.
- 24 Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, "No Crop: Dunblane," 17 August 1937, p. 17.
- 25 Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, "May Invade North," 11 June 1937, p. 4.
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- 32 Barry Broadfoot, *Ten Lost Years*, p. 8.
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- 36 Gray, *Men against the Desert*, pp. 34, 99.
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- 41 Big Stick, *Minutes of RM Meetings*, 5 February 1937.
- 42 Stapleford, "Report on Rural Relief," p. 37.
- 43 Fred Wilkes, *They Rose from the Dust* (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1958), p. 183.
- 44 Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, "Ask for Immediate Aid in Drouth Country," 14 June 1937.
- 45 Swift Current Minutes, 2 October 1937.
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- 53 Swift Current Sun, 21 September 1937, p. 4.
- 54 Gray, *Men against the Desert*, p. 63.
- 55 Ibid., p. 2.
- 56 Medicine Hat News, 9 August 1937, p. 1. The “triple-tipped lance” to which the honourable member referred was the creation of pasture land, improved fallow, and dugouts.
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- 58 Dan Balkwill, *The Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration and the Community Pasture Program, 1937–1947*, University of Saskatchewan, MA thesis, p. 21.
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- 60 Ibid., p. 103.
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- 71 When the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities (SARM) was developing a weed control program, it was observed that Alberta requires weed control while Saskatchewan does not. The question was asked of long-serving and highly respected SARM executive director Mr. Ken Engel how to make weed control effective if there was no requirement for it. Understanding the nature of the organization’s membership, Mr. Engel replied that it was a problem to work around – weed control was not mandatory for Saskatchewan rural municipalities and any requests to make it so would certainly not come from SARM.
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- 78 E. Wheat et al., “Agricultural Adaptation to Drought (ADA) in Canada: The case of 2001 to 2002,” Saskatchewan Research Council, p. 2.
- 79 Dr. David Sauchyn, address delivered at “The Water Roundtable,” Regina Saskatchewan, 16 March 2010, unpublished.
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- 81 Dr. Sauchyn, *Water Roundtable*, 16 March 2010.

CONCLUSION: OBLIVION (REDUX)

1 *Report of the Royal Commission on Dominion-Provincial Relations – Saskatchewan, 1937*, hereafter the Rowell-Sirois Report, p. 39.

2 Ibid., p. 274.

3 Ibid., p. 275.

4 See Rowell-Sirois Report, Schedule A, Statement No. 12, p. 421.

5 See *ibid.* Liabilities column.

6 David Jones, *Empire of Dust: Settling and Abandoning the Prairie Drybelt* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1987), p. 169.

7 Ibid., p. 157.

8 Carl Anderson, “‘Dominion Lands’ Policy, Drought, and the Better Farming Commission,” *Saskatchewan History* 61, no. 1 (2009): 7.

9 E.W. Stapleford, “Report on Rural Relief Due to Drought Conditions and Crop Failures in Western Canada,” Canada, Department of Agriculture, 1938, p. 59.

10 Ibid., p. 60.

11 Jones, *Empire of Dust*, pp. 122–23.

12 Stapleford, “Relief,” p. 87.

13 Ibid., p. 86.

14 Ibid., p. 86.

15 Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, “Moral Standards Collapse Under Depression Strain,” 7 July 1937, p. 5

16 Stapleford, “Report on Rural Relief,” p. 86.

17 Ibid., p. 87.

18 Fred Wilkes, *They Rose from the Dust* (Saskatoon: Modern Press, 1958), p. 186.

19 David Jones, *Feasting on Misfortune: Journeys of the Human Spirit in Alberta’s Past* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1998), p. 66.

20 Ibid.

21 Rowell-Sirois Report, pp. 137 and 323.

22 Saskatchewan, Department of Agriculture, *Annual Report, 1940*, p. 107; 1945, p. 187. The RM of Big Stick had signed over 50,000 acres to the LUB; Shamrock signed over title to 22,000 acres; the largest parcel of land was signed over by the RM of Lomond located adjacent to the RM of Hart Butte: Councilmen let go of 228 quarter sections of land, or 36,480 acres. See *ibid.*, 1940, p. 108.

23 Ibid., 1945, p. 183.

24 John Archer, *Saskatchewan* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1979), 240.

25 This information was provided by Dr. Sauchyn at a meeting concerning agricultural adaptation to drought on the south plains, Saskatoon, 9 February 2010.

26 Margaret Munro, “Geologists Discover ‘footsteps’ of Dunes,” *Regina Leader-Post*, Thursday, 5 November 2009, p. B-5.

27 *Tears, Toil and Thanksgiving: the RM of Benson No. 35* (Altona, MB: Friesen, 1981), p. 869.

28 Ibid.

29 B.R. Bonsal et al., “Canadian Prairie Growing Season Precipitation Variability and Associated Atmospheric Circulation,” *Climate Research* 11 (28 April 1999): 191.

30 Ibid., p. 191.

31 See *A Dry Oasis: Institutional Adaptation to Climate on the Canadian Plains*, ed. Gregory Marchildon (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2009), p. 32.

32 Stapleford, “Report on Rural Relief,” p. 89.

33 *Memories of Cluny* (Winnipeg: InterCollegiate Press, n.d.), p. 463.

34 Ibid., p. 459.

35 Ibid., pp. 459, 465.

36 Rowell-Sirois Report, pp. 293–95.

- 37 *Captured Memories: A History of Alsask and Surrounding School District*, n.d., p. 304.
- 38 *Treasured Memories* (Burstall History Book Committee, 1983), p. 21.
- 39 *Val Echo: A History of Val Marie* (Val Marie: Val Echo, 1955), p. 25.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 *Aneroid: The Rising Barometer* (Altona, MB: Friesen, 1980). See introduction.
- 42 Ibid., p. 3.
- 43 *Harvest of Memories: RM 134 and Shamrock* (Regina: Focus Publishing, 1990), pp. 404–5.
- 44 SAB R-370, f1, Dominion Provincial Agreements.
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- 46 Wallace Stegner, *Wolf Willow: A History, a Story, and a Memory of the Last Plains Frontier* (Toronto: Penguin, 1990), p. 297.
- 47 Ibid., p. 300.
- 48 Ibid., p. 287.
- 49 *Captured Memories: A History of Alsask and Surrounding School District* (Altona, MB: Friesen, 1983), p. v.
- 50 Stegner, *Wolf Willow*, pp. 294, 305.
- 51 *Aneroid: The Rising Barometer*, p. 5.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 James Gray, *Men against the Desert* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Books, 1968), p. viii.
- 54 Ibid., p. 19.
- 55 *Harvest of Memories: RM 134 and Shamrock* (Regina: Focus Publishing, 1991), p. 338. see also entry for Keith France.
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- 57 Gray, *Men against the Desert*, p. 9.
- 58 James Gray, *Red Lights on the Prairies* (Calgary: Fifth House, 1995), p. 67.
- 59 *Captured Memories*, p. v.
- 60 Interview with Mr. Ralph Mutter, September 1, 2010
- 61 *Prairie Echoes of Hatton: A Story of Hatton and Surrounding Area* (n.p., 1983), p. v.