

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCM = Birdtail Country Museum
LAC = Library and Archives Canada
MD = Alfred Morton Diaries

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Blanche Spicer Photo Album. Christmas 1980, to Mrs. P[hyllis] Dutton. From a[sic] old friend Blanche Spicer.

Box People + Groups.

Box Birtle Scenes Park + Events.

Box Random Pictures.

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ENDNOTES

*A note on the endnotes: Shortened forms of all works cited are used below. Refer to the bibliography for the complete reference, and also to the list of the abbreviations.

Introduction

1. Abra, *View of the Birdtail*, viii.

2. Cited in Birtle History Project Committee, *Birtle Begins*, 29.

3. Simpson, *Spoils*, 254.

Section 1. Background

1. In English, the Birdtail is variously spelt Birdtail, Bird-Tail, Birdstail, Bird's-Tail, or Bird's Tail. It is noted as "Birdstail R." on Arrowsmith's 1802 map, and as "Birds Tail Rivulet" in a North West Company map in 1814 [Warkentin and Ruggles, *Historical Atlas*, 141 and 145]. As early as 1819, it appears as "Bird Tail Creek," on Peter Fidler's Map of Red River District [printed in Sutherland, *Peguis*, 72]. The term for the waterway also varies, and sources refer to the waterway as a rivulet, creek, and river. It wasn't until 1873 that 'creek' seems to have become the official designation of the tributary [Manitoba Conservation, *Geographical Names*, 27]. While "Birdtail River" appears on the sign on the Main Street Bridge, Birdtail Creek is the most commonly accepted term.

Birdtail is apparently a translation from the French name for the waterway ["The Governor-General's Tour," *Mid-Surrey Times*, September 24th, 1881], presumably "rivière Queue d'Oiseau," of Indigenous origin, and, at least in

translation, a specifically Métis place name [Rivard, “Le fond de l’Ouest,” 160].

The most popular theory for the origin of the Birdtail’s name is that promoted by Marion Abra in *A View of The Birdtail* which quotes, but does not document, an Indian legend as follows:

A band of Sioux Indians, following a herd of buffalo, camped beside a small river. The chief’s son noticed a lovely bird flying over the water. It was bright blue, and the scarlet of its breast flashed in the sun. At that moment a hawk swooped on the bird. It escaped, but a blue feather from its tail floated past the boy. He leaned over to grasp it, slipped and was drowned. When his body was recovered he was clutching the blue feather in his tiny hand. From that time the Sioux spoke of the river as the “Birdtail.” [Pages 3-4].

However, why the river would be named by the Sioux, or Dakota, is not clear. Although the Sioux had a presence in the area centuries earlier, by the early nineteenth century they had essentially withdrawn from north of the American border under pressure from the Ojibway or Ojibway and Cree, and did not return until the 1860s [Elias, *The Dakota*, 4-5, 26]. I bring this up to indicate the doubtfulness of this ‘legend’ rather than suggest that there is no Dakota influence over regional names, which certainly manifested itself after their return to the area. Hamiota and Miniota are both examples of this [Armstrong, *The Origin*, 128, 193]. Regardless, a personal conversation with Brenda Samchuk has assured me that Ray Howard, a mayor of Birtle with a special interest in its history and sense of humour, invented the story himself to add a certain mystique to Birtle’s origin. To quote Mrs. Samchuk, “We always used to joke about it” [Personal conversation with author, May 30th, 2016].

A second theory is one noted by W. Wood, postmaster of Birtle in 1905 and son of J. H. Wood, and indicates “that the name was derived from the original Native name which was descriptive of its shape, since branches of the creek at its source resemble a spreading bird’s tail” [Manitoba Conservation, *Geographical Names*, 27]. This is plausible; even if such a shape is not immediately discernible without an aerial view, the Indigenous inhabitants of Manitoba long had a good understanding of how their territory appeared when so sketched [McDougall to Howe, Pembina, Dacotah Territory, November 5th, 1869, in *Correspondence and Papers*, 18]. The bird in question may have been an Eagle, as the river was called ‘Eagles Tail

River’ by H. J. Warre when he crossed in in 1845 [Warre’s journal, volume 1, 975-978, cited in Major-Frégeau, *Overland to Oregon*, 28].

It’s also worth noting that still in the 1880s, the Birdtail Valley was famous for its waterfowl, and was one of the best places to hunt them in the province [Grant, *Historical data*, in Abra, *View of the Birdtail*, 4]. This helps to validate George Armstrong’s explanation that “[i]n former days this stream was much frequented by wild birds and the Indians gathered along its shores feathers suitable for making their head dresses” [Page 31]. When combined with accounts of settlers near Toddburn joining “the Indians of the reserve to the north [Lizard Point or Waywayseecapo]” in their annual picnics or powows on the west bank of the Birdtail, evidence of both a reason to gather feathers and a longstanding use of the valley, Armstrong’s seems like the most plausible theory available [Izora Fraser, “Solsgirth District Recollections,” in Abra, *View of the Birdtail*, 104; *The History of Solsgirth W.I.*, BCM, 68, 97].

2. Though Birtle is almost definitely a contraction of Birdtail, other explanations for the origin of the name have been circulated. Thus *Geographical Names of Manitoba*, while acknowledging that the contraction is a popular belief, presented alternate explanations, both connected to England [Page 27]. It first suggests, with support from Sylvia Doran, that the town may have been named as such because the countryside resembled that of the hamlet of Birtle in Lancashire. The English ‘Birtle’ is an apparently an evolution of ‘Bircle’ from ‘Birch Hill,’ and, Birtle’s many white poplars bear a resemblance to birch trees, which may have been plentiful in Lancashire’s Birtle. However, David Pratt sought to establish a more substantial link between the two Birtles, and was unsuccessful [BCM, 4592-13-G]. Furthermore, at Birtle’s naming its settlers were overwhelmingly from families long-established in Ontario. It wasn’t until the later 1880s, when J. S. Crawford began redirecting settlers from Winnipeg, that many families direct from England began making their homes in Birtle [Wilson, *Birtle’s Beginning*, 35]. The necessity of direct intervention may suggest that the few English settlers already present were not very involved in any kind of chain migration, further implying weak ties between Birtle and England, and thus Birtle and the English Birtle.

In a similar vein, *Geographical Names of Manitoba* continues to say that Birtle or Birtles is an old northern surname in England, and that, again quoting correspondence from Sylvia Doran, “Mrs. Pauline Birtle of the

Channel Islands in Jersey reported that her husband's father told them of a cousin who had gone to Canada and had a village named after him" [Page 27]. However, I have seen no evidence that any Mr. Birtle was ever present in Birtle, and certainly not in 1879 when the town's name emerged, when he would have had to be especially influential. It seems much more likely that the settlement's name developed independently of the Birtle family and that Pauline Birtle's third-hand account was based on either a deliberate exploitation of coincidence or a misplaced assumption of causality.

Both explanations appear to be overthinking the facts at hand. Citing correspondence in 1905 from postmaster W. Wood, the son of Birtle's first postmaster, *Geographical Names of Manitoba* goes on to specify that the settlement was going to be called St. Clair City until Birtle was chosen "because of duplication elsewhere" [Page 27]. This is echoed in *Birtle's Beginning*, where Wilson, not only a town historian but also one of its early settlers explains "The department reported there were two St. Clair's, and suggested "Birtle" as a contraction of Birdtail, which was accepted" [Page 17]. While it is possible that officials with the postal service were influenced in their suggestion by their knowledge of the English Birtle (and perhaps even a desire to avoid the more American-sounding St. Clair City), Wilson's words indicate, that the local settlers adopted Birtle primarily because it was a convenient contraction, a convenient contraction which happily also happened to sound like an English town — and indeed turned out to be one.

3. Multiple bands situated themselves at Lizard's Point, but later left to form their own reservations [Peckett, "Anishnabe Homeland," 38 and 54]. For a visual representation of the land in Manitoba ceded by numbered Treaty and the location of First Nations communities, see *First Nations and Treaty Areas in Manitoba*, map, Ottawa: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2010, from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada website, <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100020576/1100100020578>, accessed July 26th, 2016.

4. Some doubt has been cast on the existence of this Fort. This is largely because there do not seem to be any written records from or of the Fort, while the proof of its existence lies on its presence on a number of maps. See the Fort Birdstail file [BCM, Miscellaneous Research Scraps: Places/Localities], and the "Detailed Summary" and "Discussion of Conclusions" enclosed, which concludes that the Fort most likely did exist, with an uncertain operational period or periods. See also the "Fort Birdstail" entry in *Geographical Names of Manitoba*, which suggests a period of operation

from c.1830 to c.1865 [Page 83]. Certainly, Fort Birdstail was not particularly important in terms of the area's forts. Thus while it is mentioned in the index of Coues, *The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry* [Page 949], with an explanation of its connection to the name of the town, it strangely does not appear in the text indexed; likewise, the name does not appear on the cairn erected on the site of Fort Ellice in 1937, which lists Fort Esperance (1783), Cuthbert Grant House (1793), Montagne la Bosse (1794), and Beaver House (1817) as being eventually replaced by Fort Ellice [a picture of the plaque can be found in *Wandering in Wattsvie*, 69]. At the same time, if the *Geographical Names of Manitoba* is right to say that Fort Birdstail closed around 1865, Fort Ellice, which was initially built in 1831 then moved in 1862, could not have been built to replace it, and so Fort Birdstail would not appear on the cairn. At the end of the day, I do think it reasonable to maintain that the fort existed, if only as a temporary winter post, though nothing else about it is known.

5. Dating to the eighteenth century, the weblike Carlton Trail, with a name fluctuating with one's destination, was probably initially associated with buffalo hunts [Abra, *View of the Birdtail*, 10]. For more on Red River Cart routes, see Brehaut, "The Red River Cart."

As for the cart trail's relation to the Birtle spring, see "*Passing It On*", 4-5. Multiple references can be found as to the Birdtail Crossing's being used as a camp site, such as in the *Manitoba Free Press*, September 2nd, 1876, page 2. Also of interest is that an expedition stopping at the Birdtail Creek in 1862 claimed to have discovered gold,

but not in quantities that would pay the working. Further on a little, they "prospected" again, and found some gold—in small quantities. Samples of gold found at Bid-Tail Creek have been forwarded to this Settlement, we are told; we received none ourselves. Is it not wonderful that there should be gold on this side of Fort Ellice?" ["Local Intelligence: News from the Gold-Seekers," *Nor'-Wester*, July 23rd, 1862, page 2]

The Birdtail Crossing quickly became the subject of booster pieces, as Wilson wrote in *Birtle's Beginning*,

The main Winnipeg-Edmonton Trail crossing of the Birdtail got a double share of boosting. It's[sic] sparkling waters, famous spring and camping grounds, was heralded by both base line and sectioning parties, the river crossing and spring being only a

short distance from a base iron stake which was that season's limit for section survey. [Page 1].

Thus a correspondent of the *Manitoba Free Press* reported in 1880 that "Many excellent springs of water are to be found at the foot of the hills all along the valley" [An Observer, "Birdtail Creek," May 21st, 1880, page 1]. A correspondent again wrote in the next month, noting that

At the foot of this bank there are some of the finest springs in the North-West and as good as any in the world. Mr. Wood's house is built on the bluff just above one of these, and a beautiful terrace leading from the underground story to the spring is a walk of more than ordinary beauty [More Anon, "Birtle: Its Progress and Prospects," June 25th, 1880, page 1].

So the springs or spring featured prominently in Birtle's booster literature, and the one we think of as The Spring would seem to be the one specifically mentioned.

6. The trail then left the valley in a southeast direction. This conclusion was arrived at by the Birtle History Project Committee, and opposes the conventional interpretation, which would have the trail follow the first fairway of the Birtle Golf Course, given that there are distinct undulations left from some earlier track there. This was more likely a branch line of the main trail, and may have even been made subsequent to the settling of Birtle on account of the presence of the Land Office, which made Birtle a nexus of the cart trail network. For this, and a discussion of some of these branch trails, see *Wandering in Wattsview*, 7-8.

7. While Fort Ellice was not yet "catering for settlers trade" in the winter of 1879-1880, as E. J. Wilson wrote in *Birtle's Beginning*, its "large stock for Indian trade" allowed settlers to procure many useful goods [Page 10]. Already on April 14th of 1879, for example, Alfred Morton, Birtle's first settler, recorded buying a pair of steers, twenty pounds of pemmican, and a substantial amount of potatoes at Fort Ellice [MD]. The next year, Morton noted that Chief Factor MacDonald had bought almost all the grain within 40 miles, and sold barley at \$1.50 per bushel [MD: March 30th, 1880]. The same year, Fort Ellice was selling farming implements such as "breaking ploughs 26 to 30 dollars" [MD: April 12th, 1880] and was part of local supply chains because steamboats going up the Assiniboine would land equipment there [MD: Mary 12th, 1880, although apparently in that case it never came, July 23rd, 1880].

8. The inspiration to petition the government to have Manitoba's western boundary extended to include the settlers living in the area emerged from a New Year's Eve party at Fort Ellice [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 20-21]. It was also a favourite campaigning spot for regional politicians such as Major C. A. Boulton. The significance of Fort Ellice fell drastically in the latter half of the 1880s after the Manitoba and North Western Railway chose to avoid it [Baird, "Memories," 22-23; 26].

Also worth mentioning is that Fort Ellice had been chosen by the federal government as one of the early Northwest Mounted Police posts, but its location proved unsuitable and the time it acted as such was negligible [Kuhn, *Tributes*, 14]. Fort Ellice was also on the mail route, and early Birtle mail could be picked up either there or in Shoal Lake [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 9].

9. Between the C.P.R. and the Manitoba & Northwestern both bypassing the fort, "Fort Ellice's future as a distribution centre was lost forever ... 1890 trade at Fort Ellice had declined to such an extent that the establishment was sold to the Company's storekeeper." In 1909, the Grand Trunk Railway eventually came to St. Lazare, but at that time the remaining Fort Ellice buildings were sold again. In 1930, cognizant of the site's importance, locals began raising funds for a cairn, which was unveiled on June 10th, 1935 [Ruth Meldrum, "Fort Ellice," in *Ellice: 1883-1983*, 20-21].

In private hands for many years, the Fort Ellice site is now owned by the Nature Conservancy of Canada.

10. Holling, *The Awakening*, 41.

11. Shoal Lake History Book Committee, *Ripples on the Lake*, 6. For early mail service, see Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 9, and Alfred Morton's diary entries of January 19th, 1879 and April 26th, 1879. For one of the most prominent examples of retired policemen's who took up scrip near Birtle and then greatly contributed to it, look to James Crerar, who opened the first store in Birtle when he moved his from Shoal Lake [More Anon, "Birtle: Its Progress and Prospects," *Manitoba Free Press*, June 25th, 1880, page 1]. He would go on to become the Warden of Shoal Lake County and first Reeve of the RM of Birtle.

Another benefit accrued to Birtle's settlers were infrastructure projects undertaken by the NWMP. In 1879, for example, Morton records that they built a bridge across the Birdtail [MD: April 1st-3rd, 1879].

12. Meyer, *History of the Santee Sioux*, 80-87, 115; Elias, *The Dakota*, 17-18 and 26-27; Laird to Dufferin, January 21st, 1876, Indian Affairs Annual Report for 1875. I should note that because they were considered refugees and “American Indians” [Simpson to Howe, November 3, 1871, in Indian Affairs Annual Report for 1871], the Sioux were not signatories to the numbered treaties, as HBC, British, and then Canadian officials did not consider they had valid claims to land in Canada.

13. Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 26-27; Hasselstrom, “The Birdtail Sioux,” unpublished, BCM, 17-20. Similarly, an inspector reported of the Birdtail Sioux:

These Indians were chiefly absent, being employed by settlers in hunting gophers, from which they earn a good deal. They also earn money by carting wood, and working in and around the town of Birtle. Their fields were fairly clear of weeds, but owing to so many being absent, some of the fields were run over with them. The cattle, sheep and horses were in good condition. [Alexander McGibbon to Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Saskatchewan Landing, Assiniboia, November 25th, 1887, in *Sessional Papers, Volume 13. Second session of the sixth parliament of the Dominion of Canada, Session 1888*, page 170].

He also noted also noted the integration into the settler economy: “The women make a number of articles which they sell in Birtle, such as mitts, moccasins, knitted work, baskets, &c., and some of the men earn money by working for the white settlers” [Alex McGibbon to Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, Regina, N.W.T., November 6th, 1888, in *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs*, 1887, 163]. The Anishnabe at Lizard Point or Waywayseecapo First Nation engaged in similar activity: “Some of the band work for settlers; others make beadwork and baskets, which they sell in Birtle” [ibid, 165].

14. In 1878, Lawrence Herchmer was appointed the Farming Instructor to the Sioux at the Birdtail and Oak River (now Sioux Valley) reserves and though he was supposed to base himself off the larger Oak River reserve, he instead located to the Birdtail reserve [Report of the Privy Council to Macdonald, October 5th, 1878; Herchmer to Buckingham, November 4, 1878; and Privy Council to Macdonald, December 20, 1878, all in “Birtle Agency—Personnel File on Mr. Lawrence Herchmer, Agent at the Birdtail Creek and Oak River (Sioux) Reserves. 1878-1895,” LAC, MIKAN

2061585]. His personal connections — Herchmer’s father was a close personal friend of John A. Macdonald, both the Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior — saw him promoted to Indian Agent responsible for a very wide area in 1882 [Satzewich, “Patronage,” 221]. The nearby town of Birtle was selected as the site of the Indian Agency; had Herchmer located to the Oak River reserve as he was supposed to, Birtle would not have been a contender for the Agency. While this was all good for the town of Birtle, Herchmer’s personality was better suited for his later position as NWMP Commissioner, although even there it was criticized.

Section 2. Pioneers

1. At the time of Confederation, the Northwest was ostensibly under HBC rule but shortly thereafter was transferred to Canada. While Manitoba was founded in 1870, the Birtle area remained in the Northwest Territory.

The first train into St. Boniface from the United States arrived on December 9th, 1878, allowing for the Manitoba boom of 1880-1882 [Jackson, *The Centennial History*, 120-121]. The very earliest settlers in Birtle would not have been able to take advantage of this, and Alfred Morton, for example, instead had to take a boat up the Red River from the United States [Morton Diary entries of May 14th through May 22nd, 1878]. Nevertheless, the basic route was the same. Until the completion of the portion of the Canadian Pacific Railway north of the Great Lakes, a typical route was to take a boat over Lake Superior to Duluth, and then to head north from Minnesota.

2. My two groups, the independent homesteads and H&NCS settlers, should be compared with Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 37-39. Wilson distinguishes between three groups of people coming out from Stratford, one bunch who ended up near Souris; the bunch who were aiming for Birtle; and “free lances, mostly mechanics with their tool kits along” including Wilson himself. Among the group he says Cumming and Sharman deserve special attention, suggesting that whatever connection Cumming had to the H&NCS it seems to have been soon severed.

3. Morton began preparing to relocate in the autumn of 1877 [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 5]. His driving motivation seems to have been to acquire more land. Wilson provides a clue as to that, by stating that he sold his old farm of 50 acres prior to relocating. Morton’s new homestead in the

Northwest Territories gave him 160 acres for minimal administration fees and residency requirements, which doubled to 320 acres once he'd secured an adjacent quarter section as a pre-emption. He would also later register for a second homestead and pre-emption he had no intention of living on [MD: September 15th, 1882]. That he had no intention of living on it is demonstrated by not too long afterwards signing a petition to abolish the residency requirements of the homesteading law. Morton was a good businessman, and his diaries are full of sales he made, and money he loaned out, always at interest.

4. John Richardson and Andrew Bissett accompanied Morton on the trip and also took out homesteads, even pooling their resources as demonstrated when Morton recorded buying out the shares of the other two in a yoke they had collectively bought on their arrival in the Northwest in May 1878 [MD: November 26th, 1880]. Nevertheless, Morton was clearly the instigator of the project and is buried in Birtle, while Richardson and Bissett eventually moved away [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 5; 7].

Morton's civic spirit was clear as he was involved in a number of Birtle organizations including the town's first Sunday School (non-denominational), Agricultural Society, debating society, the school district, and the local cheese factory [MD: July 24th, 1881; September 3rd, 1881; December 6th, 1881; December 23rd, 1881; and August 3rd, 1887]. Furthermore, because his farm fell within the limits of the Town of Birtle, he was able to be active with that corporation, and served as Secretary-Treasurer of the Town Council for nineteen years [Abra, *View of the Birdtail*, 55].

His love of his new location manifested itself in verse in 1895, in a poem commonly attributed to him entitled "Valley of Birtle," the many verses of which evoke everything Morton loved about his new community from the natural beauty of the location and town and the joy he could feel there despite personal tragedy, to the pride he took in its society and civic arrangements: a lack of poverty and begging, its strict temperance laws, an impartial but lenient local justice system, the local education system, and the local churches, each verse concluding with the couplet "Beautiful valley, handwork divine / No earth spot more sacred may ever be mine" [Alfred Morton, "Valley of Birtle (Manitoba)," in "The Party Line," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 29th, 1967, page 1].

5. J. J. Morton, an Anglican clergyman, was a missionary in the area instrumental in the establishment of St. George's in Birtle, but left the

settlement to pursue another call [Abra, *View of the Birdtail*, 154-155]. Samuel Morton, on the other hand, was an active and long-lived local farmer, but he died a bachelor. Alfred's descendants through his daughters Florence and Agnes continued to reside in Birtle for some time, and still have a special connection to the town [Ibid, 276-277, 356; the author also had the privilege to help facilitate an evening of sharing memories of Birtle in the summer of 2015 at the Birdtail Country Museum, attended by three of Alfred's descendants].

As for Alfred's other children, a daughter is buried next to the two sons under the Morton oak tree, all having died at a young age [Ibid, 17]. Perhaps the most tragic was his son Alfred, who made it through both the journey from Ontario and most of the winter of 1878-79 only to die on April 2nd, 1879. Northwest Mounted Policemen who were temporarily lodging with Morton at the time made the coffin and assisted with the burial [MD: April 1st through 3rd, 1879]. Morton's homestead was on section 31, Township 16, Range 26 ["Corner Stone Enclosure Makes Interesting Reading," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 15th, 1973, page 1], which he expanded southwards with a pre-emption to gain title to a whole half-section ["Map of Shoal Lake County, 1882," BCM 294-84-G].

6. "Park Dedication Well Attended on Sunday," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 29th, 1967, page 1. The ceremony, which included the official opening of Morton Drive, was attended by descendants of the Morton family. Alfred Webb, who had been acquainted with Alfred Morton, unveiled the marker at the park entrance.

7. The H&NCS was founded in Stratford at a meeting on May 21st in Hamilton, with word reaching Manitoba four days later ["Telegraphic. Special Dispatches to the Free Press. Ottawa. North-Westward, Ho!" *Manitoba Free Press*, May 25th, 1878, page 4]. Interestingly, the names reported in the *Free Press* (which got it from the *Hamilton Sentinel*) as having been selected as directors do not compare to the circular which was eventually sent to the Department of the Interior: Mr. M. Richardson, was permanent chairman, John Smith, who was apparently an "emigrant agent" was made the secretary-treasurer, and the executive committee was filled by W. Douglas, George Butley, T. D. Harrison, Joseph Vanduzen, and John Anderson. Only Douglas, Smith and Harrison really came up again in reference to the colonization effort, and in relatively minor capacities ["Hamilton's Idea," *Manitoba Free Press*, May 31st, 1878, pages 1-2].

8. Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 8; 1878 circular "The North-West Colonization Society" LAC. MIKAN 1470803. The implications of the nature of this plan were recognized by Stanley Holling [*The Awakening*, 40]. For a discussion on the connection of old-school Toryism and prairie socialism, see Nelson Wiseman, *In Search of Canadian Political Culture* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007).

The official motivations of the H&NCS as listed in correspondence with the Department of the Interior were not about profits, but about counteracting American boosters who were successfully redirecting many Ontarian migrants en route to the Canadian Northwest south of the border [John Smith to Cunningham Day, Deputy Minister of the Interior, November 9th, 1878, and John S. Crawford et al. to Minister of the Interior, December 19th, 1878, LAC. MIKAN 1470803]. While the terms with the H&NCS did give its directors a certain amount of land for establishing a set amount of settlers, this was used for a town plot, which Society settlers were to have free lots in.

That is not to say that the directors did not stand to benefit from the arrangement. It allowed them to profit from government patronage in the form of appointments, which would be required with an increased population and government involvement. Wilson noted that stranded candidates from the 1878 election cast their eyes westwards [*Birtle's Beginning*, 7-8], where an expanding federal presence meant greater patronage opportunities. Wilson probably had J. H. Wood in mind specifically. Wood was previously an unsuccessful federal candidate in Ontario who, when learning that he would not receive the promised Birtle Land Office, angrily wrote to Macdonald, outlining over his significant political service for the Conservatives, and noting a rationale for having coming west: "I came out to this country knowing that openings were few in Ontario and that there would be many positions in which I could serve the government..." [Wood to Macdonald, January 1st, 1880, LAC MIKAN 547645].

Furthermore, bringing settlers out also meant a market captive to the early businesses they started. Certainly J. S. Crawford, J. H. Wood, and D. W. Cumming, the three directors listed in the circular who remained in the Birtle area, came out with a certain amount of social, political, and financial capital, and all made out well for themselves; and Holling thought this a prime motivator: "Here was an opportunity to be in at the start of a tremendous new development encompassing virgin territories of almost unlimited extent" [Holling, *The Awakening*, 40].

However, there were more direct benefits as well; Cumming seems to have severed his involvement with the Society at an early date, to the point that E. J. Wilson considered him an independent migrant unaffiliated with the Society [*Birtle's Beginning*, 37-39]. Wood and Crawford however, the last two standing Society directors, whose functions seem to have disappeared along with the Society shortly after the arrival of the land agent [on October 25th, Crawford wrote to Macdonald noting that both he and Wood were out of work, and suggesting the two of them for government offices, with Wood for Birtle land agent: Crawford to Macdonald, Hamilton, October 25th, 1880 LAC MIKAN 537014], had the Society's ownership of the townsite personally vested in them, as reported as early as two days after Belch arrived. Thus one correspondent wrote: "I believe the town plot is now in possession of Messrs. Wood and Crawford" [Eugene A. Teeling, "Birtle, N. W. T. Its Progress and Its Prospects," June 30th, 1880, reprinted from the *Hamilton Spectator* in the *Manitoba Free Press*, July 22nd, 1880, page 1]. Similarly, "Corner Stone Enclosure Makes Interesting Reading" noted that the section on which the Stone School stood "was selected for the Company and soon after became the property of Mr. Wood and Mr. John S. Crawford by patent from the Crown" [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 15th, 1873, page 1]. J. H. Wood would later testify to this in front of a House of Commons committee in 1885: though he claimed that he was not much of a speculator, he did sell town lots, and owned much of the town of Birtle: "I own a considerable portion of it. Mr. Crawford and I got a section where Birtle is now situated. We bought another section, with a view of making something on it, and we are now offering it for sale" [Testimony of H. Wood, Ottawa, March 18th, 1885, in "Report of the Select Standing Committee on Immigration and Colonization" (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co, 1885), 54].

They continued to jointly carry out the responsibilities first assumed by the whole Society, however. When a Dominion Land Surveyor surveyed the town plot and certified a copy of a map of it in December of 1880, the copy was "Prepared for Messrs. Wood & Crawford" ["Copy of Plan of the Town Plot of Birtle Township No 17, Range No 26 West Manitoba" in Tyman, *By Section*, 96]. Furthermore, whereas Wood was the Society agent in Birtle from the beginning, after Crawford arrived in 1880 it would seem that they shared an office [MD: December 24th, 1881]. While Wood and Crawford would presumably continue to honour the terms the Society had reached with settlers when it came to town lots, they were thus also able to benefit from rising land values in land sales to non-Society members. Furthermore, as

Wilson noted, in 1880 Wood, had “map-surveyed section 5, adjoining the embryo town of Birtle,” then gone east on a lecture tour extolling the west “and incidentally found purchasers for hundreds of said lots” [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 28-29]. This did begin to backfire after the incorporation of the Town of Birtle, as taxes levied on all their spare land punished any speculative tendencies, as the land was as likely to be a financial burden as a benefit. Nevertheless, and despite Wood's 1885 assertion, they were indeed speculating on land, and it should be remembered that all of their efforts on behalf of the town and surrounding area, to bring in settlers and various services, notably Crawford's efforts with the railway, was at the same time going to enrich them. Motivated by wanting to turn a profit should not, however, take away from the official rationale under which the H&NCS had advertised itself. Their plan was aimed not only at individual accretion of wealth, but also at economically refashioning a land in the image of the loyalist Ontario whence they'd come.

9. The Society had sent delegates out to the Northwest to select land before proposing their scheme to the federal government. The delegates had been originally been attracted/made aware of the Birtle area and its resources by the NWMP detachment at Shoal Lake. Indeed, Holling wrote that they'd been led to this area “because of the encouraging survey reports and enthusiastic reports from members of the R.C.M.P. detachment at Shoal Lake. The delegates reported that the quality of the land could not be excelled and there was a good supply of water and timber for all purposes, including fuel” [*The Awakening*, 41].

The three delegates dispatched to the Northwest were Thomas Wilson and Whitfield Douglas, directors of the Society when the circular was issued, and T. D. Harrison, who'd been elected to the executive committee of the Society at its founding meeting on May 21st, 1878 [“Hamilton's Idea,” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 31st, 1878, page 2]. The delegates seem to have done their job well, because Wood selected the town site the day after his arrival [MD: May 18th-19th, 1879].

10. Memorandum, Ref. 16634, John A. Macdonald, Department of the Interior, Ottawa, February 10th, 1879, LAC MIKAN 1470805; 1878 circular “The North-West Colonization Society” LAC MIKAN 1470803; Tyman, *By Section*, 94-95.

The townships selected for the H&NCS reserve were Tp 17 Rg 24, Tp 17 Rg 25, and Tp 17 R 26. The reserve meant that, while half of the sections, as

in all other townships, were reserved to railway companies, the other sections were open to independent homesteaders and Society members. The ‘reserve’ part was that non-homesteaders were forbidden from purchasing the land or applying bounty entry for it [Lindsay Russell to Donald Codd, Winnipeg, April 18th, 1879, MIKAN 1470803]. As for the sections of land granted to the H&NCS, they were used as the town sites.

The Conservative party was newly elected to office, and the HNWCS was carrying out its activities while the government was still in a transitory phase. Thus Macdonald, who served as his own Minister of the Interior, had only taken over about a month before his first dealings with the Society, and it is reasonable for him to have permitted the H&NCS to continue its activities under the previous administration's rules — because among other things, Macdonald was allowing Society settlers who signed up as such before August 1st, 1879 to act under the older land regulations, which they had been planning around. However, those “in actual occupation” of land after that date fell under the newer regulations, “Hamilton Colonists not excepted.” [“Copy of Memo by S. General written at Dom. Land Office, Little Saskatchewan, 24 Oct/79,” MIKAN 1470805]. Independent homesteaders, who if in actual possession of land before the cut-off date they were still eligible under the old rules [Ibid], did not have this Society advantage.

Other perks for those settling with the Society included help finding land and being resettled more generally, though most of the unlisted perks were simply the various benefits of group settlement, such as having handy neighbours and the potential for an immediate local market which could attract helpful businesses.

The town lot, advertised in the circular, was a more Society-specific perk. A town lot gave settlers the potential of spending more of the winter in town nearer places of entertainment while still fulfilling the residency requirements of homesteading laws. Others took advantage of special rail fares to return to Ontario for the winter [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 33]. Still, the town lots gave Society settlers a direct financial interest in the longterm prosperity of the settlement. It was also an unusual practice, so that the Deputy Minister of the Interior would later chastise J. H. Wood for advertising that the colonization plan had government support and also talking about town plots: “Now, you did wrong to publish a statement of that kind, because as you are aware the Government has no intention of

establishing any such town plot. / Should the promoter of your scheme become entitled to a section under the arrangement proposed, it is *for them* to make such a disposition of that section as they make think proper, but certainly the Government can have no possible control over the same” [Deputy Minister of the Interior to J. H. Wood, Department of the Interior, Ottawa, April 2nd, 1879, MIKAN 1470805]. Still, Wood maintained that part of the plan notes that “we guarantee them a lot in one of our town plots” for the Company entry fee [J. H. Wood to the Right Hon. Minister of the Interior, April 20th, 1880, MIKAN 1470805]]. The lots would be 1/5 of an acre [Wood to Lindsay Russell, May 8th, 1880]. The plan to give out free lots was thus up to the Society and its successors alone without any federal involvement, which had advantages for the town later. And the Society did indeed carry out this plan, as demonstrated in a letter from Birtle smacking of boosterism: “The wise policy of the Hamilton and North-Western Colonization Company in giving each of the settlers an interest in the town plot is now admitted by all, and the result is that the village of Birtle is bounding forward in its building operations in a very cheering manner” [Eugene A. Teeling, “Birtle, N. W. T. Its Progress and Its Prospects,” June 30th, 1880, reprinted from the *Hamilton Spectator* in the *Manitoba Free Press*, July 22nd, 1880, page 1].

Claimed homesteads could be declared vacant without sufficient proof of occupancy and residency. The great advantage of the conditional land entry, therefore, was that settlers could come out to the area, pick out the land they wanted, and go back home for their families before settling on their new homesteads, without the risk of someone else taking over the land they wanted in their absence. That was a real possibility, as speculators could register a homestead or just buy unseen land from a great distance.

11. One sign of a lack of communication was that the Surveyor General was forced to request authority from the Deputy Minister to send two surveyors to the Society townships “with all possible despatch” due to the a large number of Society settlers in Winnipeg who were planning to squat on their reserve even though it had not yet been surveyed [Memorandum from Lindsay Russell to J. S. Dennis, Ottawa, April 24th, 1879, MIKAN 1470805]. The area he wanted surveyed (“Townships 17 and 18, Range 23 to 26, inclusive”) was not restricted to the three townships secured by the H&NCS, but stretched further east and north, demonstrating the early development of places such as Toddburn [see also Wilson, *Birtle’s Beginning*, 11]. A note date February 2nd, 1880, noted that the land agent

Codd had not been told about the deal with the H&NCS earlier “for some good reason no doubt, probably awaiting Copmy’s acceptance of the terms proposed” [in LAC MIKAN 1470803].

That first group of Society settlers in Winnipeg was just as surprised that Ottawa hadn’t communicated to officials in the Northwest as the officials themselves were. Donald Codd, a Dominion Land Agent, was forced to ask for details of the scheme from the Surveyor General [Donald Codd to Lindsay Russell, April 17th, 1879, Winnipeg, MIKAN 1470805]. The Surveyor General’s response, though explaining the location and nature of the Society’s open reserve, which was to be exempted from sale or bounty entry but not from genuine homesteaders, neglected to mention the right for conditional land entries [Lindsay Russell to Donald Codd, Winnipeg, April 18th, 1879, MIKAN 1470803]. This became a major issue later, “as the Dom. Land agents were not made aware of the percise[sic] arrangements made between our company and the government a certain uneasiness bordering on distrust has arisen in the minds of some of our colonists on being informed by the local agents that their claims would only be respected for two months” [J. H. Wood to J. S. Dennis, July 14th, 1879, Ottawa]. A whole year after the arrival of Society settlers in the Northwest, the right to conditional land entries was still being denied by both Donald Codd and a Mr. Fisher, the Land Agent based out of the Little Saskatchewan Land Office. Fisher was particularly problematic for the Society and Wood in particular, as his refusal to acknowledge conditional land entries stirred up Society settlers who began “making it pretty warm for me as agent of the company” [Letter from J. H. Wood to Right Honourable Minister of the Interior, April 20th, 1880, Birtle]. Fisher told settlers the Society did not exist, and further told those who had built on the land selected as a town plot, which already had many individual improvements, that they could register it as a normal homestead; and this was attempted. Fisher, who was clearly never given the details of the H&NCS, was also communicating faulty information to Society settlers still in Ontario. Wood was forced to plead with Macdonald: “This is a most embarrassing position and while it is our earnest desire to give the Minister as little annoyance as possible we think it only bare justice that the agents should be instructed at once by telegram of the arrangements we have with the Department...” [J. H. Wood to Minister of the Interior, May 10th, 1880].

12. The main instigator of the troubles was S. W. Chambers, a Society settler [Tyman, *By Section*, 232], who was one of those who had settled on the town

plot. He had arrived with J. H. Wood on May 18th, 1879, and the next day “Sec. 6-17-26 selected by J. Ho. Wood as a town site” [MD: May 18th-19th, 1879].

Chambers had himself tried to take out a homestead on part of 6-17-26, and Wood assured him that the Society townships were reserved from scrip. However, despite Codd’s clear instructions to the same effect, it fell through the cracks, and Chambers’ selected homestead was scripped out from under him [S. W. Chambers to the Minister of the Interior, January 2nd, 1880, MIKAN 1470805]. While Wood came to his defence [J. H. Wood to J. S. Dennis, Deputy Minister of the Interior, January 20th, 1880], there was also the lingering issue that Wood had claimed all of section 6 as a town plot, which Chambers may not have been aware of. Not only did Chambers have problems with scrip because the Society’s terms weren’t sufficiently known, he also had a problem with the Society’s terms themselves, which made him clash directly with Wood. On March 31st, it would seem that settlers finally took up the legitimacy of the Society and its alleged terms with Wood, and Chambers made it clear that he intended to the east half of section 6 and forbade Wood from taking timber from it [MD: March 31st, 1880]. The next day, Chambers borrowed Alfred Morton’s horse and departed for a land office to figure out what was going on [MD: April 1st, 1880], where the agent rejected the existence of the Society. On April 6th, with no solution in sight and with the full force of an authoritative statement by a Dominion Land Agent, he wrote to the Minister of the Interior, accusing Wood of “wilfully defrauding” settlers by telling them they could make conditional entries and that certain townships were reserved to the “so-called colonization society.” Among many complaints, some legitimate and caused by poor communication on the part of the Department of the Interior, others false products of a rumour-mill and fed by that lack of communication, he noted that Wood claimed the whole section while Chambers had himself settled and improved half of it, which he was therefore entitled to under the homesteading laws [S. W. Chambers to Minister of the Interior, April 6th, 1880, MIKAN 1470805]. The land agent had also apparently told Chambers that, if he got “the consent of the others who had built on our town plot he might enter it as s homestead notwithstanding the fourth clause of the Departmental letter of the 13th February 1879. This has actually been attempted and the result is a general distrust in the standing of the company” [J. H. Wood to Minister of the Interior, May 10th, 1880], that is to say, Chambers was trying to take the land out from under Wood because he’d

been convinced the whole plan was a con. He was back in Birtle on April 9th, and Alfred Morton noted how bad these had gotten: “Terrible times—war between Wood and Chambers”[MD: April 9th, 1880]. Chambers organized a public meeting which denounced Wood in a number of resolutions, one noting that he had “rendered himself particularly obnoxious to the people.” The meeting forwarded its proceedings to the Minister, asking for information and an investigation into the Society [MD: April 17th, 1880: “At a meeting of the settlers of this district held here this evening for the purpose of enquiring into the proceedings of the Hamilton and North West Col. Society and for the business of general importance”; “Resolutions,” in John Patterson, secretary, to Minister of the Interior, Birtle, N. W. T., April 17th, 1880]. The fourth resolution noted that Wood had taken money from them for land, promising to make entries for them in the Land Office but had not done so. Wood probably had indeed collected their money and kept track of their homesteads not only for Society records, but also because he had come out west with the understanding that he would shortly be appointed land agent at the settlement [Wood to Macdonald, January 1st, 1880, LAC MIKAN 547645], and he would have been perfectly able to then ensure that the Society’s terms were successfully met and also to enter Society settler land claims. The incongruity of the chief agent’s of a privileged Society being the chief local agent of the federal agency with which that Society did business does not seem to have occurred to him, or that such a conflict of interest was a little too blatant even for Sir John A. Macdonald.

Wood’s account of that meeting asserts that “The meeting was called by an individual who framed all the resolutions and afterwards got many names attached to one of them praying for a land office to be established here and then I am informed attached the said names to all of the resolutions. I called on the Secretary and Chairman of the meeting for a copy or even a sight of the resolutions — I was not at the meeting - but was refused either. You will of course know how much value to attach to such. I merely mention the facts” [J. H. Wood to the Right Hon. Minister of the Interior, April 20th, 1880]. Two days later, a counter-meeting was organized for the H&NCS, which Morton noted for its “Warm discussion” [MD: April 19th, 1880].

13. Alfred Morton, for example, was the first person to sign the proceedings of the April 17th meeting condemning Wood, with his signature appearing even before Chambers’, who signed second [John Patterson, secretary, to Minister of the Interior, Birtle, N. W. T., April 17th, 1880]. This may have been an act of subterfuge on the part of Chambers, however, as Wood

continued to claim that “I have every reason to believe that the names attached to the same were surreptitiously obtained, the parties signing them being under the impression they were signing a petition for a land office at Birtle” alone rather than whole gamut of resolutions [Wood to Minister of the Interior, May 28th, 1880]. Morton certainly doesn’t seem to have held anything against the Society settlers, if unsure about the Society; on May 4th, for example, he helped the “Shakespeare crowd” choose homesteads [MD: May 4th, 1880].

There was already some tension between Wood and the independent homesteaders, particularly away from the main base of Wood's operations in Birtle. East towards Shoal Lake, for instance, Wood came out and was claimed to have been telling settlers to pay the H&NCS membership fee in addition to the normal fees for homesteads and preemptions, lest they risk losing their land [A. R. McDougall to John A. Macdonald, Minister of the Interior, January 24th, 1880]. Wood denied that he had solicited the membership fee from independent settlers [J. H. Wood to Surveyor General, Birtle, May 5th, 1880], and that he had wished only “to get the number of their section, so that we might not locate another on the same” [Wood to Lindsay Russell, May 8th, 1880].

However, the man whose name had been attached to the accusation by the Department of the Interior, either through subterfuge by Chambers or more likely a departmental mix-up, that Wood had solicited membership fees denied it, noting that “I may also add that I have good reason to believe that some person or persons have been using my name without my knowledge as I have by the last mail received a letter from the department of the Interior purporting to be a reply to one written by me of which I have no knowledge whatever” [John Flynn to J. H. Wood, enclosed in Wood to Minister of the Interior, May 28th, 1880].

14. While Wood seems to have had a land office in the settlement promised by Macdonald prior to having come out to locate the townsite, it would not have been the first muddled promise from Macdonald, and while it maybe have already been in the works, the fact that an agent was not to be appointed until six months after the first report of mass confusion [Memorandum from Lindsay Russell to J. S. Dennis, Ottawa, April 24th, 1879, file 16046; Wood to Macdonald, January 1st, 1880, LAC MIKAN 547645] suggests that the Birtle Land Office was a response to it. Further suggesting this is the fact that the boundaries of the new land districts were not made apparent to Belch

at his appointment but more that a month after he had made it to Birtle and a map of his district in the mail [Letter from A. J. Belch to the Surveyor General, Birtle, July 24th, 1880]. To further prove the hurriedness of the appointment, Belch was still not entirely familiar with the Society terms, and as late as November had to ask for special instructions regarding the rights claimed by Society settlers to enter for pre-emptions at a dollar an acre [A. J. Belch to Surveyor General, Birtle, November 15th, 1880]. I should also note that it is possible that Belch had been given the information earlier but was simply incompetent, as Wood complained that many of those who had been given federal appointments over his head were “confessedly unfit for the situation,” and Belch’s was the appointment that Wood had coveted [Wood to Macdonald, Birtle, March 15th, 1881, LAC MIKAN 534545].

The motivation of the federal government aside, getting a land agency was certainly widely seen in the new settlement as the solution to its problems. J. H. Wood, for example, recommended that it be established more than once, suggesting himself for the position [J. H. Wood to J. S. Dennis, July 4th, 1879; J. H. Wood to J. S. Dennis, January 22nd, 1880], although his unwilling position as an antagonist in the debate as the agent of the Society whose terms were causing the trouble, made this an unlikely appointment. Likewise, many of the Society settlers and some of the independent homesteaders were drawn into the Chambers-Wood dispute because they thought they were signing a petition to get a land office, presumably to help clear up the mess they were discussing at that meeting, and to ensure their own land titles [J. H. Wood to Minister of the Interior, May 28th, 1880].

15. Belch arrived on June 28th [MD: June 28th, 1880]. Between Belch’s and Crawford’s arrivals, the tension was reported as having dispersed within two days [Eugene A. Teeling, “Birtle, N. W. T. Its Progress and Its Prospects,” June 30th, 1880, reprinted from the Hamilton *Spectator* in the *Manitoba Free Press*, July 22nd, 1880, page 1]. Teeling had noted that there had only been two really dissatisfied parties. These were Chambers and Benjamin Dutton, as Wilson explained, and much of the tension involved had been caused by the weather, as new would-be settlers were unable to select homesteads and got increasingly frustrated:

In the early spring of 1880 the settlement’s claim was ruffled by a feud which was furious the few weeks it lasted. S. W. Chambers and Ben Dutton squatted on section 5 for which no survey was in. The Hamilton Colonization Company claimed it

along with section 6 as the town site. Chambers transferred to the East half of section 6, claiming priority as the first family actually living on it. Scores of new arrivals had paid the Company's \$10.00 fee, many of them an additional \$10.00 to enter homesteads in advance. Choice quarters in Company townships all being taken, they had to seek elsewhere, blamed J. H. Wood, the company's local agent, and naturally lined up with the Chambers faction. Homesteaders of the previous year backed Wood.

Spring breakup blocked land seeking for a couple weeks with the result of daily indignation meetings, making a mountain out of a mole hill. These culminated on March 31st in a joint meeting in the Orphan's Home. Mr. Cummings, a neutral, filled the chair. Speeches, in bitterness, rivaled old-time political gatherings. When words failed, with rival factions ready to attack each other, mystery intervened—the building rocked, lights extinguished and the earth trembled as from the nature's convulsion in good orthodox novelist style. Friend and foe locked arms, forgot their feud[sic] and helped each other to safety and home in the murky dark.

Nature was innocent this time. Two kids had found a couple of old army muskets, loaded them with half a pound of black powder each, shoved them through the thatch roof and pulled the trigger at the right moment.

Next mail brought money to take up the sawmill I.O.U.'s; notice that a Land Agent and a Land guide were on the way to locate at Birtle and word that eastern directors of the Hamilton Company favored giving all paid members of the Company helped to locate land, suitable buildings sites in Birtle for those prepared to build and carry on, a draw for residential lots for other members, and arbiter compensation for improvements made on Section 5 by Mr. Dutton and Mr. Chambers. This appeared so fair that pipe of peace was smoked and community affairs were carried out amicably [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 19-20].

See also MD: January 15th and January 7th, 1881.

16. Norman McDonald, *Canada Immigration and Colonization 1841-1903*, Aberdeen University Press, chapter 12, "A Forlorn Hope: Colonization Companies," page 245, cited in Holling, *The Awakening*, 46 .

Interestingly, of the six original directors of the HNWCS, only three of them, J. H. Wood, J. S. Crawford, and D. W. Cumming, settled in the area. Two other directors, Whitfield Douglas and Thomas Wilson, never moved to the settlement though they had gone out West to select the location of the land reserves for the HNWCS [Holling, *The Awakening*, 41]. This presumably indicates the patriotic element involved, that they had only wanted to help the country, and not that they thought the whole thing was an irredeemable mess and wanted to stay away.

17. "Dr. and Mrs. Holling Honored on Visit to Birtle," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 16th, 1971, page 1.

18. Birtle was already emerging as the biggest centre of the error. Thus Wilson identified the four principal settlements in the region during the winter of 1879-1880 as what would be come to be known as Beulah, Birtle, Toddburn, and Rossburn, and noted that "Birtle was the converging point for all" [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 11]. Again, on page 15: "Real activity centred at Birtle for the 1880 season, an a record of it follows in the next section... Real activity of settlements tributary to the Birdtail in 1880 centred at the main transprairie trail crossing, later Birtle Town."

19. These services, especially the Land Office, forced people to come to Birtle from miles around. The founders of Virden, for example, had to travel 50 miles to Birtle to file for their homesteads [Ida Clingan, *The Virden Story* (Virden: Empire Publishing, 1957), 17]. Similarly, whoseit from Shellmouth wrote to his sister that "I had to go to Birtle last week about my land. I wrote the Government agent some time ago, but he wishes an interview, and I had to waste five days for ten minutes with him" [William Wallace to Maggie, Woodvale, Shellmouth, June 9th, 1885, in Coates, *My Dear Maggie*, 218]. Not only would people be more inclined to settle nearer the Land Office and Birtle because it just made their lives easier, but it would help to grow the local economy as the Birtle hotels would put up travellers coming in to take of their land concerns, and because stores in Birtle would be used to help them supply themselves while they were in town.

20. The Society, and thereafter Crawford and Wood, granted lots to entitled settlers in the spirit of the Society. They discouraged speculation; as one observer noted on visiting Birtle on September 17th, 1880, "A number of houses have already been erected, and some 80 lots have been sold, all but three upon condition of being built on within a year" [Sutherland, *A Summer*, 169]. This highlights the value of the scheme, given the potential value of a

townsite at the time—the CPR, for instance, was earning a lot from townsites [George Casey, April 19th, 1882, in *Official Debates of the House of Commons, 1882*, page 1022].

As for the question of bonuses, Robert Hill would write of Birtle in 1890 that

In 1884 and 1885 it had a great struggle to secure the railway facilities that it now enjoys. But success attended the determined efforts of the enterprising proprietors, Messrs Wood and Crawford, who generously offered the Manitoba and North-western Railway Company about 225 lots in some of the choice blocks of the town. These gentlemen had previously given some twenty acres in the town as a bonus to secure a saw mill, and also a valuable water power for a grist mill. The land grant to the railway company, it is said, saved the town \$10,000 as a bonus to the railway company [Hill, *Manitoba*, 659-660].

At the time, this had not been immediately understood by everyone in town, so that the *Birtle Observer* had to explain

It is known that twenty acres of land in the town plot has been granted to the Railway Company in blocks where the Company may select the ground. Some citizens are under the impression that the people of Birtle will be asked to pay for a proportion of the property. Such is not the case. The twenty acres is a free gift made by the proprietors of the town to the Railway Company. The ravine which leads through the property of E. P. Leacock was reserved when that block was sold and if used for a road to the station will be given to the town free [May 14th, 1886, page 1].

The railway company had been granted a twenty-year tax exemption on the railway company's lots and other property within Town limits [*Birtle Observer*, December 13th, 1884, page 1], but this was not the same as a crushing bonus paid upfront. However, it's worth noting that Ray Howard read the Town minutes differently, thus writing in the Crawford Years that

The actions of the first 1885 Council came back to haunt the 1889 council. True, they had succeeded in getting the railway, but the concessions and bonuses either extracted from or offered by the first council were proving to be disastrous five years later. A committee was formed to approach the Attorney-General regarding Assessment changes and relief from railway aid

agreement. On January 27th, 1890 Mayor Crawford was requested to go to Winnipeg to obtain relief from government for assistance given to the M NWRR Co. [Ray Howard, "The Crawford Year," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 9th, 1971, page 1].

However, it's well worth noting that when a provincial bill was passed in 1892 to relieve municipalities of debt incurred from railway construction, the R.M. of Birtle and R.M. of Shoal Lake both received funding but the Town received nothing ["Bonus Hunting," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 9th, 1892; the law itself was assented to in 1893 as *An Act for the Relief of the Rural Municipalities of Westbourne, Birtle, Shoal Lake and St. Andrews*]. That suggests that Howard either misread the situation, or misunderstood the health of the Town's finances in the late 1880s. However, it does appear that the town was using land as a security for loans, which is why the Town still owed ten thousand dollars ["Taxing Banks." *Birtle Observer*, June 15th, 1888, page 1].

In 1886, the Town had certainly tried to pass a by-law borrowing 10,000 dollars [*Birtle Observer*, August 6th, 1886, page 1: "The question of legalizing the By-law for issuing \$10,000 on the town of Birtle will come before the Judge at Brandon on the 15th inst.]. This appears to have been related to incidental costs relative to railway access, however, rather than a direct bonus, as per:

The event of the week has been the voting on the Bylaw empowering the Council to issue debentures for \$10,000. Although carried the Bylaw met with much opposition; a number of the ratepayers believing that in order to secure the trade of the fine settlement to the south and sustain the vested interests of the owners of the present business portion of the town it becomes imperatively necessary to establish a good crossing on the river and a direct and well leveled road to the station. An almost equal number of persons were against going into debt and proposed to let matters take a natural course. For a time feeling ran quite high and a political element was mixed with the matter in hand. It must be evident to every one that without proper and immediate connection with the station what is now the town of Birtle will be inconvenient and unsuited for a business center and only by the greatest good management on the part of the people and the council and by the utmost liberality of the owners of the property can the town be held in

the valley ["The Debentures," *Birtle Observer*, June 18th, 1886, page 1]

21. On April 20th, 1893, a provincial law was assented to for municipal relief: "An Act for the Relief of the Rural Municipalities of Westbourne, Birtle, Shoal Lake and St. Andrews."

22. Eugene A. Teeling, "Birtle, N. W. T. Its Progress and Its Prospects," June 30th, 1880, *Manitoba Free Press*, July 22nd, 1880, page, 1.

Section 3. Town Growth

1. Compare with the population tables in "Manitoba Communities: Birtle (Unincorporated Town)" and "Manitoba Communities: Birtle (Unincorporated Rural Municipality)." There are negligible differences: latter disagrees with my numbers for the RM for 1911, saying 1735 rather than 1733, and for 1921, saying 1980 instead of 1981.

My population tables were compiled from the various census data which were available on the third floor of the University of Ottawa's Morisset Library, and population breakdowns posted on the internet for more recent censuses. To get the population of the RM, this sometimes involved having to add up the population of the constituent townships, which features in a second table on page 10.

2. An Observer, "Birdtail Creek," May 6th, 1880, in *Manitoba Free Press*, May 21st, 1880, page 1; More Anon, "Birtle: Its Progress and Prospects," *Manitoba Free Press*, June 25th, 1880, page 1, reprinted from *London Free Press*; Eugene A. Teeling, "Birtle, N. W. T. Its Progress and Its Prospects," June 30th, 1880, reprinted from the *Hamilton Spectator* in the *Manitoba Free Press*, July 22nd, 1880, page 1; "Presbytery of Manitoba. Second Day." *Manitoba Free Press*, December 10th, 1880, page 3.

These are corroborated by the more neutral diary of Otto Klotz, a surveyor who was working out of Fort Ellice at the time. He noted the town had a steam saw mill and a dozen buildings in October of 1880 [October 21st, 1880, Diary #7, September 29th, 1879-April 15th, 1884, Otto Julius Klotz fonds, MIKAN 108208].

3. While it was not separately enumerated, Birtle fell under "Western Extension Number 192e," which we can tell by locating the entries of the

Alfred Morton, S.W. Chambers, and Benjamin Dutton families [Census 1881, Manitoba, Manitoba Extension, E, 3, pages 4-5].

In October, 1880, a report was made for the land office which gives a better breakdown of who was living in at least the three Society townships [Report, Clementi Smith to A. J. Belch, Birtle, October 6th, 1880, LAC, MIKAN 1470805]. This made for roughly 63 names. 22 of these were in the township further east which would not fall within the R.M. or Town of Birtle, and unsurprisingly, 21 of those 22 were unaffiliated with the Society. The majority of the settlers in the other two townships were members of the Society.

4. Regular data is available for Birtles Town and R.M. from 1885 onwards every five years, with the exception of the mid-1890s. Dominion or federal census were only carried out every ten years until 1956 when it switched to a five year cycle. However, thanks to a special census taken in 1885, and special censuses taken for the Prairies from 1906 onwards, Birtle was enumerated twice as often as the older provinces.

5. It was in the 1890s that the immigrant population really began to diversify, with the arrival of Ukrainians and others. Federal immigration policy had the most to do with the makeup of the immigrant population in rural Manitoba, although there were other factors at play as well, as per the *Birtle Eye-Witness*, July 9th, 1895, page 4 in the lower left corner:

A serious stabbing affair occurred[sic] after the Dominion Day races at Minnedosa. It appears that Simmons, a colored jockey from Brandon, was hounded by sporting men all the afternoon and that after the races he was attacked by Thos. Dunbar on whom he used his knife with serious effect. Simmons was arrested and committed to stand trial by magistrates Sewell and Wake. Dunbar is reported in a fair way to recover.

6. "Passing It On," 140-142. See also Dolores Haggarty, "Birtle called them to a 'town of dreams': Welcome mat rolled up until housing shortage resolved," *Winnipeg Free Press*, December 9th, 1998, A10-A11.

The official census data could reflect this movement better. Mayor Ron Bell was paraphrased in 2000 as saying, "The '96 count came after many of the people came to town through the initiative that began[sic] in '95, so the population prior to then likely dropped well below 700" [Lyndenn Behm,

“Birtle is a deer little community, boosters say,” *Cruising the Yellowhead: A Brandon Sun Special Report*, August 14th, 2000, pages 3-4].

7. *A View of the Birdtail*, 223; “*Passing It On*,” 87.

8. Though the timing of the census does not register it as much as it could have, estimated population growth was not small, and a 1998 article had estimated that the Town’s population had gone from about 600 to about 770 in three years [Dolores Haggarty, “Birtle called them to ‘a town of dreams’: Welcome mat rolled up until housing shortage resolved,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, December 9th, 1998, page A10].

Section 4. Municipal Government

1. Hill, *Manitoba* 659-660.

2. Crawford and Wood’s gifts of land as bonuses were a volunteer action, for example. Worth noting is Wilson’s take on the early governing situation:

Birdtail district was real Utopia in these early years. No taxes were demanded. To counteract this trails had to suffice for roads. Those who wanted a bridge or a culvert had to build it. Citizens of Birtle volunteered labor to bridge the Birdtail. The work not being too substantial, a ferry did duty in spells [*Birtle’s Beginning*, 23-24].

3. *Birtle’s Beginning*, 24-25; James Crerar was elected Warden in 1882, having gotten the Birtle vote as the latter had opted to support him as a candidate over either S. W. Chambers or J. H. Wood [MD: December 9th, 1881]. Crerar was a Reformer or Liberal, while Chambers and Wood were both Conservatives, though disliked each other too much to come to an agreement to let the other run. Major Boulton and other prominent conservatives were not pleased at the nomination of Crerar and made efforts to counterbalance it with Conservatives like Alfred Morton as Councillors [MD: December 10th, 1881]. Morton however chose to bow out to Wood [MD: December 19th, 1881]. Chambers and Wood finally agreed to work with each other and had a meeting to decide which of them should run [MD: December 23rd, 1881]. Chambers appears to have carried the day as the election results included Chambers and not Wood [MD: January 3rd, 1882]. Wood was nevertheless appointed treasurer for a time [Wilson, *Birtle’s Beginning*, 29].

For another article of interest concerning the County of Shoal Lake’s politicization, see “Birtle.” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 28th, 1884, page 2, reprinted as appendix 7.

4. Alfred Thomas Phillips, “Development of Municipal Institutions in Manitoba to 1886” (MA Thesis, University of Manitoba, 1948), 202; 204.

5. *An Act to amend and consolidate the Acts relating to the Division of the Province of Manitoba into Counties and Municipalities, and Judicial Districts, and for the government of the same*, 46 Victoria (1883), Cap. I.

6. *An Act to amend and revise the Acts relative to Municipalities*, 47 Victoria (1884), Cap. IX. Some Ontario settlers thought that they were not only recreating their homes in the Northwest, but actually perfecting the systems which they had not enjoyed back home, such as the County level of government [see Phillips, “Development of Municipal Institutions,” 205-208].

7. *An Act to amend and consolidate the Acts relating to the Division of the Province of Manitoba into Counties and Municipalities, and Judicial Districts, and for the government of the same*, Victoria (1883), Cap. I.

As for the dates, the RM of Birtle was incorporated on December 22nd, 1883 [“Manitoba Communities: Birtle (Unincorporated Rural Municipality)”]. The Town was incorporated a week later, on December 29th, 1883 [“Manitoba Communities: Birtle (Unincorporated Town)”].

8. “*Passing It On*,” 12-15. Also of interest is John Haines, elected to the first Council in 1884, who had been imprisoned by Louis Riel’s provisional government in 1869.

9. *An Act to amend and consolidate the Acts relating to the Division of the Province of Manitoba into Counties and Municipalities, and Judicial Districts, and for the government of the same*, Victoria 46 (1883), Cap. I.

10. “Manitoba Communities: Birtle (Unincorporated Town)”; *An Act to amend and revise the Acts relative to Municipalities*, 47 Victoria (1884), Cap. IX. The other incorporated urban settlements listed in the Act are Winnipeg, Portage la Prairie, and Morris. Birtle however was well aware that it would incorporate under the municipal act, shown when Crawford mentioned the plan to the Minister of the Interior [J. S. Crawford, signed as President of the H&NCS, to D.L. McPherson, Birtle, December 3rd, 1883, LAC, MIKAN 1471984].

11. Crawford had run unsuccessfully against E. P. Leacock for the provincial legislature in 1882 [Robertson, *Political Manual*, 92]. He was acclaimed the first Mayor of Birtle [MD: January 5th, 1884]

J. H. Wood had come West after electoral defeat and long service with the Conservative party [Wood to Macdonald, Birtle, March 15th, 1881, LAC, MIKAN 534545; Testimony of H. Wood, Ottawa, March 18th, 1885, in “Report of the Select Standing Committee on Immigration and Colonization,” (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co, 1885), 54]. This was well known locally [*Birtle’s Beginning*, 7-8]. While Wood’s role in the H&NCS debacle and continued conflict with Chambers hurt him, his sons A. B. Wood and W. H. Wood both served on Town Council in the 1880s.

12. “*Passing It On*,” 14.

13. Speech from the Throne at the Opening of the Second Session of the 40th Legislature of the Province of Manitoba, November 19th, 2012. Accessed December 18th, 2018. http://www.gov.mb.ca/thronespeech/thronespeech_2012.html. Of interest is also William Ashton, Wayne Kelly, and Ray Bollman, “Municipalities Amalgamate in Manitoba: Moving towards Rural Regions,” *Manitoba Law Journal* 38:2 (2015): 123-154.

14. Similarly, the R.M. of Miniota’s only woman elected reeve was also its last reeve prior to amalgamation. While the Town of Birtle had a different socioeconomic makeup than the surrounding rural municipalities and began electing women to municipal officers a few decades earlier, that a woman was elected Prairie View’s first reeve shows the extent to which these things hv

15. The C.P.R. ended up with a presence through Birtle, while the R.M. of Miniota was served by the C.N. None of this is to say that there wasn’t plenty of north-south movement as well. In 1882, there was actually some agitation to divide Shoal Lake County along north-south lines:

Agitation is now on foot to divide Shoal Lake County into two counties, with the object of making Beulah, in the southern part of the county, the capital of the new Riding. ... The County Council of Shoal Lake meets at Beulah, Nov. 15, when the question of dividing the county will come up for discussion. E. P. Leacock, M. P. P., is expected to be present to ascertain the

views of his constituents. [“Birtle,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 9th, 1882, page 2].

16. Birtle, as demonstrated in the first section of this project, derived its name from the Bird Tail Creek. For its part, the name Miniota is apparently a Sioux word for “much water” [Armstrong, *The Origin*, 193].

As for the booster literature concentrating on waterways, see Eugene Teeling, “Birtle, N. W. T.: Its Progress and Its Prospects,” letter dated June 30th, 1880 from Birtle, addressed to the Hamilton *Spectator*, appearing in the *Manitoba Free Press*, July 22nd, 1880, page 1; O. B. Joy, “Birtle, N. W. T. Matters and Things in that Vicinity—An Election Boomlet,” December 7th, 1880, *Manitoba Free Press*, December 16th, 1880, page 1. Similar letters appearing in the *Free Press*, even those specifically emphasizing the area’s agricultural prospects, spent most of their time writing about the picturesque river valley, abundant water, and the town of Birtle [An Observer, “Bird Tail Creek,” May 6, 1880, *Manitoba Free Press*, May 21st, 1880, page 1]. It is true as well that the existence of a town that could provide a nearby settler with a number of amenities was itself a big draw, as demonstrated by some who went along with the Marquis of Lorne, the Canadian Governor-General, when he visited the Northwest [Correspondent of the *Times*, “SOME TOWNS AND FARMS IN MANITOBA, *Colonies and India*, October 1st, 1881, page 14]. That last article also emphasized a distinction to be had between town and prairie, and indeed, a similar article would do the same. Whereas the town was charming and the river valley picturesque, the prairie itself was seen as quite bleak:

OVERWHELMING SOLITUDES.

It is only, indeed, at little towns like Rapid City and Birtle that we have seen much even of human life, and, but for Lord Lorne’s system of cross-questioning, we might easily enough have formed a painful impression about the country, and one not more painful than unfair. “it is, indeed, a Great Lone Land,” gasped out one of the party, with tremendous emphasis on the “is,” unable longer to bear up against the oppressive, overwhelming solitude. ...

The author went on to note the significant divide between the attitudes of men out on the prairie, who tended to be pleased with the place, and their wives and daughters, who found the loneliness horrific; this he contrasted with the attitudes of the women of Birtle, who, not deprived of regular social contact, were quite pleased with the place [“THE GOVERNOR-

GENERAL'S TOUR," *The Mid-Surrey Times*, September 24th, 1881, page 7].

Section 5. Municipal Services and Utilities

1. Thus while early services such as Pound-keeping and Pathfinding were provided for by the Town of Birtle and were important in their day, particularly the 1880s, I have excluded them. Some services, like pound-keeping, became thrown under the remit of the Town Constable. However, there are more ongoing services provided by or partnered with the municipality, such as weed control, that I've left out. I also haven't touched snowplowing at all. One aspect that I think deserves special mention are Town Halls and other town buildings, which have provided important venues for non-municipality-related gatherings and housing for places of business. Indeed, as the *Birtle Observer* noted in "Local and Other News" on page 4 of its March 6th, 1885 issue:

Perhaps, the most used building in Birtle is the Town Hall. Besides being a printing establishment and the Town Clerk's office, it is the general assembly room for all the wise men in the district. It is the music hall, the debating school and the polling place on election days. It is the dinning room on festive occasions and an agricultural show room when farmers gather for competition. It is the Presbyterian Church every Sunday and the place where two Councils hold their deliberations on week days. It is the Country Court room and on several occasions it has been a ball room. The City Auditors proceeded with their work in the palatial apartments and it is expected that by and by every board will be classical.

Also worth mentioning are sidewalks, which I had initially included but deleted for reasons of space. Sidewalks in Birtle dated to at least the 1890s, but were fairly modest in ambition; Mayor Crawford had suggested a system of sidewalks back in 1886, but with other things going on, it was not sure how much ended up happening with the idea ["The Rate-payers Consult," *Birtle Observer*, May 14th, 1886, page 1]. Early sidewalks tended to only do things like link Main Street to the three church buildings — at the time, only Jubilee Methodist, St. George's, and Vine Street Presbyterian were built. Thus the Town Council decided to lay sidewalk as soon as possible on Main

Street from 7th Street east for a block, and one half side walk, and a narrow walk to the three churches in 1891 [July 28th, 1891, Town of Birtle Council Minutes, pages 304-305, BCM]. In 1892, the Public Works Committee was instructed to lay an 8 ft. sidewalk from 7th Street west on north side of Main Street to Centre Street, thence north on east side of Centre Street to St. Clair, and a sidewalk to the Presbyterian Church via east of 7th Street to south of Vine Street [September 1st, 1892, Town of Birtle Council Minutes, pages 318-319]. After 1904, it was resolved to thereafter use only cement as a building material rather than wood ["Birtle Town," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 15th, 1904, page 1]. In the early 1970s, a network of sidewalks criss-crossing the town was completed [*View of the Birdtail*, 54].

2. See the *Birtle Eye-Witness* at the time:

Installation of the towns acetylene lighting plant and consequent increase of tax levy has livened interests in civic affairs and it is rumored there will be a complete change in the personnel at the council board. Nominations take place three weeks from to-day ... there are two sides to the question ... a large element of the citizens favor a policy that will stir the town from its sleepiness of past years even though taxes be increased while others object to public expenditures on principle beyond the actual sums required to keep streets passable run the school and the few incidental necessary amounts to constitute a town... ["Civic," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 12th, 1901, page 1].

To understand Wilson's comments here, we should note his progressive position and his frustration: from 1890 to 1896 there weren't any recorded town meetings at all [Ray Howard, "The Crawford Year," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 9th, 1971, page 1].

R. P. Easson was appointed manager of the plant ["Sixty Years Ago—1901," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 14th, 1961]. The plant did not only provide street-lighting, but was also to be hooked up to many communal buildings and individual homes:

The towns acetylene plant was started by Mr. Easson on Friday night when about sixty jets were hitched on. After an hour or so the pipes were cleared of air and those places connected were lighted better than they had ever been, and the steadiness and softness of the flame was most satisfactory. The churches, rink and several other blocks have not yet been connected and the lamps for street lighting are still to come. There is every

indication that the plant is of sufficient capacity for all town and its brilliancy cleanliness and other advantages over oil lighting are such that most of the citizens will avail of it on a more thorough test that it may be on depended ... [Birtle Eye-Witness, November 19th, 1901, page 4]

As for the plant itself, in 1914 it was described by Hugh McNair, with the Manitoba Public Utilities Commission:

The Birtle gas plant is owned and operated by the town, and is housed in a brick building 35 ft. by 24 ft. This plant is well kept and in good condition. I observed when visiting this plant that a gas bracket was installed in the generating house here, but I was assured that this was never used. I pointed out, however, that its presence was a temptation for someone lighting it at some time, with perhaps serious results. I therefore, advised its removal. The plant consists of one gasometer, 16 ft. by 10 ft.; one dryer, 18 in. by 3 ft.; one purifier 2 ft. by 2 ft. by 1 ft.; one generator, having a capacity of 1,000 cubic feet per hour. There is no station meter here, and I advised that one be installed so that a record could be kept of the gas manufactured, gas sold and gas lost in distribution [cited in Thompson, "The Former Manitou Gas Company Plant," page 17].

3. From a *View of the Birdtail*:

Mayor Manwaring and Councillors Wilson, Copeland and Taylor were appointed to investigate power development in 1924. In 1926 Councillors Laidman, Knowles and Moxham investigated electric-light plants. In February 1928 By-Law No. 248 was passed, providing for the raising of money to install a lighting and power system. In July 1928 Mr. H. Crookshanks was hired as plant operator. Meter rentals were 25 cents per month for light only, and 50 cents per month for power. Light rates were 25 cents per k.w., minimum rate \$1.50 per month. The plant was sold to Government Hydro in 1930 [page 51].

"*Passing It On*," says that the 1901 plant was converted into a generating station in 1928 [page 19]. In 1928,

Members of the Town Council motored over to Virden, Roston and Hartney Wednesday last to look over the lighting plants they have and express satisfaction with the results of trip.

On Centre Street facing St. Clair has been chosen as site for Birtle's plant and work of putting it in place and construction of the buildings required will now succeed. The main house is to be 30 x 36 metal clad and asbestos lined, 12 foot walls. Water is quite a consideration. Soft water from such a size should be ample if a larger enough cistern be provided [Birtle Eye-Witness, June 5th, 1928, page 7].

The decision to use a municipal plant was despite the fact that the Manitoba Power Commission, with a mandate to bring electricity generated on the Winnipeg River to rural areas, advertized in Birtle in 1925 [Manitoba Power Commission, "Lighten the Load of Life by Electricity," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 9th, 1925, page 4]. In 1962, mercury vapour lights would be installed along Main Street as street-lighting [*View of the Birdtail*, 53].

4. *View of the Birdtail*, 51. The 1930s additions to the plant seem to have included using hydroelectric power rather than gas: "A 12-foot trench and pipe line was installed to carry water from the river to the "Old Gas House" whence it would be pumped to the hydro plant. A branch line was installed for flooding the rink nearby" ["The Old News: Thirty Years Ago—1930," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 1st, 1960, page 1]. See also Roxann Barker's account of an interview with Fred Butcher:

His next employment was when the Manitoba Power Commission took over Birtle's lighting plant. An addition was built at the plant, located at the end of St. Clare Street (the recently demolished checker-board building), and a Crosley engine was imported from England. The fly-wheel for the engine weighed five tons and was skidded down the Ravine Road from the railway station on steel skis and installed, generating electricity for Birtle, St. Lazare and Foxwarren.

Fred was enjoying fulltime employment and following the installation of the hydro generating plant, he began digging hydro poles, at 50 cents an hour...

He went on to note that he was unemployed by 1931 with the onset of the Depression ["Local historian remembers his roots," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 30th, 1993, page 5]. An advantage of the provincial takeover was that it was remunerative, as per the *Birtle Eye-Witness* in 1935, "Transfer of the power plant to provincial hydro wiped out its debt." The article in question argues that Birtle should have a civic water system because the

town was consequently in such great financial shape. Apparently the CPR already pumped water 180 feet up the north hill, which system also supplied the Residential School [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 18th, 1935, page 1].

5. “Power Commission Celebrates 25 Years in Birtle,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 1st, 1955, page 1. The actual date could be 1933, 1936, or 1938, as the last digit was not printed entirely clearly, though it seems most like a 5.

6. Manitoba Hydro, *A History of Electric Power*, 30.

7. In an atypical, conscious effort to decentralize services in 1990, the provincial government decided to move almost 700 government and crown corporation jobs to rural Manitoba [“Western Manitoba big winner,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 20th, 1990, page 1]. As part of the initial phase of this plan, Birtle received a position from Manitoba Hydro [“One stop shop,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, July 17th, 1990, page 1]. As part of the initiative, a new building was soon under construction on Queen Avenue, just off Highway 83 on the southeast side of town. It included office space, storage space, and an up-to-date computer system. A full time clerk, a district operator and two assistant district operators were to work there [“Hydro pulls the plug on area offices: Decision affects staff in 24 Manitoba communities,” *Crossroads This Week*, October 4th, 2013, pages 1 and 3]. It officially opened on November 12th, 1991 [Marcie Harrison, “Hydro office is officially open: Manitoba Hydro stresses commitment to customer service,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 19th, 1991, page 1].

8. The decentralizing effort was difficult to maintain. Between population decline, the drastic changes made by the Internet to the nature of customer service, and a provincial government with different priorities, in 2013 it was decided to consolidate Birtle’s customer service office to Russell before March, 2017. Shoal Lake lost its customer service office as well. No staff were to have been laid off, but report to other offices [“Hydro pulls the plug on area offices: Decision affects staff in 24 Manitoba communities,” *Crossroads This Week*, October 4th, 2013, pages 1 and 3]. Birtle’s office closed much sooner than the cut-off, having been closed by at least the end of 2014 [“Hydro officials listen to amalgamation concerns: Municipality of Shoal Lake council says that loss of employee and families in communities is a major issue,” *Crossroads This Week*, December 12th, 2014, page 3]. As rural offices shuttered their doors, Manitoba Hydro executive had a

considerable salary increase [Ralph Eichler, “NDP mismanagement threatens front-line services,” *Crossroads This Week*, September 11th, 2015, page 6].

Furthermore, as the Association of Manitoba Municipalities’ president had noted at the time of the announcement, in calculating these closures “They calculate what it may save them, but I don’t think they calculate the human factor and what these individuals bring to the communities as far as voluntarism and other things, because obviously these people will move to where the job is” [Doug Dobrowolski, cited in Bruce Owen, “Hydro to close 24 rural offices: Move could have ‘significant’ impact on communities,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, October 2nd, 2013].

9. The following list is not exhaustive, but some significant fires in the area include

— 1883, when Alfred Morton recorded “Prairie fires raging. Air full of smoke” [Morton Diaries, October 1st, 1883]

— 1886, when a prairie fire threatened the north bank of the river valley [“The Dominion,” *The Globe*, October 6th, 1886, page 6; “The Dominion,” *The Globe*, October 13th, 1886, page 2].

— two fires in 1887, one in May at the Wilson homestead [MD: May 10th, 1887], and one on Main Street which began at the drug store and other nearby buildings [“Manitoba Affairs.: Bad Fire in Birtle,” *The Globe*, November 29th, 1887, page 1].

— in 1910 or so, T. A. Wilson noted a bad fire which burned out just short of the dam [quoted in *View of the Birdtail*, 11].

— In “*Passing It On*” Kevin Hickman listed some fires of the latter half of the twentieth century

The following fires have had a huge impact on our community: the Savoy Theatre on Main Street (1958), Birtle Garage and Masonic Lodge on Main Street (1968), Villa Motor Inn (Robert Hotel) on Main Street (1975), Red and White Store on Main Street (1976), Birtle Locker Plant on Main Street (1976), Pioneer Lodge (1978), Birtle Eye-Witness Printing Shop (1979), a large wild fire northeast of Foxwarren (1984), Birtle Bakery and Looking Good (1986), Riverside Restaurant (2000).” [Kevin Hickman, “History of the Birtle Fire Department,” in “*Passing It On*,” 139].

10. On May 7th, 1884, fire protection was added to the duties of the Town’s public works committee. They bought three ladders and a dozen pails. Then, in 1886, the Council called for volunteers to set up an official fire

brigade, dubbed “the Hook and Ladder Company.” After 1887 fire on Main Street, they decided further measures would be needed [“Pickings from Old Council Minutes and Bylaws of the Council of the Town of Birtle,” “*Passing It On*,” 189]. As the fire brigade now dates its history to 1950, the Hook and Ladder Company appears to have dissolved at some point. The Town eventually got a water tank and small gas powered pump that could be towed by whoever turned up [Kevin Hickman, “History of the Birtle Fire Department,” in “*Passing It On*,” 137].

11. Kevin Hickman, “History of the Birtle Fire Department,” in “*Passing It On*,” 137-139. The notification system involved fire calls being redirected directly to six telephones belonging to members of the Fire Department. The first firefighter to answer the phone could use it to set off the Birtle’s special fire siren, to warn all other firefighters of the emergency. In the 1970s, the system was improved to a 20 person conference system with the hospital fielding emergency calls. Pagers were added in the 1980s, phasing out both the phone system and also the fire siren, made redundant as all firefighters would be already be directly notified of any fire by page.

The Town and R.M. of Birtle jointly had funded the Department prior to their amalgamation. The Town and R.M. for example, both helped to pay for fire trucks and other equipment [Kevin Hickman, “History of the Birtle Fire Department,” in “*Passing It On*,” 137-139; “*Passing It On*,” 11-13]. In 1975, the R.M. passed a by-law to provide for the Town and Rural Municipality of Birtle Fire Department [“*Passing It On*,” 10].

12. The Town purchased the Baptist Church property in 1993, promising to keep the building intact, which it did in 1994 by moving up to its present location as the Tourist Information Centre at the entrance to Riverside Park. Construction on the new firehall then formally began in 1994, and it was opened in 1995. The Brown House and one-time Baptist parsonage serves Birtle’s firefighters as a training area [View of the Birdtail, 74; “*Passing It On*,” 11; 13; 36].

13. The preferred term for the dump seems to have been ‘nuisance ground’ until about the 1970s-1980s, but by the 1990s ‘landfill’ had become the preferred term.

The *Birtle Observer* noted in 1886 “At the last meeting of the Town Council action was taken in reference to the selection of a nuisance ground. All persons having garbage to remove will be shown location on application

to Councillors Wood or Lepper” [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, April 9th, 1886, page 4]. I’m not sure of the precise location of the grounds, but the *Birtle Observer* gives the general area: “The Town Council should stop those who are in the habit of depositing manure and other filth on the present nuisance ground which is very near the new Methodist Church and parsonage, and also above the town and so situated that the heavy rains wash the dirt into the river; the polluted water is then lifted and used by the inhabitants” [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, June 17th, 1887, page 4]. It should be noted that the editor was a Methodist himself [“The Massacre of Church Music,” *Birtle Observer*, January 31st, 1889, page 1], and so would have presumably been that much more annoyed at the location of the grounds. However, that it was so chosen did make a lot of sense; it would have been on the flat area that had made the area desirable for a townsite, making it easier to cart things to, which would have been more difficulty in its present, hill-bound location; furthermore, early pictures show that the Methodist church was, for some time, at the extreme eastern edge of the built-up area of the town, and so the grounds were probably deemed far enough away. However, being upstream meant any contamination would effect the whole town; furthermore, this was also around time when dams were in use for grist mills and sawmills, and a boom stretched across the river for the sawmill. Those kinds of barriers meant that much that may have been washed out of the nuisance grounds into the river would be more inclined to collect there, with all of the associated smells and health hazards.

14. The earliest mention I ran across of a new location for the nuisance ground location was “The Crawford Years,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 23rd, 1971, page 1: “On June 11th, 1895 the saw mill property was conveyed to J. D. McArthur. Nuisance ground location was a problem for the July 3rd meeting.” The expected reopening of the sawmill, and presumably extension of a boom to catch sawlogs and perhaps also runoff from the nuisance grounds, may have been provided an added incentive to selecting a new location. However, it would be the next year that the Town’s public works committee was tasked with selecting a new location [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 7th, 1896, page 4].

I’m not sure where the new location was, though I would hazard a guess that it was relatively near but southeast of its current location. I’m basing this on the following :“John MacDonald representing Public Works Department conferred with Council regarding construction in Town limits of Highway 83 and re new location of waste disposal grounds. Frank Price,

Provincial Sanitary Inspector, discussed proposed new Garbage and Waste disposal By-law and new location on S. W. 5 for nuisance ground area to comply with Provincial Health regulations” [“Council Reports: Birtle Town Special Meeting,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 19, 1956, page 6], and the vague sense that the wording could mean simply a relocation of the grounds on S.W. 5, and the thought that highway 83’s entry southeast into town would have been likely to disturb any old nuisance grounds. The new grounds, in their present location, were opened that summer, as per Ed. Hall’s “Important Notice!” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 7th, 1956, page 3: “The new Garbage Disposal Grounds are now open west of the new highway. The road in is located 100 yards south of the Checker Board.” It goes on to note that all garbage had to be put in the prepared trench and that the old grounds weren’t allowed to be used anymore on pain of prosecution. The Checker Board refers a building near the Main Street bridge.

15. In 1906, for example, Dr. Wheeler, as Town Health Officer, insisted that all “refuse barrels” be carted to the landfill at least every two weeks [Dr. Wheeler, “Public Notice.” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 8th, 1906, page 4], and more specifically, “Dr. Wheeler addressed council re town scavenging and the following resolution was passed on motion of Councillor Manwaring and Wilson That all refuse from houses and rooms in future be put in barrels and removed to nuisance ground every two weeks and any persons found dumping such refuse on lanes or vacant lots will be prosecuted” [“Birtle Council Minutes, May 2nd, 1906,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 8th, 1906, page 8]. In the 1930s, Dr. Edwards, also Town Health Officer, felt the need for similar efforts [Dr. H. L. Edwards, “Public Notice.” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 24th, 1934, page 4].

Another recurrent problem in the 1920s was the imprecise definition of the nuisance grounds, as people seemed to be taking advantage of fuzzy boundaries to save themselves a bit of bother. Thus an early council meeting in 1922 instructed the clerk to draft a bylaw “defining and limiting nuisance ground” [“Birtle Town Council Minutes, Jan 6,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, January 24th, 1922, page 8]. Likewise, in 1928, the Town Constable publicized that “New posts have been set at the Nuisance ground. Anyone found depositing garbage, manure or other refuse outside the limits so located will be prosecuted” [S. Templer, “Warning.” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, January 10th, 1928, page 8].

16. A new large pit was dug in 1949 as part of the Cleanup Program [“Public Notice—Town of Birtle,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 15th, 1949, page 8]. However, in 1950, the Town asked the Provincial Sanitary Inspector to investigate the landfill for violations of regulations, and also to suggest a better location [“Birtle Town Council: Special Meeting, April 24th,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 9th, 1950, page 8]. Presumably then there were other problems than temporary lack of cleanliness, though these don’t appear to have been solved as five years later a public meeting was held in Birtle to discuss, among other things, a new location for the landfill [“Town of Birtle: Public Health,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 7th, 1955, page 2]. The next year, the Provincial Sanitary Inspector was in Birtle again discussing, among other things, a new location for the nuisance ground [“Council Reports: Birtle Town Special Meeting,” April 19, 1956, *Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 19th, 1956, page 6]. The new location may have been partially chosen, not only because of its distance from the townsite permitted by the diffusion of more effective transportation technologies and also by the good road that is the sweeping southeast entry into Birtle of highway 83, and also distance from the river, but also because the nature of the clay in the area apparently meant that liquid from garbage pits was naturally contained in the area, and could be eventually disposed of in an ecological manner [Vernon Dutton, “Letter: Flouride[sic] is a pollutant claims Vernon Dutton,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, October 20th, 1992, page 8].

17. 1990 delegation was “from Birdtail recycling” [*Passing It On*,” 12-13].

18. Alfred Morton, Sec.-Treas. “Town of Birtle: Constable Wanted,” *Birtle Observer*, April 17th, 1885, page 4.

The duties of the Town Constable expanded and retracted over time. A public notice from G. H. Copeland in 1910 showed that the Town Constable had to deal with stock animals running free [G. H. Copeland, “Public Notice,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 17th, 1910, page 5]. See also “The Old News—50 Years Ago—1918,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, July 2nd, 1968, page 3: “Town Constable had instructions to look after auto speeders, travel on wrong side of road, and general amenities of the motorized age”; and “Town Council Holds Meetings,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 2nd, 1967, page 1: “Council issued orders, in writing, to Town Constable T. Mitchell to collect dog licenses.”; and Jack Dodds would later recall that

One of the most thankless jobs of those days was that of Town Cop. Over the years, I remember several people who held that position. Tom Mitchell held that position during most of my

teenage years. Often referred to as “Jingles”, due to his physical likeness to Wild Bill Hickok’s sidekick, Tom put in many long hours policing the town. I remember him as being fair and much more tolerant than I would have been in many instances. [Jack Dodds, “Memories of Growing Up in Birtle,” *Passing It On*,” 186].

As for the jail cells, see *View of the Birdtail*, 51. Being a relatively peaceful town, the cells were often used for storage more than anything else [Ibid, 209]. There were two of them [Vernon Dutton, editor, “Memories of Marilyn “Buddy” Dutton,” in “*Passing It On*,” 189].

19. In 1899 the Town Council appears to have tried to use its personal connection to Commissioner Herchmer of the NWMP, formerly the Birtle Indian Agent, for a squad of policemen to be established in Birtle, but this doesn’t seem to have amounted to anything [“The Crawford Years,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 9th, 1971, page 1].

When the Shoal Lake detachment took on responsibility for Birtle, it was on the understanding that an extra man and car would be added, and that the Town of Birtle would be patrolled a minimum of forty hours per week. The Council asked that the situation be reassessed at the end of a year, with the hopes that Birtle would get a policeman stationed in the town, but no promises were made. The new police regime took over on April 1st. The day prior, T. J. B. Mitchell, the last municipal Town Constable, was relieved of his duties. He was granted two weeks severance [“R.C.M.P. to Police Town of Birtle,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 19th, 1968, page 3].

20. “Birtle Citizens on Patrol Program in the Adult Group or Organization (Rural) category for their volunteer organization that works in co-operation with the local RCMP detachment. The program encourages residents to observe and report suspicious events/persons to help reduce incidents of crime. Volunteers also encourage participation in related crime prevention programs such as Neighborhood Watch, Block Parents, Operation Identification, Operation Provident and Bicycle Theft” [“Crime Prevention Awards Honour Efforts to Maintain Sage Communities,” November 27th, 1996, Archived News Releases, Manitoba, retrieved September 14th, 2017, <http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/print,index.html?item=22737&posted=1996-11-27>].

21. “Copy of Plan of the Town Plot of Birtle Township No17, Range No26 West Manitoba” in Tyman, *By Section*, 96; *View of the Birdtail*, 50. In 1882

already, under the County of Shoal Lake, Alfred Morton noted that town streets were being graded [MD: July 1st, 1882].

22. See for example MD: July 17th and 18th, 1882, but statute labour was abolished quite early on from the Town books.

The Ravine Road was a special case. They had first issued a contractor for the road, which was to follow the ravine near E. P. Leacock’s house down the north bank of the river valley to connect the railway station with Centre Street, and on May 7th, 1886, he had begun grading the area [MD: Friday, May 7th, 1886]. However, in the end the Town was forced to reconsider its decision to accept tenders to build the road [Town of Birtle Minutes, May 10th, 1888, page 215], and decided to hire individual workers instead [Town of Birtle Minutes, June 6th, 1888, page 217]. The change apparently had something to do with the the nature of the terrain [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, June 8th, 1888, page 4]. Nevertheless, by June 28th, “The new road to the station through the big ravine is fast approaching completion and is the best public work ever performed in or about Birtle. The difficulty of ascending the hill is entirely overcome and now instead of being a terror to teamsters the road will afford a well sheltered, level drive in winter and form a romantic and delightful pathway in summer, with woods on each side and the usual accompaniment of birds and wild flowers. Mr. Roseborough and the men who assisted him have shown remarkable skill and energy in pushing on this work” [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, June 28th, 1888, page 4].

The ravine road served its purpose for some years, with a big advantage being that its incline was mild enough for loaded wagons to easily manage [“*Passing It On*,” 8-9]. However, automobiles, which travelled much more quickly, complicated matters, maybe also due to the narrowness of the road. As early as 1913, 9th street was being improved for use specifically to avoid dealing with cars on the road [“Forty Years Ago—1913,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 16th, 1953, page 1: “The Indian School hill was being improved as an alternative to meeting autos in the Ravine Road”]. Furthermore, the Ravine Road was not always in the best shape, and in the 1940s considerable problems were met in spring [“The freighter “Maple Leaf” out of St Lazare, Capt. Ben at the helm foundered in Ravine Road quicksand last Tuesday night. Freighter Jack Cornell out of Binscarth ran aground also, Capt. Jim’s tug Caterpillar salvaged both. Traffic throughout Tuesday night and Wednesday was routed up the steeper hill roads,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, April

28th, 1942, page 8]. Narrowness appears to have been of such a concern that it was considered whether or not to make it a one-way street [Ed. Hall, "Town of Birtle," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, February 10th, 1959, page 5], and eventually the road was closed entirely. Albert Billaney has said that he was the last man to drive it before it was closed.

23. Thus the *Birtle Eye-Witness* wrote in 1919 that

Engineer Copeland of the Public Works department spent a couple of days in town past week locating and laying out work the council proposes doing this season on main roads leading into and through the town. These when completed would form links in the projected highway system of through provincial highways. The sections demanding first attention are from station westward towards Lazare and Foxwarren and completion of about 25 chains length of the Blenheim road made necessary by closing in of M McCann's block, Main St., Vine St., the mile stretch past the cemetery and ravine road are recommended for temporary repair, as being in fair condition compared with the others. [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 22nd, 1919, page 4].

Other notable additions include "Silent Policemen," installed on Main Street in 1928 and presumably removed when it became part of Highway 83 [*View of the Birdtail*, 51]. By the time of the publication in the 1970s, it seems these had long since been removed. *A View of the Birdtail* also reported a considerable amount of new paving in the 1960s [ibid, 53].

24. The *Birtle Observer* wrote

"Mr. Baker, Sup't of the M. & N. W. Railway, was in town on Thursday and Friday. His visit to Birtle was for the purpose of finally locating the station grounds, and to arrange for the delivery of telegraph poles from the end of the track to this place. The poles are now loaded on the cars and will be at Allandale on Saturday, when telegraph construction will be continued into the town. The Office will be in the store of Mr. Manwaring and an agent will be placed in charge" ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, October 30th, 1885, page 4].

Manwaring's stone block was definitely the most impressive building in town at the time ["Building in Birtle," *Birtle Observer*, November 5th, 1886, page 1], and continues to sit picturesquely on Main Street, though now better known as the Pratt Block.

25. "The telegraph office has been removed from the store of Mr. Manwaring & Wright, to the station. Arrangements will be made to connect the town with the telegraph office by telephone" ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, July 9th, 1886, page 4].

26. It would have ended up with the CPR, which ended up with Canadian National-Canadian Pacific Telecommunications in 1967, and the fate of the telegram service can thereafter be tracked through various companies on Wikipedia. When a telegraph service through Birtle stopped I don't know, although there is still a national telegram service which will deliver messages through the post office.

27. "Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, June 9th, 1886, page 4; the planned telephone was apparently installed in the town hall, as "During the night of the 22nd the telegraph and telephone wire were constantly at work brining in reports of the result of the voting from all parts of the Dominion. The Town Hall was crowded with interested men eager to satisfy their curiosity on the eventful question of who was to tulle the country for the next five years" ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, February 25th, 1887, page 4].

This is contrary to the oft-repeated assertion, promulgated by his descendants, that E. J. Wilson had the first telephone in the town, connecting his farm to his office in town, but this was not until 1893 ["The Old and the New," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, January 14th, 1964, page 3]. See the product of Roxann Barker's interview with Ted Wilson, "Good memories never change," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, September 14th, 1993, page 5, which further claims that E. J. Wilson was the first to have gas lighting in Birtle with a plant installed in 1915. Apparently the earlier events in either cases had little enough longevity to count as properly significant.

28. *View of the Birdtail*, 50; In 1904, a by-law "granting a franchise and tax exemption to Mr E. B. Hall's telephone company" because "something better than the happy-go-lucky pretence for a telephone service now in use, is required is apparent to all who use it", was put before Birtle's ratepayers, although, indicating shifts in attitudes towards government since the dawn of the twentieth century, only to those property holders who fell above a certain tax assessment [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 22nd 1904, page 1]. The vote passed on March 30th, as noted in an editorial which that Birtle's need for such a system was greaer than "many larger places owing to its scattered residences and distances of station from its business street." It also noted that

the Hall Brothers had already connected Solsgirth and Birtle with a phone line, and also to Rossburn via Kelloe [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 5th, 1904, page 1].

By July, wires were being strung up around the town [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, July 19th, 1904, page 4], and by the autumn businesses had been hooked up to the network and advertizing their telephone numbers, as per the *Birtle Eye-Witness*, September 13th, 1904, page 4: “The Town telephone system has made connection with Mr F. A. Wilcock’s farm residence east of town. His No. is 25 and all you have to do, is call him up for anything in the Auctioneer, real estate or other of his lines.” The Hall Bros telephone system was initially deemed a triumph:

Hall Brothers early in the year secured a telephone franchise and put in a system with a 50 keyed switchboard located in Speers Drug Store, about 25 of which were taken at the start. This has since been increased to 40 with direct connection to Mr. Wilcocks farm and Solsgirth town and connection there with Kelloe, Shoal Lake and Rossburn. The service is proving so satisfactory that there is every prospect of having connection at an early date with all surrounding points within a radius of at dozen miles also that quite a number of farms will hitch on and at least a hundred keyed central be necessary in a few months [“Birtle Town,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 15th, 1904, page 1].

Furthermore, in 1905, the Town of Birtle reported to a House of Commons committee that Birtle had a privately owned telephone system which had been operating for about ten months, and which was apparently “Giving satisfaction” [Report of the Select Committee on Telephone Systems, Appendix A, No. 136, page 117]. Unfortunately, printed details were sparse, as this was one of the letters given only as a synopsis, “received from clerks of cities, towns, villages, townships and county councils, but not printed in *extenso*” [Ibid, 115].

In 1905, “Management of the town telephone system was transferred from Mr. Hall to J. C. Dudley.” [“Yesteryear Clippings: 80 Years Ago—1905,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 8th, 1985, page 4].

29. “*Passing It On*,” 19.

30. The Bell Company, with a quasi-monopoly, was seen as exploitative with the rates it set; this was reminiscent in the minds of many Manitobans to the

C.P.R. monopoly. The Provincial Government, between 1906 and 1908, made a number of efforts to improve the telephone situation for Manitobans, and passed legislation encouraging a publicly-owned, province wide system. Thus, in December of 1906 already the R.M. of Birtle, which had not been a part of the Town of Birtle’s phone system, passed a by-law by a margin of 201 to 57 to begin working on a municipal system, to then be connected to the wider provincial network [“Birtle Verdict,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, December 25th, 1906, page 1]; Muir, “A History of the Telephone.” *A View of the Birdtail* notes that the Town of Birtle “entered the telephone business” in 1907 [page 51].

The Province under the ironically named Progressive Conservatives privatized the MTS in the late 1990s, and then, amusingly, once they were in government again two decades later, Bell Canada would buy back MTS in 2016.

31. Birtle hadn’t let its system fall apart, but in 1926 bought it a new switchboard, and in 1952 provided for extensive renovations [*View of the Birdtail*, 51].

The location of the telephone office varied. It first appears to have been in the drug store next to the present post office [Sylvia Doran, “People Then and Now: C. L. Dutton,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, December 6th, 1978, page 1]. The telephone operator was later based out of the brick Town Hall on Main Street [Vernon Dutton, editor, “Memories of Marilyn “Buddy” Dutton,” in “*Passing It On*,” 189].

32. “New Telephones at Birtle,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, January 14th, 1964, page 3. In 1964, a unique fire alarm system was also set up, so that anyone phoning the emergency number for the fire brigade would be redirected to the homes of five members of the volunteer fire department and the fire chief’s place of business. Upon receiving such a call, the member of the fire department was able to “trigger the fire siren.” For more on this, see “*Passing It On*,” 137-138.

Marking the later movement away from land lines, Rogers asked the R.M. for permission to build a cell tower in 1995 [“*Passing It On*,” 11].

33. “*Passing It On*,” 13.

34. MTS was the first on the ground, giving its ownership of the landline network. However, another example is appears on page 11 of “*Passing It*

On,” which notes that I-NetLink was to provide high-speed internet to residents in the R.M. as of 2007.

“Press Release,” August 19th, 2016, Park West Fiber Optic Co-Op Inc, accessed August 28th, 2017, <http://cms.myprairieview.ca/Editor/images/PRESS%20RELEASE%20August%202016.jpg>; “Invest Here,” Prairie View Municipality, accessed August 28th, 2017, <http://www.myprairieview.ca/main.aspx?parentCode=84B126F0-7B86-479E-9229-E8E94FB7E0FB>. Plans of how to exploit the cable for town use continue to be developed.

35. “Birtle is celebrated for the magnificent spring which bursts in a strong clear fountain from the wooded bank, and flows in a beautiful never freezing stream into the river. From the spring all the people of the town get their water supply...” [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, April 16th, 1886, page 4]. Even Alfred Morton up on the south hill would haul home water from the Spring [MD: June 12th, 1886, and April 20th, 1887].

However, public access to the spring had not been factored into the town layout, and by May of 1886 private proprietors, including J. H. Wood, had blocked off the roads towards it [“A Question of Cold Water.” *Birtle Observer*, May 14th, 1886, page 1]. The ultimate solution appears to have been the building of a staircase from the height of the bank, as recommended in 1894, thus allowing the old track following the river to gradually disappear [Town of Birtle Council Minutes, October 3rd, 1894, page 352].

The spring was not the only source of water. The spring was not the only source of water, and cisterns were also built into many homes for obtaining water for washing. “Wells carried from the spring” provided drinking and cooking water. For those without cisterns, ice cut on the Birdtail was melted for washing [Vernon Dutton, editor, “Memories of Marilyn “Buddy” Dutton,” in *“Passing It On,”* 188-189]. There was also early mention of waterworks in connection with the railway station and railway company. A letter from W. R. Baker of the railway referencing it was presented to Town Council, and Mayor Crawford was sent as a deputation to Winnipeg to discuss the question with him [Town minutes, Fourth Council, 5th Session, 1887, February 27th, 1887, 146-147].

36. *View of the Birdtail*, 53: “In 1955 Haddon, Davis and Brown, Consulting Engineers, were authorized to proceed with a survey. Detailed discussions with the engineers took place early in 1957. Local Improvement District No.

One was formed by By-Law No. 610 on May 5th, 1959. Contracts were awarded July 23rd, 1960 for construction of the water and sewage system.”

The Town also got considerable financial help from the Indian Department, asking for a capital grant of almost 44,000 dollars, which was approved conditional on the passing of the relevant by-law. This grant seems to have covered not only the cost of “water main and booster station, and Sanitary sewer main from the hospital to the Indian School” but also “proportionate shares of cost and water treatment plant and appurtenances, lagoon and appurtenances and sewage lift station and force main. The co-operation of the Indian Affairs Branch in supporting the proposed Municipal system will mean much added revenue and result in a reduction of rates for water & Sewage facilities.” [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 17th, 1959, page 3. See also the Public Notice from the Town on the same page].

The water and sewage system was still being extended in 1964-1965, as per the table concerning federal loans to Manitoba provided to the House of Commons by L. T. Pennell on May 17th, 1965, *House of Commons Debates: Official Report: Third Session—Twenty Sixth Parliament 13 Elizabeth II: Volume II, Comprising the Period from the Tenth Day of May, 1965, to the Eighth Day of June, 1965, inclusive* (Ottawa: House of Commons, 1965), page 1345.

The rest of the developments are outlined in Prairie View Municipality’s “Birtle Water Treatment Information Notice,” dated March 6th, 2017.

37. At the time of writing, this plan was current as of a public meeting held on December 19th, 2017. Travis Parsons, Ken Anderson, and Tina Collier presented “Prairie View Municipality: Birtle Water Supply System, Phase 1 & Phase 2 Upgrades.” Paper copies of the slides in the presentation were printed for attendees.

Section 6. Provincial Government

I haven’t talked here about changes in rules of suffrage in this section, for the simple reason that they don’t seem to have made major differences in the candidates elected. For example, Manitoba extended suffrage to women in 1916, the first province to do so. This change does not appear to have greatly altered the electoral scene, as the incumbent won, despite a very strong showing from the new Farmers party. The main change appears to

have been that for the first time in the history of Birtle's being in a provincial electoral district, the turnout of the district fell below that of the provincial average, which is significant, but which can not be traced exclusively to Birtle and may not have applied there at all [Elections Manitoba, *Historical Summaries*, 197; 226-235]

1. Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 20-21. Alfred Morton attended that party, and acted as secretary at a meeting hosted by J. H. Wood to consider the boundary question [MD: December 31st, 1880; January 1st and 11th, 1881]. He then wrote a memorial and petition on behalf of the whole area [MD: January 12th 1881].

An Act to provide for the extension of the Boundaries of Manitoba 44 Victoria, 1881, cap. XIV received royal assent on March 21st, 1881. However, it provided that the date they would be extended would be published later. This would be on December 23rd [Association of Manitoba Land Surveyors, "The First Boundary Extension," retrieved December 19th, 2017, <http://www.amls.ca/the-first-boundary-extension>].

2. "Local and Provincial: The Official Gazette: New Registration District," *Manitoba Free Press*, June 27th, 1882, page 2; the Land Registry Office was likely also placed in Birtle because the Dominion Lands Agency was already there, so that homesteaders entering their homestead or getting their title deeds could then register their land with the provincial government in a one-stop trip.

The Registry Office was located on main street: "On Monday the house on Main street next the Registry office, caught fire and was with difficulty saved from destruction. Steps should be taken to place the records of the county in a place of greater safety. Within the last three years the Registry office and the house close to it have been several times on fire" ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, May 11th, 1887, page 4]. When the Land Registry office in Birtle was finally closed, the *Eye-Witness* reported that "it had been located for many years in the Eye-Witness Block" ["The Party Line," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 1st, 1955, page 1].

3. In 1883, Birtle had one of the courts within the Western Judicial District, of which its former M.P.P. Clement was appointed Sheriff [Hardy, *Ontario, Manitoba and North-West Legal Directory*, 128]. However, nothing seemed too official, with no buildings were put up. Then in 1885 a provincial Order in Council was passed, "making Birtle County Town," according to the *Birtle*

Observer, which had been given advance notice of it ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, February 20th, 1885, page 4]; the official Order in Council was passed on March 3rd ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, March 13th, 1885, page 4] After it officially happened, the *Observer* was pleased, noting it gave "the judicial business of the country a proper and convenient centre" but also assurance that the railway, which had not yet reached Birtle, would do so. Furthermore, the "fixing of the site of the County buildings, at Birtle, will no doubt be gratifying to residents, property holders, to business men and others, and will considerably add to the prosperity of the place, but it is to be hoped that no undue excitement will be encouraged" because farmers still have to start growing things for the area to amount to anything, railways and county town status notwithstanding ["The County Town," *Birtle Observer*, March 20th, 1885, page 2].

4. Stephen Clement had been elected at a by-election, as had Leacock, prior to a dissolution of the provincial legislature; however, Leacock was re-elected at the Birtle's first general election.

5. Registry Office: *An Act to amend chapter 60 of the Consolidated Statutes, intituled "The Land Registration Act of Manitoba,"* 46 Victoria Cap. IV. It received royal assent on July 7th. The job of the registry was to keep track of who owned land after the federal government alienated it, because once Crown lands entered private hands, they fell to provincial management. The text makes it quite clear too that there were fees to register land. Furthermore, the Registrar got to keep all fees and emoluments up to 4000 dollars, so this was a valuable office to hold.

In late 1887, the editor of the *Birtle Observer* took advantage of the appointment of a new registrar, J. S. Crawford, to recommend that a new building be constructed, one not of wood directly adjacent to other buildings, an obvious safety hazard in a town which had suffered badly from fire that summer. A building made of stone would also be less likely to be vacated if the provincial ministry were to change its mind about the locations of its land registries. Crawford's term was to start on January 1st, 1888 ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, November 4th, 1887, page 4; *Birtle Observer*, December 16th, 1887, page 1]. Shortly after Crawford's duties began, Alfred Morton was appointed Deputy Registrar, the editor of the *Birtle Observer* pointing out that "Mr. Morton is known to be a skillful and careful scribe and his duties will be well attended to" ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, January 13th, 1888, page 4]. These appointments to prominent,

though eminently qualified, local Conservatives suggest that it continued to be a patronage position.

Clerk of the County Court: The first clerk was F. K. Herchmer [Hardy, *Ontario, Manitoba and North-West Legal Directory*, 128]. He is not to be confused with his brother, Lawrence Herchmer (Indian Agent and later NWMP Commissioner); however, they both earned their positions by virtue of being the nephews of an old school friend of Sir John A. Macdonald. Clerk of the County Court was not a full-time position, and F. K. also served other patronage positions in the Land Office and later as a forestry inspector [“Locals,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 13th, 1893, page 4; “F. K Herchmer,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, June 28th, 1913, page 3]. The County Court Clerk’s office moved into the newly built building by Mr. Howard, along with Mickle’s law office, in March, 1885 [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, March 13th, 1885, page 4].

Chairman of the Judicial Board: “House of Assembly,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 4th, 1884, page 3.

6. Elections Manitoba, *Historical Summaries*, 196; 238.

7. Ibid, 195; Simpson, *Spoils of Power*, 254; *An Act to provide for the Division of the Province into Electoral Divisions* 1957 Elizabeth Cap. XVIII, received royal assent on March 30th, 1957.

8. The boundaries used in these depictions are rougher than I would like them to be. They are overlaid on a Manitoba Highway map from 1928 [Province of Manitoba, Infrastructure and Transportation, Historical Highway Maps of Manitoba, accessed September 26th, 2017, <http://www.gov.mb.ca/mit/maparchive/index.html>]. The maps are based on the following:

Birtle (1881-1886): *An Act to divide the new added territory to the Province of Manitoba into electoral divisions and for representation in the Legislative Assembly* 44 Victoria Cap. XII, received royal assent May 25th, 1881: “Electoral division number 28, or Birtle, shall consist of townships 13 to 30, inclusive, ranges 23 to 29, inclusive.”

Shoal Lake (1886-1888): *An Act to Divide the Province of Manitoba into Electoral Divisions* 49 Victoria Cap. XL, received royal assent May 28th, 1886, “The electoral division of Shoal Lake shall comprise the county of Shoal Lake.” See also *An Act to consolidate and amend the laws relating to Municipal Corporations* 49 Victoria Cap. LII, received royal assent May

28th, 1886, “The County of Shoal Lake shall comprise townships 13 to 18, both inclusive, from and including range 23 west to the western boundary of the Province, with all the Indian Reserves included within these boundaries.”

Birtle (1888-1958): *An Act to divide the Province of Manitoba into Electoral Divisions* 51 Victoria Cap. III, received royal assent April 30th, 1888, “The Electoral Division of Birtle shall comprise the Town of Birtle and the Municipalities of Ellice, Archie, Birtle and Miniota.”

Birtle-Russell (1958-1981): *An Act to provide for the Division of the Province into Electoral Districts*, 1957 Elizabeth Cap. XVIII. The act notes that Birtle-Russell consisted of townships 16 to 18 in ranges 25 to 29 west, and townships 19 to 21 in ranges 21 to 29 west.

Virden (1981-1990): based on the map in “Chasing the Marbles: Election ’81,” *Brandon Sun*, October 24th, 1981, page 19.

Roblin-Russell (1990-1999): “The Electoral Divisions Amendment Act,” received royal assent June 26th, 1989.

Section 7. Federal Government

1. Wood to Macdonald, January 1st, 1880, LAC, MIKAN 547645. The terms upon which Manitoba entered Confederation meant that the public or Crown Lands within the new province devolved onto the Dominion Crown, rather than the provincial Crown as had happened with those provinces who had first been their own Crown Colonies prior to their joining Confederation. The reason was to settle the Northwest as quickly and with as few impediments, such as a potential desire of the existing inhabitants to maintain a demographic superiority over immigrants, as possible, and the excuse was that the Dominion Government reversed a longstanding policy and had bought all the rights claimed by the Hudson’s Bay Company, most of which it had previously rejected, such as that the HBC held fee simple ownership of all Rupert’s Land, barring the extinguishment of Indian title. Leaving aside the speciousness of the position, the Land Office was a federal appointment, as was surveying Crown Lands. Not until individual homesteads and sections had been alienated would they fall under the administration of the Crown of Manitoba. This constitutional inequality became the focus of considerable tension between the provincial and federal governments (see resolution 3 in Appendix 11, as an example). Alberta and

Saskatchewan had been set up with the same template and had similar debates with the federal government. Finally, in 1929 and 1930, in three separate agreements, the Crown of Canada transferred the bulk of what remained of its Crown Land to the crowns of the respective provinces.

2. Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 9; MD: January 19th and April 26th, 1879.

3. Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 9; MD: August 27th, 1879. Officially, however, the Post Office dates to September 1st, 1879 [Library and Archives Canada, Postal Heritage and Philately, Post Offices and Postmasters, Item 5946, accessed August 30th, 2017, <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/postal-heritage-philately/post-offices-postmasters/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=5946&>].

4. The post office in Birtle functioned as a “sub post office for Shoal Lake” [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 9]. Although Wood was not content with his position as Postmaster, it did provide his electoral ambition a certain amount of potential, as he would be able to connect with individuals from a wide area. Mail day was a social event; and mail runs went out from Birtle to the post offices at Toddburn and Rossburn in the early years, for example [*View of the Birdtail*, 30]. Presumably this became less of an event as mails became more frequent and after Birtle's own post office was established, mail delivery times multiplied. Thus, on March 26th, 1881 and in connection to construction on the C.P.R., Birtle got a weekly mail [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 21; MD: March 26th, 1881; *View of the Birdtail*, 30]. Mail began arriving twice weekly in 1883 [MD: April 3rd, 1883], and it was expected that a daily mail would follow soon after the completion of the railway into Birtle [“One of the comforts to be enjoyed in a few weeks, or as soon as the railway is completed to this point, will be the much needed advantage of a daily mail” in “Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, August 24th, 1885, page 4], and the amount of trains to go through Birtle suggests it played out as expected [*Birtle Observer*, March 19th, 1886, page 1], though I'm not sure.

There was a fair bit of continuity to Birtle's status as a hub; it had gotten in early, and, with the help of its post office, has managed to outlast the majority of its contemporaries, as per the LAC database, noted in the previous footnote, which includes the records of other local post offices: Toddburn (1882-1899), Wattsvie (1884-1915), Warleigh (1884-1909), Lansburn (1884-1891), Solgirth (opened in 1886), and Foxwarren (opened in 1889).

5. Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 9; MD: August 27th, 1879.

6. Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 17, notes that it was a 20x30 foot Red River frame residence. See also Clementi Smith's report for the the Land Agency, which further notes a 15x20 foot addition under construction, as well as an unfinished 34x21 foot building to serve as stables and a shed [Report, Clementi Smith to A. J. Belch, Birtle, October 6th, 1880, page 12, in LAC, MIKAN 1470805]. Indeed, the home was so large that in 1881 Wood noted it also housed the Land Office and was “the only public hall in the place” [J. H. Wood to John A. Macdonald, Birtle, March 15th, 1881, MIKAN 534545]. These functions would all be mimicked in the new block built by his son, although according to Wilson these were separate structures [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 31].

A hint as to the location “The valley we speak of is about twenty feet above high water mark on the banks of the rivers. At the foot of this bank there are some of the finest springs in the North-West and as good as any in the world. Mr. Wood's house is built on the bluff just above one of these, and a beautiful terrace leading from the underground story to the spring is a walk of more than ordinary beauty.” [More Anon, “Birtle. Its Progress and Prospects. Correspondence of the London Free Press,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 25th, 1880, page 1].

7. Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 31. At the end of 1882, the second floor was turned into the Albert Hall [MD: December 31st, 1882]. This may have been a tribute to the late Prince Albert (paired later by the Victoria Hall above the Birtle Eye-Witness building [*View of the Birdtail*, 435]. However, there was a tradition in the J. H. Wood family to name things after themselves. Thus St. Clair City and St. Clair Street shared the name of Wood's third son, and presumably Woodburn Street was also rooted in the Wood family, and perhaps partly also the John Street which had been projected and never built [see the original town plan in Tyman, By Section, 96, which interestingly calls Woodburn Street Woodburn Avenue, as Wood appears to have chosen to name roads laid out east to west alternatively as streets or avenues but giving each a specific name; these were distinguished from roads on a more north-south axis which were all named streets, but were given numbers rather than names].

Regardless, the building was much used by locals, and became something of a landmark. Indeed, for a time the slope down from that bank of the hill to the river was known as the Post Office Hill [*View of the Birdtail*, 202]. J.

H. Wood was succeeded as postmaster by his son, A. B. Wood, who was in turn succeeded by his brother, W. H. H. Wood. The Post Office store appears to have done well. Despite some painting and other improvements in 1887 [“Manitoba and the North-West,” *Brandon Sun*, November 3rd, 1887, page 1], it was so successful that the building was completely renovated to better accommodate it in 1892, temporarily displacing the post office [“Locals,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, October 27th, 1892, page 4; “Locals,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 3rd, 1892, page 4; “Birtle,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, December 21st, 1893, page 1].

8. The attached store went with the post office [“Arthur Neale moved his Massey Harris Agency and Music Store into the “Right House” and the Post office and store moved up to Main St. from Albert “Hall.””—“The Old News—Sixty Years Ago—1909,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, December 17th, 1969, page 5]; W. H. H. Wood was the postmaster at the time, and the move was completed on December 8th to the post office’s “new quarters next to the Union Bank block” [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, December 14th, 1909, page 6].

9. Though at its 100th anniversary, the building was reported as having been built in 1937 [“Birtle Post Office 100 Years Old,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, September 14th, 1979, page 7], the date 1938 appears above the door of the main building, so I went with that. Furthermore, the building appears to have still been under construction in 1939, apparently connected to efforts to get an independent water supply for the building — “Water in quicksand was found at Birtles new post office at 80 feet. It promises an ample supply” [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 11th, 1939, page 4]; “With assurance of adequate water supply for ordinary needs the well drill moved away from Post Office yesterday. Birtle has no organized fire protection but a reasonable length of hose attached to a water supply so located would reach most of the worst fire hazards in town. What are the possibilities?” [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 18th, 1939, page 4]; “The construction inspector came up Friday and O.K.ed the New Post Office to date. A Regina firm has the contract for installing fittings and Fred Dodd has been accepted as caretaker.” [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 2nd, 1939, page 4].

The site itself had been purchased from the Town of Birtle for 700 dollars, and total costs of construction amounted to 13,661.27, as reported to the House of Commons on May 14th, 1941 [*Dominion of Canada Official Report of Debates House of Commons, Second Session—Nineteenth Parliament, 4-5 George VI, 1941, Volume III, Comprising the Period from*

the Seventh Day of April, 1941, to the Twenty-Eighth Day of May, 1941, Inclusive, Being Volume CCXXVII for the period 1875-1941 (Ottawa: House of Commons, 1941), page 2808]. The House of Commons voted on 2000 dollars to purchase a building “for Postal purposes” [*Journals of the House of Commons of the Dominion of Canada From the 17th January, 1935, to the 5th July, 1935, both days inclusive, the Twenty-Fifth and Twenty-Sixth Years of the Reigns of Our Sovereign Lord, King George the Fifth, Sixth Session of the Seventeenth Parliament of Canada, Session 1935* (Ottawa: House of Commons, 1935), page 667] which does not seem to have been very elaborated on in the *Birtle Eye-Witness* except “\$2000 is listed in federal supplementary vote to purchase Birtle Post Office” [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, July 2nd, 1935, page 1]. However, seeing as the post office store, which I’m assuming was privately owned and operated, moved to Main Street with the post office in 1909, then presumably that was also a privately leased space. This then presumably marks the first time that the federal government owned the land and building which it used as a post office in Birtle.

The town could have been more enthused about the new building, however. When the town rink blew down in 1938, Birtle Branch #55 of the Legion helped spur on the construction of a new rink, resolving, among other things, to “suggest to the Birtle and District organizations that a community meeting to be called to jointly approach the Dominion Government, pointing out that the erection of a skating and curling rink is of more importance than a new Post Office and ask the authorities to assist in funds to meet the cost of the same” [quoted in Ernie Walley, Bruce Thornton, Nelson Ewbank, Bob Evans, Larry Kowal, Nancy Birch, Margaret Ashcroft, and Shirley Barteaux, “The Rinks of Birtle,” in *“Passing It On,”* 118; the text goes on to note that “Plans for the new Post Office went ahead anyway”].

10. The name St. Clair survives under an alternate spelling in the street name St. Clare. However, all newspaper evidence I found for the brief amount of time that the settlement was called St. Clair City pointed to the St. Clair spelling rather than St. Clare.

Wilson, *Birtle’s Beginning*, 17. See also the letter from J. H. Wood’s son, and a later postmaster, written in 1905 which notes this [cited in Manitoba Conservation, *Geographical Names of Manitoba*, 27]. It’s also worth considering that the Town Seal, the creation of which was authorized at the very first Town Council meeting, was to have a picture of a bird on it [“Picking from Old Minutes and Bylaws of the Council of the Town of

Birtle,” “*Passing It On*,” 189], suggesting the primary importance of the name of the river to the name of the town.

The name itself appears to have been bestowed on the town in June, 1880, as per the a handwritten history to date of the town included in the cornerstone of the Stone School, which was laid in 1882 by J. H. Wood who presumably knew what he was on about [“Corner Stone Enclosure Makes Interesting Reading,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 15th, 1973, page 1].

Another potential name included Birdtail, so that at the end of 1879 when a group from Birtle went to Gladstone for flour, E. J. Wilson, who was one of them, specifically wrote that they left “Birdtail Crossing, not yet named Birtle, on November 14th in high spirits.” The theme continued, and at Gladstone they were called “the Birdtail boys” [Wilson, *Birtle’s Beginning*, 33-34].

St. Clair City was said to be “the name of the embryo metropolis at Bird Tail creek” in the *Manitoba Free Press*, June 2nd, 1879, page 1. See also the hotel arrivals on the same page, which note S. W. Chambers of “St. Clair City, N.W.T.” However, already by January of 1880, it was being phased out, as per an excerpt from the London Free Press reprinted in the Manitoba Free Press, noting that a group of settlers were destined for “Birtle or St. Clair City.” [*Manitoba Free Press*, January 15th, 1880, page 1].

11. Eugene Teeling, “Birtle, N. W. T.: It’s Progress and Its Prospects,” letter dated June 30th, 1880 from Birtle, addressed to the Hamilton *Spectator*, appearing in the *Manitoba Free Press*, July 22nd, 1880, page 1.

12. Thomas Etsell, for example, a settler at Oak Lake, had to walk 60 miles to the land title office [Oak Lake History Committee, *Ox Trails to Blacktop*, 189].

13. Before the Land Office was built, Belch had a temporary office in Carpenter’s boarding house [Wilson, *Birtle’s Beginning*, 18]. This does not appear to have been a permanent arrangement, but by the summer of 1881, Belch had been incredibly busy [Ibid] and presumably hadn’t had the time to arrange for the erection of the office, as it was then located in Wood’s building on Centre and St. Clair streets, as per a letter Wood wrote the prime minister. This is a little ironic, in that in the letter Wood bitterly regrets the rumoured appointment of a young man, possibly Clementi Smith though the chronology seems off, “who has no family but a very good income from London England” and “happens to be a favorite with some such choice

spirits,” which would mean that Wood would have to uproot himself from the community he built in order to get a sinecure [J. H. Wood to John A. Macdonald, Birtle, March 15th, 1881, MIKAN 534545]. This was especially galling for Wood, as he had expected an appointment as the principal agent of the Birtle Land Office himself. Indeed, he had apparently had a conversation with Macdonald in the latter’s home on that very subject, and on hearing that Belch was to get the position, he’d written “and if the rumour is correct then I may use the language of the old book and say ‘Cursed is he that putteth confidence in princes.’” [J. H. Wood to John A. Macdonald, Birtle, January 1st, 1880, Mikan 547645. Underlining in original]. Perhaps, with that kind of language being used, it isn’t a surprise that Wood did not get the later position either. Nevertheless, after writing that letter, he wrote within the month to J. S. Dennis, among other things asking for a land office, and confidently saying that “I am getting a suitable building in readiness on the ministers promise of the appointment.” [J. H. Wood to J. S. Dennis, Birtle, January 22nd, 1880, LAC, MIKAN 1470803].

The boundaries of the land district can be found in Tyman, *By Section*, 39.

14. Major Boulton had apparently tried to take advantage of the recent appointment of D. L. McPherson as minister responsible for the policy concerning and administration of Dominion lands, or at least Crawford wrote to mitigate such a threat, as he wrote to McPherson saying that when Boulton tried to get Birtle’s land agency removed, it was in the hopes that it would end up in Russell, where Boulton himself owned the town site and stood to benefit [J. S. Crawford, signed as President of the H&NCS, to D.L. McPherson, Birtle, December 3rd, 1883, LAC, MIKAN 1471984]. McPherson had only been appointed on October 17th [Ken Cruikshank, “MACPHERSON, Sir DAVID LEWIS,” in Dictionary of Canadian Biography, vol. 12, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed August 30, 2017, http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/macpherson_david_lewis_12E.html].

Some of these efforts can be found in LAC MIKAN 1471959: “C. A. Boulton, Birtle Land Office. Petitions from Settlers in the County of Russell and Council for the Removal of the Land Office to the Village of Russell.” Petitions received included one from the County Council of Russell and one from the Council of the Municipality of Shell River, in addition to a petition signed by a number of councillors of the Municipality of Boulton, asking that the land office be moved to Russell. An HBC factor and an apparently

personal acquaintance of Macdonald were also recruited to the cause, writing blatantly that “My homestead adjoins the Town of Russell, which is an enterprising & pushing place, and the removal of the Land Office would be a great personal benefit to me. In consideration of the long association on my late dear Father under you, in the Civil Service, I have felt, that a personal appeal to you would help my interests.” [James C. Audy to John A. Macdonald, Russell, Shell River, December 21st, 1883]. On the other side, a resolution had also been passed by the County Council of the United Counties of Shoal Lake and Russell, recommending that the land office stay in Birtle. A separate memorial from the Council Council of the United Counties of Shoal Lake and Russell went for a compromise, asking that a second land office be established in Birtle, which would mean both areas would be able to benefit. The ultimate result was a recommendation by Aquila Walsh, accepted by the Minister of the Interior, to leave the land office in Birtle until the construction of the Manitoba & Northwestern Railway, after which it would be moved to somewhere else along the line.

The railway came to Birtle in 1886, but it was able to hang onto the office until 1893.

15. “That same year (1893) major alterations were effected in the pattern of the older established districts. The Birtle and Turtle Mountain offices were closed and their districts merged with those of the Souris and Little Saskatchewan agencies” [Tyman, By Section, 61]. Compare with “The Dominion Land Office at Birtle closed April 1st with the territory parcelled to Minnedosa, Brandon and Yorkton offices. W. Pentland and F. K. Herchmer moved to Yorkton” [“The Old News: 90 Years Ago—1893,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 13th, 1983, page 4].

There may also have been some connection to parties in power, in that Mickle was a staunch, high profile provincial Liberal and the federal government Conservative, although I would think that the change had more to do with the declining need for a land office so nearby; railways had made travel from Birtle and area much easier to get to centralized land offices. Earlier, Birtle had actually benefitted from reorganizations, such as in 1888 [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, December 13th, 1888, page 4].

16. The position of farming instructor was a blatant patronage appointment, because though Herchmer had some farming experience in Ontario, his primary qualification was his father’s friendship with John A. Macdonald [Satzewich, “Patronage,” 221]. Herchmer’s appointment also covered the

more populous Sioux reserve at Oak River, where Herchmer had been instructed to settle, but he instead chose to settle near the Birdtail Reserve, retroactively getting the relevant permission. The reason he listed in his request were that he had already built a house and stable and had ploughed 14 acres at Birdtail [Herchmer to Buckingham, November 4, 1878, in MIKAN 2061585; Privy Council to Macdonald, December 20, 1878, in MIKAN 2061585]. In 1882, the position of farming instructor was abolished [Wilson, *Birtle’s Beginning*, 30]. An example of Herchmer’s membership in the so-called higher social circles included the fact that he was at the big New Year’s Eve party at Fort Ellice where they discussed the boundary extension [*View of the Birdtail*, 32].

17. Regarding provisions, two separate invitations for the submission of tenders for supplies needed by the Indian Department, with the lists of agencies and their respective agents, can be found on page 4 of the *Birtle Observer*, April 29th, 1887. One is more general in nature, the other specifically asking for flour. Before the arrival of the railway, supplies would have been especially more likely to have been locally sourced. As the *Birtle Observer* noted in a booster piece from 1888, which mentioned all of the government and other services which were on offer in Birtle, noted that “The Indian agency is also situated here and eleven bands of Indians obtain their supplies at this place” [“Towns and Villages on M. & N. W. Ry in these Counties.: Birtle,” *Birtle Observer*, January 19th, 1888, page 1].

As for the role of Birtle’s Indian Agents in the town’s social life, Herchmer was known for his lavish New Years’ parties at his “hospitable mansion” in Birtle [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, January 9th, 1885, page 4] and for having encouraged “every establishment, having for its object the progress of [Birtle] and welfare of the inhabitants” [*Birtle Observer*, March 19th, 1886, page 1]. As for his successor, Agent Markle, he was able to count on J. S. Crawford, Birtle’s popular mayor, and H. A. Manwaring, the foremost entrepreneur of the town and also a future mayor, as his “sureties” for the position of Indian Agent [Reed to Vankoughnet, August 21, 1886, in MIKAN 2059438]. Similarly important socially was Markle’s successor G. H. Wheatley. Though he left Birtle in the early 1920s, he and his family were important enough to the community to have merited an entry in the biographical section of *A View of the Birdtail* [page 429].

As late as 1901, the Indian Agency would mean the “Birtle area covered with tents and teepees as claimants awaited scrip” [*View of the Birdtail*, 216].

18. The agency left its mark on the landscape of Birtle, if for its involvement in the erection of buildings alone. Leaving aside the Residential schools, see for example C. J. Mickle, vendor's solicitor, "Mortgage Sale of Valuable Town Property Birtle," *Birtle Observer*, March 11th, 1887, page 4: The property, lot 9 in block 76, was to be auctioned off; details included that it "is situated on North side of Main Street, and has a frame building there, formerly used as the Indian Agency building, also a frame stable; Lot has 25 feet frontage, and runs 126 feet in depth to a lane." Whether the building had been built or merely rented by the federal government is uncertain.

As for the question of water access, the last Indian Agent, Mr. Smith, was noted as having a water pump at the Indian Agency which was used by the Townshend family from 1936-1946 [*View of the Birdtail*, 420].

19. Transcript of *Canada Department of Mines and Resources Report of Indian Affairs Branch for the Fiscal Year ended March 31, 1949 (Reprinted from the Annual Report of the Department of Mines and Resources, Pages 189 to 218 inclusive)* (Ottawa: Indian Affairs Branch, Department of Mines and Resources, 1950), no page numbers, accessed on August 30th, 2017, <http://central.bac-lac.gc.ca/.item/?id=1949-IAAR-RAAI&op=pdf&app=indianaffairs>.

That the residential school's location is due to the Birtle Agency's is circumstantial, but one I'm willing to stand by. The presence of a strong Presbyterian would also have played a significant role in the decision, but the federal government would have been more apt to smile on Presbyterian plans when its agent was able to look in on proceedings more easily.

20. "MARQUETTE, Manitoba (1871-1979)," History of Federal Ridings since 1867, Parliament of Canada, accessed August 30th, 2017, <http://www.res.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/FederalRidingsHistory/hfer.asp?Language=E&Search=Det&rid=424&Include=>; "PORTAGE—MARQUETTE, Manitoba (1979-1988), History of Federal Ridings since 1867, Parliament of Canada, accessed August 30th, 2017, <http://www.res.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/FederalRidingsHistory/hfer.asp?Language=E&Search=Det&rid=560&Include=>; "DAUPHIN—SWAN RIVER, Manitoba (1983-2004)," History of Federal Ridings since 1867, Parliament of Canada, accessed August 30th, 2017, <http://www.res.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/FederalRidingsHistory/hfer.asp?Language=E&Search=Det&rid=886&Include=>; "DAUPHIN—SWAN RIVER—MARQUETTE, Manitoba (2004-2015)," History of Federal

Ridings since 1867, Parliament of Canada, accessed August 30th, 2017, <http://www.res.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/FederalRidingsHistory/hfer.asp?Language=E&Search=Det&rid=1425&Include=>; "DAUPHIN—SWAN RIVER—NEEPAWA, Manitoba (2015-)," History of Federal Ridings since 1867, Parliament of Canada, accessed August 30th, 2017, <http://www.res.parl.gc.ca/About/Parliament/FederalRidingsHistory/hfer.asp?Language=E&Search=Det&rid=1522&Include=>.

21. Stubbs, *A Majority of One*, 31-34.

22. *View of the Birdtail*, 51.

23. There was a brief break in the 1990s when the PC party disintegrated.

Section 8. Media

1. Reunions were planned for Birtle pioneers as early as 1897, and interest continued; thus

Currently interest is being shown in plans for a museum and for preservation of relics and history of Birtle's past. The interest is not new! The first Banquet of Birtle Pioneers w'as held on February 17, 1897, in the Lepper Block, now occupied by Barker's Men's Wear. Arrangement had previously been made by a voluntary provisional committee consisting of J. S. Crawford, J. R. Cook and E. J. Wilson and some 60 pioneers and 30 of their friends took part in the banquet. During the evening a permanent Association was set up and an annual gathering was proposed, also "that steps be taken to collect and preserve relics of pioneering days and life." ["Party Line," *Birtle Eye-Witness* June 4th, 1963, page 1].

More details can found in Binder of resident pioneers with Birtle Eye-Witness Clippings, BCM, 3563-98-G and Pioneer ledger, with lists of pioneers from 1879, deaths, financial statements, reunion write-ups, some newspaper clippings, BCM, 3635-99-G (L).

For the diaspora, see Phoebe Hamilton, 'Foreign' Correspondent, "Good Turnout at Birtle Re-Union at Vancouver," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 6th, 1975, page 1.

2. Walpole Murdoch, “Memories of ’79 and Later Years” and “Bought Rock Lake Herald Plant,” in McKittrick, *Cornerstones of Empire*, 54-55. While page 215 of *A View of the Birdtail* claims that the *Birtle Observer* lasted “just long enough to repay the town for a bonus and loaned freight charges,” Murdoch claimed that the bonus had been paid in the form of relieving his debt for setting up the operation, which suggests that the bonus was indeed a bonus rather than an advance, as Abra seems to have construed it.

For more details on the timeline, see Morton Diary entries of Saturday October 11th, 1884; Saturday November 25th, 1884; Tuesday November 15th, 1884; and Saturday, December 13th, 1884.

3. There may have been a connection with the John Murdoch had been involved with the Conservative *Pilot Mound Signal* which closed on January 10th, 1885, presumably shortly after James went to help his son with the *Birtle Observer* [Loveridge, *A Historical Directory*] The *Signal* had competed with Greenway’s failed Liberal/Reform *Rock Lake Herald* at Crystal City [“Mr. Greenway and the Liberals of Southern Manitoba,” *Birtle Observer*, February 12th, 1886, page 1], whose press Walpole bought for the use of the *Observer* [Murdoch, “Memories,” in McKittrick, *Cornerstones*, 54].

4. Or so the *Observer* claimed:

... The people of Birtle and vicinity send about two hundred copies of the OBSERVER to their friends in Ontario; men who purchased land at the great sale here mostly all take this paper in order to see how the district prospers; we exchange with the Stratford, Ottawa and Toronto papers, and with other journals which are ever ready to catch anything deprecatory of Manitoba and turn it to injury of this province. [“Abusing the Country,” *Birtle Observer*, August 6th, 1886, page 1]

Some of this may have been through the custom among newspapers to exchange issues with each other, in order to pick up on news happening elsewhere in the country. Murdoch would have a precise idea of how many issues of each run of the *Birtle Observer* he personally sent to Ontario.

5. “Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, December 3rd, 1886, page 4, noted that the *Observer* was printing ballots for the provincial election. Similarly, it received paid advertizing from Indian Affairs [*Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs*, 1887, 233]. Likewise, the *Birtle Observer*

earned \$ 228.30 in advertising in 1887*, almost twice as much as was paid to the two Brandon newspapers on the list, the *Mail* and the *Times* — the *Brandon Sun*, as overtly aligned with the Reform or Liberal party, received nothing [*Report of the Auditor-General, 1887*, xiv]

6. *Birtle Observer*, January 31st, 1889. The paper announced that this was its final issue, that they were packing up the press and moving back to the County of Rock Lake to set up a paper. That would be sent to those who still had subscriptions to the *Observer*, until they ran out. The edition also noted that they had tried to sell the paper earlier, but that the sale had fallen through when an early frost had ruined much of the area’s wheat crop.

It was based out of the Town Hall [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, March 6th, 1885, page 4].

7. *View of the Birdtail*, 215, 435. Initially Wilson had shareholders, but in time he became the sole owner. There was some kind of problem in 1897, when some kind of newspaper association, perhaps his shareholders, objected to his editorial stance, during which Wilson built the new building. The paper appears to have continued to be produced; instead, the paper received no printing contracts from governments during this period [“It’s Our Seventy-Ninth Birthday!” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, September 16th, 1970, page 1]. *View of the Birdtail*, 215 also noted that he had a partner, J. C. McChesney, for the first three years. Members of the Birtle History Project Committee reviewed a rough draft of these notes, and added that in 1891 the *Eye-Witness* began its operations in a building on the southwest corner of Main and 10th Street, where the cenotaph now is.

The *Eye-Witness* building burned down in 1979 [“*Passing It On*,” 139].

8. *View of the Birdtail*, 215. In 2001, it received a Centennial Business Award.

9. “W.H.E.N. IN NOW! CABLE TV SERVICE NOW AVAILABLE IN BIRTLE TOWN,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 25th, 1982, page 2.

10. “Community Media Committee Established For Access TV,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 20th 1983, page 1.

11. Carroll and Broadhead, *1996 Canadian Internet Handbook*, 53-55. To understand why it was such a big deal that Birtle was included, the handbook needs to be understood in regards to the important role it had in introducing the newly-accessible Internet to Canadians. Helpful in this regard is Jim

Carroll's 20 year retrospective. See Jim Carroll, "20 years ago today: a celebration of the canadian internet handbook!!!!," retrieved December 26th, 2017, <https://www.jimcarroll.com/contact/20-years-ago-today-a-celebration-of-the-canadian-internet-handbook/>.

12. In 1977, Greg Nesbit bought the neighbouring *Shoal Lake Star*, followed by the *Rosburn Review* in 1979, the *Birtle Eye-Witness* in 1984, and the *Hamiota Echo* in 1992. Crossroads This Week. Retrieved September 18th, 2017. <http://www.crossroadsthisweek.com/>; "Passing It On," 144.

13. Terry Vanmackelberg, "Weekly News Now Available," *The Birtle Outlook*, January 7th, 2011, page 1; Penny Speiran, "The Charm of Small Town Living," *The Birtle Outlook*, October 20th, 2011, 1-2; "We Welcome Miniota to the Outlook!," *The Birtle Outlook*, November 27th, 2014, page 1.

At the time of the amalgamation to create Prairie View, the distribution area of print copies was extended to Miniota [ibid].

Section 9. Transportation

1. As William Wallace wrote to his sister on March 18th, 1885, Birtle "gained its prominence from being on the main trail to all points west before the railway came" [Coates, *My Dear Maggie*, 207]. As for the decline of Warleigh, its post office lasted from 1884 only until 1909. The area had first been the location of the Brandon House, founded by retired Northwest Mounted Policemen from the Shoal Lake barracks [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 11] and had been named by the Dudleys, as per Margaret Dudley, one of the daughters, though she had a few dates wrong, thinking that the Town of Birtle was incorporated in 1882, and that her family had come out in 1885, and named the place Warleigh in 1886, when the P.O. records the post office was already named Warleigh under the previous postmaster, William Howey [Margaret Dudley, "Pioneer Life at Warleigh," first part, in *Birtle Eye-Witness*, September 30th, 1981, page 2; Library and Archives Canada, Postal Heritage and Philately, Post Offices and Postmasters, Item 16724, accessed August 30th, 2017, <https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/postal-heritage-philately/post-offices-postmasters/Pages/item.aspx?IdNumber=16724&>.

2. Cited in W. L. Morton, *History of Manitoba*, page 79. Charles Mair's description of the Red River carts, which he sent to the Toronto *Globe*,

famously noted in 1868 that "The creaking of the wheels is indescribable; it is like no sound you ever heard in all your life, and makes your blood run cold" [cited in Hargrave, *Red River*, 451-452]. However, another writer, this one a native to Manitoba, noted that Red River carts actually got considerably quieter as time went on with a few innovations to the design [Garrioch, *First Furrows*, 99].

3. This is not to say that the Assiniboine was ideal for navigation, as its combination of regularly low water levels and series of rapids often made it difficult to travel [McCarthy, *Steamboats*]. While the Birdtail does not appear to have ever had steam vessels on it, nevertheless the river had been important to the area too, as boats could bring goods from Fort Ellice to Birtle. Thus on April 17th, 1878, Alfred Morton notes that "McD," presumably the Chief Factor of Fort Ellice, "brot boat from Ellice, it upset, dumped my potatoes in the creek and me clinging to some bushes" [MD: April 17th, 1879].

4. The *Marquette* was the first to arrive at Fort Ellice, though the *Alpha* and the *North West* were also used for this route. The *Alpha* came to be used the most, as it drew less water and could thus travel under conditions the others could not [McCarthy, *Steamboats*]. The *Alpha*, not yet on the Assiniboine route, was actually used by Alfred Morton to freight out some of his goods to Manitoba in 1878 [MD: September 19th, 1878].

By 1881, Morton notes an established "Birtle Landing" on the Assiniboine in the Wattsview area [MD: Saturday, May 14th, 1881]. Wilson notes that a "large warehouse was built" at what he called the "Wattsview wharf" [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 22].

5. Cumming had a boiler for the mill delivered to the mouth of the Snake Creek via steamer. He then paid Morton and others to help cart it to Birtle, and the next month the saw mill was up and running, greatly helping local construction projects [MD: June 30th, July 2nd, and August 26th, 1880].

In this period, steamboats were guiding settlement near the Assiniboine, with Birtle being one of five principle areas so served: "The traffic along the Assiniboine River untied attention to the lands adjacent to the valley. From points of debarkation along the river settlers proceeded to the Rapid City area, to the area surrounding the Brandon Hills, as well as to Odanah, Minnedosa and Birtle" [Friesen, "Expansion of Settlement in Manitoba, 1870-1900"].

6. The initial circular for the H.&N.C.S. had noted that “the Railroad now projected will either pass through the settlement or in the immediate vicinity” [1878 circular “The North-West Colonization Society,” LAC, MIKAN 1470803]. John Tyman identified 10 variations on proposed routes for the C.P.R. [Figure 18: A Route for the CPR: The Alternatives,” Tyman, *By Section*, 34] and Alfred Morton recorded news of route changes twice in 1879 alone [MD: April 19th and July 4th, 1879].

7. One of the trio of Birtle’s earliest settlers, Andrew Bisset, went to work on the railway on April 4th, 1879, returning on the 11th [MD: April 4th and 11th, 1879], and Moron was able to sell oats to a survey crew later that year [MD: October 26th, 1879].

8. J. S. Crawford wrote to the Minister of the Interior, noting that “great damage was done to us last year” because “being in about the centre of this strip when we want Railway Service Co say must run near our Lands or through them” and those lands were all sold [J. S. Crawford, signed as President of the H&NCS, to D.L. McPherson, Birtle, December 3rd, 1883, LAC, MIKAN 1471984]. This was mitigated somewhat by the stipulation that the railway manage to build itself prior to receiving its land grant; however, Crawford further explained the problem in another letter, noting that people holding the odd-numbered railway sections they’d purchased from the railway “wait our improvements + increase value bound to do nothing. If it was necessary for the government to sell I could not take exception, but the selection of the Belt as is through our efforts become well known for sale in this way is most disastrous to our Town now incorporated” [John Crawford to D. McPherson, Minister of the Interior, received February 4th, 1884, Department of Interior Dominion Lands Branch Headquarters Correspondence, MIKAN 1471984].

9. The Land Offices of Winnipeg, Gladstone, and the Little Saskatchewan were having similar sales [“Notes From the Capital. Ottawa, March 4.: Dominion Land Sales.” *The Globe*, March 6th, 1882, page 12], although Birtle was apparently a favourite locality for this, “as there is said to be more good land there than in the others.” Civil service people with inside knowledge were doing a lot of speculating [“Notes From The Capital. Ottawa, March 15th.: The Speculative Mania.” *The Globe*, March 16th, 1882, page 2]. A travelling correspondent for the *Globe*, the Grit paper, happened to be in Birtle on April 1st, the day of the sale, and while he had disliked the idea of the sale in a first place but further thought that it had

been poorly designed: “Look at the operation. A gathering of speculators from the East were there, chiefly Tories of first order from Ontario. They had been in caucus the night before, and had made a perfectly accommodating arrangement as to when each should bid. ... The settler, or local man of moderate means, was practically shut out” [“Western Manitoba. Notes at Fort Ellice, Birtle, Shoal Lake, and Minnedosa. Emigration—Present and Prospective. How Dominion Land Sales are Conduct.” Minnedosa, April 15th, in *The Globe*, May 5th, 1882, page 3]. He revisited the sale a week later, noting that it been held during “the great blizzard ... on April 1—an appropriate day so far as the sellers were concerned. It being impossible for buyers to get there, the few speculators were on the ground formed a ring, portioned the sections among them, and captured the bulk of the sections at \$2.50 an acre. A party of Winnipeggers, headed by a prominent eastern judge, Drove out and landed on the ground during the last day of the sale, the result being that the lands on that day averaged \$7 an acre” [Our Own Correspondent, “The North-West. The Progress of Settlement Impeded by Speculation. The Nipper Sometimes Nipped. Valuable Suggestions for Intending Immigrants. The Sort of People Wanted. How the Government’s Action Drives Them Away.” *Winnipeg*, April 21st, in *The Globe*, April 29th, 1882, page 6].

10. The sale in Birtle did raise 700,000 dollars shortly before the crash of the big land boom [William Pearce, “Title to Land in the Three Prairie Provinces,” cited in Tyman, “Patterns”]. E. J. Wilson noted that most of the speculative money vaporized, but also some positive aspects to the sale: “This sale had two redeeming features. It focused interest in the Birdtail settlement and placed all lands, with exception of the Hudson Bay and School sections, on municipal tax rolls in contrast to vast areas exempt in the railway’s reserve belts” [Birtle’s Beginning, 27]. That helped first the County of Shoal Lake, and then for the R.M. of Birtle, and the also the Town in that what was good for the R.M. tended to benefit the Town after the arrival of the railway.

11. Birtle didn’t get its entire way, however, at least in regards to the location of the train station. The hope had been to get as near the junction of Centre and Main Streets as possible, but this was deemed either too expensive or technically unfeasible, and the station was built on the north hill instead [Nathan Hasselstrom, “How Birtle Got Its Railway” (draft, January 2nd, 2018) in BCM]

12. Hill, *Manitoba*, 659-660; *Birtle Observer*, May 14th, 1886, page 1. Furthermore, while the Town of Birtle Council investigated the possibility of getting in on legislation to relieve municipalities of debt entered into in order to spur railway construction, it received nothing from the eventual law, unlike the R.M. of Birtle or the R.M. of Shoal Lake [Town of Birtle Minutes, December 4th, 1889, pages 267 and 269; “Bonus Hunting,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 9th, 1892]. The law itself was assented to in 1893 as *An Act for the Relief of the Rural Municipalities of Westbourne, Birtle, Shoal Lake and St. Andrews*.

While that land, according to the agreement, was to be tax-free for two decades, lost revenue was not equivalent to having to pay a massive upfront bonus in cash, particularly as, should things have gone spectacularly wrong for any reason, Birtle could simply disband, without leaving anyone liable for debts [*Birtle Observer*, December 13th, 1884, page 1: “A By-law has been passed by the Council of Birtle granting exemption of taxes for twenty years on the lands to be obtained by the Railway Company. In order to complete the contract it only remains that the Company should select the Station grounds and other property”].

Another important point to note is that, because the H&NCS had offered town lots to each Society settler, the surrounding rural area and not only the nascent Town of Birtle had a vested interest in supporting Birtle’s efforts to having the railway reach Birtle, as property values would rise with it, and crash without it. The connection between town and countryside was designed to be strong from the beginning.

13. See various advertizements, usually connected with hotels or independent livery stables, in the *Birtle Observer*. For lack of a more specific reference immediately to hand, Kenneth Price drove a stage coach from Moosomin to Birtle some time after 1887 [Enns-Kavanagh, “Cannington Manor,” page 334]. Stage coaches had also connected with the end of the Manitoba & Northwestern when it was in Minnedosa [“Direct Route to Winnipeg and the East,” *Birtle Observer*, April 3rd, 1885, page 1].

14. The Brandon, Birtle, and Swan River Railway Company was incorporated in the provincial legislature in 1883. It planned, amid uncertainties surrounding the Manitoba & Northwestern, to build a line from Brandon northwest to Beulah and then north towards Russell [*An Act incorporating the Brandon, Birtle and Swan River Railway Company* 46 Victoria Cap. LV, received royal assent July 7th, 1883]. Whether the

incorporators, including E. P. Leacock, ever intended to build the line is another question, although the *Birtle Observer* took such projects seriously [“A Word in Time,” *Birtle Observer*, April 30th, 1886, page 1].

Similarly did the Town Council, which went to some efforts to have the Great North Western Railway extended into Birtle [Town of Birtle Council Minutes, January 28th, 1888, page 203; January 17th, 1890, page 274; April 2nd, 1890, page 278; April 25th, 1890, page 281; May 10th, 1890, page 282. See also January 18th, 1894, page 345].

15. McDougall, *Canadian Pacific*, 174. For the interesting relationship of the Manitoba government to this railway, see Martin, “*Dominion Lands*” *Policy*, 88-89.

16. In 1954, passenger service had first stopped being offered during the day:

The local train made its last trip west through Birtle on Saturday afternoon marking perhaps the end of a phase in rail service on this line. Loss of the service will be much more vital to some other points than to Birtle which had no train crews to let off. As a passenger service it was practically deserted by fare paying passengers and most of the mail service has been carried on the night trains.

The first Manitoba and North Western Railway train came into Birtle on July 30, 1886. Since then the service has been changed many times. At one time there was a six-days-a-week local each way and at one time the scheduled arrival at Birtle was round 9 p.m. Later the thorough[sic] sometimes misnamed “flyers” were added to take much of the through traffic and the locals were cut back to every other day. These are now cut off and the night trains will carry all rail passenger traffic in future. The mail service is supplemented by a truck service daily on the highway and carries to points off the highway.

The question still remains whether this is a retrogressive step in service to communities concerned or a change in keeping with changing conditions [“After 58 Years,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, September 28th, 1954, page 1].

For the 1959 discontinuation, see “Rail Service Cut Proposed,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 17th, 1959, page 1. The Town of Birtle opposed both of these outcomes [*View of the Birdtail*, 53; “Council Reports: Birtle Town,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, September 29th, 1959, page 8].

17. *View of the Birdtail*, 31.

18. Thus:

Engineer Copeland of the Public Works department spent a couple of days in town past week locating and laying out work the council proposes doing this season on main roads leading into and through the town. These when completed would form links in the projected highway system of through provincial highways. The sections demanding first attention are from station westward towards Lazare and Foxwarren and completion of about 25 chains length of the Blenheim road made necessary by closing in of M McCann's block. Main St., Vine St., the mile stretch past the cemetery and ravine road are recommended for temporary repair, as being in fair condition compared with the others [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 22nd, 1919, page 4].

19. *View of the Birdtail*, 51; see the Provincial Highway Maps for the years 1928, 1929, 1930, and 1931, as found at Province of Manitoba, Infrastructure and Transportation, Historical Highway Maps of Manitoba, accessed September 8th, 2017, <http://www.gov.mb.ca/mit/maparchive/index.html>.

20. *View of the Birdtail*, 52. There had, of course, been a decent municipal road south as early as 1926, but that wasn't the same thing. See Provincial Highway Maps for the years 1926 and 1954, as found at Province of Manitoba, Infrastructure and Transportation, Historical Highway Maps of Manitoba, accessed September 8th, 2017, <http://www.gov.mb.ca/mit/maparchive/index.html>. Worth noting is that 1954 is the same year that the railway's day-time passenger service ceased, leaving only a night run; it was just as the rail passenger service was disappearing in the 1950s that the highway network really got underway.

21. It was for example reported at the beginning of 1956 that "A small drilling unit of the Highway Department has been busy during the past weeks testing for footings for a new bridge to span the Birdtail on Main street and carry the traffic of Highway 83 which will eventually climb the hill west of Birtle. The crew are also authorized to make tests for the new No. 4 Highway crossing of the Birdtail to the north of the railway crossing" [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, January 10th, 1956, page 6], and "Big equipment moved in the morning to commence work on Highway 83 through town making a start west of Main St. Bridge" [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 26th, 1956, page 5].

The next year, "Since publishing the picture of roadbuilding in other days, there have been marked developments in roadbuilding around Birtle. The six miles north from Birtle to junction with new No. 4 is a fine piece of road as any in the area and finished with first gravel. A tremendous amount of clay has been carved out of the hillside near the Clubley home and transported via a new access road to finish the approaches to the Main Street bridge. If the present weather holds for a couple more days this stretch, too, will be gravelled" ["Weather Aids Road Building Program," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 19th, 1957, page 1].

22. In a selection of highlights from the minutes of the Council of the Town of Birtle in the early 1950s, *A View of the Birdtail* notes that "Pressure was exerted on the Province for a road connection with St. Lazare" [page 53]. In 1956, as the new route for Highway 4 was still being constructed, the road from Birtle to Shoal Lake was still labelled Highway 4 while the road from St-Lazare to Shoal Lake was labelled Highway 41A. By 1958, the new Highway 4 route was completed and both of these sections of road had designated Highway 41A [Provincial Highway Maps for the years 1956 and 1958, as found at Province of Manitoba, Infrastructure and Transportation, Historical Highway Maps of Manitoba, accessed September 8th, 2017, <http://www.gov.mb.ca/mit/maparchive/index.html>]. Most of the stretch between Birtle and St-Lazare has since been relabelled Highway 42. Apparently in 1964, "Council decided to get tough with the Province over the condition of PTH No. 41 A between Birtle and St. Lazare" [*View of the Birdtail*, 53-54].

23. The new route was indicated on the 1956 map [Provincial Highway Map for the year 1956, as found at Province of Manitoba, Infrastructure and Transportation, Historical Highway Maps of Manitoba, accessed September 8th, 2017, <http://www.gov.mb.ca/mit/maparchive/index.html>] The road was Manitoba's second trans-provincial highway, and the new section opened had "just been opened for full traffic" at the beginning of October 1957 ["No. 4 to Become Trans-Provincial Highway," *Russell Banner*, October 3rd, 1957, page 1]. Highway 4 was first designated with the Yellowhead symbol in the 1972 Highway Map, and was first relabelled Highway 16 on the 1979-1980 map [Provincial Highway Maps for the years 1972, and 1979-1980, as found at Province of Manitoba, Infrastructure and Transportation, Historical Highway Maps of Manitoba, accessed September 8th, 2017, <http://www.gov.mb.ca/mit/maparchive/index.html>].

24. *View of the Birdtail*, 53. As it is of interest, I reproduce here the Birtle & District Chamber of Commerce's Highway Committee's take on the new location, which I have included as appendix 15 ["Committee Statement On No. 4 Highway," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 23rd, 1955, page 3].

25. *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 21st, 1955, page 3: "Minister of Public Works, F. C. Bell was in Birtle yesterday and conferred with town officials and citizens re the location of No. 4 Highway. He confirmed the location as far as Solsgirth on the north side of the C. P. railway."

26. "Passenger bus service not available: Greyhound Canada pulls plug on routes along Highways 16 and 45," *Crossroads This Week*, June 29th, 2012, page 1.

Section 10. Industry

1. Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 8-9. See also MD: April 22nd and April 26th, 1879.

The next month, the Society applied for a timber license [*View of the Birdtail*, 18]. Cumming had hoped that the license would be issued in time to get equipment out in 1879 already. Abra got all this from the Department of the Interior Records. More details on the delay, involving the plans for Crown Timber Agent John Anderson to first go to Birtle, can be founded in LAC MIKAN 1470803.

The license wasn't officially approved for another year. The relevant Order in Council referred to a D. W. Cummings, as per the usual misspelling, and the berth was described as "Township 21 Range 23 West, and those portions of Township 2 and the North half of 21 Range 24 West that lie east of the Birds-tail creek, excluding therefrom School and Hudson Bay Company's lands, and all road allowances. Area 48 square miles." Joseph Sharman also received a berth, his measuring 80 square miles [LAC: Order-in-Council Number 1880-0879, Item Number 15772].

By January 20th, 1880, however, Cumming's official relationship with the Society as a director had terminated, as Wood wrote of the "rumor" that Cumming planned to build his sawmill where the railroad would end up passing regardless of the location of the Society townships [J. H. Wood to J. S. Dennis, Deputy Minister of the Interior, January 20th, 1880, LAC

MIKAN 1470803]. Certainly, in Birtle the Society always seemed to be a Wood and Crawford project, and Cumming had left it much earlier.

2. Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 11, 16. Cumming had contracted with James Crerar for supplies. Crerar opted to keep the store of supplies for the lumber camp in Birtle, to be carted north as needed, and this store developed into a commercial venture of its own.

3. In April, Cumming had arranged for a boom to be made across the Birdtail to catch the drive [MD: April 9th, 1880]. They began building the sawmill on June 1st, and the first part of the drive reached Birtle in late June. The mill itself was apparently still under construction because it didn't begin cutting anything until the end of August [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 16]. For the arrival of machinery and erection of the building, which was roofed and finished after the installation of the machinery, see also MD: June 30th, July 1st-2nd, July 30th, August 23rd, and August 25th-26th, 1880].

4. Wilson noted that 1882 was a record year for building activity, which was good for the sawmill [*Birtle's Beginning*, 31]. He also noted that Cumming dropped out of the project in 1882, in the wake of the great land boom, in order to go into cattle ranching and then a couple years later into private banking, making Cumming a very successful frontier businessman with an excellent head for a changing frontier economy, with the starting capital to make large profits from it. [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 31]. When Cumming dropped out, the Toronto capitalists were to have taken over. Cumming was deal with timber berths again in 1882 and 1883, however [LAC: Order in Council Number 1882-2474, Item Number 23645; Order in Council Number 1883-2596, Item Number 25646]. Similarly, in 1885, the *Birtle Observer* noted that "Mr. Cumming has had men employed during the week constructing a boom near the Mills, for the protection of saw logs" ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, April 10th, 1885, page 4]. The uncertain status of the pending railway was throwing wrenches into his planning, however:

Mr. D. W. Cumming, of the Birtle Saw Mills, has returned from Winnipeg; while there he had an interview with Mr. McArthur of the M. N. R. Besides an immense quantity of sawed lumber on hand, Mr. Cumming has 22,000 spruce saw logs in the river at this place. Having some doubts about the approach of the railway this season, it was proposed to float the logs to Brandon. Mr. McArthur, however, assures Mr. Cumming that the road will be proceeded with at once and that he is perfectly safe in turning

his logs into boards and depending on the railway for an outlet. Accordingly the Saw Mill will be run constantly during the summer ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, April 17th, 1885, page 4].

The season ended up being successful. Cumming's involvement appears to have shifted to the cutting part of timber operations rather than the milling part, as others were contracted to saw the logs which had already been floated down to Birtle:

Messrs Grant & McPhearson have taken the contract for cutting into lumber the spruce saw logs which are in the mill pond at this place. The saw mills were started on Tuesday last. The sound of the whistle and the noise of the saws gives a business air to the town. As there are many thousand logs to be converted into lumber, the mills, no doubt, be run constantly during the entire season ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, July 6th, 1885, page 4].

There were so many logs that they weren't finished until November ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, November 20th, 1885, page 4]. This was very useful in building up the new village of Solsgirth and the relocated town of Shoal Lake ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, February 5th, 1886, page 4].

Cumming also got the contract to supply the railway with lumber for the continuation of the line from Solsgirth to Birtle ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, April 30th, 1886, page 4]. That finished, Cumming dropped out of the project again in 1887, and this appears to have properly been the end of Cumming's involvement, as he sold his lumber business to Robert Gibson ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, April 29th, 1887]. However, this deal apparently only extended to the vast lumber pile on top of it, which after an appeal was assessed on the municipal tax roll to Gibson rather than Cumming, while the sawmill property itself was going up for a tax sale [Town of Birtle Council Minutes, Fourth Council, Seventeenth Session, 1887, pages 172-173]. Still, Cumming was still somehow involved with lumbering, so that "*Passing It On*" notes on page 27 that after McArthur closed up the sawmill, Cumming "moved the lumber yard office to the Patterson Block but continued to oversee the interests in the lumber camps."

5. "*Passing It On*," 26-27. Among the problems the Town had to wrestle with was the desire of some of those interested in the sawmill to remove its

machinery for use in a grist mill, while the Council presumably were going to such efforts on behalf of the sawmill because they were wanted it producing lumber [Town of Birtle Council Minutes, September 25th, 1888, page 227]. A Mr. Mitchell ran the sawmill during the 1903 season.

6. Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 21. It also helped cultivate an esprit de corps among such young single men [ibid, 16-17], partly due to the efforts of Cumming himself, as he organized, for example, "a supper for the lonely bachelors" on Christmas Day, 1880 [MD: December 25th, 1880]. The employment opportunities were missed once they had departed, as the *Birtle Eye-Witness* noted in 1902, the fallow year prior to the mill's final year of operation: "Sawmill work will be missed and lumber prices will be higher" [quoted in "*Passing It On*," 27].

The presence of this kind of employment presumably contributed to a marked difference of opinion that Birtle had from other settlements in the Northwest regarding the question of whether a settler needed capital before his arrival in the Northwest, or if he could make the necessary starting capital in the Northwest before settling. In Shoal Lake, it was found that, "No settler, it was agreed, should come out with less than \$1,000—at least, no settler with a family. A single man might venture with \$600. Men without money had better not come at all. They would find employment only during harvest-time, and even then the farmers could generally dispense with them, owing to the prevalence of wheat-binders. I may here remark that we found this view about labourers hotly contested at Birtle. The difference may possibly be accounted for by labourers being wanted in towns, however small, but not on farms each at some distance from the other" [Correspondent of the *Times*, "Some Towns and Farms in Manitoba," August 16th, in *Colonies and India*, October 1st, 1881, page 14].

7. As the *Birtle Observer* noted in 1884, spruce lumber could be bought at the mill for half the price of imported timber, and that "In a country where good granaries and warm houses are indispensable, such an abundant supply of boards and shingles of home production, have a value which can scarcely be estimated" ["Town of Birtle," *Birtle Observer*, December 13th, 1884, page 1].

In 1882, "The previous two seasons' demand over a 50-mile radius for rough lumber and shingles took these as fast as they could be cut" [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 28]. See also William Wallace to Maggie, Woodvale, Shellmouth, March 18th, 1885, "I arranged with Mr. Whaley, who is one of

the Councillors, to go down to Birtle fifty miles distant, to get a load of planks for the new ferry boat.” The trip to Birtle is described in the rest of the letter [Coates, *My Dear Maggie*, 207].

8. *By Section*, 96 shows how early Kent Street was named. Granted, the name-sharing could be a coincidence. Regardless, Kent was involved with the Stone School at its beginnings, among other things.

9. For example, when H. A. Manwaring erected what later became known as the Pratt Block, on the southwest corner of Main and 7th Streets, those looking for stone “discovered a number of rocks of excellent quality near the farm of Mr. F. K. Herchmer. The stones submit to burst into large square blocks of suitable proportions and of the proper shape for front and corner work” [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, July 30th, 1886, page 4]. The F. K. Herchmer farm was just to the west of town [“Map of Shoal Lake County, 1882.” BCM 294-84-G].

Many stones could simply be dug from the ground: “Birtle is steadily growing. A peculiar feature noticeable here was the number of concrete buildings being erected. It may not be generally known that Birtle stands upon a stone-bed. Such is, however, the case. By removing the surface soil on any of the lots, stone sufficient for the building of the foundation can be obtained from the cellar excavation. One merchant has not only done this, but secured sufficient stone to build the concrete front of his store” [“NORTHWESTERN MANITOBA.—Mr. H. C. Stovet Describes a Drive Along the Line of the M. & N. W. Railway.—Prosperous and Growing Towns and a Grand Country—Stock Raising.—\$20,000 a Week Paid Out for Stock—Senator Boulton’s Peculiar House,” *The Winnipeg Tribune*, October 10th, 1895, page 5].

10. MD: November 24th, 1884.

11. Alfred Morton’s diary notes that he bought lime from each of these, MD: June 22nd, 1885, “Bot of A. Shepherd 10 bus. lime @ 50¢ = \$5.00. A. Anderson starts mason-work of new house @ \$2 per day. J. Nichol attends him.” He got more from Shepherd a few days later as well. See also *A View of the Birdtail*, 394. Haines’ kiln was also already in operation [MD: August 12th, 1885].

As for the wide area these two producers provided with limestone, “Large business had been carried on more extensively than usual. Mr. Shepherd having handled some 4000 bushels and Mr. Haines about half that quantity.

Birtle kilns have largely supplied Shoal Lake and Binscarth besides the farmers for twenty miles around” [“Birtle During 1897,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 2nd, 1897, page 1].

12. John Haines advertized fresh burnt lime “at the kiln one mile west of Birtle” in 1901 [“For Sale,” *Supplement to Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 29th, 1900, page 3]. In 1902, it was noted that he “has his third lime kilm burnt and ready for sale” [“Locals,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 5th, 1902, page 4].

However, in 1895 Shepherd was advertizing his newly opened kiln [“Lime,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 14th, 1895, page 4]. Apparently, that Birtle is much less stony than it had been is due partly to this kiln. Apparently “the number of boulders in front of the school has been lessened by frequent visits of the men from the neighbourhood lime kiln in search of material for making lime” [“NORTHWESTERN MANITOBA.—Mr. H. C. Stovet Describes a Drive Along the Line of the M. & N. W. Railway.—Prosperous and Growing Towns and a Grand Country—Stock Raising.—\$20,000 a Week Paid Out for Stock—Senator Boulton’s Peculiar House,” *The Winnipeg Tribune*, October 10th, 1895, page 5].

While Shepherd died in 1898, he was reported as working “even to within a few weeks of his death in connection with his lime kiln on the banks of the river in the town limits” [“Birtle Brevites. Death of John Shepherd, an Old and Respected Resident.” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 29th, 1898, page 2]. His wife continued to operate the kiln after his death, but I’m not sure when it shut down.

13. When precisely the kilns ceased operation is uncertain, but for a long time they served Birtle as only the object of cautionary commands given children by parents. In 1993, it was reported that “The stone detail is exact and remnants of lime are still in the pits, for visitors to touch and see. The lime kilns are about 10 feet in length and about the same in depth” [Roxann Barker, “Treating Tourists to Legends and Legacies,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, July 13th, 1993, page 5]. The opinion as to the condition of the kilns was confirmed by provincial archaeologists; apparently Birtle was the only community in Manitoba at the time restoring lime kilns [Roxann Barker, “Birtle,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, October 4th, 1994, page 10]. It became one of the focusses of the bursts of civic energy and enthusiasm which occurred in the 1990s, and the “River Walkway and Lime Kiln Restoration Project” came into being [Roxann Barker, “River Walkway—strolling on the wild side,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 30th, 1994, page 5].

14. Apparently source the lime from the Birtle kilns was also used in “the construction of nearly every foundation in town” [*Landmarks: Birtle’s Significant Heritage Buildings*]. That source notes that this was one of the stone houses built by Charles Dunham, a skilled local mason. Compare with Luella McTavish, “People Then and Now,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, September 6th, 1918, page 1, which notes John Shepherd had run three lime kilns on his property as well as the one in Birtle.

15. See Advertisement for Birtle Cement Building Block Co., Ltd., *Birtle Eye-Witness*, July 19th, 1904, page 1. D. Mitchell was the manager. They manufactured hollow cement building blocks, cement chimneys, sills, lintels, paving blocks, and tiling, and also sold cement by itself in various quantities. The office and warehouse were both at Patterson Bros. Lumber Yard. See also “Birtle Town,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 15th, 1904, page 1: Important Birtle names appear among the incorporators: “John Patterson, lumber dealer; John Clemens, mill owner; Edmund J. Wilson, printer and publisher; Henry A. Manwaring, merchant; Joseph Charles Dudley, bank manger, Richard Freeman Preston, butcher; David Mitcher, builder, all of the town of Birtle” [“New Companies, Standard Grain Co., of Winnipeg, Organized—Birtle Cement Industry,” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 11th, 1904, page 9. The information had come from the official *Manitoba Gazette*. Patterson, Clemens, and Wilson were the executive officers. The company was still operational in 1906 [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 9th, 1906, page 4].

The Birtle Cement Building Block Company’s stockholder book, with minutes, is on loan to the Birdtail Country Museum [BCM 3626-99-G (L)].

16. The house was estimated to, on completion, have cost 3000 dollars [“Birtle Town,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 15th, 1904, page 1]. This was later referred to as the “Corr House,” after the family who lived there for over a quarter of a century [*Landmarks: Birtle’s Significant Heritage Buildings*].

17. Wheat was already being grown in Birtle in 1880 [MD: August 24th, 1880], and plans for a grist mill were among the many projects being planned in the new town in the summer of 1880, with capitalists looking into it in June [More Anon, “Birtle. Its Progress and Prospects. Correspondence of the London Free Press,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 25th, 1880, page 1; “Birtle, N.W.T.: Its Progress and Its Prospects,” Eugene A. Teeling, Birtle, June 30th, 1880, to *Hamilton Spectator*, appeared in *Manitoba Free Press*, July 22nd, 1880, page 1].

Crerar’s building was finally erected on the north bank of the Birdtail just west of Centre Street bridge. It was plagued with difficulties. Crerar had procured mill stones that had been discarded in Rapid City, and they were apparently made of stone soft enough that within a few months it was only being used to crush grain for feed [“*Passing It On*,” 27; Wilson, *Birtle’s Beginning*, 25]. Likewise, in 1882 its machinery had failed so that after harvest, when it was needed most, it wasn’t operational, as per the *Free Press*: “J. S. Crerar’s grist mill at Birtle has again resumed work after a rest of three months, through a defect in the works of the engine” [“Provincial Paragraphs. Items of Interest From Our Rural Exchanges,” *Manitoba Free Press*, October 31st, 1882, page 1]. Nevertheless, in November it was noted as doing “good work in the locality” [“Birtle,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 9th, 1882, page 2]. Still, it could not compete with the mill to be built by Nelson & Mackenzie. In the summer of 1883, when the latter mill was being sold, it was advertized as being the only grist mill but one for 40 miles [“Merchants and Millers Attention! Sale by Tender of Valuable Property!” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 1st, 1883, page 2], and given that the mill at Dowsford was already operational [*View of the Birdtail*, 105], Crerar’s must have already been out of commission. While “*Passing It On*,” assumes that Crerar’s mill was the same as Nelson and Mackenzie’s, they were distinct structures [“Birtle,” *Manitoba Free Press*, November 9th, 1882, page 2]. Crerar’s building was repurposed by Sheriff Adams, who hauled it to main street in 1886 [MD: March 10th, 1886].

18. Wilson, *Birtle’s Beginning*, 30-31. This second mill was located on what E. J. Wilson called “Birtle’s present park site.” Alfred Morton’s diary notes that the building was raised on November 15th, 1882, had a dam raised on March 24th, 1883, and its water-wheel first set in motion on April 4th, 1883. He also noted that a couple weeks later the dam broke [MD: April 19th, 1883], but apparently it was soon fixed, as there was enough reasonably priced flour around to attract Birtle’s first baker [MD: June 8th, 1883].

However, Mackenzie seems to have changed lines before too long, or perhaps gone bankrupt, as his many and various holdings were sold off by his estate, including the grist mill, the building, furnishings, and stock “of the oldest established and most centrally situated store of Birtle,” “a complete outfit for lumbering camp,” “live stock and implements,” and 75,000 feet of lumber 40 miles north of Birtle. The mill, as described, was a valuable asset, “A three-run grist mill, water power an unlimited supply all the year round. The building is 40x48 feet, 3½ stories high, stone basement, erected 1882,

machinery almost new. This mill is situated in the Town of Birtle, the centre of a well settled and flourishing agricultural district. No other grist mill but one within forty miles.” [Merchants and Millers Attention! Sale by Tender of Valuable Property!” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 1st, 1883, page 2]. He had not died, however [Bill Mackenzie, “MacKenzie Recollections,” Don MacKenzie, editor, in *Ellice: 1883-1983*, 29-30].

It continued to operate under new management, however, benefitting from that monopoly in the Town of Birtle. Indeed, J. H. Wood complained to a House of Commons committee that milling “is the greatest monopoly we have. They charge us 20 cents a bushel for grinding wheat. . . . By law they are only allowed to charge 16 cents, but if you take a grist to them and refuse to pay more than 16 cents, they will tell you to wait until they are ready to grind it. In that case, the probabilities are that we will have to wait for months, so that we are really forced to pay the 20 cents” [Testimony of H. Wood, Ottawa, March 18th, 1885, in “Report of the Select Standing Committee on Immigration and Colonization,” (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co, 1885), 54].

While Wood may have been reading the worst into the situation to help spur railway construction, there were real problems with the mill, particularly during winter. Alfred Morton’s diary, for example, notes that he brought grist to the mill on December 4th, 1885, but that it wasn’t done when he went to check on the 12th, that it still had not been done by January 18th, 1886, and that on February 8th he went down again “for grist but only got some middling.” On April 6th, he noted that the mill started “turning with water” but on April 26th, he drove all the way to “G. Mill with 8 bus. wheat to grind,” that is, Grant’s mill in Dowsford. On April 29th, apparently having given up, he brought his grist home “from Birtle mill.” It did not seem to have been processed.

Competition with Dowsford didn’t do the Birtle mill any favours, but its chronic problems with low water levels in the Birdtail did local farmers no good either, so that in the autumn of 1886, the *Birtle Observer* noted that “the prospect is that many farmers will, this season, sell their wheat and buy their flour—a most unprofitable proceeding but the only course left” [*Birtle Observer*, September 10th, 1886, page 1]. It is perhaps not surprising that so many took up and left then after the railway had arrived in Birtle.

However, the railway bypassed Dowsford, and the Grant Mill close up. Its operator left to take over the Birtle mill in 1887, and got it up and running

in April [*View of the Birdtail*, 106; *Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 15th, 1887, page 1]. However, the problem of getting power during times of low water, and during winter, had not been solved. The Birtle mill did have “an engine on the premises, but hitherto it has not been satisfactory” [*Birtle Observer*, September 10th, 1886, page 1] and in January, “The steam engine formerly used in the grist mill during the winter season has been taken to Portage la Prairie, where it will be set to drive a mill for making pot barley” [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, January 28th, 1887, page 4].

19. After the loss of the engine in the grist mill, the Birtle Board of Trade, in the first reference I found to the body, issued an invitation for a roller process mill to be brought to Birtle, noting “Good water power and liberal inducements offered” [John M. Lawrie, Sec.-Treas. Board of Trade, “Wanted Roller Process Mill,” *Birtle Observer*, February 25th, 1887, page 4]. In March, Morton recorded “Farmers have a meeting in Town Hall to discuss assisting grist mill” [MD: March 26th, 1887], and the Town Council got in on the efforts, instructing Mayor Crawford to buy the grist mill property at a tax sale later that year [Town of Birtle Council Minutes, Fourth Council, Seventeenth session, 1887, page 172]. Power for the mill continued to be a problem so that, while during the summer of 1888 “The roller mill at Birtle, Man., is kept busy with gristing. The supply of water power this season has been all that could be desired.” [“Dominion Notes,” *The Weekly Northwestern Miller*, August 3rd, 1888, page 144], the Town Council had to balance the desire to have a running saw mill in the town with an operational grist mill, in September deciding against a plan to move the engine and boiler from the sawmill to the grist mill [Minutes of Birtle Town Council, September 25th, 1888, page 227]. This may have been partly connected to the organization of the “Birtle (Man.) Milling Co.” organized by prominent locals including Wilson, Crawford, Haines, Manwaring, Hallen, and Wilson which planned to build a mill of its own [“Dominion Notes,” *The Weekly Northwestern Miller*, September 7th, 1888, page 303].

Part of the struggle was due to the fact that after the railway was completed, other mills could now compete with what had been Birtle’s quasi-monopoly, which required a much tighter business model for the local mill [“Birtle Milling Co.,” *Birtle Observer*, October 19th, 1888, page 1].

20. “Among town improvements in value and extent the Arrow Mill Co. takes the lead with its 20,000 bushel elevator nearly completed flour warehouse t the station and large assortment of latest machinery. The Co’s

outlay for improvements will aggregate[sic] about \$6,000 and the mill will be prepared only to make the best brands of flour but carry a sufficient store of grain to run the year round" ["Birtle During 1897," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 2nd, 1897, page 1]. It closed in 1907 ["Birtle Town," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 19th, 1907, page 1].

21. The Town Council had refused to grant the new operator three hundred dollars for mill insurance a few months earlier. The operator died in the fire ["*Passing It On*," 27-28].

22. As the *Birtle Observer* noted in 1886, "Nothing tends so much to draw the business to a place as a good grist mill, which is also a great convenience to the people of a district" [*Birtle Observer*, September 10th, 1886, page 1]. A mill was one of the first things wanted by Birtle's pioneers, and continued to be a concern for farmers in the next four decades. Thus, after the Arrow Mill had ceased working, Birtle Grain Growers organizations asked that it be reopened ["*Passing It On*," 27].

23. Alfred Morton attended "a meeting in the Town Hall to start a creamery" on February 28th [MD: February 28th, 1885; see also the announcement in "Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, February 20th, 1885, page 1], and in March the *Birtle Observer* noted that a company with that object had been created. Birtle was apparently the natural spot for the creamery, due to its central location and the "unlimited supply of pure cold spring water" available. It further noted that "The establishment of a butter making factory in this place cannot fail to be of the greatest benefit to the people of the surrounding country" ["A Creamery," *Birtle Observer*, March 13th, 1885, page 1]. The establishment had presumably been spurred on by *The Manitoba Dairy Act*, which had come into force in 1885 in order to provide for the creation of creameries and cheese factories. Karen Nicholson notes that this was built by a Dr. Meyer, but listed this as a cheese factory rather than a creamery [Nicholson, *The Dairy Industry*, 9, 138]. However, the above suggests otherwise, as does the insistence in 1887 that cheese was more profitable than butter.

24. Ray Howard, "The Crawford Year," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 9th, 1971, page 1.

The Town Council appears to have been the originator of this scheme, as at meeting on April 6th, "A committee was formed to investigate the prospects of a cheese factory." At another meeting on the 15th, "on the

motion of Councillors Morrison and Manwaring, the Council accepted the offer of Joseph Dutton in the matter of a cheese factory. The finance committee was instructed to procure the necessary plant and to conclude necessary contract with Joseph Dutton" [Ray Howard, "The Crawford Years," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 2nd, 1971, page 1]. This would prove important in later years; the fact that the town provided for the equipment and perhaps even building, and that Dutton was only on contract rather than outright owner, may have contributed to the factory's short life.

Nevertheless, on April 20th, there was a meeting of local farmers to make arrangements for the factory [MD: April 20th, 1887]. The factory itself was operated out of the Patterson Furniture Store, apparently near the Main Street bridge [*View of the Birdtail*, 57, 280]. "*Passing It On*," says the building had been bought in 1885 for Jos. Dutton's cheese factory [page 18]]. Regardless, it began operations in June [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 36]. By July, it was noted that "Under the experienced management of Mr. Dutton, work at the Birtle Cheese Factory is progressing favorably, and a quantity of excellent cheese is accumulating in the store room" ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, July 15th, 1887, page 4]. Alfred Morton who had his own dairy cows and made much use of the factory, as with so many other local initiatives, helped to get it started, as noted in his diary entry of August 3rd "Drove down with 143 lbs milk. Meeting of Cheese factory patrons, I was elected chairman of Managing Committee. Com. fixed price of cheese @ 12¢ for present" [MD: August 3rd, 1887].

Initially at least, it seems to have been successful, as by November the factory had shipped a large amount of cheese, and factory patrons had netted twenty dollars for the milk of each cow's milk brought to the factory over three months ["Manitoba and the North-West," *Brandon Sun*, November 3rd, 1887, page 1]. At the annual meeting the next year, George Seale was elected the chairman and E. J. Wilson the secretary, with the rest of the board of managers being Benjamin Dutton, S. Roseborough, A. McGillvray, and John Shepherd. They expected more milk to come in that year and so reduced the price charged for cheese-making to 2 cents from 2 1/2 cents per pound. They also seem to have been dissociating themselves from the concerns of the Creamery, which had been set up to produce cream and butter, noting

that cheese making was more profitable than the manufacture of butter, as in the case of cheese all the milk is utilized, the work is quickly and easily performed, the cheese improves as it ripens

and always commands a ready sale in a cash market; while in the matter of butter a very large portion is always inferior, sometimes almost unsalable, difficult to keep and troublesome to handle, while the price is more uncertain than that of cheese [“The Cheese Factory.” *Birtle Observer*, February 23rd, 1888, page 1].

However, it then closed. Certainly, it was no longer around in 1896 [“Dairy Interests.” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, February 4th, 1896, page 1], but 1891 was more likely its final year of operation. Joseph Dutton, the operator, moved on to a cheese factory Asessippi in June, apparently walking all the way there, and then at the end of his term walking home again carrying a large cheese [“Locals,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 2nd, 1892, page 4; Sylvia Doran, “People in Profile: The History of a House,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, October 9th, 1985, page 4]. In 1900, he managed a new cheese factory north of Beulah for a few months, but died five months later [“Locals,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 15th, 1900, page 4; *Birtle Eye-Witness*, September 4th, 1900, page 1].

As for Birtle’s more immediate cheese needs, Benjamin Dutton, Joseph’s cousin who served on the managing board of the Birtle Cheese factory in 1888, had already set up his own cheese factory at his home: “For the present season, he will manufacture the milk from 25 cows kept by himself. Should his neighbors guarantee him sufficient patronage, he will put in a plant capable of handling the milk of two of three hundred cows for next season. The present price of cheese compared with the figure being paid for butter, is a strong incentive in favor of cheese-making” [“Locals,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 19th, 1892, page 4]. And his neighbors did patronize his factory, as its location 4 miles west of Birtle was considered competition for the Birtle Creamery at least as late as 1896 [“Dairy Interests.” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, February 4th, 1896, page 1]. In 1903, a Dutton from Birtle had a good looking entry for a factory cheese competition at a big exhibition in Winnipeg [“Ladies’ Day at the Industrial—Ideal Weather Favored 20,000 Visitors Yesterday—Platform Specialities Pleased and Entertained—Beautiful Spectacular Effects—Chestnut Made Canadian Record—Provincial Running Record Broken—Visit to the Buildings.:The Dairy Building.: Cheese.” *Manitoba Free Press*, July 22nd, 1903, page 1].

25. The connection with the earlier established creamery company is not entirely clear. The Town took on an active involvement with this reorganization, and the BCM currently has, on loan, the letter book [BCM 3621-99-G (L)] and the Minute Book [BCM 3637-99-G (L)] from the ‘Birtle

Dairy Company’ which appears to have gone by both that name, and the more official ‘Birtle Dairying Company’. The company appears to have been sold in 1902. The letter book runs from 1886 to 1902, and the minute book from 1895 to 1902. Such dates make it seem that the earlier company setting up a creamery in Birtle in 1885 was the same organization as the one which had a new impetus in 1895. In relation to that continuity, the *Birtle Eye-Witness* noted that “The creamery was launched by the Farmers’ Institute and is managed as a joint stock company under charter, most of the farmers within a reasonable radius and quite a number of citizens being stockholders” [“Birtle,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, October 22nd, 1895, page 1]. Ray Howard noted in the *Crawford Years* that “The cheese plant machinery was to be placed in the Agricultural Hall. Prospects for a cheese and butter factory coming in were good ... On May 23rd, 1895 a company known as the Birtle Dairying Co. was formed and allotted the N. 50 ft. of lots 21, 22 and 23 in Block 106, Block 106, Plan ‘M’” [Ray Howard, “The Crawford Years,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 23rd, 1971, page 1].

Mayor Crawford is recorded as having gone to Winnipeg in June of 1895 “in the interest of the Birtle Dairy Company” [“Local,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 11th, 1895, page 4]. This appears to have resulted in a 500 dollar loan for the Birtle Dairy Co. from the provincial government [“Department of Agriculture and Immigration, Expenditure: Agriculture and Statistics: Loans to Creameries and Cheese Factories,” *Journals of the Legislative Assembly of Manitoba. From the 6th day of February to the 16th day of April, A.D. 1896 (both days inclusive.) in the Fifty-Ninth Year of the Reign of Our Sovereign Lady, Queen Victoria. Being the First Session of the Ninth Legislature of Manitoba. Session 1896: Index to Journals, Twenty-Eighth Volume, First Session—Ninth Legislature, 59 Victoria, 1896* [Winnipeg: Legislative Assembly, 1896), 108]. The loan helped defray the cost of the new building, the construction of which had been successfully tendered for by May, for 582.50, by “Messrs. Corbett and Gibson.” Apparently they had already secured a good supply of water after having only dug 11 feet [“Yesteryear Clippings: 90 Years Ago—1895,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 8th, 1985, page 5]. This was on the site of the old Crerar grist mill [“*Passing It On*,” 19].

Two teams were employed by the company that first year of operation, and three men, producing “About 20,000 lbs of gilt edge butter” most of which was still being held in stock by the company “for an advance in price. We are informed that a few days ago an offer of 17 cents was made but with a rising market the directorate hold out for 20 with prospects of getting it.

An advance of five cents per lb was made to patrons monthly” [“Birtle,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, October 22nd, 1895, page 1]. Ben Longmore was the “butter maker” for that year [“Locals,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 10th, 1896, page 4]. Apparently he was also involved in 1896 [“Witnessed Fifty Years Ago,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 16th, 1946, page 8].

As for the fact that this was, to an extent, part of a larger cooperative effort, see the discussion in “Parkissimo Cheese Factory,” *Bridging the Years, 1879-1967*, 41-42: Beulah, Parkissimo, Rossburn, Binscarth, and Seeburn all decided to establish cheese factories that year, though Birtle, Newdale and Arrow River opted for creameries instead. This made sense for Birtle, given that it was in the catchment area of three cheese factories and only one creamery [“Dairy Interests,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, February 4th, 1896, page 1]. The *Bridging the Years* account continues, noting that “The difference in price between dairy and creamery butter did more to hasten co-operation in dairying among the pioneers than any lecture”, as butter made by a housewife at home sold for 11 cents a pound, but creamery butter at 25 cents. “Therefore, in March 1895, a large area was mapped out with Parkissiom and Rossburn marked for cheese factories and Newdale, Rapid City, Foxwarren and Birtle to have creameries, with Beulah planning a local cheese factory.” By July 1895, Manitoba had 34 cheese factories, and 19 of them were apparently new, and there were also 18 creameries in the province.

When Beulah opted not to operate their cheese factory in 1896, farmers in the area split between shipping cream to Birtle or milk to Arrow River. Indeed, the next year, representatives from the Birtle Creamery were going to go to Beulah to help “deal with the creamery question” as business could have been better, “and farmers look to the co-operative creamery as the only means of meeting the case” [“Beulah,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, February 9th, 1897, page 4]. The Birtle Creamery representatives had been “Messrs. Randall and Whitcher, as per “Beulah,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 24th, 1896, page 1]. The essential point in the cooperative element is that creameries didn’t want their catchment areas to overlap, and would arrange with each other to avoid that. A local example would be in 1906, when “Messrs Hough & Wickware and J. M. McCrindle have arranged the territory midway between their creameries so as to avoid increased cost of overlapping in the hauling” [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 20th, 1907, page 4], referring to the territory covered by the Rossburn and Foxwarren creamery routes [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 27th, 1906, page 5].

26. He noted that there was a movement afoot “to form a dairy exchange on the same line as the grain exchange. This would be a benefit to Winnipeg as it would tend to concentrate all the dairy trade of the province in the city and give the members such an influence that independent shipping would be effectually stopped.” Wilson thought that would be a good thing, as it would force dairy producers to work together to overcome that sort of thing. He went on to say that that sort of action by dairy producers “would encourage grain raisers to take steps to avoid the heavy tax imposed on them by the grain exchange and stop the practice of a few dealers from saying how many buyers shall be on each market and how many cents below competitive point rates shall be paid at markets where they can block competition” [“Dairy Interests,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, February 4th, 1896, page 1].

The butter had been accompanied to British Columbia by Mayor Crawford, and had been destined for the “gold fields” there at the time. In 1898, the surplus was again shipped there [“*Passing It On*,” 19].

27. 1897 was a concerning year for united dairy producers in the province, as their focus on bulk exports meant that local prices went up. Wilson was quite concerned about the natural outcome of this; though there were “five creameries and four cheese factories” in the counties of Russell and Shoal Lake, “if half the farmers continue to make up their milk at home they may gain a little temporary profit by better prices owing to the creamery product being largely shipped out of the country but if this short sighted policy is continued the creameries must go under and dairy products revert to the old order of being a drug in the market.” He specifically mentioned that the Birtle creamery received less cream than the previous year, and that a number of patrons refused to send anything until they knew more about its business practices. Among other concerns were manufacturing and marketing costs, why payment was delayed to them for so long, and that those who should be in the know kept contradicting themselves [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 8th, 1897, page 1]. Regardless, 1898 was a good year, with Samuel Larcombe, as a representative of the Birtle Dairying Company, serving as conference speaker in Winnipeg for the Manitoba Dairy Association [“Locals,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, February 15th, 1898, page 4; *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 1st, 1898, page 1].

1899 was also a good year, as Thomas Gadd, its buttermaker, managed to double the previous May’s production, had sold all it had produced, and had reduced its expenses per pound [“The Old News—Seventy Years Ago—

1899,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 11th, 1899, page 3; *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 21st, 1899, page 4; *Birtle Eye-Witness*, January 23rd, 1890, page 4]. Gadd was an 1894 graduate of the Ontario Agricultural College in Guelph, and continued his involvement with the creamery, an involvement carrying until something like 1904 [“Personals,” *The O. A. C. Review*, 10:4 (January, 1899), 10; *View of the Birdtail*, 295]. Directors for 1900 were Samuel Larcombe, F. G. Lewis, J. Parfitt, H. A. Manwaring, H. Randell, J. Walley and William Huggins [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, January 23rd, 1890, page 4]. It was still operational the next year, as were the other local diary establishments, as the municipality was noted as continuing to support “three creameries, at Birtle, Foxwarren, and Mr. Hodlen’s at Toddburn and supplies a large local field with several tons of cheese made at Dutton’s factory” [“The Bird Tail District,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, July 23rd, 1901, page 1].

I’m thus not entirely sure why, but the Birtle Creamery was apparently offered for sale in 1902 [Nicholson, *The Dairy Industry*, 122; see also BCM 3621-99-G (L) and 3637-99-G (L), the letter and minutes books of the Birtle Dairy Company, which both end in 1902].

The butter maker, Thomas Gadd, seems to have bought the operation, but at the same time it would appear that he was having trouble making payments: “The adjourned meeting of the creamery directors was held to hear the report of Messrs. Galloway and Morton. As their report was favorable, it was agreed that Mr. Gadd be allowed until the 1st of May next to complete payments on the creamery. It was also agreed that 15 per cent. be paid on all paid-up creamery shares” [“Northwestern News,” *Manitoba Free Press*, January 21st, 1903, page 8]. Either Gadd couldn’t pay, or he then promptly sold the creamery himself, because he had not brought it into operation himself. As noted by the *Eye-Witness* in 1904, “After being idle for a couple of seasons the creamery was bought by B. Longmore and operated with such satisfaction that prospects are it will have a considerably increased patronage next season” [“Birtle Town,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 15th, 1904, page 1]. Ben Longmore had been involved with the creamery in 1896 but had since moved on to the Russell area [B. Longmore was listed as the Commander of the Russell branch of the Knights of the Maccabees and the Worshipful Master of L.O.L. 1558 in Russell in two separate advertisements on the same page in the *Russell Banner*, April 25th, 1901, and a Mrs. Longmore was noted as returning to her home in Barnardo in the *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 25th, 1901, page 4, and, the *Birtle Eye-*

Witness, June 2nd, 1903, page 4]. Indeed, he was noted as visiting Russell as “proprietor of the Birtle creamery” in order to make arrangements to ship cream from the Russell area to his new operation [*Russell Banner*, May 12th, 1904, page 1].

28. Langmore got into other lines as well. When he came back to Birtle, he served as the local agent for McCormick Machinery, which seems to have been connected to his other job, as among the main products they advertised were De Laval cream separators [“McCormick Machinery,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 16th, 1904, page 4]. He was based out of “the old Indian Office” [“Hello Sandy,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 22nd, 1905, page 4]. Nevertheless, in 1907, “Arrangements are under way to operate Birtle creamery as soon as the season is favorable” [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 14th, 1907, page 8].

I’m not sure whether it ran or not, but the next year, Longmore was noted as having been “managing an elevator at Foxwarren” but then left to manage another elevator in Elbow, Saskatchewan. His family followed him in December [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, October 27th, 1908, page 5; *Birtle Eye-Witness*, December 15th, 1908, page 5]. Given that the Manitoba Government was apparently in the position to offer “the out-dated and neglected equipment and buildings of the Birtle creamer” in 1910 to the newly formed Elkhorn Creamery Company—it wasn’t interested—it would then seem that the Birtle Creamery had been closed for a few years [Nicholson, *The Dairy Industry*, 124-125]. Hence my tentative date of 1908, or possibly 1907.

In 1910, E. J. Wilson, who had been on the board of the Birtle Cheese factory in 1887, reflected on the demise of Birtle’s dairy industry as part of a wider phenomenon which he called “The creamery problem in our west.” He noted that the model they had tried “A few years ago,” stressing the importance of local creameries started up by stock-holding farmers, had been first successfully tried in Quebec and Alberta. However, in Manitoba, “money could be made here with less intensive energy by wheat cropping and the local creameries were mostly placed on the shelf and the few who continued to believe and practice dairying as a profitable farm line, were encouraged to ship their cream to the half dozen centrally located creameries whose situation and transport facilities for catering to a wide range of patrons enabled them to continue operating under the otherwise unfavorable conditions.” However, he noted that it had been well established that the

quality of the products decreased the longer it took for them to get to the consumer, so that “the home dairy” butter beat all else. Thus the creamery in Toronto run by Eatons could churn out a better product than what resulted from cream gathered all over the province to reach Winnipeg “in all stages of composition or decomposition.” He ended by noting that the dairying industry had learned from this and were working on perfecting the system [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 8th, 1910, page 5].

29. Surrounding creameries continued to pick up cream from Birtle area farmers. In the 1920s, for example, cream was being picked up in the Oxford District for establishments in Shoal Lake and Miniota [*View of the Birdtail*, 262]. In the depressed economy of the 1930s, this business was especially important, as “the cream cheque was often a major part of the household budget” [*View of the Birdtail*, 125]. By the writing of *A View of the Birdtail*, “the small dairyman has been forced out of business, as large creameries have improved their facilities” though a milk truck continued to call at each farm to haul cream to Rossburn [ibid]. The nature of farming in the area, both on the level of scale and of specialization, has since changed.

30. In 1903, a good half a dozen years after the Birtle Creamery’s experiment with cutting out the middlemen in Winnipeg, the Manitoba Grain Grower’s Association was founded. Birtle area farmers were already primed for this sort of undertaking, holding a meeting to form the Birtle Branch the next month, as advertized in *Birtle Eye-Witness*, February 24th, 1903, page 4. A connection between the dairy industry and the Grain Growers worth noting is that at the formation of the Miniota Branch: the man elected president was J. L. Thompson, who had run the cheese factory which was the last employment of Joseph Dutton [“Miniota Farmers Organize,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, February 24th, 1903, page 1].

None of this is to say that farmers had not been thinking of mutual grain operations earlier. Indeed, one of the earliest issues of the *Birtle Observer* included the following:

As it now seems to be settled that the M. & N. W. Railway will be built into this Municipality, early this season, some action should be taken to provide warehouse or elevators for the reception for the reception of grain immediately after harvest, or a more preferable plan would be for farmers and others to form a joint stock company, and erect an elevator and flour mill in connection, similar to the one at Portage La Prairie, which has been both profitable to the company and the district. Farmers

would thereby provide themselves with a market, and a share in any profit accruing therefrom, as well as giving considerable employment, which would be more or less benefit to all.—COM. ...” [*Birtle Observer*, January 2rd, 1885, page 1].

However, it appears that the first time such an effort was successfully followed through was with the dairy industry.

Section 11. Commercial Development

1. The lists consulted are reproduced in appendix 17. The first list is from the end of 1893, chosen because it gave the town enough time to have stabilized following the upheaval caused by the arrival of the railway in 1886. It is found in the article “Birtle.” in the *Birtle Eye-Witness*, December 21st, 1893, on page 1. The 1974 list is that which can be found on pages 75 and 76 of *A View of the Birdtail*. The 2015 list is the most recent Business Directory, as it appears on the Prairie View Municipality website, accessed September 5th, 2017, <http://cms.myprairieview.ca/Editor/images/Documents/doc02709020140116150835.pdf>.

While it may have been better to have found a fourth list, to subdivide 1893 from 1973, I was not immediately able to access one and, in terms of establishing continuity, there shouldn’t be a huge loss.

2. Photography is another great example of a continuous strand. Among others, Samuel Bagshaw, who practiced photography in Birtle from 1888 to 1907, and Alfred John Lawrence, who practiced from 1903 to 1947, especially stand out. A. J. Lawrence in particular produced a vast number of postcards, among his other work, featuring pictures of Birtle, all of which are of retrospective interest; and Birtle has continued to be the base of other photographers. However, while there is great historical interest there and they’ve played an important part in the construction of memory in Birtle, the extent to which they were pivotal to the community’s development is a little harder to argue. Not that it can’t be done, but I have chosen to sideline it here for reasons of space. That said, Chapter 9 of A. J. Lawrence’s memoirs, a copy of which resides in the Birdtail Country museum, is of interest [“Mr. Lawrence Memoirs,” BCM 2560-90-G].

3. In the winter of 1882-1883, Birtle had five hotels [Wilson, *Birtle’s Beginning*, 32]. In 1938, Thomas Low Sr. recalled that in 1882 Birtle’s

hotels were packed, “with guests sleeping on the floor” [*View of the Birdtail*, 79].

While only temporarily adequate for the supply, J. H. Wood told a House of Commons committee that until 1884, between hotel-keepers and merchants, there was a “ready market at home for all the produce that you could supply to the settlers coming in,” with very good returns. At the time, there were “four stopping” places in Birtle [Testimony of H. Wood, Ottawa, March 18th, 1885, in “Report of the Select Standing Committee on Immigration and Colonization,” (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co, 1885), 58-59].

4. Also with an interesting lineage is the Leland Hotel next to where the Birdtail County Museum is now, which burned down in 1887 as the Russell House. It was then rebuilt on the same spot, renamed the Birtle Hotel (1920), then the Commercial (1923), then the Hotel Robert (1943), and finally renamed Villa Motor Inn, under which title it burnt in 1975. However, there was also a Leland Hotel in the early 1900s, and the relationship of the Russell House and the Leland Hotel isn’t one I’m entirely sure of, as the Adams seem to have gotten involved with them, as with so many other businesses and especially hotels in town.

Other long-serving hotels were the Arlington Hotel on the site of the present-day community hall, also known at various times as the Grand Central Temperance Hotel and Grand Central Hotel (depending on whether Sherriff Adams could get a liquor license or not), which served from 1881 until it burnt in 1897; “legend has it that despite the liquor control measures, as the fire progressed someone was heard to urge “Save that keg!” ... With his hotel gone, Adams is reported to have had \$14 in cash which was his stake as he built the Shakespeare Hall, 29 x 80 ft. of concrete, which stood until replaced by the Legion Hall” [“It’s Our Seventy-Ninth Birthday!” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, September 16th, 1970, page 1].

The Riverside Motel and Drive-In next to the highway on the west side of town and overlooking the river, was built in 1962 and was sold and towed away in 1993.

5. The house built by Chambers was sold to John Flynn [“*Passing It On*,” 17-18].

6. In late 1884, the *Birtle Observer* was advertizing McDougall’s hotel as the Birtle Hotel. In 1887, McDougall appears to have considered giving up the

business entirely, as in May, he had tried to let the Birtle Hotel, on the northeast corner of Eighth and Main Streets [John McDougall, “To Let,” *Birtle Observer*, May 6th, 1887, page 4]. However, he must not have gotten a taker and decided to double down, because on June 24th it was noted that he was about ready to open the Birtle Hotel “which has been refitted and much improved both in appearance and accommodation afforded” [*Birtle Observer*, June 24th, 1887, page 1]. It was continued to be advertized as the Birtle House until September, when the name was changed to the Rossin House.

7. As “one of the best hotels in western Manitoba”, the Rossin House had people meeting all trains, and had telephone communication with the station [“Birtle.” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, December 21st, 1893, page 1]. Wilson would later write that after McDougall bought the Chambers hostel, “for the following 20 years the McDougall House was famous for its cheer and service with all travellers” [*Birtle’s Beginning*, 14].

8. “Passing It On,” 18; “News Briefs: Demolished,” *Baldur Gazette*, June 4th, 2013, page 2.

9. Birtle also hosts a couple of bed & breakfasts, seasonal and other accommodations, as per the Prairie View website.

10. See for example the very first issue, *Birtle Observer*, December 13th, 1884, pages 1 and 4.

11. E. H. Irish advertized his business in the manufacture and sale of harnesses, horse collars, and other “general Saddlery Stock” *Birtle Observer*, December 13th, 1884, page 4. Beirnes first opened up a harness shop in Binscarth in 1888 [“New Harness Shop,” *Birtle Observer*, March 9th, 1888, page 5]. He moved it into Birtle in the gap between the closure of the *Birtle Observer* and establishment of the *Birtle Eye-Witness*, as noted in the *Manitoba Free Press*, where it was further noted that “Mr. Beirnes, who recently opened out in the harness business here, secured the best portion of the stock” from Irish’s estate [“Birtle Bits.: M. & N. W. Railway Bonus Liabilities—A Deputation to Visit Winnipeg,” *Manitoba Free Press*, February 1st, 1890, page 5]. By 1891, it was reported that he sold saddles as far east as Winnipeg [“Locals,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 5th, 1891, page 4]. He had arrived in the area from Regina following the Northwest Rebellion, and his shop was located where Ball’s hardware was in 1974. The family lived above it [*View of the Birdtail*, 236]. The stone block was

reported as new in 1893 ["Birtle," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, December 21st, 1893, page 1]. In 1928, however, it was reported that the Beirnes residence on Vine Street had been sold, and that the premises of the harness shop had been rented "for Rest room purposes" [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 22nd, 1928, page 4].

12. In November of 1918, Moxham's advertisement appeared on the same page as an advertisement to sell or rent out the Adams livery and feed barn [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 12th, 1918, page 5].

13. Moxham & W. A. Watt advertised a joint business in which they not only painted cars but also did vulcanizing and woodworking, in addition to being agents for Ford and selling Ford cars and parts, though they were "prepared to undertake any repairing and overhauling of all makes and cars." They also sold DeLaval Cream Separators and Robt Bell Threshing Machinery and had a "Licensed Auto Livery in connection" ["Moxham & Watt," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, January 6th, 1919, page 4]. By 1921, it was only Moxham left [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 26th, 1921, page 8]. In 1939, it was advertised as "Moxham's Garage, Birtle's Ford Dealer" [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 28th, 1939, page 5].

14. The first dealer of GM products seems to have originated as a branch of Frank Sanders' auto mechanic's business in Solsgirth. In early 1928, it was advertised that J. H. Evans was severing his connection with Sanders to continue business under the name 'Birtle Motors' [*View of the Birdtail*, 392.; J. H. Evans, "Garage Notice," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, February 14th, 1928, page 4; *Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 6th, 1928]. I'm not sure whether the business continued or failed, but in 1933 there was a 'Birtle Consolidated Motors' in operation ["Birtle Consolidated Motors," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 23rd, 1933, page 5; "Birtle Consolidated Motors," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, September 19th, 1933, page 4].

However, as per Ted Falloon's account in 1987, the first garage in the line of succession into which he entered was founded in about 1946 [Sylvia Doran, "People in Profile: Birtle Motor Products opens enlarged premises," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 15th, 1987, page 4]. In 1964, the owner changed, as did the name, from Kelly Motors to Johannson Pontiac Buick [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 25th, 1964, page 5]. By 1980, the name had changed to Neilson Pontiac-Buick. That year the Johannsons left the business, and it was sold to new owners to become Birtle Motor Products [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 22nd, 1981, page 3]. In 1984, co-owner Ted Falloon bought

out his partners to take full ownership [Sylvia Doran, "People in Profile: Birtle Motor Products opens enlarged premises," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 15th, 1987, page 4]. In January 1991, the business was purchased by Bill Murray, and the name changed to Bill Murray Motors ["Bill Murray purchases Birtle business," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 12th, 1991, page 1]. The name has since changed to Mainland Motor Products Limited.

15. Glasman-Bicknell Transfer was based out of Foxwarren ["Glasman-Bicknell Transfer," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 13th, 1947, page 5], and the next year William Bicknell was operating Bicknell Transfer, still with a Foxwarren telephone number, but on the the same page as the advertisement for Draying & Teaming by Jim Laird, who was operating the Birtle Livery Barn [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 20th, 1948, page 8]. However, he soon moved to Birtle. Prior to starting his own business, Bicknell had driven trucks for the Foxwarren Truck Service, and started his own business [*View of the Birdtail*, 91].

In the 1950s, Bicknell Freighters were based out of Birtle ["Bicknell Freighters," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, July 30th, 1957, page 7]. By the 1970s, it was advertising under the name W. E. Bicknell Ltd ["Daily Freight Service," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 19th, 1972, page 7].

16. Jae Desmarais, "Local trucking company taken over by Winnipeg-based company," *Russell Banner*, November 27th, 1990, page 1-2A.

17. Less formal banking in Birtle was carried on by private wealthy residents almost immediately. It was noted that J. S. Crerar, for example, after setting up his general store, acted as banker for many settlers, "cashing their cheques and discounting their notes" [O. B. Joy, "Birtle, N.W.T.. Matters and Things in the Vicinity—An Election Boomlet." December 7th, 1880, in *Manitoba Free Press*, December 16th, 1880, page 1].

D. W. Cumming had made a fair sum with the Birtle sawmill which he'd opened, and selling his cattle after two years of ranching left him 20,000 dollars richer. He started up the bank under the management of Robert W. Gibson [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginnings*, 31]. The Manwaring building was eminently suitable for banking and would serve multiple financial firms throughout its existence, having included from the beginning "vaults of the best construction" ["Local and Other New," *Birtle Observer*, December 3rd, 1886, page 4].

18. *View of the Birdtail*, 57. In 1889, Gibson was still running the bank [Bill Mackenzie, “MacKenzie Recollections,” Don MacKenzie, editor, in *Ellice: 1883-1983*, 35.

19. A manager from the Union Bank branch in Minnedosa had come down in 1902 to arrange for a branch, and to accommodate it, “A part of the lower floor of the Patterson block is to be fitted up with vault and other necessary fittings for it” [Locals,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 5th, 1902, page 4]. Apparently “Mr. Dudley who transfers business of his private bank will be in charge” [“Locals,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 5th, 1902, page 4]. How that worked out is not entirely clear, but the branch was opened on September 22nd [“Locals,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, September 23rd, 1902, page 4]. Shortly thereafter, a “Mr Learmouth came up a few days ago as associate with Mr. J. C. Dudley head manager of the Union Bank” [“Locals,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, September 30th, 1902, page 4]. Learmouth would leave in 1904 [“Locals,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, July 26th, 1904, page 4].

By 1905, Dudley had severed his connection with the Union Bank as well, and gone back into private banking, as per the advertizement on page 1 of the *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 8th, 1905. An advertizement on May 29th, 1906, page 8, demonstrates that his business was again in the Manwaring Block. His private firm was still advertizing in May of 1928 [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 8th, 1928, page 8], but on May 1st he had declared bankruptcy [“Notice to Creditors of First Meeting where Assignment made.” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 15th, 1928, page 4].

20. “Despite late spring and adverse season Birtle Town has added several good buildings. A few of them are not yet completed and a few were commenced last season. Among the latter are the Union Bank now one of the best structures on Main St. cement block and plate glass front balance walls stone, fitted up very complete for its purpose, with water heating and other up-to-date equipment, at a total outlay of about \$5000” [“Birtle Town,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 19th, 1907, page 1].

21. “New Royal Bank Bldg. Officially Opened in Birtle,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, January 8th, 1969, page 1.

22. The manager’s office was moved to the opposite, three more offices added, and an upstairs wheelchair accessible bathroom installed. In 2006, one of the offices was turned into a waiting room. In 1999, instead of closing the branch, hours and number of full-time employees were reduced,

much of the “background work” centralized to different offices, and Birtle Branch was connected to Shoal Lake and Hamiota in a single “Marketplace” under a travelling manager. In 2006, hours were extended again, and a single manager installed for each branch. An ATM was also added [“*Passing It On*,” 28].

23. Soslgrith set up a Credit Union in 1941 [*View of the Birdtail*, 110]. Interest existed in Birtle and Foxwarren as well, with joint action being taken beginning in 1944 [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, February 8th, 1944, page 4; *Birtle Eye-Witness*, February 15th, 1944, page 4; “Credit Union,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 7th, 1944, page 5; “Credit Union,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, July 4th, 1944, page 4].

24. “Birtle Credit Union Society Ltd.” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 22nd, 1947, page 3; “Double Share Capital in January,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 2nd, 1948, page 8.

25. “*Passing It On*,” 31-32. After being taken over by Foxwarren Credit Union, the Birtle branch was opened in 1970. In 1979, the General Manager and Head Office moved from Foxwarren to Birtle, and new branch offices were opened in McCauley in 1975 and St. Lazare in 1983. Four years later, Foxwarren Credit Union then amalgamated with Rosssburn Credit Union, and the Head Office of the amalgam located in Rosssburn. Concerning the new name, “*Passing It On*” notes on page 32 that “It was difficult to come up with a name to depict the geographical area given the uniqueness of each community. A generic name proved to be the answer,” and they chose the name Vanguard Credit Union. In 2000, Vanguard amalgamated with Hamiota Credit Union under the Vanguard name.

26. Linda Clark, compiler, “The Co-operative Movement,” in “*Passing It On*,” 28-31. In the directory today, Anhydrous Ammonia, Home/Farm Centre, and Patroleum Office are the other listed services. The Twin Valley administration office is also in Birtle.

Section 12. Spiritual Life

1. Birtle’s earliest missionaries, and many later pastors, served a wide area but often based themselves out of Birtle. This was even considered a selling point for Birtle, being included, for example, in a public letter aimed at boosting Birtle which noted that “I might have mentioned that this is the

headquarters for the ministers of the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. The services of the former were held last Sabbath in Mr. Wood's new residence which is now so far advanced towards completion as to afford very find accommodation for that purpose." ["Birtle, N.W.T.: Its Progress and Its Prospects," Eugene A. Teeling, Birtle, June 30th, 1880, to *Hamilton Spectator*, appeared in *Manitoba Free Press*, July 22nd, 1880, page 1].

Also worth citing in that regard is *View of the Birdtail*, which notes that while there have been other important Anglican congregations in neighbouring areas, such as St. Alban's at Blenheim, notable for its atypical stone structure; the rural and still sometimes operational congregation of St. James near Solsgirth; and St. Stephen's in Solsgirth proper, which were all part of the local Anglican mosaic, "for more than seventy years Old St. George's was the centre of Anglican worship in Birtle" [*View of the Birdtail*, 154]. For more information on St. Alban's, built in 1902 and closed in 1964, see page 152 and "Passing It On" page 40; for more on St. James (built in 1899) and St. Stephens (1905-2002), see *View of the Birdtail* pages 155 and 156, and "Passing It On" pages 37-38.

Despite the low profile of Birtle's Catholic community for many decades, a later example is from the 1950s to 1972, when a team of two clergymen lived in Birtle. They served Beulah, Miniota, Arrow River, Decker, Shoal Lake, Kelloe, Solsgirth, Foxwarren, Wattsview, and the Gambler, Valley River, Rolling River, and Lizard Point reserves, and all the Métis in the region [*View of the Birdtail*, 159; "Passing It On," 42].

2. In the 1885-86 census, the town and RM's most popular denomination was Presbyterian, followed by Methodists, Anglicans, and Baptists, as per the *Census of Manitoba 1885-6* (Ottawa: Maclean, Roger & Co, 1887), 12-13: There were 238 Presbyterians in the RM and 100 in the Town for 338; Methodists were at 146 and 79 for 225; Anglicans at 197 and 52 for 149; and Baptists were 106 and only 14 for a total of 120. Other groups were negligible.

In the 1891 census, this had changed to Anglicans, Presbyterians, Methodists, then Baptists, as per *Census of Canada 1890-91, Volume 1* (Ottawa: S. E. Dawson, 1893), 226-227: Anglicans — 298 and 91 for 389; Presbyterians, 249 and 109 for 358; Methodists, 183 and 91 for 274; and Baptists, 50 and 11 for 62.

In the 1901 census, it was back to Presbyterians, Anglicans, Methodists, and Baptists [*Fourth Census of Canada 1901, Volume 1: Population* (Ottawa: S. E. Dawson, 1902), 158-159: Anglicans — 300 and 129 for 429; Presbyterians, 268 and 179 for 447; Methodists, 300 and 102 for 402; and Baptists, 70 and 30 for 100, though 11 Free Baptists in the RM were not included in that total.

3. Thus, while Birtle was entirely Christian for almost its entire history, dogma always had a variable place. More recently, as some traditional congregations decline, newer, less dogmatic forms of spirituality have taken a greater place. Thus the Tibet Health Club has advertized its classes about chakras and how to "receive the cosmic energy that is unlimited and free to all who are wanting it" [*The Birtle Outlook*, August 16th, 2017, page 5].

4. MD: September 25th, 1879. Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 12 notes that he first boarded with Alfred Morton [MD: November 13th, 1880, "Henry Rose starts board with us."]. On the 16th, he started a Bible class at Wood's. While the description of the Jubilee Methodist Church fonds [retrieved December 20th, 2017, <https://main.lib.umanitoba.ca/jubilee-methodist-church>] says his first service was held on October 12th, 1879, Morton said that Rose preached at Woods' house the day after he arrived. He was only a student, and was seems to have been supervised by Reverend Lawson of Rapid City [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 11; seealso MD: October 23rd, 1879, "Revs. Halstead and Lawson here. Held service." Morton had previously noted that Lawson had earlier preached at Wood's house on September 21st]. *View of the Birdtail*, 152, notes that Rose served Shoal Lake, Birtle, Rossburn, and Solsgirth.

5. "Methodist Church of Canada: First Draft of Stations in the Toronto Conference: Missionary Districts XVIII.—Portage La Prairie District." *The Globe*, June 9th, 1880, page 9, says that the position was vacant, and when it was filled it was by a Thomas W. Hall ["Methodist Church of Canada: Closing Session of the Toronto Conference: Stations for 1880-81.: Missionary Districts: XVIII.—Portage La Prairie District." *The Globe*, June 17th, 1880, page 3], who, however, does not appear to have turned up. Wilson reports that the Rev. Dewart held regular services in Birtle in 1880 [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 21], though Morton doesn't record his preaching until September 30th [MD: September 30th, 1880]. Morton had also noted that on September 19th, the Methodist Rev. D. Sutherland preached [MD: September 19th, 1880]. There was some trouble finding candidates for

Birtle, as in 1881, the Methodist conference still hadn't named anyone though did plan to send someone to Birtle ["Methodist Church of Canada: Toronto Conference—Eighth Day: The List of Stations.: XVIII.—Portage La Prairie District." *The Globe*, June 16th, 1881, page 7]; MD: December 24th, 1881 and February 20th and July 10th, 1883; Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, page 32.

Sutherland recorded his experiences in *A Summer in Prairie Land*. He arrived in Birtle on Friday September 17th, 1880 and resolved to stay until Monday morning:

This gave great satisfaction to some Methodist families in the place, as they had been without a Missionary since last spring. All up and down the Creek for 35 miles, and eastward toward Shoal Lake, there are settlements, and the people are anxious for Gospel ordinances. There is a Presbyterian Missionary in the neighborhood, but among these widely-scattered settlements no one man can possibly supply the wants of the people. Since the Methodist Missionary left, an excellent Local Preacher, named Buritt, has been preaching with much acceptance; but it is very desirable that a man fully set apart to the work of ministry should be sent without delay.

On Sunday morning a good congregation gathered in the house of a Mr. Lane, to which I preached with much comfort. In the afternoon, although the day was cold and disagreeable, the equinoctial storm having fairly set in, the large dining-room of Mr. McDougall's boarding-house was filled with a congregation mostly from Ontario, many of them Methodists, who listened attentively to the word spoken. In conversation afterwards, some of them expressed their earnest desire for a Missionary, and intimated their intention of uniting in the erection of a place of worship at an early date.

During our brief stay in Birtle we received much kindness from a Mr. Wood and his estimable family. Mr. Wood is from Woodstock, and is a prominent member of the Hamilton and North-west Colonization Company. During Saturday afternoon, in company with Mr Wood, I made a careful examination of the town plot, and selected a couple of lots as a site for a church and parsonage in the future. These lots are on a prominent corner, and together make a plot of 132 square feet. In this place I met several other acquaintances of former days—Mr. Balch[sic], former editor of the *St. Mary's Argus*, now Land Agent at Birtle; Mr. J. B. Carpenter, and others. Altogether the

settlement is a most promising one, and those who have located farms here have made, I think, a good investment [Sutherland, *A Summer in Prairie Land*, 170-171].

Buritt may have referred to Burdett [MD: September 26th, 1880 and June 26th, 1881], though he may have been a Presbyterian ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, April 16th, 1886, page 4]. Mr. "Balch" referred to Mr. Belch.

6. Morton Diaries, December 31st, 1882: "Albert Hall over post office opened by Methodist."

William Crawford was the contractor for the Methodist church building [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 36]. When it was demolished in 1931, A. J. Shepherd t the building's corner stone in the vault of the *Birtle Eye-Witness* building for safekeeping [*View of the Birdtail*, 161]. Two cottages were built on the site using material salvaged from the church [Description of the Birtle United Church fonds, United Church of Canada Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario Conference Archives, retrieved December 21st, 2017, <https://main.lib.umanitoba.ca/birtle-united-church-fonds>], and were still standing and in good condition as of this writing.

7. Morton notes a Reverend Stewart preaching and collecting subscriptions for a missionary [MD: July 23rd, 1879], but the first resident clergyman was C. M. Copeland, whom Alfred Morton recorded preaching in October [MD: October 19th, 1879]. Though serving a wide area, he was based out of an office in S. W. Chambers' boarding house [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 12]. However, he had moved on by June, to be replaced by a Mr. McArthur. Apparently Copeland, "late Presbyterian missionary at Birtle," had become the permanent secretary for the Y.M.C.A. ["Manitoba. Winnipeg: Secretary of the Y.M.C.A.," *The Globe*, June 18th, 1880, page 2; "Birtle. Its Progress and Prospects," More Anon. to *London Free Press*, appeared in *Manitoba Free Press*, June 25th, 1880, page 1]. See MD: May 31st and September 26th, 1880. McArthur, similarly, reported that he had held services in 14 different places in the district ["Presbytery of Manitoba. Second Day." *Manitoba Free Press*, December 10th, 1880, page 3]. Copeland and McArthur were both theology students [*View of the Birdtail*, 161].

8. "North-West Affairs. (From Our Own Correspondent.) Winnipeg, Oct. 21: Gone West," *The Globe*, October 29th, 1880, page 5. Also worth noting is Mr. Burdette, whom Morton also notes as a preacher [MD: September 26th, 1880 and June 26th, 1881].

9. Hodnett's family farmed south of Birtle too. J. A. Johnston was a contractor for the Presbyterian building [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 36; *View of the Birdtail*, 160-161; compare with "Local and Other News," October 1st, 1886, page 4, which names "Mr. McLeod and Mr. Pearson" as having contracted to erect the building]. Apparently the foundation they had initially built wasn't big enough for the building projected by the autumn of 1886 ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, September 24th, 1886, page 4]. In late October, the *Birtle Observer* noted that "The steeple has been placed on the new church and presents quite an imposing appearance" ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, October 29th, 1886, page 4]. It opened the next year.

10. Mrs. Morrison had died on New Year's Day, 1887, and had been very involved with the congregation [*View of the Birdtail*, 161; "The Organ Recital," *Birtle Observer*, November 4th, 1887, page 1; Hartman, *The Organ in Manitoba*, 66-67, 217, and 253; see also "Birtle's Pipe Organ" in the BCM.

11. The Residential School, like the Indian Agency, had started off closely tied to the Birdtail Sioux reserve, which had a strong Presbyterian presence before Birtle had come to be [Hasselstrom, "The Birdtail Sioux," unpublished, BCM, 12-13]. This was largely thanks to a Sioux Presbyterian missionary out of Dakota, who had visited the reserve in 1875 and begun resident mission work there in 1877. When he returned to work with the Presbytery of Dakota, the Minnedosa Presbytery noted that his efforts had meant that the reserve, which had been "Pagan in religion and barbarians in their mode of life" had since mostly converted to Christianity and could support themselves without any Government assistance ["Minnedosa Presbytery: Minutes of the Recent Sederunt Held at Birtle—The Indian Industrial School Visited," *Manitoba Free Press*, September 18th, 1889, page 2].

For the connection with Birtle's United Church, see "*Passing it On*," 37, and *A View of the Birdtail*, which page 189 explains a little how the school and merger interacted, saying that the "school was operated and financed by the Women's Missionary Society of the Presbyterian Church, with per capita grants from the Indian Affairs Branch. After Church Union it came under the United Church for a time, but in 1927 was transferred back to the Presbyterian W.M.S."

12. Cooperation went back as far as Rose and Copeland, who planned their preaching schedules so as not to overlap. Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 11-12. See also MD: November 4th, 1880. Similarly, Alfred Morton noted the beginning of a Sunday School on January 24th, 1881, which Wilson called a union Sunday school [Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 22]. Furthermore, when the Vine Street Presbyterian church held its opening services, the Methodists cancelled their own service in order to attend ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, June 17th, 1887, page 4].

Those in the new Union congregation were proud that they had joined together as early as they did. However, things were less ideal on the Birdtail Sioux Reserve, where the continuing Presbyterian Church of Canada was not replaced by the new United Church of Canada, and they did not have an initially happy relationship. They had been left out in 1917, understandable as the Local Union was only for the congregation in Birtle, but in 1924, as National Union loomed, the following petition was sent by Birdtail Sioux Presbyterians, which serves as an illustration of the problems it was causing there

Bird Tail Reserve No 57. Feb. 26/24
C/O Uno, Manitoba
To the Presbyterian Church Association

We the undersigned here in a members of the presbyterian church + members of the Bird Tail Reserve—

Humbly pray

For Restoration of our presbyterian church rights. Since the year 1878 we are under the control of the presbyterian church of Canada. Thereby our younger generations are knowing nothing else but presbyterian creed. When the Union Committee which is composed of methodist + Presbyterian churches discussed to form in United the presbyterian and Methodist churches in this district—How ever the said Committee did not offer to us a word of kindness or invite us to join in with them. Only cut us off from our Indian Services, that is cut us off from the enjoyment of the preaching the Gospel in our tongue. Further more that we the members of the presbyterian church prefer nothing else but presbyterian churches on our Reserve.

Signed 1. John Thunder 2. Isaac Thunder 3. Sam Bohpa 4. Thos Thunder 5. Alex Ben 6. Thom Ben 7. Mrs. Tom Ben 8. Mrs. J. Thunder 9. Florence Bohpa 10. Geo. Bearbull 11. [John?] Bunn

12. J. C. Paul 13. Ruth Bohpa (her mark) 14. Angus Ben 15. Mrs. Alex Ben 16. Mrs. John Waste 17. Mrs. Thos. Thunder 18. Robt. Kitana 19. Mrs Robert Kitana 20. Mrs. J. Thunder 21. Florence Ben [Petition to Presbyterian Church Association, February 26th, 1924, in LAC, MIKAN 2040484].

13. This was the product of many years of saving, helped by the congregation's Women's Auxiliary [*"Passing It On,"* 36-37; *View of the Birdtail*, 161; Description of the Birtle United Church fonds, United Church of Canada Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario Conference Archives, retrieved December 21st, 2017, <https://main.lib.umanitoba.ca/birtle-united-church-fonds>].

There had been an earlier Presbyterian manse, built 1907 "next to the Indian Agency" ["Next Week's Old News—Sixty Years Ago, 1907," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, July 4th, 1887, page 4]. On October 8th, 1907, the *Birtle Eye-Witness* noted that "The McDougall residence lately purchased by H. Gibson is to be reserved for a manse" [page 4]. Like the church, this was on Vine Street, as "H. Gibson is building a stable on the manse lots Vine St" [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, 1907, page 4].

14. *The Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 7th, 1953. The pipe organ was probably taken out at this time. Shortly after the 1953 renovation, a number of stained glass windows were added to celebrate the 75th anniversary of Birtle's first church service [*View of the Birdtail*, 161]. At the time, the congregation's Sunday School had over 120 pupils. It was renovated again in 1982 [ibid]. The Church Education Building as served many congregational, parishioner, and community purposes [*"Passing It On,"* 36-37].

15. The United Church was initially within the Birtle field, which also served congregations in Gnaton, Wattsview, and Solsgirth [Description of the Birtle United Church fonds, United Church of Canada Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario Conference Archives, retrieved December 21st, 2017, <https://main.lib.umanitoba.ca/birtle-united-church-fonds>]. In 1969, Birtle helped form the the Birtle Miniota Wider Parish, with points in Birtle, Beulah, Isabella, and Miniota. Already in 1972, it was renamed Birtle-Isabella-Miniota Pastoral charge after losing Beulah which became a community chapel. Isabella did the same in 2007, leaving only two churches in the now named Birtle-Miniota Pastoral Charge [*"Passing It On,"* 37]. As of this writing, while the congregations still continue to hold regular churchly gatherings, the Pastoral Charge is vacant. While by far the greatest cause of

the decline of the pastoral charge is undoubtedly changed values and demographics, the shifting of the Beulah and Isabella to a more community focus is a small manifestation of their proud ecumenism as well.

Another example of the ecumenical spirit guiding the United Church is the submission of Bill and Gertrude Whetter to "*Passing It On,*" on pages 192-193. Bill was the United Church minister during the 75th anniversary celebrations, and they noted on page 193 that "As we planned the church float, one individual felt we should have the names of each denomination of the four sides of the float. The majority thought it important that we exemplify Christ's desire "that we all might be one" and thus we were "The Church"."

16. Alfred Morton notes that the Reverend Dawson conducted the first Anglican service on October 2nd [MD: October 2nd, 1881]. This followed the organization of the congregation at a meeting a week earlier [Abra, *View of the Birdtail*, 154]. See also Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 20-21.

17. Wilson, *Birtle's Beginning*, 32. After Morton's arrival, Birtle saw its first batch of confirmations [MD, June 10th, 1883]. There were ten of them [*View of the Birdtail*, 154]. A Sunday School was opened in 1883 [MD: July 8th, 1883].

18. The first service in the new building was held on the fourth Sunday of Advent, December 21st, 1884 [*View of the Birdtail*, 154].

The chimes seem to have been donated by E. P. Leacock, the M.P.P. They may have initially been intended for the tower of his own house. W. J. Healey wrote in the *Free Press* that "The set of chimes which makes such pleasant music from the steeple of the Anglican Church in Birtle for the dwellers of that little town that nestles in as picturesque a valley as any in the west, was the gift of Mr. Leacock" [W. J. Healy, "A Legislative Jaunt Thirty-Five Years Ago," *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 1st, 1922, page 21]. Compare that with *St. George's Church, Birtle, Manitoba, 1884-1949: 65th Anniversary Book* which says "The Balls[sic], Tower, Pulpit and Chancel were the gift, as a result of an appeal by Edward Prescott to his father who was Rector of St. Michael's Church, Paddington, London, Eng." However, this booklet is riddled with errors when it came to the days beyond what was then living memory, and when these were ironed out in the centennial booklet *St. George's Anglican Church, Birtle, Manitoba: 1884-1984*, the donor of the chimes was not mentioned.

The chimes were well loved [see H. Greeves, “St. George’s Corner,” in *“Passing It On,”* 41]. They perished with much inside the church from a fire on March 8th, 1955 [*View of the Birdtail*, 154].

19. Insurance and hard work from parishioners allowed the construction of the new building by the next year, and the first service was held on April 22nd, 1956. It was consecrated in 1959. The chimes were replaced after special fundraising in the form of a performance of a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta [*View of the Birdtail*, 154].

Making the best of a bad situation, the basement of the new building was designed to include a Parish Hall. This has served not only a number of Anglican groups, but has also been opened to the wider community. At one point both the local branches of the Freemasons and the Order of the Eastern Star, for example, held their meetings there [*View of the Birdtail*, 154; *“Passing It On,”* 40-41].

20. *“Passing It On,”* 41.

21. The Pelly Plains Wider Parish extends as far north as Roblin. The incumbent, Dr. Kevin Goodrich, is a member of the Anglican Order of Preachers, and is currently based out of the more central location of Russell.

An interesting thing to note about St. George’s is that, until the opening of St. Mary’s, it was the only ‘high-church’ offering in Birtle. Early photographs show that the congregation went for an Anglo-Catholic aesthetic, with a screen separating the nave from an elaborately decorated chancel, not too characteristic of the plain whitewashed wall look which was so in vogue among Protestants on the Prairies at the time [Photo #16, “Birtle, Manitoba in the 1890’s: Rare historic photographs of Birtle and area from the Charles A. Flower Photo Album,” BCM]. Furthermore, in a memoir, the Rev. Pritchard complained about the hostility many of his parishes had felt towards his higher-church aesthetic, but does not mention St. George’s, which he served from 1902 to 1907, in that context; and it would seem that it was before he had left Birtle that he finally admitted to have “caught the spirit of the Oxford movement and was not merely high-church (I dislike the term) — I was a convinced Anglo-Catholic.” His examples of liturgical behaviour disliked by some of his later parishioners included such ‘radical’ measures as “to turn to the altar in the Creed, to sing or intone the service, to have a cross on the altar or to use a processional cross, to take the eastward position at the altar, even to sign the psalms or to use the sign of the cross...”

[Pritchard, *The Red River Settlement, A Gripping Narrative*, 24-25]. It may well be then that the aesthetic already cultivated at St. George’s helped to shape his own liturgical outlook. Furthermore, it was likely the Anglo-Catholic nature of the parish which allowed E. P. Leacock, an early Birtle M.P.P., who claimed to have never distinguished between his formal Catholic and public Anglican confessions of faith, to have no qualms in attending and being involved with the Birtle congregation as People’s Warden [*View of the Birdtail*, 154; “Leacock Joins Rome,” *The Winnipeg Tribune*, January 22nd, 1892, page 9].

22. MD: December 10th, 1882. This service was conducted by a Baptist Superintendent who was spending a week in Birtle sizing up mission prospects [Wilson, *Birtle’s Beginning*, 32].

23. *View of the Birdtail*, 157; *“Passing It On,”* 35. The purchased building was the Rosemount Chpael in Newdale.

24. *View of the Birdtail*, 157. The parsonage was rented out until 1979, when it was sold. After the Town of Birtle purchased the church building and property, it also acquired the Brown House, which is currently used by the Birtle Fire Department for training purposes. The parsonage had ceased being used because of changing pastoral circumstances among area Baptists. Initially, Birtle’s Baptist ministers were also responsible for holding services at Beulah, Fort Ellice, Solsgirth, and the Oxford and Burdette schools. In 1938, Birtle, Shoal Lake, and Strathclair were organized as a Field together, though in 1954 Strathclair withdrew to be its own congregation. However, in 1968, the Strathclair minister began to serve Birtle, presumably using a parsonage in Strathclair, while Shoal Lake carried on by itself. This continued until 1984 [*“Passing It On,”* 35; *View of the Birdtail*, 157].

25. *“Passing It On,”* 36.

Worth noting in the context of the closure of the Birtle Baptist Church is the Word Alive Full Gospel Church, which was not included here for not having built its own facility. Nevertheless, though I don’t know to what extent it was pivotal to Birtle, it may well have been to individual lives. When the Baptist Church fell apart, its last recorded minister was Deborah Fulton, a Birtle native [*“Passing It On,”* 36], who within a few months was pastoring the Word Alive Church “Full Gospel.” [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, December 7th, 1988, page 8]. She resigned the next year, but the congregation continued under new leadership [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, July 4th,

1989, page 9]. Philip and Linda Schwarz, who had been involved with the congregation [“Word Alive Witness to feature interview with Linda Schwarz,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 16th, 1989, page 10], had charge of it from 1990 onwards [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 6th, 1990, page 14; “Your Worship Services,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, February 12th, 2000, page 6; *Crossroads This Week*, August 20th, 2005, page 12]. However, its Main street location at the old laundromat suffered from the vandalism that had plagued the town in the early 2000s, and was also robbed [“RCMP will check suspicious people,” *Crossroads This Week*, July 10th, 2004, page 3; “Yellowhead RCMP weekly report,” *Crossroads This Week*, June 23rd, 2007, page 5]. After Philip’s death in 2013, Linda Schwarz sold the building the next year to The Classic Garden for a nominal fee [“About the Classic Garden—An Opportunity,” The Classic Garden, retrieved December 27th, 2017, <http://www.theclassicgarden.ca/about-the-classic-garden-the-beginning/>].

26. *View of the Birdtail*, 159-160; “*Passing It On*,” 42-43.

When thinking about the names of the congregations in the parish, it might be significant to consider the Métis congregations of Sainte Marthe near Rocanville, and the lamented Sainte Madeleine [for its story, see Herriot, *Towards a Prairie Atonement*]. Ste. Marthe “was named after the biblical Martha, the Martha of the story of Mary and Martha, the sister of Lazarus and Magdalene” and the “settlement policies of the archbishopric of St. Boniface can be seen in the location” of those communities [Heath, *Joe Fafard*, 17]. It is not impossible then for St. Mary’s to be connected to that; if the St. Mary’s were named for Mary Magdalene, it could have been preemptively replacing Ste. Madeleine, which would be dispersed in 1938. However, the parish in Russell was named St. Joseph’s, the priest of whom supervised the construction of St. Mary’s, so it is more likely a reference to the Mother of our Lord. Another thing to bear in mind is that some of the original Birtle settlers had come from the St. Marys area of Ontario [“Beginning of a History,” *Birtle Observer*, November 13th, 1885, page 1]. For those wishing to venture further into the significance of the naming of area Roman Catholic parishes, Shoal Lake’s congregation is named St. Helen.

27. *View of the Birdtail*, 160; “*Passing It On*,” 43.

Section 13. Education

- 1.** C. E. Tibbats, for example, a teacher and principal at the high school, also served as Mayor in the early 1950s [*View of the Birdtail*, 55, 178].
- 2.** An example of the lingering hold of these district identities are Birtle’s Canada Day celebrations in 1967. On day three there was to be a centennial parade and an “old-time picnic,” which would include tug-of-war teams from Wattsvie, Blenheim, Gnaton, Rothesay, Burdett, and Mountjoy [“Birtle’s July Celebrations!,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 27th, 1967, page 1].
- 3.** The one-time importance of these subregional identities, though referring to already consolidated school districts, is made fairly clear at the surprise of a teacher describing what occurred when the regional centres consolidated to Birtle: “Students from St. Lazare, Foxwarren, Solsgirth, Isabella, Beulah and Miniota added to the mix in Birtle. It was amazing that these students who had been raised with their own community pride, prejudice and rivalry could quickly unite and add their talents to new activities in Birtle” [Ray Simms in “*Passing It On*,” 59].
- 4.** For an account of each of these school-districts, see “*Passing It On*,” 69-80.
- 5.** See for example “*Passing It On*,” which notes “Many of those who left Rothesay to go to Birtle and other schools, by their own insistence, were still ‘Rothesay Kids.’” [“*Passing It On*,” 79].
- 6.** Even before officially joining Manitoba, Birtle settlers sent a petition on October 20th, 1881, to the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba about a school district, asking that it consist of “the thirty six sections centering on the iron stake at the corner of this section,” which was approved by the province the next year. The trustees elected on December 23rd, were Alfred Morton, J. H. Wood, and Joseph Brown, the same day as the formal extension of the Manitoba boundary [Wilson, *Birtle’s Beginning*, 24 and 29; “Corner Stone Enclosure Makes Interesting Reading,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 5th, 1973; Association of Manitoba Land Surveyors, “The First Boundary Extension,” accessed September 23rd, 2017, <http://www.aml.ca/the-first-boundary-extension/>].
- 7.** When E. J. Wilson wrote the Birtle’s Beginning series in the 1930s, the site of the Stone School was “still marked by a pile of dressed rocks about half a mile west of the present business section of Birtle. ... Present citizens

wonder why it was chosen and get no answer” [Wilson, *Birtle’s Beginning*, 29-30]. The site is supposed to be covered up by Highway 83 now. Alfred Morton notes that the trustees were authorized to borrow money to build the school and purchase a site on May 20th, 1882, and that they had given the contract to build the school to J. A. Johnston and James McKenzie on August 5th, 1882, as noted by Wilson; but he also noted that this was before the selection of the site had been made. Perhaps then the contractors had a voice in the decision of where the building would be located; it was a dozen days later that Morton noted that a “School meeting decided that S.H. be placed on SW of 6, T.16, R 26 leaving the further placing of it to the Trustees” [MD: August 17th, 1882]. Four days later, “Trustees go to locate S.H.” [MD: August 21st, 1882]. However, their preferred location, wherever that was, had to be switched, as noted by Morton the next day. They had presumably attempted to purchase the land at the Land Office and been turned down, as “School site changed on account of some of the block belonging to a man in Hamilton” [MD: August 22nd, 1882].

Thus, when saying why the site was selected, it should be noted that it was not the first choice, but the second choice. As to why the general area west of the bridge was selected, remember who the trustees doing the selecting were: J. H. Wood, who from the beginning was hoping to have founded an important settlement for his own personal welfare in addition to higher sense of duty, and Alfred Morton and Joseph Brown, who were also both noted for their civic-mindedness. They all wanted to raise Birtle’s profile. In keeping with that, they had chosen to construct a massive stone building. There was symbolic importance to all of this, as the impressive three story Stone School heralded a promising future for the settlement, in that it hoped to extend much more widely than it yet had by 1882. As Bill Mackenzie, son of James McKenzie (or Mackenzie), would recall of his father: “At Birtle he had a contract to build a new stone school. So optimistic were the people of Birtle that the school was built a distance outside the village, so when growth occurred, the school would be centrally located” [Bill Mackenzie, “MacKenzie Recollections,” Don MacKenzie, editor, in *Ellice: 1883-1983*].

Also worth considering is the fact that being farther away from the dusty, horse-filled streets of the main part of town would have meant an environment less likely to immediately assault the senses. A peaceful learning environment away from the main action was certainly characteristic of Birtle’s later school buildings, which have tended towards the edges of

town. Nevertheless, the distant location of the Stone School was not appreciated by Birtle residents.

8. “*Passing It On,*” 79. The financial difficulties of the school district were quite clear by 1885, when E. P. Leacock, Birtle’s representative in the Manitoba legislature, floated the idea of killing three birds with one stone by turning the school district into a courthouse: “By purchasing the present stone building used as a School House, and by altering it so as to be adapted for a Court House and Gaol, the District would obtain for some \$9,000 a most suitable building; the School District would be relieved of a portion of its very heavy debt, and would be able to build a School House in a more convenient part of the town. The District would be relieved of its share of the enormous rental now paid by it to the town of Brandon for the Court House and Gaol” [E. P. Leacock to Editor, “Judicial Changes,” *Birtle Observer*, December 11th, 1885, page 1].

As for the precise date of the transfer to the Residential School, in the summer of 1887 the Stone School was still noted as the “public school building . . . whose location shows a desire to give the rising generation plenty of exercise in reaching it” [“Refugee Indians.: Dr. Bryce Visits the Sioux Reserve on Bird-Tail Creek—Notes of Advancement.: The Indians Taking Kindly to the Cultivation of the Soil—Beautiful Birtle.” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 31st, 1887, page 3]. The distance from the town was a big inconvenience, and it would seem that for the winter of 1887-1888, or possibly just for the spring (there could have been troubles with the bridge, logs, and the spring freshets more generally), school had been held in the main part of town again, probably the Town and Albert Halls. Thus the *Birtle Observer* noted in May that “On Monday the Birtle public school will remove to the stone school house across the river” [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, May 4th, 1888, page 4].

The inconvenient location and significant debt made leasing out the property seem like a good idea, and this happened in 1888. Thus, on January 2nd, 1889, the Indian Agent reported that “A boarding school for Indian children has been opened at this place by the Presbyterian Mission.” He noted that its 23 students could be increased by thirty or forty, “if accommodation is offered,” suggesting why the school ended up building its own building, one more suitable for boarders [J. A. Markle to Indian Commissioner, January 2nd, 1889, LAC, MIKAN 2060007]. Indeed, the *Birtle Observer* had noted a couple weeks earlier that only about one-half of

the third floor was dedicated to dormitories [“The Indian School at Birtle,” *Birtle Observer*, December 20th, 1888, page 1].

9. “*Passing It On*,” 49, 79.

10. Cited in E. J. Wilson, “School Days,” in Sylvia Doran, “People in Profile,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, October 2nd, 1985, page 4. Page 28 of “*The Birdtail Country*” has a good picture of the ruins in a dilapidated state, and the caption notes that they when they were blasted in 1919, the fill was “used for Roseboroughs garage next to Town Hall.”

11. “*Passing It On*,” 49 dates the Blue School to 1905, but appears to be mistaken. In 1897, it was noted in the *Eye-Witness* that “Birtle school moved into the new building yesterday. The rooms appear admirably suited for school purposes and no complaints are now heard as to its location. It is a little early to state if the furnace will heat the whole building satisfactorily as the weather has been very moderate and a little experience will be required to get it properly regulated” [“Locals,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 9th, 1897, page 4]. Later that year, the *Eye-Witness* concluded that “the new school just finished is a credit to the school district, stone basement with Hillborn furnace large enough to heat the whole building, two roomy, well lighted class rooms, with halls, teachers’ rooms, cloak lobbies and ventilation on the approved plan. It is proposed to hold an opening concert on Friday evening of next week. The contractors Messrs. Barge & Carpenter have completed the building in most workmanlike manner and within the time expected” [“Birtle During 1897,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 2nd, 1897, page 1].

Considering how dissatisfied the people of Birtle were with the location of the Stone School, it isn’t surprising that the proposed site of the Blue School changed a couple times. See the notice of a Public Meeting put in the *Eye-Witness* by E. J. Wilson in his capacity as secretary of the Birtle School District, on page 1 of the *Birtle Eye-Witness*, January 26th, 1897. In a different paragraph on the same page, the new location was specified: “The school board has got figures for the south half of Block 63 in front of Mr. Carpenter’s residence, for a school site to be submitted to the public meeting.” Block 63 is the block the Blue School sat upon. The question of a new school building and its location had been a divisive one, as its final construction was reported to have “removed the main question over which there has been agitation for a couple of years and which caused citizens to take an unusual interest in the election of both trustees and

council” [“Municipal Questions,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 2nd, 1897, page 1]. Wilson would explain the wrangling over the school question after the Stone School burnt in an undated piece printed far later by Sylvia Doran in her column:

In April 1896, a public meeting asked trustees to have estimates made for repairing the stone walls or alternately a new building. Another meeting on February 3, 1897, discussed possible new site, but after much bickering and several amendments, and a change of chairman, proved inconclusive, and dissolved.

In response to 60 ratepayers asking that the site be moved to town another meeting was held April 4, 1897.

Mr. Manwaring seconded by J.I. Foster, moved for school in block 75. An amendment which carried left choice of site to the board, but east of 6th street. A motion to retain the stone school site was lost.

On April 28th, 1897 the board announced at a public meeting their choice of South half of block 63 at \$420.00 which was accepted. Alternative sites were in block 95 (Dr. Miles’ property) offered at \$25.00 a lot and part of McArthur’s sawmill property (near old rinks) at \$400.00. Proposal of the school board to purchase half of block 63 from C. J. Mickle was endorsed by a vote of 28-12. Opponents to any change of site were again ruled out of order.”

[E. J. Wilson, “School Days,” in Sylvia Doran, “People in Profile,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, October 2nd, 1985, page 4].

As for the expansion of the school in 1904, the *Eye-Witness* noted that “Birtle has experienced a very good year in trade and improvements. ... The school board has added two rooms which will be ready for occupying shortly at cost of about \$2500 giving Birtle a four roomed school building that presents a handsome outside appearance and will be adequate for the towns educative needs for some years” [“Birtle Town,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 15th, 1904, page 1].

12. “*Passing It On*,” 50; Sylvia Doran, “People in Profile: We Are Building A New School!” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 22nd, 1985, page 4. Classes were again set up upstairs in the Town Hall, though by now there was a large new structure for them. One primary class moved to the brick high school and in 1945 another classroom began in the Court Room.

13. “*Passing It On*,” 57.

14. “*Passing It On*,” 50-51; “Memories of Former Pupils: Glenda Walker-Hobbs,” in “*Passing It On*,” 65-66; Sylvia Doran, “People in Profile: We Are Building A New School!,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 22nd, 1985, page 4.

15. “*Passing It On*,” 57-59.

16. Bob Marshall, “Birtle Elementary School,” in “*Passing It On*,” 51-53.

17. At the time, the Pink School was housing “the Town of Birtle office, Birtle Public Library, Birtle Nursery School, Valley Recreation District office and the meeting place for a great variety of organizations” and having to vacate “should be good news for the owners of vacant office space throughout town” [Judy Bicknell, “BRSD office moving here,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 2nd, 2001, page 1]. See also Judy Bicknell, “BRSD staff have new home,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, September 8th, 2001, page 1.

18. Bob Marshall, “Birtle Elementary School,” in “*Passing It On*,” 56, says 2004-2005. Al Bray, “Birtle Collegiate,” in “*Passing It On*,” 60 says the combination was actually in 2002-2003, and that “One of the more positive spin-offs resulted in Birtle becoming the new home of the administration office.”

19. Hamiota, Russell, and Shoal Lake had all made competing proposals [“Park West goes with status quo: Status Division office will stay in Birtle after all,” *Crossroads This Week*, April 23rd, 2010, page 1].

20. When the Birdtail Sioux reserve was officially established in 1875, it was visited by Solomon Tunkansuiciye, who became a permanent missionary there two years later. Between Tunkansuiciye and Chief Enoch Mahpiyahdinape, much of the band converted. Both were involved in religious services but also in teaching. However, Tunkansuiciye could not speak English on his arrival, and even after his final departure from Canada in 1887 his proficiency in the language was limited [Baird, *Foreign Missions*, 19-20; “Refugee Indians.: Dr. Bruce Visits the Sioux Reserve on Bird-Tail Creek—Notes of Advancement.: The Indians Taking Kindly to the Cultivation of the Soil—Beautiful Birtle.” *Manitoba Free Press*, August 31st, 1887, page 3].

Students were taught to read and write fluently in their native language, however. As noted by Dr. Bryce on a visit to the Birdtail Sioux,

The Rev. Solomon does not speak English but through his interpreter I learned that ... [t]hey also have a school house in readiness for occupation, but are without a teacher to instruct

them in the English language. There are six young men in the reserve who read the Sioux language fluently, and forty children under instruction. The literary inclined ones, who read the Sioux language so fluently, are just fidgeting to tackle the English, and want to know where the teachers are that the Government agreed to send among them. Rev. Solomon put this question very pointedly, but not knowing anything about the teachers, I attempted to effect a change in the conversation by asking how many young squaws there were in the reserve who could speak English, but Mr. Tunkansuiciye again propounded his conundrum. The interpreter emphasized the “where” as strongly as it was possible to do; and to heap still more importance to the question reverend Solomon silently nodded his head three times. I was forced to admit that I knew nothing about the matter. But to Mr. Tunkansuiciye this was a favorite topic, and it was with difficulty that your correspondent succeeded in drawing him into conversation on any other subject” [From our own correspondent, Little Saskatche-wanderer, “The Near West.: Something About the Indians.” August 20th, 1879, in *Manitoba Free Press*, September 6th, 1879, page 1].

Bryce further noted that Tunkansuiciye was planning to take out a homestead entry for eighty acres in township fifteen, range 27 west, to make him “I believe, the first Indian who has homesteaded land in Manitoba or the North-West Territories.”

It isn’t surprising the Sioux could speak their native language so well, as Mahpiyahdinape would have been an excellent teacher. Noted for his calligraphy and use of language, he had helped prepare the first Dakota dictionary in 1853 [*The Word Carrier*, Santee Agency, Nebraska, volume 4, number 6 (June 1887), page 1: “Enoch Mahpiyahdinape returned this last winter to Sissiton Agency from the British Possessions, where he has been with the fugitives from the Sioux War of 1862, ever since that time. An old man, he has come back to his near relatives to spend his last days. We have just received a letter from him telling of the kindness of the people in the two Indian churches of Long Hollow and Buffalo Lakes; ninety-nine persons having given gifts of goods and clothing as they were able. The handwriting of this letter is beautiful, and the language is equally so. Enoch “Cloud Appearing” is one who uses the classic Dakota. Thirty-four years ago he gave valuable help by his criticisms, when the first Dakota Dictionary was preparing”].

21. With “the inferiority of day schools to boardings schools having become very apparent, it was merged in the new boarding and industrial school at Birtle This school was intended for the benefit both of the Sioux reserve and also of the Salteaux reserves to the north and east” [Baird, *Foreign Missions*, 20-21].

It seems that there had already been a school destined for the Indigenous in Birtle since 1886, as in 1889 the *Observer* noted that “The Birtle Indian School, which has for over three years, been doing a true work among the Indians, is about to have its staff strengthened by the addition of a missionary teacher. ...” [“Locals,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, December 17th, 1889, page 4]. Presumably, it would not have been a boarding school or, if so, it had not been of the same ambitions as the one established in 1888.

As for the rooming establishments, “The institution is supported from the Presbyterian Foreign Mission Fund and by the Women’s Presbyterian Mission Association,” but apparently only about one-half of the third floor was dedicated to dormitories [“The Indian School at Birtle,” *Birtle Observer*, December 20th, 1888, page 1].

22. Apparently they had first left the Stone School and moved to the Watt house, which had provided better accommodation. How long that arrangement lasted is uncertain, but the new building was opened in 1894 [“*Passing It On*,” 68]. The site was located in 1892 [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 11th, 1892, page 4].

23. A fire started in the school in 1901 after a furnace pipe overheated and lit a joist on fire. When he investigated, Indian Agent G. H. Wheatley noted his amazement “to see what a fire-trap the work about the furnace pipe hole was” and that it was “a mystery that the building has escaped so long.” In 1927, another inspector noted that the building “owing to its narrow and intricate passages would be a death trap in case of fire.” To top it all off, that same year the principal noted that the school had no ladder long enough to reach the girls’ dormitory window in case of fire [*Canada’s Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939*, 472, 477]. The water supply was likewise problematic, reported as inadequate in 1915, an issue compounded by a defective boiler by 1927 which could not heat water hotter than 10° Celsius during the winter [Ibid, 462].

24. “*Passing It On*,” 69.

25. In 1940, the school’s chlorination system wasn’t working, and there were signs of fecal contamination of the school’s water supply [*Canada’s Residential Schools: The History, Part 2 1939 to 2000*, 180]. In 1950, the hot-water supply shut down due to a leak in the heating equipment, and students had to haul boiling water from the boiler in the basement to bathe [Ibid, 180]. In 1957, the water from the kitchen tap was inspected and deemed dangerous [Ibid, 180].

In 1943, the principal reported that the fire alarm could not be heard in the junior boys’ room, and that a lack of interior lighting made nighttime fire drills dangerous; furthermore, there were persistent problems with locked fire escapes, noted in 1945 and 1968 [Ibid, 318, 320]. The wiring situation was also unsafe, as a lack of outlets in the building meant they used a lot of extension cords, as noted in 1960 [Ibid, 182].

In addition to these problems, in 1940 it was already reported that there were large cracks opening up in the floor of the decade-old school, and that money had never been provided to repair the foundation or the cracks [Ibid, 75].

26. The following citation from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s report helps to illustrate them in relation to Birtle, particularly Smith’s comment at the end:

In 1935, ten pupils ran away from the Birtle, Manitoba, school. At the time, the Indian agent put the problem down to homesickness, since he felt the children were well treated and well fed. The runaway problem continued into the next year. Then, the school inspector, A. G. Hamilton, believed the problem was attributable to the “spirit that pervades the school,” adding that he always thought it was a mistake to have the principal’s wife act as school matron. (It was a common practice in Protestant schools for the principal’s wife to serve as matron.) In 1937, five girls tied sheets together and slid out the dormitory window. In reporting on the escape, Indian agent A. G. Smith wrote, “To be candid I cannot blame the girls as the life they have been leading is enough to breed discontent.” [*Canada’s Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939*, 585].

There are many other Birtle examples scattered throughout the documents published by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

27. Verna Kirkness, who taught in Birtle from 1959-1961, did not much care for the attitudes or actions of her fellow staff members, but still notes that: “Birtle Residential School was reputed to be much superior to the Brandon Residential School. Students from Fisher River were normally sent to Brandon, but once they learned about Birtle, most chose to go there” [Kirkness, *Creating Space*, 32].

28. *View of the Birdtail*, 54. The flower garden was “the pride and joy of the whole town,” [cited in “*Passing It On*,” 68].

29. The standard memory from the town’s residents tended to be quite positive about the whole thing, with an assumption that physical punishments complained about were comparable to those meted out in ‘white’ schools. However, an increasing understanding of the cultural devastation and outright if unintended cruelty involved in sending five-year old children away from their parents for most of the year to spend much of their days in increasingly irrelevant farm labour has taken hold, particularly in light of the findings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Still, that newer direction continues to be tempered by memories, friendships, and an underlying assumption that if there was widespread abuse it would have been more widely known about. A good example appeared by Jack Dodds appeared in the *Crossroads*. He attended school in Birtle in 1948, and shared his memories in 2013 [Jack Dodds, “Memories of the Birtle Indian Residential School: Former Birtle resident Jack Dodds remembers his classmates who attended the school,” *Crossroads This Week*, September 27th, 2013, 3-5].

See also “Unity Ride Honors Children who never came home,” *The Birtle Outlook*, August 3rd, 2016, page 1, where alumni of the Residential School seemed to have a similar take on the residential schools generally and Birtle Residential school in particular: “It was not all bad and it is time to move on.”

30. “*Passing It On*,” 68.

31. As noted by the *Eye-Witness* in 1935, “Work at the Indian School has wonderfully helped Birtle’s labor problem past few years. This will slacken and citizens must find other means of filling the void” [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 18th, 1935, page 1].

32. Sometimes hiring locals may not have been in the best interest of the school. In 1940, for example, the Indian agent looking at trying to get

trained repairmen to fix the school’s chlorination plant “worried that it would be difficult to recruit a school engineer who was familiar enough with the technology to properly maintain it [*Canada’s Residential Schools: The History, Part 2 1939 to 2000*, 180]. This may well imply that less skilled locals had been hired for quicker jobs at certain points; worth noting is the construction of the first building, where the Indian Agent in 1901 thought it was a mystery that the building hadn’t burnt down yet [*Canada’s Residential Schools: The History, Part 1 Origins to 1939*, 472].

Birtle also benefitted through non-construction related work. Dr. Richard Wheeler, for example, got work as a physician at the Residential School [*Birtle Begins*, 100]. See also the annual Indian Department reports, which have him collecting various sums for services to the Birtle Indian Agency up to 1915, the year of his death, which lists Wheeler as having received a salary of 800 dollars as Medical Officer, only 100 dollars fewer than S. M. Dickinson, then clerk of the Indian Agency — to compare, G. H. Wheatley, the agent, was earning 1200. Earlier reports are sprinkled with receipts for Birtle businesses like Wheeler’s own drug store, but also for local saddlers and blacksmiths.

33. As reported in the *Eye-Witness*, the Town of Birtle had asked for a capital grant of almost 44,000 dollars from the Indian Department, which was approved dependent on the relevant by-law passing. This grant seems to have covered not only the cost of “water main and booster station, and Sanitary sewer main from the hospital to the Indian School” but also “proportionate shares of cost and water treatment plant and appurtenances, lagoon and appurtenances and sewage lift station and force main. The co-operation of the Indian Affairs Branch in supporting the proposed Municipal system will mean much added revenue and result in a reduction of rates for water & Sewage facilities” [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 17th, 1959, page 3. See also the Public Notice from the Town on the same page]. It seems that the Indian Department, then, paid for the basic water infrastructure needed for the entire span from it to the hospital, although the Town would have probably had to run pipes at least part of the way anyway. If not, the school’s hookup would have made later property development on the north bank that much cheaper.

34. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission highlighted the issue of Residential Schools, which has led to a greater interest in the history of the Birtle school. Considerable attention was also attracted to a news story in

2013, after the owners of the former school put up the building for sale on Kijij. Opinion was mixed, but the story got international attention, with a pair of prospective buyers from Switzerland travelling to Birtle to look at the property [Alexandra Paul, “Crumbling former Manitoba residential school property available for \$79,000,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, June 27th, 2015].

Section 14. Health Care

1. For example, Dr. Morrison, in his capacity as Health Officer, wrote a warning in the pages of the *Birtle Observer* not to take either water, or ice, from the backwater of the Birtle dam, the filth of which he described in fairly vivid detail [J. H. Morrison to editor, *Birtle Observer*, January 30th, 1885, page 1]. Similarly, the Town of Birtle Minutes note that the Council, which after having gone to significant lengths to ensure the town’s sawmill was operational and supply settlers with timber, adopted a resolution to forbid the men in the local timber industry to use the dam “during the hot weather as it affects the health of the Town” [Town of Birtle Minutes, May 10th, 1890, page 283].

2. Dr. Morrison was on Town Council and Doctors Wheeler and Miles both served as mayor [“*Passing It On*,” 68]. Morrison was also appointed school inspector in 1883 [MD: October 9th, 1883] and became the range officer at the founding of the Birtle Rifle Association [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, April 17th, 1885]. He was apparently a good shot [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, January 15th, 1886]. Morrison was also a businessman who got into timber berths [LAC: Order-in-Council Number 1884-0894, Item Number 27653]. Morrison was also instrumental in getting the pipe organ in the United Church.

3. Pioneer Lodge, a low-cost housing facility for the elderly, which has helped retain older citizens [“*Passing It On*,” 90]. Sunnyside Manor, a personal care home, was also spearheaded by locals. It received its first residents in the fall of 1978 [Ibid, 82]. In 1998 a palliative care unit opened at the hospital [Ibid, 86].

The Hospital Auxiliaries have been helpful in connection with this. According to the *Birtle Eye-Witness*, a “Hospital Aid had been formed under the auspices of the Home Economic Society” or Women’s Institute. This was to raise funds for equipment for the first municipal hospital in

1915 [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 9th, 1915, page 5]. This seems to have disbanded by the time the hospital re-opened as St. Mary’s under the Sisters of St. Benedict, as the Birtle history books trace the formation of the auxiliary back to 1935, when it was formed to help raise funds and buy equipment for St. Mary’s. It disbanded in 1961, as the individual members then thought their energies were as needed there and turned their attention to different projects. However, it reorganized in 1976 and did a lot of good work, before disbanded again in 2000 due to declining membership [*View of the Birdtail*, 148; “*Passing It On*,” 89].

4. “Young Mr. Carpenter came to get a tooth pulled. It was so badly decayed that I could not get it out” [MD: December 30th, 1880]. Whether or not Morton always charged is uncertain, but in 1881 he would charge 25¢ per tooth, which seems to have gone up to 50¢ by 1883 [MD: May 16th, 1881, and October 5th, 1883]. Local physicians were typically good people to pull teeth, and Morton himself notes that he had his first ever tooth extracted by Dr. Morrison in 1883 [MD: September 24th, 1883]. At the same time, Morton may well have been better at pulling teeth than Morrison as in 1882 he “Pulled a tooth for a man in Mr. Morrison’s office” [MD: July 24th, 1882], though that may have only been because it was an emergency and Morrison was unavailable.

5. *View of the Birdtail*, 68; “*Passing it On*,” 14.

6. *View of the Birdtail*, 54, 68. See also “*Passing it On*,” 82, which notes that by 1974 they were already looking for someone to replace Dr. Lang.

7. Morton noted in 1880 that “A Dr. from Rapid City called here to get some oats” [MD, July 19th, 1880]. Two dies prior, Morton had noted that Mrs. Carpenter had convulsions without a doctor, so the Rapid City doctor may have been brought in to see her. Some physicians presumably had come out to farm rather than to be physicians. By name, Morton mentions a Dr. H. McMillan in 1884, from whom he collected taxes on February 13th, and a Dr. McKinnon on October 24th, 1886, when Morton went to get him about half an hour before an infant son Willie died of pneumonia.

According to *View of the Birdtail*, Morrison was “the student medical doctor” [page 161]. Morton’s diary records Morrison dressing John Haines’s foot. He was from Nova Scotia, and set up the town’s first drug store [Wilson, *Birtle’s Beginning*, 30]. As for Morrison’s political career, he was on town council [“*Passing it On*,” 14-15], and had ambitions to contest

Birtle's first mayoral election, as Morton noted that he "circulated a requisition for Dr. Morrison to be Mayor" [MD: December 21st, 1883]. Morrison also attended a Conservative convention as a delegate of the Birtle Conservative association along with Crawford and Manwaring [MD: June 30th, 1886]. In 1888, he wrote to George Elias Foster, a rising cabinet minister he likely knew from back in Nova Scotia, attempting to get Major Boulton, the most prominent Conservative of Northwestern Manitoba at the time, to be appointed to the Senate as a replacement for John Schultz, the old Riel opponent who vacated the seat on his appointment to the Lieutenant-Governorship of Manitoba. Boulton had narrowly lost the federal seat of Marquette in 1887, and Morrison claimed "he met defeat simply owing to my absence from the constituency." He also explained why a Conservative from the Northwest part of Manitoba ought to receive the appointment rather than yet another man from Winnipeg; not only was it the "producing portion of the province," but:

Hitherto, the voice of Winnipeg alone has been heard and her usually exorbitant demands acceded to. It was not Mr Norqay's failure to secure the abolition of monopoly alone that brought about his downfall. It was principally because the Western Conservatives became alienated from him when he started to defy constitutional authority in forcing the construction of the R.R.V. Railway. While we firmly supported the Federal Govt in the lawful exercise of their proper authority, all Winnipeg including Scarth, Mulvey +c. flew off on a tangent of excitement and determination to secure the abolition of the monopoly rights of the C.P.R. All through that trouble Major Boulton and the conservatives of the North-western portion of Manitoba stood squarely up for law and the constitution and even defended the policy of disallowance. Subsequent events have proved that its removal has done us more harm than good.

Foster passed on the letter to Macdonald, noting that it came from "a bright coming man" [J. H. Morrison to Hon. G. E. Foster, Birtle, November 1st, 1888, LAC, MIKAN 535599, underlining in original]. Nothing came of it for over a year, and Morrison wrote again, this time directly to Sir John, revisiting his earlier points but this time blaming Boulton's recent electoral defeat on the Métis vote, which opposed him because of his participation in the Northwest Rebellion [J. H. Morrison to Sir John A. Macdonald, Birtle, December 4th, 1889, LAC, MIKAN 535601].

The letter to Macdonald was written on letterhead identifying him as coroner, a position likely earned through patronage in addition to his medical qualifications. This appointment was apparently made in 1888, given that he wrote to the government that year for instructions as to what the job involved [See LAC, MIKAN 1322863].

8. *View of the Birdtail*, 65. Edwards based himself out of Foxwarren in September 1927, though the nearest hospitals were in Birtle and Russell. When O'Brien ceased his operations in Birtle in 1930, Edwards moved there [*View of the Birdtail*, 67]. On the hospital's secularization in 1970, Edwards was the chief of staff [*"Passing It On,"* 81].

9. The hospital was primarily set up to cope with the "numerous tubercular cases" among the Waywayseecappo band [Canada, Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs, 1906, 282]. In 1910, William James Roche was brought up the changed location in the House of Commons:

Mr. ROCHE. There was formerly an Indian hospital on the reserve near Rosssburn, and I understand that hospital has been closed, or removed to the town of Birtle. I would like the minister to explain on whose recommendation that was removed, or why it was removed from Rosthern reserve. Is there any local difficulty there?

Mr. OLIVER. It was not though the hospital at Rosssburn was not as conveniently located for administration as it would be at Birtle. Birtle is an important railroad point, with good railway facilities that did not exist at Rosssburn. The hospital was removed on the report of the inspector, Mr. Swinford. [*Debates of the House of Commons*, 1909-1910, 7850].

This may have been the reason for the change of location, and the hospital hunkered down in Birtle. However, as the Annual Indian Report for 1910-1911 also demonstrates, the reasons it had been centrally located may have been done more out of convenience to some parties involved than to others:

The tent hospital in connection with the Birtle boarding school, under the management of Principal McLaren, was closed down three months during the summer, and was reopened in October with nurse Highet in charge. The tents have been replaced by lumber cottages, two for the patients, and one for the nurse. Chas. G. Wotherspoon, M.A., M.B., C.M., is the medical officer,

and visits the hospital and schools daily. The greatest number of patients are pupils from the school. Very few from the reserves take advantage of it, preferring to stay on their reserves and effect their own cure as best they know how [G.H. Wheatley to Frank Pedley, Deputy Supt. General of Indian Affairs, Birtle, April 11th, 1911, in *Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the year ended March 31st, 1911*]

10. Thus the *Eye-Witness* noted in late 1915 that “Birtle hospital yesterday had to turn away, for want of room, a patient from Rosburn, who had his hands badly frozen from exposure when lost on the prairie Xmas night. He went down to Minnedosa” [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, December 28th, 1915, page 5]. It was apparently doing a good job as other districts put money towards it as well, as per the *Eye-Witness* again: “Ellice council offers liberal aid to Birtle hospital. The large numbers from Ellice and Foxwarren districts, who have received treatment and had operations performed are the best possible living advertisement of its need and the careful work done by both doctors and nurses [“Foxwarren Locals,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 22nd, 1916, page 4].

11. In 1990, the government was doing some legislative housekeeping, and *The Private Acts Repeal Act* repealed a number of long since irrelevant acts, including “An Act to incorporate the Lady Minto Hospital at Birtle, S.M. 1917, c. 104” [retrieved December 23rd, 2017, <http://web2.gov.mb.ca/laws/statutes/1990-91/c00290-91e.php>]. The decision to so incorporate was made in 1916, as per the *Eye-Witness*, “The hospital promoters have decided to incorporate under the Lady Minto Hospital Auspices. The proposal embraces hospital of about a dozen cots, to cost about 25,000, including equipment. An active campaign is under way to raise the ‘sinews of war.’” [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, February 8th, 1916, page 5].

Lady Minto was a name representative both of the Town’s imperialist tendencies, but also may have been aimed at getting further funding. Lady Minto, the wife of a one-time Governor-General of Canada, had cooperated with the Victorian Order of Nurses, which in turn had been founded in 1897 by Lady Aberdeen, another Governor-General’s wife. Funds may have been forthcoming from that organization, as they had been for the Lady Minto Hospital in Cochrane, Ontario, which opened in 1916 [“History,” *Victoria Order of Nurses Canada*, retrieved December 23rd, 2017, <http://www.von.ca/en/history>; “About Us,” *MICs Group of Health Services*, retrieved December 23rd, 2017, <https://www.micsgroup.com/minto/about.html>].

Indeed, the *Eye-Witness* noted a presence of the Order: “Last night a meeting of the hospital board was held to arrange for meeting the representative of the Victorian Order of Nurses who is listed to spend tonight here in conference over hospital work. Birtle hospital has not been operating some eight months and has amply proved its necessity and that with reasonable public support and sympathy will fill all requirements” [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, July 25th, 1916, page 5].

12. “*Passing It On*,” 81; *View of the Birdtail*, 51, gives more information about the construction of the hospital in 1923; the completed building was occupied by the hospital on January 21st, 1924 [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, January 22nd 1924, page 5].

They had planned to erect a hospital building back in 1916, as per the *Eye-Witness*: “Birtle hospital board met last night to consider plans for its building. Committees were appointed to have plans completed and building proceeded with. Dr Smith, Reeve Doig and John Corr is personnel of latter. Site selected on East Main St. next the Agricultural Grounds. It is proposed if possible to get the foundations ready this fall.” [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, September 16th, 1916, page 5]. And again, “Plans for Birtle hospital were before the board last night for approval. It may be too late to proceed with any of the actual buildin[sic] work this fall after the necessary preliminaries are gone through” [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, October 3rd, 1916, page 5]. For some reason these plans were postponed.

13. It appears that the Sisters opened the hospital first but only had the building and equipment transferred to them in 1940. A by-law on the hospital was voted upon on August 24th, 1953, the site for the new hospital was selected on February 4th, 1954, and it opened on January 4th, 1855 [*View of the Birdtail*, 52]. Te

In 1997, Birtle Health District joined the new Marquette Regional Health Authority, with a new office in Shoal Lake. Then in 2003, the MRHA joined the South West Regional Health Authority to form the Assiniboine Regional Health Authority [“*Passing It On*,” 87]. Then in May of 2012, this joined the Westman, Brandon, and Parkland Regional Authorities to become the Western Regional Health Authority, which shortly thereafter changed its name to Prairie Mountain Health.

14. In 1969, the Birtle Hospital District Ambulance began operation, as a cooperative effort of the R.M. of Ellice, St. Lazare, R.M. and Town of Birtle,

Birtle Branch #55 of the Canadian Legion, and the Birtle Lions' Club [*View of the Birdtail*, 54; see also “Birtle Ambulance Service,” “*Passing It On*,” 87-88].

“Sunnyside Manor (Birtle Personal Care Home Inc.)” was likewise the results of a grassroots effort [“*Passing It On*,” 82-83].

15. “Mrs. Carpenter takes convulsions — no doctor. I filled out a prescription for Joe Painter — 1 oz tinct. iron 25c, 1 Oz tinct. iodine 25c, fly blister for 2 blisters 25c.” [MD: Saturday, July 17th, 1880]; “Sold to Wm Paynter 2 oz. tinct. iron 40c.” [MD: August 3rd, 1880]; “J. Wilson came at 10:45 p.m. to get some castor oil for little Annie Haines who is sick” [MD: April 17th, 1881].

16. “*Passing It On*,” notes that “A building was erected on Main St. for a Drug and Novelty Store” in 1882 [page 18; see also Wilson, *Birtle’s Beginning*, 30 and “Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, August 20th, 1886, page 4]. It burned down in a big fire in the town in 1887 which was started in the drug store [*View of the Birdtail*, 36, paraphrasing *The Midsummer Holiday Number of The Winnipeg Sun* in 1888; *View of the Birdtail*, 42, 57]. The *Birtle Observer* gave a detailed report of the fire, illustrating the volunteer nature of firefighting at the time, and noting that buildings lost included “the drug store and dwelling house attached,” the Russell House, J. Pritchard’s house, the Walley store and “the elegantly furnished lodge room of the Free Masons” above it. The tin covering of Doig’s hardware store, opposite the fire, protected it. Morrison was quite ill, and in the middle of the night went to get some of his stock to treat himself with and dropped a lamp, “and the fire soon caught in the large stock of wall paper and got amongst the cans of oil, turpentine and vessels containing alcohol” [“Fire at Birtle.” *Birtle Observer*, December 2nd, 1887, page 1].

17. *Birtle’s Beginning*, 30; *View of the Birdtail*, 60. Sylvia Doran noted that “The drugstore, during Mr. Dutton’s ownership, moved from the building east of the present post office to its present sight[sic]” [Sylvia Doran, “People Then and Now: C. L. Dutton,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, December 6th, 1978, page 1].

18. Darrell Nesbitt, “Birtle Pharmacy open in new location: Alison and Steve Desjardins say the new building will allow them to serve the community now and in the future,” *Crossroads This Week*, June 27th, 2014, page 3.

Section 15. Culture and Recreation

1. “Town Council Holds Special Session,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, July 12th, 1966, page 1: “By-law No. 724 of the Town of Birtle for establishing a public Recreation Commission under the provisions of Section 430A of the Municipal Act was passed.”

2. As Alfred Morton noted in his diary in 1881: “Birtle celebrated Dominion Day for first time. About 300 people are gathered. Sports consist of horseracing, footracing, jumping, rope pulling, followed by tea and concert in evening and that succeeded by ball and supper in new hall” [MD: July 1st, 1881].

On Premier John Norquay’s first visit to Birtle in 1881, he took the occasion to speak in the town hall and guarantee a grant of 100 dollars to the Agricultural Society for its prize list [MD: September 19th, 1881]. The Birtle Agricultural Society had only formed itself on September 3rd, but Wilson notes that the grant from Norquay “assured success” and a committee got to work to arrange a fair. He also noted that the snowfall on October 12th, the day in question, “made it unpleasant compared with summer fairs,” and also described his recollection of the displays and winners [*Birtle’s Beginning*, 23]. Morton described the day as follows: “Snowing this morning but clears off before noon. First Ag. Show in Birtle today. Good display in hall in cattle & fowls. Quite a crowd in. ... Supper at McDougall’s for officers and directors of show” [MD: October 12th, 1881]. The previous day, Morton had help set up the hall for the event and made his entries, and the subsequent day, he helped S. W. Chambers write up the show books.

3. In 1892, a Music and Drama Association was formed. The Odd Fellows and Rebekahs were also involved in a number of theatrical productions, some touring [*View of the Birdtail*, 209]. In 1910, there was a group called the Birtle Players, and in the summer of 1973 the Birdtail Valley Theatre started up and gave a number of excellent performances in the 1970s [*View of the Birdtail*, 213; “*Passing It On*,” 151]. In 1995, the Birtle Dramatic Society was organized, and gave a number of performances over the next few years [“*Passing It On*,” 151]. The Birtle Collegiate Institute’s efforts are also worth noting, with its Drama Club winning the highest award in Brandon in both 1971 and 1972 at the High School Drama Festival [*View of the Birdtail*, 211]. Further back, Birtle’s musical and dramatic tradition was

also fostered by the Chautauqua's high-minded, educational and moralizing variety shows which annually appeared in Birtle for stretches of three to six days. They toured western Canada, from 1916 to the mid-1930s [*"Passing It On,"* 151].

4. *View of the Birdtail*, 209, 213; *"Passing It On,"* 151. The Birdtail Valley Theatre was organized in 1973, and the Birtle Dramatic Society in 1995.

The Birtle Collegiate Institute's efforts are also worth noting in this regard, with its Drama Club winning the highest award in Brandon in both 1971 and 1972 at the High School Drama Festival [*View of the Birdtail*, 211]. The high school was also involved in successful dinner theatre in the 1990s.

5. See the *Birtle Eye-Witness* in 1959:

The Legion Hall, which has been variously known through the years as Shakespeare Hall, Adams Hall, the Legion Hall, has been demolished. Records are not available at the moment to give the exact date of its erection, but folk-lore has it that before the turn of the century Sherriff Adams having completed the large livery barn which bore his name for years, (and has since disappeared) had \$14 left and decided that Birtle needed a centre of culture and with this capital proceeded to erect what was then a commodious and well fitted hall of drama and dance. Older timers will recall the drop curtain which had on it a full size picture of the Avon River — and from which the name "Shakespeare Hall". They will recall also certain hilarious episodes when that same drop curtain dropped inopportunistly or rose at the malicious whim of the operator.

Berry Brothers are in charge of the present demolition and though the building has been condemned for some time its passing lends urgency to the need for an adequate public hall in town. One could speculate also on the far-reaching result of our forefathers' faith combined with \$14.00 in cash, knowing that funds currently available for such a project are several hundred times that amount" [*"Party Line," Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 31st, 1959, page 1].

Among the other groups to have appeared at the Empress Theatre were "The Royal Lilliputian Opera Co" [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, April 16th, 1912, page 5] and the "Famous William Jubilee Singers," [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, November 18th, 1913, page 5].

6. Thus in 1912, "A number of citizens purchased a moving picture outfit and engaged the Adams Hall which was re-named the Empress Theatre.

(Community Hall site)." ["The Old News: Seventy Years Ago—1912," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 31st, 1982, page 4]. It would appear that they soon bought the Adams Hall outright outright, as they advertized "Along the Kennebec" in the same issue that Mrs. Sherriff Adams was advertizing the sale of an "Opera House and Livery Stable in town of Birtle" [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, October 15th, 1912, page 4].

The Savoy was opened at the beginning of 1915 by "Messrs. Laidman and Neale" ["Yesteryear clippings: 60 Years Ago—1915, *Birtle Eye-Witness*, January 30th, 1985, page 4].

7. The Savoy burned down in 1958 [Kevin Hickman, "History of the Birtle Fire Department," in *"Passing It On,"* 137].

8. The Capri Theatre was built on the northeast corner of Main and Centre Streets, opening in late 1961 [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, October 31st, 1961, page 5]. In February of 1987, it "closed until further notice" with a thank you for past patronage [David Farquhar, "Notice," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, February 18th, 1987, page 3]. Fairly promptly, the building was refitted and reopened as a Drop In Centre on January 27th, 1990 [Ethel Howard, "Drop In Centre now open," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, February 6th, 1990, page 1].

9. *"Passing It On,"* 137.

10. *View of the Birdtail*, 213.

11. "About the Classic Garden—The Beginning," The Classic Garden, retrieved December 27th, 2017, <http://www.theclassicgarden.ca/about-the-classic-garden-the-beginning/>. The building is the old laundromat on the north side of Main Street between 7th and Centre Streets, which had been used by the Word Alive Church and then by the Value Shoppe. Birtle also had a thriving ceramics club when *A View of the Birdtail* was put together [page 212].

12. *"Passing It On,"* 149; *View of the Birdtail*, 209.

13. Some other bands in Birtle have been The Excelsior Dance Band, Buck's Haymakers, Cooley's Nigh Hawks, and more recently Temporarily Unnamed [Margaret Ashcroft, Gerald Negrave, and Morgan Ashcroft, "Arts and Entertainment," in *"Passing It On,"* 150-151].

14. *"Passing It On,"* 151-152.

15. "Dominion Day." *Birtle Eye-Witness*, July 7th, 1892, page 1.

Apparently, Birtle had a baseball club as early as 1888 [*Winnipeg Sun*, cited in *View of the Birtle*, 205].

16. In 1936, the Birtle Ladies' baseball team won the the L.O.L. Cup at Strathclair, having gone undefeated that summer despite never having missed a regional Sports Day. Also noteworthy are a successor team, the Birtle Maroons, who were active in the late 1950s [*View of the Birdtail*, 206].

17. The Manitoba Senior Baseball League's inaugural tournament was held in Birtle in 1962. In the late 1960s, the Birtle Blues were formed, to become the Birtle Blue Jays, a AAA team which joined the MSBL in 1997, winning the title in 1998, 2000, 2002, and 2004; these last three victories saw them represent Manitoba at the national level [Lenore Peacock, Bruce Thornton, Ernie Walley, Larry Kowal, Don Sumner, "Baseball in Birtle," *Passing It On*, 107-108]. Unfortunately, as of 2009, it was said that "the future for baseball in Birtle looks bleak" [Ibid, 108].

18. In 1887, a soiree was to be held "at 'Oak Lawn,' the residence of Mayor Crawford on Thursday evening, August 4th, beginning at 7 p.m. Sets of croquet and lawn tennis will be on hand and every facility provided for the amusement of all. At 8.30 p.m. refreshments will be served after which an interesting programme will be presented. Admission 25 cents. Proceeds in aid of the Methodist Church" ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, July 29th, 1887, page 4].

By 1895, the sport was included among those up for prizes at the Canada Day celebrations: the total prize fund for lawn tennis was 25 dollars, with a ten dollar prize going to mixed doubles, another ten dollars to men's doubles, and a five dollar prize for non-gender specified singles ["Birtle Dominion Day Celebration," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 2nd, 1895, page 1].

19. "*Passing It On*," 109; Fulton and Wilson also coached. *View of the Birdtail* notes courts "where Paul Madiuk's house now stands, and later, where John Brown's and Frank Wilson's houses are" [*View of the Birdtail*, 206-207], and three courts at the Cartright and Joseph Louis Edmundson homes [*View of the Birdtail*, 253, 282]. "*Passing It On*," specifies that these courts were in the East part of town [page 301].

20. In 1922, it was noted that C. A. Gigot, D. Mason, J. C. Cartwright, D. A. Patterson, and W. C. Robertson had been elected as officers at the "8th annual meeting of the Birtle Golf Club" [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 2nd, 1922, page 5]. The same page advertizes a dance in the Birtle Town Hall hosted by

the Club, with 50 cent entry for ladies, and a dollar for men; Golf Club members got in free.

21. *View of the Birdtail*, 206.

22. "*Passing It On*," 110-111. A new Clubhouse had also been added. In 2002, this was considerably upgraded, and in 2007 a new water system was to have begun to be installed.

23. *View of the Birdtail*, 205—Compare with the statement by the son of a Presbyterian minister in the early 20th century on page 171, noting that "In those days girls never thought of going for a swim in the Birdtail."

See also Ernie Walley, Donna Sararas, Barbara Wonitoway, and Larry Kowal, "Swimming in the Birdtail," in "*Passing It On*," 112-116. The latter vaguely dates the present pool to the early 1970s, but it was already well under construction in 1966, as per the "Party Line" section of the *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 2nd, 1966, one page 1:

Work on the larger swimming pool at the Park is well underway on the north shore of the lake above the dam. The pool will be apart from the river and will be fed with fresh water.

A large supply of beautiful sand was uncovered by the machines at work and will be used for the beach area around the pool and to sand the pool bottom.

The pool will be approximately 200 feet long and 100 feet wide.

When completed, the pool will provide good swimming and will be a very important asset to the Park facilities.

For more on the origins of the Birtle Riverside Park, see "*Passing It On*," 300-301.

24. *View of the Birdtail*, 196; 200-203; Ernie Walley, Bruce Thornton, Nelson Ewbank, Bob Evans, Larry Kowal, Nancy Birch, Margaret Ashcroft, and Shirley Barteaux, "The Rinks of Birtle," in "*Passing It On*," 116-120; and "*Passing It On*," 126-127.

25. Brenda Evans, "Birdtail Ski and Hiking Trails: Reflecting on the Past and Looking to the Future." The article was written for the *Birtle Outlook*, probably in 2015. The author has a typed copy in his possession, but time constraints prevented his tracking down the precise reference in the *Outlook*.

26. *View of the Birdtail*, 202.

27. Pat Farquhar, “Birtle is Manitoba’s Hockeyville 2006,” “*Passing It On*,” 127-129.

Section 16. Clubs and Organizations

1. MD: November 29th and December 6th, 1881. I have not elaborated on the Birtle Agricultural Society later in this section because of limited space. Furthermore, as a source of entertainment and agricultural encouragement it has been very important, it has also been largely self-contained, whereas the W.I., Lion’s Club, and temperance organizations had a greater impact on the surrounding community, and to that extent were more pivotal. Regardless, Margaret Ashcroft included an excellent overview of the Birtle Agricultural Society from its establishment onwards in “*Passing It On*,” pages 131-137.

2. The Birtle and District Hospital Auxiliary was formed in 1935, shortly after the Sisters of St. Benedict reopened the municipal hospital, but disbanded in 1961 as they thought their efforts were no longer needed. In 1976, it was reorganized and did much good work, but disbanded again in 2000, that time due to declining membership [*View of the Birdtail*, 148; “*Passing It On*,” 89].

3. I should note that the Royal Canadian Legion probably ought to bear special mention, as it was behind the Birtle Community Hall and Ambulance Service [*View of the Birdtail*, 76], but I preferred to talk about it in the military section. Similarly, the Birtle Value Shoppe went unmentioned, though it has raised a substantial amount of money for various local organizations. Of the various fraternal organizations, the Birtle Lodge No. 39 of freemasons also deserved special notice.

What follows is an arbitrary and non-exhaustive list of clubs and organizations which do or have existed in Birtle, or have or have had branches in Birtle. Sources have only been included when I thought they weren’t easily verifiable elsewhere, or thought the source notable in its own right. More such organizations can be found by scouring “*Passing It On*” and *A View of the Birdtail*.

- 4-H Home Economics Club
- Artaban Chapter, Order of the Easter Star
- Birdtail Country Museum
- Birdtail Women for Action [“*Passing It On*,” 145]

- Birtle Band [*View of the Birdtail*, 209]
- Birtle Art Club [“*Passing It On*,” 137]
- Birtle Agricultural Society
- Birtle Boys and Girls Club School Fair [“Rules of Birtle Boys and Girls Club School Fair Friday September 26th, 1919,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 20th, 1919]
- Birtle in Bloom [“*Passing It On*,” 139-140]
- Birtle into the Future [“*Passing It On*,” 140-142]
- Birtle Library
- Birtle Lions Club
- Birtle Loyal Orange Lodge No. 3208
- Birtle Turf Association [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, February 25th, 1887]
- Birtle Orchestral Society [*View of the Birdtail*, 209]
- Birtle Value Shoppe
- Boy Scouts
- Canadian Girls in Training
- Canadian Order of Foresters [Wilson, *Birtle’s Beginning*, 36]
- Chamber of Commerce
- Daughters of the Empire [“News From the Old Files: Birtle District in Years Gone By. Fifty Years Ago—1915,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 3rd, 1965]
- Freemasons: Birtle Lodge No. 39 [independent sources are easily found on the internet, but see if possible F. Petrinack, “The Emergence of Masonry in Manitoba and Birtle Miniota Lodge #39 A. F. & A. M.,” published in 1971. The author was not able to find a copy, but Brandon University had one listed in its library though was unable to track it down at my request in 2016]
- Hospital Auxiliary
- Ladies’ Auxiliary to the British Empire Service League/Royal Canadian Legion
- Ladies’ Auxiliary to Pioneer Lodge Inc.
- L.O.L. [Wilson, *Birtle’s Beginning*, 36]
- Loyal and Independent Order of Oddfellows
- Pioneer Lodge Inc.
- Rifle Association [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, July 6th, 1885]
- Royal Canadian Legion

4. MD: April 13th, 1880: “J. Bauer, J. Johnston, T. Rutherford and A. Fraser detained at S. Lake by M. Police for having liquor.” Likewise, Wilson notes on page 21 of Birtle’s Beginning: “On being incorporated with Manitoba, liquor licenses were applied for. Petitions against were freely signed and blocked it for some time. But there was considerable smuggling of it and quite a crop of moonshiners got to work. While under Northwest Territory rule, the Red Coats rigidly enforced prohibition, and very few got past them under the permit system.”

5. The newly-formed society visited an unnamed liquor seller and secured from him the promise that he would cease that particular activity, upon which “The crusaders departed satisfied, but resolved to keep an eye on suspicious parties” [“Dominion News. Interesting Items from the Canadian North-West. Illicit Liquor Traffic,” *The Globe*, January 20th, 1883, page 10].

While a formal organization may not have been formed yet in Birtle, a temperance meeting had already been held the previous summer, attended by E.P. Leacock, shortly to be Birtle’s M.P.P., and C.P. Brown, the provincial Minister of Public Work [MD: August 14th, 1882].

6. Alfred Morton’s diaries note a temperance concert held on January 23rd, 1884, and a temperance picnic held on May 24th, 1884. For an example of one of the evening entertainments set up by temperance organizations, see “Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, February 19th, 1886, page 4.

7. An example for this sort of thing occurs in the neighbouring Bayfield Church, where the clergyman launched a branch of the Royal Templars, “a side effect of which was twelve happy marriages among young people of the district” [*View of the Birdtail*, 164]. Apparently the men had been more reluctant, but “The ladies all signed the pledge ‘Lips that touch whiskey will never touch mine’, and finally the men were brought into line” [Ibid, 80].

8. The Independent Order of Good Templars were active in Birtle in 1885 [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, February 20th, 1885, page 4; *Birtle Observer*, October 30th, 1885, page 4], and were clearly identified by the I.O.G.T. acronym in an issue of the next year [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, May 7th, 1886, page 4]. These templars may have switched their allegiance, as mentions of them were soon replaced by those of the Royal Templars, who scheduled their first meeting in the Albert Hall in December of 1887 [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, December 16th, 1887, page 4]. The Royal Templars gave multiple entertainments in

1888 [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, May 18th, 1888, page 4; “R. T. of T. Picnic,” *Birtle Observer*, August 2nd, 1888, page 1]. It’s possible that the departure of Murdoch, who was involved with the *Birtle Observer*, in early 1889 may have hurt the organization, of which he had been elected “Select Councillor” [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, June 28th, 1888, page 4]. Certainly, both branches of templars seem to have disappeared by 1890, leaving a more generic Prohibition Club, which Town Council allowed to use the Town Hall rent free in 1894 [Town of Birtle Council Minutes, November 7th, 1894, page 359].

Other reasons for the demise of the templars likely include the successful exercise of local option control over liquor licenses in the Town 1887. The next year, they petitioned the R.M. for the same [“Local and Other News,” *Birtle Observer*, May 25th, 1888, page 4]. However, apart from having really achieved its primary goal in 1887, another plausible reason for their disappearance is that they had mostly concentrated on the social side of things. John H. Thompson noted that both templar groups were “More social and less effective as pressure groups” [Thompson, “The Prohibition Question,” 39], and ‘the social side of things’ was increasingly competitive space. Other organizations had begun to take preeminence in social gatherings; thus the “Local and Other News” section of page four of the *Birtle Observer* from March 11th, 1887 alone, notes the official opening of the Birtle Lodge of Freemasons with a “sumptuous feast,” a lecture held in the Albert Hall aimed at establishing a Court of Foresters in Birtle, and “the most successful entertainment of the season”, a basket social held on behalf of the Methodist Church in the Albert Hall.

The formation of a branch of the Women’s Christian Temperance Union would have also detached many of the women members from the templars organizations, with a presumably proportionate fall in interest from some of the male population.

9. The national president of the W.C.T.U.’s gave a helpful summary of the organization’s aims in 1893:

Some difference of opinion has been expressed as to the real objects of the union, but these may be set at rest when it is stated that the society is one of Christian women pledged to total abstinence, and banded together for the preservation of the home and education of the young, the elevation of public sentiment with respect to the cause of temperance, the reformation of the

drinking classes by the power of divine grace, and the securing of laws which shall totally prohibit the carrying on of the liquor traffic in the Dominion of Canada.

[“Objects of the W.C.T.U.: An Interesting Talk With Mrs. President Williams—Some Facts Concerning the Aims and Work of the Union.” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 22nd, 1893, page 6].

Thompson, “The Prohibition Question,” 113, has a map showing that both Foxwarren and Birtle had branches of the W.C.T.U. in 1913. Solsgirth had apparently had a branch in 1891, but had since lost it. Indeed, the map shows a considerable decline in the movement between 1891 and 1913, though it continued to remain important in Birtle and the other larger centres in western Manitoba. Probably the Birtle chapter had been formed in 1891, which might also help explain the decline of the templars, as both those organizations had been gender-inclusive, and would have been hard-put to continue if women pulled out to join the W.C.T.U., particularly as many young men interested in such organizations were interested less in the principles than in the women involved in them [*View of the Birdtail*, 80]. It was still active in 1898 [“The W.C.T. U.,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 9th, 1898, page 4], and was meeting regularly:

The regular gospel temperance meeting held under the auspices of the W. C. T. U., in the Presbyterian church on Sunday last, after the regular church services was to have been addressed by Rev. Wm. Robertson, of the Church of England, but in his absence the vacancy was filled by the Rev. Mr. Murray, on a few minutes’ notice. His remarks were chiefly directed to the probably forthcoming plebiscite vote. The chairman, Dr. Hall, emphasized the importance of seeing that candidates for political honors at the next election were pledged prohibition men. The improvised choir rendered several pieces of music suitable to the occasion ... The W. C. T. U. gave a farewell reception at the home of Mrs. Markle on Friday to Rev. A. B. Hames and family, who leave on Dominion day for Mono Road, Ont., where Mr. Hames is to be stationed for the next three years” [June 27th, 1898, “Birtle Brevities.: Death of John Shepherd, an old and Respected Resident,” *Manitoba Free Press*, June 29th, 1898, page 2].

For the greater legislative pressure exerted by the W.C.T.U., see Thompson, “The Prohibition Question,” 59. Thompson notes the close intertwining of

the temperance and women's suffrage movement from the W.C.T.U.’s foundation in 1883. The relevant tactical link was that if women could vote they would be able to advocate temperance with their ballots, and that women, many of whose lives were inversely affected by the implications of drunkenness, had a vested interest in the question.

10. The Rev. Hodnett was circulating a petition against granting liquor licenses in 1881 [MD: January 3rd, 1881]. E. J. Wilson hints that the move towards temperance had manifested as early as July of 1880, as when Clementi Smith first came to Birtle he asked “to be directed to the tavern in accents which disclosed his homeland as England. A nephew of Corny O’Callaghan answered ‘nayther whiskey nor rum would he get, but cool water down there at the spring’” [Wilson, *Birtle’s Beginning*, 18]. On a similar note, on the following page, Wilson notes that Corny O’Callaghan kept on his homestead, in a dugout in the hillside across from the golf course,

a 5 gallon keg of the best brandy. His personal friends, several of them remittance boys, were invited to share its rejuvenating joys. Sometime during Xmas eve the keg was spirited away. A slight snow fall covered all tracks, the only clue was the legend ‘Folded their tents like the Arabs and silently stole away’ penciled in script on brown paper. Language used by Corny and his friends on reaching the cave after the other feast and revelry, was too sulphurous for print. Report is that the keg was found with contents intact about ten years later when wrecking an early structure.

The clue was a reference to the Longfellow poem, “The Day is Done,” and refers to the final verse:

And the night shall be filled with music,
And the cares, that infest the day,
Shall fold their tents, like the Arabs,
And as silently steal away.

The dugout the brandy was stowed was not so far from the townsite, or even from some of the homestead of Alfred Morton, a known temperance man, at the top of the south bank of the valley. Any joyous nighttime revelry may have been a disturbance to neighbours, and it may have echoed and carried a bit as it was at the bottom of a valley. After a night of music, cares infesting the day (and perhaps night) of other people had been silently stolen away. Essentially, the theft was either a practical joke, the work of annoyed neighbours, or of people who wanted to drink the brandy; as it was

apparently untouched ten years later, that would not seem to be the concern, and I would imagine that a practical joke would likely be revealed rather than accidentally discovered, hence my suspicion that the event was part of the town's temperance matrix.

11. As the Birtle Observer noted in 1886, "On Saturday the quietness of the town was disturbed by a row which led to a second outbreak. Some persons wrongfully took possession of the horse and cutter of a half breed, who was at the time enjoying the comforts of a bar room. The half breed succeeded in getting hold of his horse as it was driven past at high speed, and a most violent quarrel was at once begun. For a time the usually quiet street presented a scene of tumult in which plunging horses, frantic and ill used half breeds, and drunken white men were struggling, kicking, swearing, striking and tumbling. The presence of the wives of the half breeds who were trying to get their husbands away added increased horror to the disturbance. So long as the means of making men mad is permitted, so long will their[sic] be mad men and so long will the town be disgraced" ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, February 26th, 1886, page 4].

12. At first, "A petition was presented signed by the Rev. J. F. Betts and others praying the council to grant no licenses for the sale of intoxicating beverages. Laid over." [Town of Birtle Council Minutes, First Council, Third Session, February 6th, 1884, page 10], but at the next meeting, "On motion of Messrs Patterson & Easson the following resolution was carried: that this council will not do anything to further the granting of licenses for the sale of intoxicating liquors, to any person; and that the Sec-tres. be instructed to request the commissioner to use his influence accordingly." [Town of Birtle Council Minutes, First Council, Fourth Session, March 5th, 1884, page 13]. At both those meetings, Sheriff Adams, proprietor of the Grand Central hotel, had applied for a liquor license; interestingly, Easson too ran a hotel in the town, the Russell House. I am not aware of whether Easson had a liquor license himself.

Citizens were proud that Birtle was dry. Alfred Morton's 1895 poem "Valley of Birtle" includes a verse demonstrating the pride with which the Town of Birtle maintained its principles of temperance.

No licensed saloon to bring strong men down,
None nearer than twice ten miles from town;
Local option controls with a grip like to stay,
For illegally selling has dearly to pay.
Beautiful valley, handwork divine,

No earth spot more sacred may ever be mine.

[Alfred Morton, "Valley of Birtle (Manitoba)," in "The Party Line," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, August 29th, 1967, page 1].

Nine years earlier in a similar vein, the *Birtle Observer*, a consistent advocate of prohibition, had gone so far as to proudly note that "Birtle is the only town of its size in Manitoba which has no billiard table. The people are proud of the absence of altar that[sic] of idleness and dissipation" ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, April 8th, 1886, page 4]. This demonstrates the widespread feeling of antipathy in Birtle to all aspects of saloon life, which wrecked homes and produced wastrels rather than the productive citizens and subjects the luminaries of Birtle wanted to foster [*View of the Birdtail*, 50: "One of the really big issues of the first decade of the Twentieth Century was the licensing of a pool table. Council spent literally dozens of hours on this subject. The controversy kept flaring up, and is referred to as many as forty years later"].

13. Town of Birtle Minutes, Fourth Council, Eighteenth Session, August 3rd, 1887, page 175:

A petition signed by J. A. Murdoch and others asking for a by-law to be passed having for its object the prevention of granting liquor licenses, was received, and dealt with as shown by the following resolution passed on motion of Councillors Morrison & Wilson:— "Whereas a petition has been received from J. A. Murdoch and others praying that a bylaw to forbid the receiving of any money by the Town for liquor license fees be submitted to the ratepayers to be voted on, And whereas the said petition has been signed by more than twenty-five per ct. of the householders of the Town; Therefore resolved that the prayer of the petition be granted and that a by-law be drafted and submitted to this Council for consideration at the next meeting."

A couple of potential delays were dealt with within the week, and on September 10th, Alfred Morton noted "I conduct poll for voting on local option clause of liquor license by-laws. By-law carried" [MD: August 3rd, 1887]. The Town of Birtle was thus the first to go dry under these newer regulations [Council of R.T. of T. to editor, April 9th, 1888, *Birtle Observer*, April 13th, 1888, page 1. This letter is also transcribed as Appendix 24].

Earlier efforts at achieving municipal temperance under the aegis of the federal *Canada Temperance Act, 1878*, better known as the Scott Act, had

also been made, though apparently unsuccessfully. Either that, or it had to be redone after the smaller municipalities were incorporated:

The canvass of the north half of the County of Shoal Lake, for signatures to the petition for the submission of the Scott Act, is now very nearly completed. Over two hundred signatures have already been obtained. Many of the petitions have been returned duly witnessed and attested. Those workers in the cause who have not yet returned their petitions, are requested to make a declaration before a Magistrate or Reeve as to the genuineness of the signatures they had witnessed, and to return petition and declaration to Dr. Morrison, the Secretary of the Birtle Alliance. The Reeve or Magistrate will furnish the form of declaration. As soon as the Beulah Alliance reports the work finished in old Manitoba, the petition will be deposited in the Registry Office, as required by law [“The Scott Act.” *Birtle Observer*, December 20th, 1884, page 1].

That year’s convention of the Manitoba Branch of the Dominion Temperance Alliance was attended by the Reverend J. F. Betts, who was representing a “Birtle public temperance meeting,” so the movement was not particularly organized in Birtle yet. At the convention, he noted that the public meeting had been held “to support a delegate.” He later spoke to the question of whether they should be concentrated on pressuring the Province or the Dominion, and “considered the provincial license law sufficiently effective if properly enforced, particularly in view of the submission of the Scott Act. He also seconded a resolution which, for a number of reasons, aimed at having the Scott Act voted on by electors throughout the Province simultaneously, rather than one area at a time. Betts also spoke in favour of local temperance organizations being established throughout Manitoba [“The War on Whiskey.: Meeting of the Temperance Convention Yesterday.: The Work of the Alliance—Preparations for the Submission of the Scott Act.” *Manitoba Free Press*, May 22nd, 1884, page 4]

14. “The Plebiscite,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, July 7th, 1892; “History of Liquor Regulation,” Liquor and Gaming Authority of Manitoba, accessed August 15th, 2017, <http://lgamanitoba.ca/about-us-overview/liquor-and-gaming-in-manitoba/liquor-in-manitoba/history-of-liquor-regulation/>.

The only polling station in the area to oppose prohibition was the railway town of Solsgirth, where it was defeated by a single vote, 27 to 26. By comparison, the polling station in the Town of Birtle voted 73 to 27 in favour

of prohibition [“The Birtle Election,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, July 28th, 1892, page 1].

15. In the prohibition referendum, Birtle had again voted enthusiastically in favour of the policy. E. J. Wilson had worried before the vote that because “Birtle district has been so long under local option that our people do not feel the acute need of further action to check evils of the liquor traffic, and many may therefore not take sufficient interest to come out and vote” [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 7th, 1916, page 1], this did not come to pass. The poll in the Birtle Electoral Division had 803 in favour and 155 against out of a total of 1694 electors. Solsgirth voted 64-19 and Birtle 188-13 [“Vote On Prohibition in Birtle Division, March 13th, 1916,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 14th, 1916, page 5].

16. Thompson, “The Prohibition Question,” 59.

17. Liquor and Gaming Authority of Manitoba, “History of Liquor Regulation.”

By 1925, the I.O.G.T. was down to two lodges in Manitoba, and the Royal Templars to just one. While the W.C.T.U. still had province-wide representation, membership of local branches overwhelmingly consisted of women who had joined prior to the First World War, and without any fresh blood coming in, its fate was sealed [Thompson, “The Prohibition Question,” 96].

Birtle’s lack of enthusiasm may even have been a direct result of its strong temperance tradition, as Wilson had feared would happen in 1916: “W. D. Bayley, M. L. A. who is touring the province in interests of temperance gave an address in Birtle Union Church, Wednesday evening. The audience was not as large as the merits of the subject demands. Birtleites do not appear to take as lively an interest in prohibition work as they do in places where drink ravages are greater. A committee composed of Rev. J. H. Miller, Principal Pitts and Principal Bockstead was appointed to organize Birtle along temperance lines and arrange for a Templar school here next fall.” [*Birtle Eye-Witness*, June 9th, 1925, page 3].

18. *View of the Birdtail*, 52: “The Guardian of Morals role was strong in councils of the day. Council refused permission for the operation of a merry-go-round for the reason that young children should not be encouraged to stay out late at night. May 12th 1941 a motion was passed - ‘That no person under age sixteen be allowed in places where Bingo is played.’” For

resistance in Birtle to the end of prohibition, see *Birtle Eye-Witness*, March 6th, 1923, page 4, and “United Church Notes,” *Birtle Eye-Witness*, May 19th, 1927, page 4.

19. The Birtle Household Science Association N° 11 received its charter in 1910. The next year, the name changed to Home Economics Society, and in 1919, the name changed yet again to Women’s Institute [*View of the Birdtail*, 137-138].

During the First World War, Birtle’s W.I. organized a Red Cross Society, raised money to send for relief purposes overseas, formed a “Hospital Aid,” began a library, and created a trust fund for for triplets which was eventually given to their mother as a Victory bond. They served lunches on Canada Day, and organized a big New Year’s Eve Dance, among other activities [*View of the Birdtail*, 138]. In later years, the W.I. carried on similar activities, serving lunch to school children and organizing a Blood Donors’ Clinic, all while maintaining regular contact with other W.I. branches provincially and nationally [*“Passing It On,”* 143].

Their philanthropic activities aside, when reviewing a draft of this section, Margaret Ashcroft noted that the W.I.’s “focus was on the family and women in the home. However, there were also programs for women to educate them on their own personal rights re: the owning of land and equal pay for equal time with the men in similar jobs.”

20. *The Grain Growers’ Guide*, December 5th, 1916, cited in Norell, “The Most Humane Institution,” held up Birtle’s rest room as a model. The Rest Room was first located on “the Shepherd property, then in the old Post Office, then in the front of the Pratt Block and later in a room on the ground floor of the Masonic Hall. This room gradually furnished with tables, chairs, cupboards, dishes, etc. and had ample room for a lending library” but all their furniture, records, and supplies went up in the fire of 1968 when the Masonic Hall burned down [*“Passing It On,”* 143]. The Birtle district of the W.I. appears to have taken a particular liking to the Rest Room concept, as in 1940-1941, Donna Norell reports that though one of twelve districts in the province, Birtle had 38% of the province’s total Rest Rooms [Norell, “The Most Humane Institution”].

View of the Birdtail, 138 notes notes that the Rest Room provided the only public toilet in the town for some time, though this was not included in

“Passing It On,” which otherwise only reproduced and added to the account contained in its predecessor.

21. Mrs. David Watt served as Provincial and National President from 1923-1943, Mrs. L. L. Townsend was Provincial President from 1941-1943, and Mrs. E. V. Fulton, that is, Marion Fulton, served as Provincial President from 1965 to 1967, and National President from 1970 to 1973 [*“Passing It On,”* 143]. She received the Order of Canada in 1978.

22. *“Passing It On,”* 143. After reviewing a draft of this section, Margaret Ashcroft noted that “In later years, the difficulty in getting new members was because most young women were working outside the home and with their children activities had no time for meetings and no need for the social aspect that was appreciated in the earlier years.” The conditions and needs of Birtle’s women had changed considerably since the Birtle W.I. was chartered.

In keeping with that, reduced membership was partially due to difficulty attracting some younger women who had an appetite for different expressions of feminism, embracing campaigns for wider societal change in addition to the improvement of individuals. The W.I., for instance, worked with but also had a slightly uncomfortable relationship with the Birdtail Women for Action group in the 1980s, as I learned in conversation with Brenda Evans in December 2017. The B.W.A. was a branch of the Provincial Committee on the Status of Women, which received funding from the National Committee on the Status of Women. Brenda Evans allowed me to look at the B.W.A. minute book which was in her possession, so see also Meeting on June 20th, 1983, Birdtail Women for Action minute book, page 16, and Meeting on August 15th, 1983, *ibid*, page 22. The latter page records an address from the W.I.’s Marion Fulton, who explained the difference between the mandates of the two organizations; the W.I. “deals with international issues concerning the family” which had led it to break from the Status of Women group, which “focuses predominantly on women’s issues.” After reviewing a draft of this section, Brenda Evans elaborated that the W.I. did not view its work through a feminist lens, adding that it focussed on “family and education and providing friendship and support for rural women” rather than the overtly “political action fighting for equality and social justice for all women” of the B.W.A.

The B.W.A.—which, demonstrating an important effect which retaining schools in Birtle has had, was mostly composed of teachers or former

teachers [“Birdtail Women for Action, Birtle Manitoba Interview: May 6, 1985,” page 2, in *ibid*, page 48]—was interested in voiding traditional gender roles and publicizing and changing the status of women. Among its activities, it championed (unsuccessfully) a non-sexist policy for the daycare, confronted (more successfully) the editors of local papers about the use of gendered terms like ‘businessmen’, educated the public about some of the less obvious problems involved in the pornography industry, organized and participated in various conferences, hosted prominent feminist authors in Birtle, and were involved in establishing a shelter for battered women. Though only active for something like half a dozen years, in small ways they helped to change the community to better match their vision of what it could be. They also started conversations in Birtle about what it meant to be a feminist. However, at its inception the Birtle chapter had relied on word of mouth to bring people together, and for the rest of its existence had to shake accusations of elitism [“Birdtail Women for Action, Birtle Manitoba Interview: May 6, 1985,” page 1, in *ibid*, page 48], and with key members moving away it slowly wound down. For more on B.W.A., see “*Passing It On*,” 145.

Though the B.W.A, well known in the community as a self-identifying feminist group, had difficulty transforming support into new members, it and its goals had a lot of sympathy in Birtle [“Birdtail Women for Action, Birtle Manitoba Interview: May 6, 1985,” page 4, in *Birdtail Women for Action* minute book, page 48; Lisa Drozda, “B.W.A. is a recognized lobby group,” *Shoal Lake Crossroads*, December 2nd, 1987, page 5]. Part of this is because of a feminist tradition in Birtle, which stretches back at least to those women involved in the temperance movement in the 1880s. This has manifested itself in a number of ways. Ethel Margaret “Peggy” Fulton is perhaps the most prominent example here: raised on a Birtle farm, she taught grades 7 to 10 for a number of years at various small schools before earning a set of degrees (later receiving over a dozen honorary doctorates) and embarking upon an academic and consulting career. If I remember rightly, she was especially interested in designing and implementing lateral organizational paradigms for institutions to replace the standard hierarchal models which duplicated traditional patriarchal power relations, which she thought made those institutions function inefficiently and took a greater human toll on all involved than was either necessary or helpful.

23. “*Passing It On*,” 142. Compare the founding date with page 104 and Ernie Walley’s recollections of the Community Hall, which note that the Birtle Lions Club had its third birthday party in 1961.

Section 17. Birtle’s Military Tradition

1. Other conflicts didn’t bring the war home in the same way, and none compared with the number of soldiers to participate in the Northwest Rebellion and World Wars. The Boer War saw a few recruits from the area, most significantly the retired veteran of the Imperial army Major-General Wilkinson, who in 1887 had settled on a large parcel of land along the Birdtail Creek to become a very successful stock raiser. The Town Minutes also indicate that the community was raising funds for soldiers overseas, but the local impact was minimal, because even if people had wanted to volunteer, political pressure from Quebec ensure that the federal government limited its participation to equipping something like 7,000 volunteers from across the whole country, which didn’t leave many slots open for individual locations. See *View of the Birdtail*, 47, 50, and 218-219.

Material benefits were derived locally for all three of the conflicts discussed. With the Northwest Rebellion, Boulton’s Scouts were locally supplied. The railway had not yet come to the area, and there was not that much money around, but one Shellmouth settler made it clear that money in circulation was much increased because the soldiers had been in the area. Each troop consisted of thirty men, besides logistical support which, with a few later replacements, brought the total to something like 80 men, and as that Shellmouth settler noted, “The outfit of the sixty men and horses cost the government \$20,000. War is rather an expensive game” [William Wallace to Maggie, Shellmouth, April 24th, 1885, in Coates, “*My Dear Maggie...*”, 213]. In corroboration of that, Major Boulton himself recalled that he had purchased all horses locally [Boulton, *Reminiscences*, 203]. Alfred Morton corroborates this in his diary [MD: April 2nd, 1885], and indeed sold Major Boulton a horse himself for 200 dollars [MD: April 6th, 1885]; the Major was in a hurry, however, and Morton didn’t record payment for the horse until May 6th. Apparently it was a very good horse, as it was included at the end of a poem appearing in the *Birtle Observer* which went over some of the more prominent of the volunteers:

The ladies bright came out to see
 The gay and gallant force
 Led to the front by Major B
 Astride of Morton's horse
 ["The Birtle Volunteers," *Birtle Observer*, April 17th, 1885].

Furthermore, all Birtle soldiers got land scrip, including those from the Home Guard thanks to the energetic efforts of J. H. Wood. Similarly, after the First World War, Birtle benefitted following the war in that veterans were given federal help to settle as farmers. This presumably contributed to the impressive 27% increase of the population of the municipality between 1916 and 1921 noted in the third section of this project. Among those to settle in the Birtle area were Major O. Q. Warren, who worked with the Hudson Bay Land Inspectors' Department and was active with local veterans' organizations [*View of the Birdtail*, 425-426]. For an overview of land policies concerning soldiers in both the Northwest Rebellion and First World War, see Tyman, *By Section*, 134-137.

The Second World War had its fair share of material benefits as well; those in uniform were often seen in Birtle, whether on leave from pilot training or stationed there. The 12th Dragoons trained some of their recruits in Birtle, for example [Ernie Walley noted this in passing in "*Passing It On*," 103 and 105]. Also worth mentioning is that so many people had signed up that following the conflict the ranks of veterans' organizations swelled considerably, and the good work they did for veterans and for community projects more generally increased proportionally. An example of this sort of thing was given by Ernie Walley on page 103 of "*Passing It On*," when he spoke about funds raised through Bingo: "We made a promise to ourselves that, because this money came from the people of Birtle and District, it would be channelled back into the district. Probably 90% of it was."

During the world wars, military spending would likely have only partially offset rationing policies, but nevertheless, the rationing would have been in place regardless while the military spending could have all been done elsewhere.

2. Birtle was situated within short distances of multiple reserves, which settlers feared might harbour sympathizers of Riel and his cause. Ken Coates, in his article "Western Manitoba and the 1885 Rebellion," specifically quotes a letter from J. H. Wood to establish a larger point about settlers in western Manitoba being concerned with the attitude of local

Indigenous peoples [Coates, "Western Manitoba"]. Alfred Morton too, who was a little old for soldiering and concerning whom I found no record of his thinking about enlisting, nevertheless noted that he was "Preparing cartridges for rifle in view of half breed troubles" [MD: April 1st, 1885].

The Birtle Home Guard Troop ended up having 40 men in it [Mulvaney, *The History of the North-West Rebellion*, 440]. Thanks to the influence of J. H. Wood, the Birtle Home Guard was included on the list of active Infantry units in the Northwest. The importance of being on the active service list came when soldiers were rewarded for the service at the end of the conflict with land scrip. When Birtle's Home Guard received land scrip but a similar unit in Regina did not, it was brought up in the House of Commons, and a letter Wood had written to the commander of the Regina unit was produced, illustrating the importance of Wood's personal touch: "...had it not been that I was in Ottawa when the Riel rebellion broke out, and got our company by general order gazetted on actual service, we were left, as far as recompense was concerned. As it was we were relegated to the home guard list till I went down, and after a pretty hard fight in the department, I succeeded in establishing our claim to be placed on the active service list, and thus we got our claim to the land allowed" [J. H. Wood to Major Mowat, Birtle, May 8th, 1886, produced by Nicholas Flood Davin, M.P. for Assiniboia West, on May 4th, 1888, *Debates of the House of Commons, 1888*, page 1204.

3. They had signed up eagerly, as apparently "Only about half of those who put down their names were required and much disappointment was experienced by the men whose services were not needed" ["Starting of the Volunteers," *Birtle Observer*, April 10th, 1885]. In mid-May, more volunteers were called up to fill vacancies, presumably due to casualties among the scouts, and were promptly filled ["Local and Other News," *Birtle Observer*, May 18th, 1885]. Russell Easson's family history also notes that "In 1885 he was one of three men left to take care of Birtle when all others went to Batoche." Apparently the six babies born in Birtle that year were known as 'Rebellion Babies' [*View of the Birdtail*, 280].

As to the troop's name, see the appendix "List of Officers and Men Comprising the North-West Field Force which suppressed the Rebellion of 1885" in Boulton, *Reminiscences*, 501, which lists the troopers under Boulton's Mounted Infantry—No. 2 Birtle Troop. Troop No. 1 was recruited in Russell. For the role of the scouts, see the letter from Wm. Morrison, *The Birtle Observer*, May 8th, 1885, which has been transcribed into the

appendices. Also worth noting is the following part of a letter which S.W. Chambers had received from a soldier in a Winnipeg battalion and passed on to the *Birtle Observer*. The soldier remained anonymous:

I have been pleased to see all along that the papers of our city did not omit to mention Boulton's Horse in the accounts given of the campaign. Since the above body first joined us, which was I think, the day before we reached Clark's Crossing. They were far and away the best body of men with Middleton, and indeed I don't think that in all the Northwest Field Force including the "Gophers" we had such useful men. They were better men than French's scouts for the reason that they were more accustomed to prairie life, were as a rule hardier men and were as well mounted, as good if not better shots. They were always in a position of danger while on the march, literally carrying their lives in their hands from minute to minute as at any moment they might be fired on from the numerous ambushes along the route, and in action at close quarters they set the rest of us an example of coolness, and did, I think, effective service with their Winchesters.

[*Birtle Observer*, June 29th, 1885, page 1].

4. Among others, see the *Birtle Observer*, April 24th, 1885, page 1; "An Unskilful Fabricator," "The Battle at Fish Creek," "The Shrapnel Shell," and "Our Boys," May 1st, 1885, page 1; "Ready for Anything," *Birtle Observer*, June 22nd, 1885, page 2. For their return, see "Return of Boulton's Troop," *Birtle Observer*, July 27th, 1885, page 1 and "The Picnic," *Birtle Observer*, August 3rd, 1885, page 1.

5. See the speech of J. S. Crawford to Major Boulton, officers and men of Boulton's Mounted Infantry, *Birtle Observer*, August 3rd, 1885. This is included among the appendices. The conflict was an important thing for the soldiers too, who periodically held reunions; the Birdtail Country Museum has a picture of such a reunion from as late as 1921.

6. Not that this was consistently a thing practiced, "Eye-Witness called for an earthquake to stir Birtle town. No nominations were received for any council positions and John Walley was requisitioned as mayor: Nor were there any school trustee nominations — and no council to appoint them. A mess!" ["The Old News—Seventy Year Ago—1899," *Birtle Eye-Witness*, December 17th, 1969, page 5].

7. "Passing It On," 102, notes that "Until just recently, traces of the battalion's trench warfare exercises were to be found in the Sports Grounds."

8. While not necessarily exhaustive, the list of names appearing on the Birtle Service Rolls as they appear in "Passing It On," for example, shows fewer soldiers participating in World War One than World War Two, with a much higher proportion of casualties ["Passing It On," 95-97]. This isn't surprising, given the different nature of military activities of the two wars.

9. Birtle's citizens voiced their opinions through more than their patronage of Stubbs' practice. On the night of the election he had to brave a number of threats as "all traitors were to be tarred and feathered." To his credit, Stubbs went out of a way to personally challenge all comers, and still passed through the night unscathed [Stubbs, *A Majority of One*, 29-30].

10. *View of the Birdtail*, 62-63; 156.

11. After the Second World War, another plaque was added to the monument to commemorate those who died in that conflict. A second unveiling ceremony was subsequently held on October 17th, 1948 [*View of the Birdtail*, 93-94].

12. "Passing It On," 103. Branch 55# was preceded by a branch of the Great War Veteran's association, organized in 1919 [*View of the Birdtail*, page 93, said 1920, but on page 51 it notes that a grant was voted to it by Town Council in May 1919], and sometimes coordinated activities with the similar Women's Service League. They organized memorial services, and were helped in the effort to erect the monument by the Town Council and the Oddfellows. The Great War Veterans ceased operating in 1923.

Further details of the activities of the Birtle Legion can be found in both Birtle history books, and also in the scrapbooks prepared by Steve MacBeth, which are currently housed in the Birdtail Country Museum.

13. Showing the lesser controversy, the Council of the Town of Birtle passed a motion on September 8th, 1941, "That the citizens of Birtle are requested to unite with all other municipalities in Canada in commemorating Consecration Week, September 10th to 17th. It is especially desired that merchants and private citizens decorate their premises by flying flags and other suitable displays, and by so doing demonstrate their determination to continue the struggle to end all tyranny and aggression, and in proud memory of those valiant hearts who have gone on, or will in future go from among us to preserve our common freedoms." [*View of the Birdtail*, 52].

The volunteering statistics are from “*Passing It On*,” 102-103, citing the *Winnipeg Tribune*.

14. *View of the Birdtail* notes that “Ration stamps are recalled in the appointment of Mayor R. L. Miles and Councillor C. L. Dutton to the Ration Board. Councillor Dutton with J. H. Kitching and J. H. Dalton formed the committee in charge of Volunteer Harvest Help for 1943” [page 52]; see also Ernie Walley, in “*Passing It On*,” 103.

15. “*Passing It On*,” 378. He was later awarded both the Order of Canada and the Légion d’honneur.

16. Lifelong friendships and even a marriage were struck up between Birtle residents and Australian pilots, see “Birtle and the Royal Australian Air Force,” in Vernon Dutton’s edited *Birtle Memories*, page 153, in the Birdtail Country Museum. For the large painted letters on the roof, see “*Passing It On*,” 119.

17. Ernie Walley details this unhappy occurrence on page 105 of “*Passing It On*.” Walley served with the 12th Dragoons and was sent to the crash site along with Bruce Thornton, Don Noble, and Dennis Pratt after a phone call at 4 a.m. on March 1st, 1943. The plane went down five miles south of Birtle. Ernie noted:

There is an error in Contact regarding the A.C. location. The correct site is 5 miles south of Birtle on #83, then a quarter to a half mile west in the middle of the road allowance, between the two fences. I know because I was there from the get go. You can find two holes, maybe 15 feet apart, where the engines crashed to the ground. The official cause of the crash was believed to be pilot error due to insufficient night and instrument training.

Appendices

1. The Birdtail County Museum has a copy of a letter Leacock wrote to Major Boulton, Winnipeg, November 23rd, 1882. Boulton had written him on the 17th informing him of the result of the convention, and Leacock responded “I heard all the news in regard to the convention, and was rather surprised at the attitude some of my friends took while I was very grateful to Templeton for what he did” [BCM, 4658-14-G].