

**CENTENNIAL of
TRAILL COUNTY
1875-1975**



INTRODUCTION

The following story is about the Red River Valley and Traill County before the arrival of the white man, about fur traders, Indians, Metis, Hudson's Bay Company, about the famous Red River cart, steamboats and barges on the Red River, about first settlements at Frog Point and Goose River, about stage coaches, squatters and homesteaders. It tells of the formation of Dakota Territory, of the coming of the railroads and James J. Hill, the creation of Traill County, the era of bonanza farming; it gives a picture of Hillsboro before the turn of the century, and it relates the history of banking from 1881 as it traces the history of the Northwestern State Bank of Hillsboro.

The writer is one who believes that local history as much as possible should be set into print before all knowledge of it is lost or forgotten. The Centennial year 1975 and the Bicentennial year 1976 seem appropriate times to do it.

I have spent many hours over many years reading books of history, the early issues of the Hillsboro Banner whose yellowed pages of fine print would tax the eye of an eagle, official county records, old letters and invoices, and conversing with a few of the fast declining population of old timers.

I am especially indebted to the Hillsboro Banner whose early issues of news and comment are now history and to the North Dakota Historical Society. Letters of Walter J. S. Traill and other interesting articles, published and unpublished, provided much information. I am also indebted to the following named publications:

"Physical Geography" by Gilbert Brigham
"Journals of the LaVendryes- by the Champlain Society of Toronto "Red River Runs North" by y Vera Kelsey
"Excerpts from the "Journals of Alexander Henry."
"The Story of North Dakota" by Erling N. Rolfsrud
"American History" by Wayne Andrews
"Oxford History of American People" by Samuel Eliot Morison
"In Rupert's Land, the Memoirs of Walter J. Traill" by Mae Atwood "Heart of the Continent" by E. S. Russenholt
"Manitoba - a History" by W. L. Morton
"Lord Selkirk of Red River" by John Morgan Gray
"In the Beginning" by Gwain Hamilton
"The Days of the Bonanza" by Hiram M. Drache
"Red River Revelations" by Wilson F. Green

While reading these volumes I made a bundle of notes of items of local interest and I have used them in this story with little or no mention of the sources because I had made no records of author, book, or page from whence they came. This list of publications, however, is a source from which interested persons may acquire additional information.

It was at the request of Northwestern State Bank that I wrote a history of the bank; then at my suggestion the history was developed into a story of the Red River Valley, of Traill County and Hillsboro. This history is not for sale but is a contribution of the bank and myself to the Centennial of Traill County and the Bicentennial of the Nation. It is not the work of a trained historian but it is certainly that of a devoted amateur.

1975.

Leonard Beal

THE RED RIVER VALLEY OF NORTH AMERICA

The Red River Valley is much larger than most people realize. It extends westward from the Red River 25 to 40 miles and east from the river about the same distance. From the south in northeastern South Dakota it widens to 250 miles in Canada and includes the rich soil of southern Manitoba. Half of the Red River Valley is in the United States and half is in Canada. To Canadians it is known as Southern Manitoba as well as Red River Valley. The section south of the border and east of the river is designated Northwestern Minnesota. Only the North Dakota quarter west of the river is and always has been known Red River Land. While the eastern border of North Dakota is measured at about 200 miles, the distance to Winnipeg via the meandering river is about 400 miles. The width of the valley averages about 100 miles.

The river from which the valley gets its name extends from a lake in the extreme northeast corner of South Dakota, Lake Traverse, whose outlet in the north is the Bois des Sioux River. The Bois des Sioux runs north to Wahpeton-Breckenridge, where joined by the Ottertail River flowing from the east it forms the Red River. The Red River empties into Lake Winnipeg and the waters then drain into Hudson Bay via the Hayes and Nelson Rivers.

Geologists describe the Red River Valley as a prairie lake bed. Hundreds of thousands of years ago, during one of the cold periods that affected the world, a blanket of snow hundreds of feet deep fell and continued to fall over countless centuries. Finally a sheet of ice, a glacier, covered all of Canada and the northern part of the United States. It alternately melted and grew again until the ice mass was a mile thick. Glaciers move and advance slowly. One finger of the glacier advanced down through the whole of eastern North Dakota and western Minnesota. This mighty mass of moving ice pried off rocks, picked up boulders, gravel, soil, trees and shrubs and carried everything before it. It gouged out a valley and filled it with ice.

During a warming period, perhaps 10,000 years ago, the glacier gradually melted and left in its wake huge quantities of water. The atmosphere was very humid and torrential rains fell. All this water from melting ice created a huge lake spreading over 110,000 square miles, a lake larger than all the Great Lakes combined. It has been determined that the lake was 100 feet deep at Wahpeton, 200 feet deep at Fargo and 450 feet deep at Pembina. Storms of rain and wind created huge waves which washed sand and gravel to the shores. Rushing water from the escarpments on the east and west carried in more water laden with drift soil together with decayed vegetation from their banks.

When the turbulent lake first sought an outlet, it drained to the south through the glacial River Warren, the remains of which is the Minnesota River of today, but the stupendous weight of ice and water caused the valley to tilt to the north. Such a change in the earth's surface was not by any means infrequent during the early periods of the world's formation. Even now portions of continents are slowly rising while others are slowly falling. When the huge dam of ice in Manitoba finally broke, the lake water drained into Lake Winnipeg and on to Hudson Bay and the Atlantic Ocean.

In this new rich lake bed grasses grew four to six feet tall; 210 different kinds have been identified by botanists, together with over 2,000 different kinds of plant life. They blossomed, withered and died and further enriched the soil. Into this land came the buffalo and other fauna to feed, grow old and die. Adding to this material was the natural sediment of the lake itself, the decayed fishes and multitudes of water animals, giving an animal as well as

vegetable fertilization. Thus was formed a new land of unparalleled richness, a gritless soil of remarkable depth.

This prehistoric lake was named in honor of Louis Agassiz, a noted Swiss scientist and professor of geology at Harvard University who in 1879 first described the lake's origin; his findings were subsequently confirmed by other noted scientists.

In the course of time water was drained from Lake Agassiz and all that remains of this great lake is Lake Winnipeg, Lake Manitoba and Lake Winnipegosis and the channel in the middle of the valley which serves to keep it drained. The channel became known as the Red River of the North.

Back in 1670, in the days when a monarch could do as he pleased, the king of Great Britain gave his cousin, Prince Rupert, and seventeen of his friends under a royal charter all the land in middle Canada. The charter granted to them the whole trade of "all seas, straits, bays, rivers, lakes, creeks, countries and territories, including all known and unknown territory in North America drained by waters that emptied into Hudson Bay." By virtue of the north flowing river into Hudson Bay, the entire Red River valley came under the domination of the British flag. This territory became known as Prince Rupert's Land. They organized Hudson's Bay Company, or as it was officially known "The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson Bay." These gentlemen adventurers never knew how much land they owned, nor did they ever visit it. Their interest was only in the fabulous profits derived from the fur trade. It wasn't until after the War of 1812, or to be exact on October 20, 1818, that the United States by treaty acquired from Great Britain all Red River land south of the border set at the 49th parallel.

By 1890 almost 300,000 people had taken root in what later proved to be "The Bread Basket of the World." All of this began when Scotland's Lord Selkirk started his little agricultural settlements at Pembina, Fort Douglas, Fort Daer and Red River Settlement.

**RED RIVER VALLEY EXPLORERS
and
ORGANIZATION OF DAKOTA TERRITORY**

We will never know the name of the first white man who set foot in Traill County. Radisson and Groseilliers, French explorers and adventurers, pushed overland to the Mississippi in 1654 and 1660. They were followed by a long line of explorers and traders including Duluth from 1679 to 1689, Father Hennepin 1680, LeSueure in 1700. LaPierriere in 1727 and the LaVerendryes in the 1730s and 1740s. Eastern Minnesota remained under control of the French until 1763 when it became British. Duluth, who explored westward from Lake Superior in search of a route to the western sea, made friends with both the Chippewa and the Sioux, and from them learned he was near the source of the Mississippi River. He was obliged to return to camp to arbitrate a quarrel between tribes, but before going he left three nameless men and a group of warriors to explore the western wilderness. Duluth's records indicate they entered the Red River valley and were the first white men to set foot in North Dakota. I wish I could say the place was in Traill County and that I could record their names.

We do know that Pierre LaVerendrye, the greatest of all explorers of the Red River Valley, and his sons, in the 1730s found their way through the swamps, rivers, streams, lakes and waterfalls by canoes and portages from the western shores of Lake Superior through Lake of the Woods, down the wild Winnipeg River to finally arrive at Lake Winnipeg. They discovered, explored, and mapped the lower Red and Assiniboine Rivers, Lake Winnipeg, Lake Winnipegosis, and Lake Manitoba, and after several years spent building forts and trading posts they traveled as far south as Bismarck-Mandan. This was sixty years before Lewis and Clark ascended the Missouri River from St. Louis. Jean LaVerendrye in 1734 accompanied a war party of Cree Indians south along the Red River from a trading post on the Roseau River to a point north of Fargo-Moorhead. Whether he crossed to the west side of the river at time we do not know, but it is a possibility.

Beginning in 1800 we do have indisputable evidence of the first white man in Traill County who, day by day, recorded his journeys. He was Alexander Henry who established a trading post at the confluence of the Park and Red Rivers and shortly thereafter another post at Pembina. In his journals he uses French names for rivers and streams indicating he had access to French maps of the valley.

The Red River he called Rivierre Rouge. The fork of the Red River and the Red Lake River is not written Grand Forks but Les Grandes Fourches; Sand Hill River is written Rivierre Butte de Sable; Wild Rice River is Rivierre Folie Avoine and the Goose River is Rivierre aux Outardes (River of the Goose.) The question naturally arises - What unknown Frenchman explored and named these rivers?

Dakota Territory was organized by an act of Congress in 1861. The Act was signed into law by President Buchanan. Dakota Territory originally consisted of 350,000 square miles and included what is now North Dakota, South Dakota, Montana and Wyoming. It was reduced in size in 1864 by formation of other territories, and by 1889, Dakota Territory consisted of what is now North and South Dakota. In this two state area there were about 1200 people living around Yankton and about 80 white persons and 500 Metis

at Pembina. When the Territorial Legislature met in a log house at Yankton in 1862, it created four counties in northern Dakota Territory. They were Kittson, Chippeway, Stevens and Sheyenne.

Kittson was named in honor of Norman W. Kittson, a successful trader at Pembina who in 1843 led the first fur cart train of Red River carts to St. Paul.

Chippeway was of course named for the Chippewa Indians. The area of Traill County was then part of Chippeway County.

Stevens was named in honor of Isaac Stevens, the leader of a group of surveyors who, accompanied by soldiers, blazed the trail for the Northern Pacific Railroad to the Pacific coast in 1853. Many years passed before the railroad was built.

Sheyenne was named for a band of Dakota or Sioux Indians who held forth in the southeast corner of the future state.

The Indian wars in the Minnesota valley held back settlement in Dakota Territory for several years. In 1862 the Sioux decided to reclaim their happy hunting grounds because the Indian agents had reneged on food rations the government promised in exchange for land. They killed, robbed, and pillaged the settlers in the valley. Hundreds of whites - men, women and children - were massacred. Stage coaches and wagon trains were burned and merchandise carried away. Settlers by the hundreds fled the Minnesota River valley. Those living at Fort Abercrombie and Georgetown joined the exodus. The Red River valley was deserted and from Fort Abercrombie to the outskirts of Pembina, not a white man or a cabin remained, and it was written: "Dakota is that part of the Great Plains which is and ever must be useless."

In the midst of the Civil War President Lincoln ordered troops into Minnesota and Dakota, and slowly but surely the Sioux were driven west of the Missouri River and into reservations. Never again did the Sioux cause a problem east of the Missouri. With the establishment of forts confidence was restored, and life slowly returned to the valley.

TRAILL COUNTY, THE FUR TRADE, THE METIS, BUFFALO HUNTS AND THE RED RIVER CARTS

Traill County, in the heart of the Red River Valley of North Dakota, is one of the most fertile and prosperous farming areas in the nation. The production from its marvelous rich, black loam is amazing for quality, quantity, and variety. And yet, the first commercial product of Traill and other Red River counties was BUFFALO.

It is quite impossible to imagine the magnitude of the buffalo herds that once inhabited the plains. Students of the species estimate that their numbers once ranged from 50 to 90 million. Perhaps 65 million is a reasonable compromise. Walter T. Hornaday of Smithsonian Institution once wrote "Of all the quadrupeds that have lived upon the earth, probably no other species has ever marshalled such innumerable hosts as those of the American bison or buffalo."

As the Canada goose flies north in the early spring and south in the fall, so did the buffalo migrate from Texas north to the Red River Valley to feed on its luxurious grasses. Their departure to the south was much later than that of the wild fowl for they had no fear of early winter if they had "pawing" ground for food. Long before the arrival of the white man the Indians noticed the

thundering herds preferred the valley's lush grass above all other and called the Red River Valley "Buffalo County." Always stalking the herds were Cree, Assiniboin, Chippewa and Dakota or Sioux Indians. They had migrated to the valley from the forests and prairies of the Great Lakes area, Minnesota Wisconsin, constantly pushed westward by more warlike tribes and the guns of advancing white civilization. Wandering tribes had reported to them that west of the Red River was a land of plenty teeming with herds of buffalo.

Buffalo became the Indian staple diet. The tongue, liver and hump were the favorite parts. The women cut other parts into strips and hung them on poles to dry in the sun or over a fire. Some of the meat was chopped and pounded into powder and mixed with buffalo fat, salt, and high-bush cranberries or wild cherries for flavoring. This was called "pemmican" and packed in buffalo skins it kept indefinitely. It was very nourishing food and solved the problem of the white traders' and trappers' survival in the wilderness. The Indians killed buffalo for sustenance, not for sport, and it was not until the demands of the fur traders and hide hunters grew so great that buffalo hunting had any effect on the supply or the Indians' way of life. They were free from want. Buffalo supplied food in quantity, hides for clothing, robes for warmth and skins for teepees. Spoons and drinking vessels were made from the horns, and the shoulder blade became a hoe for a patch of Indian corn. The Indians' way of life was secure. No other animal in America's history had a more important role.

From 1670 onward French and English explorers and fur traders vied for the rich furs of northern Red River Valley. The English came by way of Hudson Bay and up the Nelson and Hayes Rivers. The French came by way of the St. Lawrence River, the Great Lakes, Rainy River, Lake of the Woods and the Winnipeg and Roseau Rivers. Hudson's Bay Company and North West Fur Company became rich from the fantastic supply of prime beaver, otter, mink, and marten pelts. These furs had been of little importance to the Indians until they learned the white man's way of trading iron kettles, cloth, beads, guns, knives, and alcohol for furs.

Over the decades as the trappers and traders roamed over Red River land, a new race of men was born, the METIS or mixed bloods. Many of the French and English married, legally or otherwise, Cree and Assiniboine Indian women and by 1870 the population of present day Manitoba was 11,963, half of which were Metis.

Fur traders and fur companies looked with disfavor on agriculture, claiming that it interfered with trapping, so the diet of the trappers, like that of the Indians and Metis, depended on pemmican, wild rice from the swamps of northern Minnesota, and a few vegetables at times from the settlement gardens.

By 1867 the buffalo were fast disappearing from the Red River Valley - ever moving westward to the less luxurious plains, harried by the Metis and white hide and robe hunters. Traders' demands for hides and robes and the Indians' passion for trade goods and alcohol made them slaves of the traders, and close association with white men brought to the Indians small-pox and other diseases that rapidly decimated the Indian population.

The Metis were the most talented of all buffalo hunters. They were a happy-go-lucky people. They liked to hunt, to race ponies, to sing their French father' songs and dance the French folk dances, to go on buffalo hunts; they

liked to dress colorfully, drive the famous Red River carts to the fur markets at St. Paul and return with cart loads of staples, such as cloth, tea and sugar.

Alexander Henry was a noted fur trader. His expedition of 29 persons and two horses was sent out from Montreal by North West Fur Company in 1800 to establish a trading post on Park River, one-quarter mile from its confluence with the Red River. The location proved unsatisfactory due to high water in the spring, so he moved to a location at Pembina. He kept a daily journal of events and in 1800 recorded that buffalo were so numerous they would only turn to stare at him, and that their path to Park River, where they went to drink, was packed down like hard smooth pavement.

Henry was the first white man to see, describe, and record a description of Traill County around present day Caledonia. On November 9, 1800 he and a Cree Indian guide started south following the course of the Red River to learn if there were sufficient beaver to warrant sending his Indians to trap there the following spring. At four o'clock in the afternoon of November 10, 1800, they reached the outlet of the Rivierre aux Outardes (French for Goose River) and there discovered the remains of a recently abandoned Sioux camp. Realizing that they were now in dangerous Sioux country, they decided to go no farther. They camped in the woods along the Goose River that night, made no noise, lit no fires and fired no guns. In the morning Henry climbed the highest oak tree and surveyed his surroundings. He records the Goose meandering into the Red, mink and black bear swimming in the river, deer and elk at the edge of the woods and buffalo grazing out on the prairie. They returned to their post the following day.

On January 14, 1801 he wrote that he was awakened by bellowing buffalo and, though he had seen an incredible number in the fall of 1800, it was like nothing he saw that morning. The ground was covered - east, west, north and south - as far as the eye could see. Fifty years later Charles Cavalier, the first customs inspector at Pembina, wrote "The prairie was black with buffalo. We traveled from Pembina River through herds of buffalo and the next day it was the same thing - all buffalo on the move - there were simply millions of them. "

Lord Selkirk's colony of Scottish immigrants in Red River Settlement in 1812, and subsequent years, was saved from starvation by hunting buffalo in the valley. Lacking provisions for the first winter, most of the settlers went to Pembina and built log cabins, a store house, and a stockade which Selkirk named Fort Daer. They subsisted on buffalo throughout the winter. Although these settlers returned to Fort Douglas in the spring, each winter for several years, they went south to Pembina to hunt buffalo.

In 1839 the U.S. War Department sent Jean N. Nicollet, a French scientist, together with Lt. John Fremont and a small army to gather information about the territory between the Mississippi and the Missouri rivers. They crossed over the Sheyenne River on their return and came upon such immense herds of buffalo their march was slowed for three days.

As millions of buffalo roamed the plains, the supply seemed inexhaustible. The number taken by the Indians for their own use was insignificant and did nothing to check the annual increase, but between 1820 and 1840 the massed hunts staged by the Metis at the behest of the traders made great inroads. 650,000 were killed by Red River hunters alone. As the population of Manitoba grew, more buffalo meat and robes were needed; there

was wholesale killing wherever buffalo could be found and there was tremendous waste. As railroad construction through the south and west multiplied, the construction companies hired professional hunters to kill fresh meat for their workers, and one American writer in describing the scene said, "the plains became a stinking slaughter house."

Historian Ross described an 1840 buffalo hunt, in part, as follows: "On the 15th of June men, women and children with horses, carts and their equipment took the road for the hunters' rendezvous at Pembina. When the whole party had assembled, it comprised 620 hunters, 650 women and 360 boys and girls, a total of 1630. They had 403 buffalo horses, 655 cart horses and 586 draft oxen, and the total number of carts in the cavalcade was 1210. Before starting out the party adopted a code of rules for the regulation of the hunt, the government and protection of the camp, and the punishment of offenders. Ten captains were chosen, one of which acted as head of the camp. Each Captain had ten men under him to assist in maintaining discipline, and guides were appointed. When all arrangements had been completed, a priest celebrated high mass and the expedition started. Following one day of successful hunting 1,375 buffalo tongues were taken into camp. On another occasion 2,500 animals were killed in two day's hunting. And so it went on for about eight weeks. They returned home with 1,089,000 pounds of meat. The Metis kept half for their own use and sold the other half and the robes to fur companies and traders."

The carts used on the hunt and for transportation of robes and furs to market at St. Paul were based on the development of carts by Alexander Henry's men at Pembina. To bring in meat they made carts similar to French two-wheeled carts. These were made entirely of wood, for no other material was available. They were called Red River carts and historian Wilson F. Green describes one as follows: "This cart was made in 1801 from native trees. It had solid wheels 36 inches in diameter and up to 18 inches thick. They were sawed off ends of large tree trunks with center holes burned out to take a wooden axle. It was a clumsy cart and hard to haul. An improved cart built in 1802 had open wheels four feet in diameter with four spokes. 1803 saw completion of a cart used for years before arrival of the steamboat. It had a still larger wheel with a dozen spokes and could traverse any kind of terrain. Because no metal of any kind was used, it could be repaired on the spot from any kind of wood available. Some persons claim that sections of the wheel rim, called felloes, were regularly bound together with green buffalo hide at the joints. It is likely too that spokes on each side of the rim joints were sometimes tightly tied together in order to complete a trip. Cart axles were left ungreased to avoid collecting sand or abrasive laden dust which would greatly increase wear and shorten length of service. Consequently the turning wheels produced creaking wails far more penetrating than bagpipes." (One of these carts, a gift from the Great Northern Railroad Company, reported to be one of three still extant, is a possession of the Traill County Historical Society at Hillsboro.)

E. S. Russenholdt's description of a cart is somewhat different: "The Red River Cart is readily made and repaired with local materials by any man who is a master of axe, saw, auger and draw knife. The hubs are short-sawn lengths of elm which do not easily split. An axle of oak is chopped to the desired size and shaved round at each end and bored for wooden lynch-pins which hold the hubs in place. Ash is boiled and bent into shape for felloes and cut in proper length for spokes. The wheel rims are wrapped in wet rawhide which dries to make a

tight, hard tire. The six foot, wheels are decidedly "dished" to give resilience to the cart on rough, bumpy trails. Atop the axles split strips of poplar provide a floor. On this floor assorted sticks make a box four feet wide by six feet long and three feet deep. Two poles for shafts and an oxbow of ash, boiled and bent, complete a cart that can carry half a ton anywhere an ox can pull it. The Red River cart is used for hunting, freighting - everything - a universal vehicle."

Trader Norman Kittson at Pembina in 1843 was the first to use the Red River cart to transport furs to market at St. Paul. The West Plains Trail was west of the Red River. Its route was through Traill County and it crossed over the Red River at Georgetown and continued south along the Minnesota River to St. Paul. The East Plains Trail on the east side of the Red River, turned to St. Cloud and then along the Mississippi River to St. Paul. Both trails were subject to raids by Sioux Indians so the Woods Traill still further east through friendly Chippewa territory was used. It branched off the East Plains Trail to Crow Wing and then down the Mississippi. These caravans, often of hundreds of carts, each year represented more than a million dollars in business and each year the cart trains lengthened while the buffalo herds decreased. After 1867 the buffalo came no more to the Red River valley. Missouri River traders frequently hunted for buffalo but none of the hunts was on the scale of the famous Red River hunts. Extermination of the buffalo demolished Indian society and Indian hopes. As General Phil Sheridan said. "We took away their country and their means of support, broke up their mode of living, their habits of life, and introduced alcohol, disease and decay among them." Sitting Bull, the great Sioux chief and orator said: "A cold wind blew across the prairie when the last buffalo fell - a death wind for my people."

Even in death the majestic herds contributed to the economy of the valley. Buffalo bones which littered the prairie were collected by homesteaders and Metis and sold to bone dealers for shipment to factories in St. Louis, Chicago and Detroit for conversion into fertilizer and charcoal filters. Two million tons of bones purchased at prices from three to twelve dollars per ton, produced \$40,000,000 in profits. Judge Divet in his memoirs of homesteading in Richland County, North Dakota, stated that in 1882 buffalo bones were an obstacle in breaking land and they had to be removed from the path of the plow.

It was here again that the Metis made use of the marvelous Red River cart. Accompanied by their wives and children they ranged the countryside as bone pickers, and when their carts were filled, they hauled them in caravans, sometimes a quarter of a mile long, to a railroad siding where a bone dealer would buy and pay them in cash. It was a good business that benefited the railroads, the Metis and the homesteader. It brought the railroads income on return trips from the west, provided necessities of life for the often penniless homesteader and brought a new lease of life to the Metis.

But the way of life, based on the buffalo economy, had ended. Heretofore the buffalo had provided the Indian with food, clothing, shelter, and happiness; pemmican for the trappers and traders, and saved Lord Selkirk's colony from starvation; buffalo coats and robes for early Dakota pioneers; buffalo tongues and steaks for the St. Paul epicures; buffalo hides for the tanners, and finally buffalo bones for industry.

In retrospect the slow but certain depletion of buffalo herds and the ruination of the Indian way of life are events of which we cannot be proud.

Robert Burns once wrote: "Man's inhumanity to man make countless thousands mourn."

Concerned citizens feared that the buffalo would become extinct. Belatedly, in 1883, Dakota Territory enacted a law for the preservation of the buffalo but there were no longer any great herds; nearly all had been slaughtered. By 1902 only a few hundred remained. An organization for their protection was formed with President Theodore Roosevelt as one of its sponsors.

Today there are about 30,000 buffalo, half of them in Canada and half in United States, on government sanctuaries and private preserves. A buffalo, however, is a wild animal and needs room to roam. A few can be tamed but herds cannot, and there is no longer grazing room for the thundering herds.

RAILROADING AND BONANZA FARMING

While Caledonia was serving as the capitol of Traill County there was a rumbling in the air of which few were aware.

James J. Hill and his friend Norman Kittson for many years had been engaged in the transportation of freight to and from St. Paul and Fort Garry. Hill had traveled through the valley by horseback, dog sled, steamboat and stagecoach. He had long recognized the problems of the plodding Red River carts and made them obsolete by entering into steamboat and barge business. He looked longingly at railroads and realized their importance to the economy of the valley in opening new fertile land for settlement as well as increasing the Fort Garry trade. Financing the Civil War had taxed the financial resources of nation and had interrupted development of the west but Hill didn't stop dreaming. He knew all about the huge federal land grants to the Northern Pacific Railroad Company and the Minnesota land grants. Congress had given Minnesota six million acres of land to advance railroad construction. Four companies were organized for the purpose but in this account we are concerned only with Minneapolis and Pacific which was to build two lines out of St. Paul, one to Breckenridge on the Red River and the other to St. Vincent on the Canadian border. Nothing was done, however, as the company was unable to sell construction bonds. The grant was taken over by the St. Paul and Pacific, and with funds furnished by Dutch investors. The St. Paul and Pacific began its first construction and by 1871 a railroad was completed from St. Paul to Breckenridge.

In the same year the Northern Pacific reached the Red River at Moorhead. As its chartered route was east and west, it looked with greedy eyes on the St. Paul and Pacific's charter north and south, which if it could be obtained, would provide for them a rich feeder line to Canada. The Northern Pacific therefore bought sufficient capital stock to control it and continued construction. In 1872 it completed a line from Barnesville to Crookston and as this line was not connected to any other track of the St. Paul and Pacific, it would serve as a branch of the Northern Pacific which it crossed at Glyndon. Railroad building came to a sudden halt in 1873 when the Northern Pacific and its subsidiary, the St. Paul and Pacific, were thrown into bankruptcy in the panic of 1873.

Hill cast longing eyes on the St. Paul and Pacific charter. Together with Kittson, David A. Smith, governor of Hudson's Bay Company, and George Stephen, president of the Bank of Montreal, these four Scotsmen decided to buy the charter, if possible. Northern Pacific in its reorganization in 1875 was obliged to divest itself of the St. Paul and Pacific because of its large and complicated debt. The bond holders wanted out in some manner before the charter was cancelled for non-performance. After long negotiation these four men signed an agreement in 1878 to buy the charter, complete the track to St. Vincent, and to get it done in a hurry to save the valuable land grant due to expire the same year. Hill, in personal charge, pushed contractors to the limit, and on December 2, 1878 joined tracks with the Canadian Pacific at St. Vincent which had built down from Winnipeg. A railroad was now in existence from St. Paul to Winnipeg.

Ever on the move, Hill in 1878 organized the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad, absorbed the St. Paul and Pacific, and in the spring of 1880 built a track from Fisher's Landing near Crookston over the Red River to Grand Forks and thus entered Dakota Territory.

A line connecting Fargo with Grand Forks was in order and this too was built in 1880. One writer stated it was built from Grand Forks to Fargo, another from Fargo to Grand Forks while another said the railroad tracks arrived in Hillsboro in the fall of 1880 coming from Grand Forks, that Hillsboro was the terminal, and in the following year was built from Hillsboro to Fargo. To solve the misunderstanding I wrote to the Burlington Northern and received this reply: "In 1880, 81.63 miles of track was laid from Barnesville, Minnesota to 0.4 miles west of Reynolds. The following year the segment from Reynolds to Grand Forks Junction was installed." In 1882 Hill extended the line from Grand Forks to Neche on the Canadian border and thus had two railroads to Canada, one of each side of the Red River.

Hill's genius continued. He built other feeder lines through the valley, and to support them and his main line, advertised extensively for settlers to come to the valley and take up free land. He was constantly waging war with the Northern Pacific and when it built a feeder line from Casselton to Mayville, he built another line a few miles to the west through present Clifford and Galesburg to Portland. He eventually maneuvered the Northern Pacific into an agreement to keep out of his territory, and he traded a branch line, Wahpeton to Milnor, to the Northern Pacific for the Casselton branch and thus became the sole railroad operator in Traill County.

Hill's next venture was a major one. He reorganized the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba into the Great Northern. Recapitalized at \$105,700,000.00, he built a transcontinental line from Grand Forks to the Pacific Coast. It was completed in 1893 without the aid of any government, land grants. Eight months later the Northern Pacific was again in receivership but the Great Northern prospered because of its many feeder lines, new towns, new settlers and big crops.

Mention was made earlier of the Northern Pacific reaching Moorhead in the fall of 1871. A further discussion of railroads is necessary for they vitally affected the growth and economy of Traill County.

Congress in 1864 had issued a charter granting millions of acres of land to the Northern Pacific as an inducement to construct a railroad from Duluth to the Pacific Coast. Years passed before Jay Cooke of Philadelphia, the honest,

reliable and noted financier who helped raise funds to finance the government during the Civil War, finally agreed to finance the Northern Pacific. In 1870 and 1871 rails were laid westward and crossed over the Red River at Fargo in 1872 and into Dakota Territory, and a year later was completed as far as Bismarck. In the panic of 1873 the Northern Pacific was thrown into bankruptcy as was Mr. Cooke and his bank.

Dakota Territory, however, had its first railroad even though it operated a receivership. There was not another single mile of track anywhere in the Red River valley north, west or south of Grand Forks but Northern Pacific trains were able to run between Fargo and Bismarck.

The receivers moved quickly. On September 25, 1875 the Northern Pacific was reorganized. They knew the value of the thousands of acres of fertile Red River land they owned. In Dakota Territory the land grant extended forty miles north and south of a line running from Fargo west and covered alternate sections of land in that eighty mile width. Securities of the railroad were selling for \$10.00 per hundred or less. A plan was devised to trade land for securities to relieve the company of its heavy debt so it could become solvent again. Depending on location, they priced the land at \$2.50 to \$10.00 per acre with payment to be made with securities valued at par or \$100.00. Thus if the land desired was in the \$2.50 range, a person could receive 160 acres for \$400.00 in securities.

At first the disgruntled security holders were not impressed. George W. Cass and Benjamin P. Cheney, new officers of the company, decided to demonstrate the worth of the land. They purchased a thirteen hundred acre track near Casselton and hired Oliver Dalrymple to manage it. He quickly proved its value in 1876 by raising 32,000 bushels of wheat and then selling it at \$.95c per bushel. Prices of land and grain and the yield were at times higher and lower, but the demonstration proved to be a bonanza and the phrase "Bonanza Farmer" was born. News of forty-five bushels per acre of \$1.25 wheat quickly spread through the country. Not only did most of the security holders exchange for land but eastern farmers, business men, speculators and others entered the market with cash for railroad land. There was plenty of it left over and the Northern Pacific entered into a great advertising program. They needed settlers to cultivate the land, not speculators to hold it for speculative profit. Nearly a thousand railroad agents traveled through Canada, Great Britain, Germany and the Scandinavian countries to tell the thrilling story of productive land that could be purchased for a few dimes an acre. Immigration agents from the government joined in with stories of free homesteads, pre-emptions and tree claims. Forward looking Scots from Canada, refugees from the industrial revolution of Great Britain, depressed small farmers, merchants and fishermen from Norway, plus Swedes, Danes, Icelanders, Germans, Austrians, Russians and Poles swarmed into the valley in search of free land. At one time in 1882 the train yards at St. Paul held hundreds of passenger cars filled with immigrants awaiting transportation to Dakota Territory. Special trains had to be organized to handle the crowds.

While the Northern Pacific sold vast acreages to its bond and preferred stockholders, it was aware many settlers were more important than just a few bonanza farmers. Perhaps it should be said the Northern Pacific, as well as the Federal government under the Homestead Act, were the originators of the family size farm of which we have heard so much. Cash buyers anywhere who owned land holdings of 320 acres or less could buy Northern Pacific railroad

land at \$3.00 to \$6.00 per acre on the installment plan over a ten year period with 10 per cent down and interest at 7 per cent on the remaining balance. Smaller tracts were also available at 1/6 down on a five year plan and if the farm was quickly put under cultivation, a 60 per cent discount was granted.

Students of bonanza farming say an ownership of 3,000 to 90,000 acres was necessary to be classified a bonanza farmer. Others said three, four or five sections should be considered because bonanza farming was a way of life and not just a huge ownership.

We know that bonanza farming was profitable. This new breed of sodbusters had capital for horses, mules, and the newest kind of farm machinery. They imported hundreds of transient laborers from eastern cities and hired local Norwegian and German homesteaders in need of extra dollars. Labor costs averaged \$15.00 per month plus room and board. It was shown that the production cost of \$1.00 wheat was 40c and thus was created the "Red River Millionaire."

In Traill County, Grandin Brothers and the Dalrymple families were the largest bonanza farmers. They were also great speculators and their acreages rose and fell through buying, selling, and trading railroad land, government land, military bounty certificates, homesteaders' disillusionments, defaulted pre-emption contracts and half-breed Indian scrip. It is estimated that at the height of Grandin Brothers' holdings they owned 75,000 acres and the Dalrymples, of whom there were many, owned 63,000 acres. Their farming was a mass production operation concentrating on wheat. With their wealth and financial backing they bought nearly all supplies at wholesale and received railroad rebates on their grain shipments. They built dwellings for their managers, grain elevators for storage, large barns for horses and mules and barracks and dining halls for their workmen.

Other bonanza farmers in Traill County were smaller operators such as S. S. Blanchard, H. S. Easton, A. D. Reed, D. C. Smith, William McCain, Thompson Farm Company, Preston Farming Company, Rand and Brown, Jones and Brinker; all of whom operated much over that 3,000 acre minimum, but were much smaller than the Grandin Brothers and the Dalrymples.

Of the bonanza farmers in the two, three and four section classification should be included H. D. Hurley, Daniel Patterson, C. A. Morton, S. Robinau, R. T. Kingman, James deGroat, A. L. Wentworth, R. W. Daniels, L. C. Stanford, Joseph Sims, C. W. Sutton, Guido von Steinwehr, William von Steubwehr and W. H. S. Brady. While these smaller bonanza farmers were comparatively wealthy men, farming was a way of life they enjoyed, and did much to build the economy of the nearby villages along the railroads. They enjoyed country living, they bred and raced spirited horses (some had private race tracks) they built sumptuous homes and furnished them lavishly, enjoyed neighborhood parties and they themselves did very little work. They enjoyed hunting ducks, geese and prairie chickens, gambled at cards and horse races, hired plenty of housekeepers, maids and cooks and lived the good life. Some of their sons were gay young blades who joined in the singing, dancing and skating parties of the villagers.

Bonanzas were all established by 1885; most of them split up and sold in the early 1900s but they, especially the smaller ones, did much to build the economy of the county. Much criticism had been leveled against the bonanza farmers but it must be stated that their operations were successful, they

helped make the fertile valley known throughout and they helped bring hundreds of new settlers into Traill County.

**WALTER J.S. TRAILL HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY,
FROG POINT & GOOSE RIVER, STEAMBOATS, BARGES,
STAGECOACHES, AND U.S. MAIL.**

The Riel rebellion of 1869 in Manitoba brought fame to Walter J. S. Traill. As a trusted employee of Hudson's Bay Company he was selected by Mr. Campbell, chief factor for the company at Fort Ellice, to save the winter collection of furs from the rebels. He was placed in charge of a brigade of 25 carts of valuable furs, extra horses, an Indian guide and the persons of Mrs. Campbell and their two daughters, with instructions to escape out of the country into Dakota Territory west of the Turtle Mountains. They proceeded of the fort on the west side of the Assiniboine River to a point near Brandon and crossed over the border just ahead of a mounted party of Metis who had received word of their escape. After crossing the border they traveled southeast until the Indian guide advised Traill to turn away from the western sun and travel eastward. He followed this advice and came upon the cart trail over which he had traveled northward four years before. They camped one night at Frog Point and the next day continued as far as the Goose River, which was in flood stage at the time, but by evening all had crossed over. The following day he delivered the cart train to Georgetown and placed Mrs. Campbell and daughters aboard a stage coach to Abercrombie.

Mr. Traill was still in the employ of Hudson's Bay Company and after a short trip to St. Paul he returned to Georgetown where a letter awaited him placing him in charge of the trading post at Georgetown and requesting him to return to Fort Garry as soon as possible for further instructions. By saddle horse he rode to Frog Point where he boarded a steamer for Fort Garry. He debarked at Pembina and rode into St. Bontiface to inform himself about political situations at the fort. He decided to go Fort Garry where his fellow officers were held prisoner. He boldly entered and was also imprisoned. When the steamboat arrived Louis Riel confiscated it, but when he realized it was flying an American flag and was under American license, he released it and ordered Traill to depart. Traill was expelled from Fort Garry on July 26, 1870 as an undesirable citizen who had exported a valuable amount of furs without Riel's consent.

Mr. Traill was happy for he now had additional orders. Hudson's Bay Company owned considerable real estate and personal property in the United States and because of Traill's outstanding service, he was placed in charge of all Hudson's Bay Company posts in the valley with headquarters at Georgetown. As he at this time was well acquainted with the area around Frog Point, he went ashore and it was there he decided to make his headquarters instead of Georgetown.

George E. Weston, a native of England, was the first settler to establish a home in Traill County. At Fort Abercrombie he built a barge and when the ice cleared from the river in March 1870, he loaded it with supplies and floated down the Red River to a point where the Goose River empties into the Red. Then he staked out a claim a mile south of present Caledonia on the south

bank of the Goose. He cut trees, built, a cabin and squatted on the land. Mr. Traill made Weston's acquaintance and placed him in temporary charge of the post at Georgetown.

The reason Mr. Traill decided that Frog Point should be the head of navigation on the Red River was because the lower bank there was a natural levee, convenient for freight handling from steamboat to wagon and vice versa. He squatted on a claim consisting of 159.90 acres, legally described as Lot 1 in Section 23, Lots 1, 2 and 3 and west one-half of the Northeast Quarter of Section 22, all in what is now Belmont Township, Traill County. On a journey to Alexandria he took out naturalization papers and became an American citizen. He advanced money for a special land survey and became the first recorded land owner in Traill County. He quickly built warehouses and a hotel and was appointed the first postmaster in the county. He selected Howard Morgan, a fellow Hudson's Bay Company employee, as junior clerk at Frog Point and manager of the hotel.

For a time Frog Point was the metropolis of the Red River. It had been settled by Scotch, Irish and English from Canada who left there during the troubles with the rebels. It had the usual business of a frontier town and a transportation industry of major importance. Hundreds of teamsters engaged in freighting congregated there, and together with the flatboat men, hunters, trappers and traders kept the saloon busy and there are tales of great revelry.

Hudson's Bay Company in 1871 decided to establish a post above the rapids and named it Goose River (now Caledonia.) Traill quickly built docks, warehouses and a hotel and placed Asa Sargeant in charge of the settlement. Business boomed from the steamboat and stage coach trade and from service to a stream of pioneers settling along the Red and Goose Rivers. The company built a dam on the Goose, erected a fifty barrel water powered grist mill, the first in the state, and Goose River became an important grain center. The second post office in Traill County was established at Goose River April 22, 1872 with Asa Sargeant as postmaster.

As early as 1853 official mail service had been established between St. Paul and Pembina. The lone carrier was usually a Metis who was acquainted with the cart trails and his trips were made once a month on horseback in summer and dog team in the winter. Many country postoffice mail drops were established in strategic settlements in the county during the middle 1870s. They were located in homesteaders' cabins where a box would be placed in which to deposit the settlement's mail. Letters were few in number and delivery to the cabins was quite irregular in summer and very irregular in winter. Mail was brought from the nearest boat or coach station on the Red River by a carrier on horseback when one was available. In order of establishment the first country post office was perhaps at the Arnold homestead near Mayville and then at Little Fork, Bloomfield, Fork and Hartland in 1879. With arrival of the railroad all country mail drops were discontinued and postoffices were established at the townsites along the railroad.

The year 1875 was disastrous for Frog Point. Because of changes in the government of Canada, Hudson's Bay Company was deprived of its governing rights and its charter declared void. The company prepared to close its trading posts in the United States. Mr. Traill was placed in charge of liquidation and finished his work in 1876. He sold the Hudson's Bay Company store and hotel at Frog Point to Robert Ray. Caledonia, instead of Frog Point, had been

selected the county seat of newly organized Traill County. A. H. Morgan and other merchants moved to Caledonia where Morgan and Sargeant purchased Hudson's Bay Company's interests. Traill resigned from the company and engaged in the buying and selling of grain at St. Paul. After several changes of residence, he moved to British Columbia where he died at the age of 85.

Today nothing remains of the once thriving village of Frog Point. Fires and the lapse of time have reduced it to grass again, but the stately oaks and beautiful elms still stand. Citizens of Belmont Township organized an Old Settlers Memorial Association and made Frog Point a beautiful park. They erected a granite monument at the gate in honor of the early pioneers, built a band stand and shelters for picnic grounds, and up the road toward Caledonia they erected a monument to Walter J. S. Traill.

A few Red River carts still rolled over the cart trails but as early as 1850 the fur trade was on the decline. Over-trapping in the Saskatchewan and Athabaska areas of Canada had greatly reduced the supply of beaver.

The first steamboat on the Red River was the Anson Northrop built in 1859. Others quickly followed: the International, Sheyenne, Alpha, Dakota, Pluck, Selkirk, Manitoba, Grand Forks, Swallow, From, William Robertson, Alsop and Grandin. St. Paul merchants rightly called steamboat and barge transportation on the Red River a ten million dollar trade. Railroad rails and the first railroad steam engine, the Countess of Dufferin, arrived in Winnipeg aboard a Red River barge. The steamboats, wood burning stern wheelers drawing little water, averaged 100 feet in length. Steamboats and barges now of carried most of the freight to and from Winnipeg even though the Goose Rapids often caused great inconvenience as the boats often had to wait for teamsters, wagons and horses to transfer cargo by the rapids and reload it on another boat

Shortly after the fur trade reached major proportions, the merchants of St. Paul inaugurated a stage coach service. The first stages, crude vehicles more like covered wagons, drawn by draft horses followed the Red River cart trails. But soon there were fancy Concord coaches and more spirited horses. When coaches began to run from Fort Abercrombie to Pembina and Winnipeg, a line of stage stations became centers of settlement. Coaches crossed over to Dakota by ferry from Georgetown and continued north. Stations were established Elm River (Quincy), Goose River (Caledonia) and Frog Point (Belmont). They were relay points for change of horses and furnished lodging for travelers. Dirt floored log cabins, without beds, were available at fifty cents per person and meals of pork and beans were provided at the same price. At Goose River and Frog Point, the Hudson's Bay Company hotels, the Hiltons of the era, furnished pleasant lodging and excellent meals. Caledonia continued to prosper as a steamboat and stage coach station and trading station for the homesteaders. It became the county seat of a new county in Dakota Territory.

ORGANIZATION OF TRAILL COUNTY

Traill County was organized February 23, 1875 by an Act of the Dakota Territory Legislature. Governor Howard appointed Asa H. Morgan, Jonas Ostland and John Brown the first County Commissioners. The name of Traill was selected in honor of Walter J.S. Traill no doubt due to the suggestion and influence of the delegates of this area at the Territorial Legislature.

The first meeting of the commissioners was held April 5, 1875 and Morgan was elected chairman of the board. They elected Asa Sargeant as Judge of Probate and County Treasurer, George E. Weston as County Clerk and Chester M. Clark as sheriff. A review of copies of board meetings from 1875 through 1882, though some are missing, reveal some amusing and important facts worth mentioning.

At the first meeting a petition from John Shelly was received for permission to operate a ferry across the Red River and it was put up to the highest bidder. His petition was granted for a period of ten years at \$5.00 per year giving him exclusive right from the north line of Section 14-146-49 for three miles south of said line, on the Dakota side of the Red River of the North. He was directed to charge no less than the following rates: four horse team and wagon (this to signify horses, mules or oxen) 40c, two horse team 25c, loose cattle 5c a head, horse and buggy or any one horse conveyance 15c, foot passengers 5c, hogs and sheep 3c.

Also on motion of Morgan the County Seat was to be located on a tract of land containing one acre in the SE 1/4 of Section 15-146-49 and the village name was changed from Goose River to Caledonia.

Subsequent meetings dealt with projects much the same as today: the establishment of commissioner districts, road districts, school districts, appointments of Justices of the Peace and Constables, selection of an official paper, granting of liquor licenses, appointments of County Coroner and County Surveyor. The first tax levy was 15 mills (2 mills for school purposes, 2 mills for roads and bridges and the remainder for county expenses.). Though J. C. Patton was appointed or elected County Superintendent of Schools I did not find a record of it though there are records of travel vouchers in the line of duty. The first school in the county was taught by J. C. Patton in Goose River in 1872, the second in Mayville in 1873 on claim of Thomas Pederson.

On September 5, 1875 a petition to lay out the village of Caledonia was acted upon favorably.

On January 3, 1876 the first elected county officers were sworn in: M. O. Flaherty, Lars H. Gordon and Halvor Berg as County Commissioners with Flaherty selected as Chairman of the Board. Sworn in also were George E. Weston as County Clerk and Register of Deeds, C. M. Clark as Sheriff and P.O. Ingrebretson as Judge of Probate and County Treasurer. On the same day the Clerk was authorized to build an office for the Register of Deeds and County Treasurer on Block 31 at a cost, including stove, of \$150.00. This block had been purchased from Asa Sargeant on October 25, 1875 with the stipulation that if the land was not used for a Courthouse building title would revert back to Sargeant. This block is between Court Street and Bridge Street. Across Court Street to the south a block away is the Hudson's Bay Mill property.

On August 15, 1876 on motion of Mr. Flaherty the board approved and endorsed the action of the County Clerk in the arrest of the County Treasurer. The treasurer then paid over to the board all moneys belonging to the County and tendered his resignations. Asa Sargeant was then appointed County Treasurer and Judge of Probate for the unexpired terms.

On October 7, 1879 a group of legal voters petitioned for an election to move the county seat from Caledonia to Mayville. An election was held and Mayville lost by a vote of 287 to 238.

On January 16, 1879 the buildings of a jail was authorized and its specifications are interesting and confusing. I quote: "A log building 12 x 16 feet - 10 feet high, partition in center with 2 inch oak planks, double upper floor of 2 inch oak planks, resting on 6 logs to be laid lengthwise, on which said 6 logs also the whole building shall rest, the planks to be laid crosswise, both floors to be spiked, 2 doors on the long side wall, 1 small common door to take inwards and one heavy door of double 2 inch oak planks to trim and images, spiked together one thickness crosswise and one lengthwise, strengthened with their own bars, wagon tire size, one in each end and one in the middle, the middle bar to serve as fastenings for a padlock, Shingle roof. The building to built of oak or elm logs or both. 1 inch round iron on outside of windows. The jail to be built by subscription and if an amount of money sufficient to build such jail cannot be raised by subscription, the county shall supply the deficiency.

At the same meeting the Chairman was authorized to go to Grand Forks and purchase from a Mr. Woodruff, the agent for the Hudson's Bay Company, a town property in Caledonia for the County to erect public buildings on.

On January 9, 1880 the Board authorized that a Courthouse be built and to advertise for bids. The contract was awarded to George E. Weston for \$2,100.00 with completion date set for September 15, 1880. The site was Block 6 and the building to face Main Street. (A photograph (date unknown) shows the two-story Courthouse and across the street the town hall and Lutheran Church). Tradition at Caledonia is that the land was donated by Asa Sargeant. Evidently the building was completed by September 15th for on that date the Commissioners authorized Peter Herbrandson to make arrangements for painting the Courthouse, provide bench and bar for the Court Room, seats for jury, six dozen chairs for the Court Room, a chair for the Judge and to all clean rooms. Lamps for the Court House were ordered as were curtains.

On September 7, 1881 the county office building on Court Street was ordered sold at the front door of the new courthouse on October 7th and Asa Sargeant purchased it for \$35.00.

On October 5, 1882 the Board ordered the jail moved to the new Courthouse property and an addition be built thereon.

Thus ends the saga of early political life in the first county seat of Traill County, and it should be noted that Mr. Traill's is not one of the participants. He had finished his work for Hudson's Bay Company and moved to St. Paul in 1876.

There are many stories by old timers of Traill's work and his many deeds of kindness. He created a milling center and grain market for the homesteaders, he trusted them for food and tools; he furnished plows when all had was ambition; and supplied a horse powered threshing machine for use. The spirit of Walter J. S. Traill still hovers over the peaceful village today, as it does over Frog Point, and it is fitting the county bears his name.

When Traill County was created in 1875 it was much larger than it is today. It was comprised of land taken from Grand Forks, Cass and Burbank Counties. Bounderies were set as follows: On the north the 12th Standard Parallel, on the south the 11th Standard Parallel, on the east the Red River and on the west the 8th Guide Line Meridian which is a point near Cooperstown. The formation caused an adjustment of other county lines as the northern tier of seven townships, (numbered 144, ranges 49 to 55) were taken

from Cass County, and four townships (numbered 144, ranges 56, 57, 58 and 59) were taken from Burbank County, an earlier name for Barnes County.

Griggs County was created in 1881 by taking eight townships from Foster County, two townships from Barnes County, and Traill County lost twenty of its western townships.

When Steele County was organized in 1883, ten more of Traill's western townships and ten of Grigg's eastern townships were lost to Steele County.

The future of Caledonia was promising when Traill County was formed. Caledonia had a population of between four and five hundred persons. It was a steamboat and stage coach center. It had a grist mill, grain elevators, general stores, machine shops, post office, hotel, warehouses for Hudson's Bay trade goods, market places for grain, feed and flour, a bank and a newspaper. It supplied the needs of an ever increasing number of homesteaders.

HILLSBORO BEFORE THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

In the middle of the 1870s a few isolated settlers had squatted on the wooded banks of the Goose River in the northern part of northeast quarter of section five, township 145 north, range 50, located in what is now known as Hillsboro Township. The St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad decided to establish a townsite there on its projected railroad. In the spring of 1880 S. G. Comstock and A. A. White, personal friends and agents of James J. Hill, were employed to select a path for the railroad right of way north through Traill County. Hill's railroad owned no land grants in the county whereas the Northern Pacific owned alternate sections in the form of a checkerboard including section five. Hillsboro Township was overwhelmingly a wilderness prairie except for a few settlements of sod busters along the wooded areas of the Red, Goose and Elm Rivers and three very small Red River villages at Frog Point (Belmont), Goose River (Caledonia) and Elm River. (Quincy.) These served the needs of steamboat and stage coach passengers to and from Winnipeg, the traders, the Hudson's Bay Company employees, and men and teams necessary to load and unload the boats around the Goose Rapids during low water, but these towns were only pin pricks on a map.

Northern Pacific agreed to sell to Comstock and White at a reasonable price as did many of the homesteaders, and some of them gladly donated land to be on or near a railroad. Comstock and White decided to locate the townsite on a wooded tract on the bend of the river just north of present day Hillsboro where Albert Potterud owned land on both sides of the river. Bargaining with Gorder, Skogen, Elliot and Gilbertson, who owned small pieces of land nearby, proved difficult and failed when they could not arrive at a satisfactory price. Albert Potterud, however, whose homestead was south of the river, wanted the townsite on his land so he donated twenty acres of it to the railroad. He also owned the site of Woodland Park, then called Potterud's Grove, which he subsequently leased to the city and then sold to it for a park. The remainder of his land south of the river he divided into lots when the city was platted. Some of these lots were sold for \$50.00 and \$75.00 each and others were given away.

During 1880 the railroad was built and in September of 1880 Comstock and White officially platted the townsite. The original plat did not cover all of section five but covered a very irregular plot of land. No land north of the river

in NW¹/₄ of NE¹/₄ was included and none from the W¹/₂ of NW¹/₄. What was left of the SW¹/₄ was retained by White for later use. Thirty acres of it became the property of The Traill County Agricultural Association where an annual county fair was held with exhibits of farm machinery, baseball games and trotting races. Comstock retained most of the SE¹/₄ for future use and donated part of it to the city for park purposes. The new town was named Hill City in honor of James J. Hill. Comstock and White were unaware that there was already a Hill City in the hills of South Dakota. Mail and freight consigned to Hill City, Dakota Territory, often arrived at the wrong place at the wrong time so the citizens of our Hill City petitioned the Territorial Legislature to change the name to Hillsboro. It is fitting that Hillsboro is named in honor of J. Hill for he was the guiding genius of the railroad industry, the man later called the "Empire Builder." He was one of the first to realize the amazing productivity of the rich Red River soil, and the need to develop thousands of farms to make the valley "The Bread Basket of the World."

The first business men to settle in Hillboro were three enterprising men from Caledonia who decided to establish themselves in business on the railroad, A. H. Morgan, James Rogers and John E. Paulson. Morgan sold his store in Caledonia, the old Hudson's Bay Trading Post, to his brother. He proved energetic in the development of the new town and built a store for general merchandise and built other buildings for rental purposes. While at Caledonia he had been selected first chairman of the Board of Country Commissioners, and in Hillsboro he was chosen its first postmaster. Later he elected a member of the State Legislature. About the same time Morgan built his store, Rogers built a hotel on the site now occupied by the Hillsboro Auto Company and named it Rogers Hotel; and upon expansion in 1882, he renamed it the United States Hotel. While awaiting completion of a two story frame building located on the corner lot of the two now occupied by Olsen Hardware, Paulson sold the first merchandise in Hillsboro from a hastily constructed warehouse filled with supplies brought over from Caledonia. A few years later, on a full fifty foot frontage on Main Street he erected a two story brick building for his expanding mercantile business, and on the site of present Bowling Alley he built a large implement store and behind it a livery stable. The original store building was moved to the rear of his store lots and faced toward Caledonia Avenue. It is now the property of Mrs. C. L. Ferguson, who rents half of it to Oscar Nelson; this is the oldest business building in Hillsboro. Paulson also was very active in the development of Hillsboro; he served as its Mayor for three terms and he also represented Traill County in the State Legislature.

It is difficult to assemble a list of names of all the first business and professional men of Hillsboro. My best source of information has been advertisements and news items in early issues of the Hillsboro Banner, the weekly newspaper in North Dakota. In addition to Morgan, Rogers and Paulson, the following can be mentioned; many of these came from Caledonia:

- P. S. Peterson, merchant
- Gunder Howard, farm machinery dealer
- L. E. Francis, attorney
- E. S. Kneeland, depot agent
- E. D. Barker, publisher of the Hillsboro Banner
- John O. Sundet, general merchandise
- Erick T. Jahr, hardware merchant

Martin Brothers, hardware merchants
E. W. Kneeland, grain buyer
Peter Morris, livery stable operator
Baglien and Hanson, saloon keepers
Mike Kelly, grain buyer
Albert Potterud, saloon keeper
C. M. Clark, saloon keeper
J. P. Clark and Brothers, farm machinery dealers
C. F. Getchell, feed and grain business
G. P. Feihn, general merchandise
J. M. Moore, druggist
C. S. Sherwood, operator of a boiler and engine repair works.

With amazing speed frame buildings, most of them one or two stories on 25 foot lots, were erected on Main Street west of the railroad, on River Street, east of the railroad, now First Street SE, on Caledonia Avenue, and on Sargeant Street, now First Street, SW.

In 1882 the boom really started. The town had been organized as a municipality May 1, 1882 with John DeGroat, bonanza farmer and farm implement dealer, as its first Mayor. Among those arriving were E. Y. Sarles, banker, O. C. Sarles, lumber merchant, B. G. Walker, barber and his wife, a photographer of note, Joseph Armstrong, baker, A. L. Plummer, banker, J. H. Hanson and Brothers, general merchandisers, L. M. Boorse, physician, A. L. Hanson, banker, Mathias Johnson, physician, Mrs. A. Hager, ladies' ready to wear store, G. W. Foogman, jeweler, Honstain Brothers, contractors and builders, Lanterman Brothers, lumber merchants, C. W. Steele, furniture dealer and his wife a piano and organ teacher, Elmer I. Smith, publisher, Captain Flick, merchant, Ole N. Anderson, butcher, John F. Selby, lawyer, L. O. Elliott, baker, Lillian Honstain, milliner and dressmaker, M. W. Gilchrist, grocer, Lewis Larson, saloon keeper, J. W. Henderson, operator of a livery barn, billiard parlor, roller rink and meeting hall, and Hans Johnson, general merchandiser.

Sixty or more new business and professional men arrived in 1883 and the list is too long to detail. Among lawyers there were John Carmody, C. E. Leslie, Marcus H. Norman, B. J. Howland, E. E. Engebretson, E. B. Ingwaldson and Peter G. Swenson. Among medical doctors there were W. E. Fitzgibbon, H. Wechler, W. D. Harvie, George McLain, E. C. Haagenson, Dr. Nielson, George F. Bates, C. W. Glasspill, F. O. Blerke, J. O. Moeller, Henrich Moeller, Thor Moeller, B. S. Shaw and George McIntyre. Of all the lawyers and doctors who came to Hillsboro before the turn of the century, many remained only a short time and then moved on to new frontiers. The most noted of the doctors who remained were George McLain, graduate of McGill University of Montreal, George F. Bates of Maine, a graduate of Toronto and Brooklyn Medical Schools, whose father and grandfather were also doctors. Dr. Bates was well and favorably known throughout the state and became a president of the North Dakota Medical Society. Dr. J. O. Moeller was a graduate of the University of Christiania, Norway, and was very popular among the Scandinavian settlers as was Dr. Haagenson. John F. Selby, John Carmody, C. E. Leslie and P. G. Swenson were the most widely known attorneys.

It is impossible to furnish a complete list of every professional and business man of the early 1880s and of the ever changing array of school

teachers, county officials and ministers of the gospel.

In 1889 when North Dakota put a prohibition clause into its Constitution, Hillsboro had six saloons:

Baglien and Hanson
Potterud and Acker
C. M. Clark's Headquarter's Saloon
W. L. and L. E. Seaver
Charles Hager
Lewis Larson's "Palace Gem."

Perhaps a balance occurred by the presence of eight churches:

Presbyterian Church
Scandinavian Methodist Church
Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church
American Methodist Church
Congregational Church
St. Rose of Lima Church
Immanuel Lutheran Church
Baptist Church

The first church service held in Hillsboro was that of the Presbyterians with Rev. Wm. DeArgeant officiating at C. M. Steele's hardware store on River Street. Before completion of their church building subsequent services were held at the Masonic Lodge, United States Hotel and the Scandinavian Methodist Church. The Scandinavian Methodists erected the first church which is still standing today, and known as the Wesley Methodist Church.

The following interesting advertisements were picked at random from 1882-1884 issues of the Hillsboro Banner. Seldom is a particular item described. More attention is focused on the name of the manufacturer, the location of the store, the type of business and the general items a homesteader and his family needed for life on the prairie:

GUNDER HOWARD, Dealer in Farm Machinery, Hillsboro, Traill County, Dakota. The celebrated Walter A. Woods Twine Binders, Reaping and Mowing Machines, Superior Seeders, Buffalo Pitts Threshers.

JOHN E. PAULSON. St. Paul Twine Binders, St. Paul Harvesters, Edward Harvester, Climax Mower, Advance Hay Rakes, Van Brunt Seeders, Iron Harrows, Drags, Deere and Company Sulkies, Gang, Breaker and Stubble Ploughs, Mitchell Wagons and Buggies, Nichols, Sheppard & Company Steam and Horse Power Threshing Machines.

J. P. CLARK and BROTHERS. Dealer in Farm Machinery, Hillsboro and Caledonia, Dakota. Hoosier Seeders, Bennett Harrows, Case Ploughs, Tiger Hay Rakes, McCormick Mowers and Harvesters, Case Threshing Machines, Wagonss and Buggies.

JOHN DEGROAT. Champion Mowers, Minnesota Chief Threshers, Ypsilanti Hay Rakes, Northwest Wagons, Bufford Plows.

C. W. MORGAN. "BLUCHER, this celebrated Stallion, sired by Canadian Clarion Chief and dammed by Kentucky Gold Dust, will stand at Roger's Stable, Hillsboro, Mondays of each week during the season."

J. H. and O. C. SARLES. Dealers in Lumber, Sash, Lath, Doors,

Shingles, Blinds, Building Paper, Lime, Cement, Brick, Etc., Hillsboro, Dakota. Large, Complete and Well Assorted Stock of Wisconsin Dry Pine Lumber Constantly on Hand which will be sold at the lowest figure.

ATTENTION! To be sure of finding just what you want in the way of DRY GOODS, Notions, Groceries, Crockery, Glassware, Boots and Shoes, Good Goods and Choicest Bargains of the Season. Full value received for your money and lowest prices throughout every time go to J. H. HANSON & BROTHERS, opposite the new elevator, Hillsboro, Dakota.

ERICK T. JAHR. Hillsboro, Dakota. Dealer in Shelf and Heavy Hardware. Heating and Cooking Stoves of Every Variety. Repairing Promptly Attended to.

J. M. MOORE, Main Street, Hillsboro, Dakota. DRUGGIST and dealer in Patent Medicines, Paints and Oils, Fancy Toilet Articles, Brushes, Perfumery, Wines and Liquors for Medicinal Purposes Only. Prescriptions Carefully Compounded.

POTRUD AND ACKER. Agents for the Celebrated DAVIS Sewing Machines. Improved. Call and See Them.

HONSTAIN BROS., A. E. Honstain and C. T. Honstain, Hillsboro, Dakota Territory. Contractors and Builders. Plans and Specifications furnished on application. Painting Department will be superintended by Capt. E. E. Honstain. Sign Painting a Specialty.

MEAT MARKET, River Street, D. T. SULLIVAN AND COMPANY, Fresh Meats of all kinds constantly on hand. Fresh Beef, Fresh Veal, Fresh Pork, Fresh Mutton. Fresh Lamb.

LION DRUG STORE, A. L. Lien, Prop., Hillsboro, Dakota. DRUGS, Patent Medicines, Toilet Articles, Paints, Oils, Books, Stationery, Etc. Etc. Wines and Liquors for Medicinal Purposes Only. Prescriptions Carefully Compounded.

W. C. MARTIN. Dealer in General Hardware, Hillsboro, Dakota. The Celebrated MICHIGAN JEWEL STOVES, Heavy and Shelf Hardware, Tinware and Fence Wire.

J. O. SUNDET, Hillsboro, Dakota. NEW GOODS! NEW GOODS! NEW PRICES. Having enlarged my store and placed therein a large and well selected stock of Dry Goods, Groceries, Notions, Glass, Stoneware and Queensware. All kinds of Fish. Furnishings, Clothing, Boots and Shoes, Hats and Caps, Tobacco and Cigars, Flour and Feed. I am prepared to furnish my customers with first class goods at low prices, Customers will be waited on by Norwegian, American and German Salesmen.

C. M. CLARK. Headquarter's Saloon, On Main Street, Opposite Depot. Dining Room, Refreshments of Every Description from a Champagne Supper to Pig's Feet.

C. M. STEELE. River Street, Hillsboro, D. T. Dealer in Parlor, Bed and Dining Room Furniture, Office Fixtures, Pictures and Frames. Everything kept in a first class store. Repairing done neatly and promptly.

JOHN E. PAULSON. Dealer in General Merchandise. Hillsboro, D. T. The best quality of Dry Goods, Groceries, Boots and Shoes, Clothing, Crockery and Glassware. Flour and Feed Constantly in Stock. Everything Warranted and Sold Cheap for Cash or on Time.

G. P. FEIGN. New Grocery Store. Dealer in Choice Family Groceries, Main Street, Opposite New Elevator, Hillsboro, Dakota Territory. Canned and Dried Fruit. All goods sold at Bed Rock Prices. With great attention to business and fair dealing Mr. Feign expects to merit and receive a fair proportion of the public patronage.

A. H. MORGAN. Dry Goods, Groceries, Clothing, Buffalo Coats, Notions, Boots and Shoes, Crockery, Queensware, Glass Ware, Flour and Feed. I have placed in my store a handsome and convenient SPICE GRINDER which is at the service of customers free of charge.

CHARLES HAGER. On Main Street, Liquors, Wines and Cigars, Lager Beer 5c a Glass. Also boarding house and restaurant.

PRICHARD and DONELSON. The "Pioneer Hardware Store, formerly Martins.

LILLIAN A. HONSTAIN. Hats, Plumes, Flowers, Ribbons, Laces, Ruchings, Corsets, Gloves. Dress Making \$1.00 to \$10.00. Located west of Traill County Bank.

BAGLIEN AND HANSON. (they were a bit poetic). "Here the weary may rest and the thirsty refreshed. Choice of Wines, Liquors and Cigars.

Advertisements of the hotels are not shown as they were all quite similar in content but their accommodations varied considerably. Seven hotels and several boarding houses were in operation - the Rogers Hotel (United States Hotel), the Plummer House, Weston House, Leeland Hotel, North Star Hotel, Skandia House and Martin Hotel. They were extremely important to business and professional men seeking new locations, traveling salesmen, and emigrants seeking temporary shelter. The Weston House, formerly the Merchants Hotel, was known far and wide for the excellence of its meals. It was located on River Street directly north of the present telephone building. The Plummer House, built by banker A. L. Plummer, on River Street, on the site now occupied by the Skelly Service Station, was also known for its good food and accommodations. The Martin Hotel on Main Street, the site now occupied by the Hillsboro Fire Department, together with the Plummer House, the Weston House, and the United States Hotel were the four leading hotels. They were the sites of many civic, political, and school meetings. They the social centers for dinner parties, school banquets, business and and professional clubs, lectures and musicales. The United States Hotel burned to the ground before the turn of the century and the Plummer House shortly thereafter.

Fraternal societies were represented by the Masonic Lodge, Masonic of Lodge of Perfection, Knights of Pythias, Odd Fellows, Modern Workmen, Order of the Eastern Star, Grand Army of the Republic, and Women's Relief Corps.

Located on the second floor of Gunder Howard's farm implement store, now the site of Traill Inn, was the Opera House. For decades the Opera House served as a center of culture, education, and entertainment. It was later used as a motion picture theater, as a roller skating rink and as drill headquarters for Company L of First North Dakota Infantry.

Woodland Park, originally known as Potterud's Grove, was leased from Albert Potterud for ten year periods for \$50.00 for a city park until it was purchased by the Hillsboro Park District. In the park's early years O. C.

Sarles built three-quarter mile driving track around and through the grove; the same route is used today by automobiles. A new iron bridge was constructed over the Goose River at Woodland Park and the wooden bridge it replaced was moved to the north end of Clark Street, now Second Street SE, for use by pedestrians entering the park.

It should be stated that horses were the only means of transportation by farmers coming to Hillsboro to trade and by doctors making their country calls. Numerous livery stables, sales barns, harness makers, feed stores and blacksmith shops were established to care for this business. Liveries also catered to the renting of driving teams and equipment for business and pleasure.

THE BIG FIRE OF 1891

Fires throughout the United States were numerous due to the preponderance of wooden buildings. When they occurred in business districts fires were especially disastrous, and Hillsboro was no exception. The fire of January 21, 1891 was a big one, and since that time has always been referred to as the "big fire of 1891."

Early in the morning of January 21, 1891, a cold and windy day, fire broke out in the business establishment of Potterud and Acker on Main Street. It spread quickly and destroyed some of the best business properties in Hillsboro. To the north the hardware store of P. L. Prichard was quickly consumed. The A. H. Morgan building to its north soon was ablaze but the steady work of the volunteer firemen proved effective and though it was severely damaged the buildings to the north were saved. All buildings to the south were doomed.

Owners of buildings destroyed were First National Bank, J. H. Hanson and Brothers, Mrs. Erick T. Jahr, A. W. Ellis, Albert Potterud, P. L. Prichard and A. H. Morgan. Tenants who lost their stock, furniture, fixtures and equipment were Olius Anderson, Doctors McLain and Harvie, Lawyers Carmody and Leslie, Barber B. G. Walker, the Masonic Lodge, T. J. Quamme, J. E. Drycorn, W. B. Knudson, Mary Anderson, the United States Post office, A. O. Rustad and J. O. Sundet. Today such a fire in the same location would destroy the First National Bank building, Johnson Store, Hillsboro Fabric Shop, Arne's Fairway, Fankhanel's, Genuine Auto Supply and Rexall Drug Store. Flames flying across Caledonia Avenue from the burning bank building filled the air with burning embers and only the heroic work of firemen saved the John E. Paulson building and others in that block.

Upon reflection, after the fire was over, residents considered the fire a blessing. In place of what was destroyed arose a new bank building and the Union Block of four brick store buildings owned by J. H. Hanson, Mrs. A. Hager, Albert Potterud, A. O. Anderson. P. L. Prichard erected a new hardware store sheeted with iron, called the Iron Clad Building, and by 1896 A. L. Lien and A. G. Foogman joined the solid front with new brick buildings. The block was reborn bigger and better than before.

The pioneer spirit of the citizens accelerated; a building boom was on so large that on every street lumber, brick and other building materials awaited the artisans use. In 1881 Hillsboro had a population of 400, in 1885 it was nearly doubled and by 1898 about 1800. A new brick schoolhouse was

constructed in 1893, and the old frame school was transformed into a hospital supported by church organizations for the use and convenience of the people of Hillsboro and surrounding country. By 1889 Hillsboro had become the county seat and a brick courthouse was erected and paid for by public contributions.

In 1898 Hillsboro had two national banks, seven general stores, three hardware stores, three drug stores, two jewelry stores, five hotels, one clothing store, one boot and shoe store, one ladies' ready-to-wear store, three weekly newspapers, two harness shops, two boiler works (one with 35 employees), a granite and marble works, one of the finest greenhouses in the valley, four restaurants, three billiard parlors, three meat markets, five farm implement stores, two veterinary surgeons, three barber shops, seven lawyers, three lumber yards, four grain elevators, five medical doctors, one dentist, and an array of carpenters, brick layers, plasterers and painters. Hillsboro's pride was the Hillsboro Roller Mill with a daily output of 100 barrels of flour marketed throughout the United States. One company manufactured a patented escape screen; another manufactured a patented egg tray and carrier. A creamery produced excellent butter and cheese. A large plant manufactured brick; there were two starch factories, a candy factory and several cigar makers.

As in all frontier towns there was another kind of migration; that of roustabouts, out of work lumberjacks from Wisconsin and Minnesota, imported Greek and Italian railroad workers, gamblers, swindlers, thieves and prostitutes. Saloons, before the prohibition of 1889, were kept busy. Beer was 5c a glass. Poker games ran day and night; drunken brawls and bashed heads were common as were knife fights and robberies. The swindlers and riffraff soon disappeared. Hillsboro had come of age and had lost its frontier glamour; it now had acquired a "metropolitan" look.

The new homes now had bay windows, cupolas and stained glass, fireplaces and parquet floors and were furnished with flowered carpets, new furniture, lace curtains, velvet drapes and fine cutglass and china. The first mayor of Hillsboro, John DeGroat, built a new home, and the Hillsboro reported the house was furnished "in a most elegant manner." The ladies organized societies for drama, elocution, musicales, lectures on history and literature, and group reading of poetry. On the lighter side there were evenings of box socials and strawberry and ice cream festivals for young men and women. Tennis and croquet were in vogue and many homes had private courts. There were many gay young bachelors who in their leisure time, according to the seasons, organized hunting parties, baseball teams and skating and sleigh ride parties. An organization named the Hillsboro Rangers was formed to display horsemanship. Formal dances and masquerade balls attractions that interested many. From news stories in the Hillsboro Banner it appears the young at heart had more good fun than their counterparts today.

Sabbath schools were well attended by young and old alike, and choir practices were often held in homes of members who possessed reed organs. Dinner parties, political rallies and card parties were frequent at the Plummer House and Weston House. In retrospect it can be said that the years before the turn of the century were peaceful years, buoyant and spirited years. They were years of confidence and optimism and the players on the stage were intent on helping Jim Hill build his empire - the Red River Valley.

Now the empty prairies of Traill County were completely filled. The crocuses and wild violets of early spring, the pink and red prairie roses and the wild strawberries of June, and the tiger lilies and bluebells of July were falling before the cultivation of the soil. But the bushes of bright red raspberries and green gooseberries and the chokecherry and wild plum trees skirting the Goose River remained. Many changes had occurred but the earlier, steadier and braver homesteaders, in comparing their lives to the situation from whence they came, were exceedingly happy. Just as their city cousins had replaced business buildings and homes with new and attractive ones, so had the homesteaders replaced their log cabins and tar paper shacks. Schools and churches had sprung up in all towns and townships. Farming was now a good life and no longer just back breaking toil.

From middle and eastern United States, from Canada and from many countries of Europe, pioneers in farming, in business and in the professions brought with them the talents, the skills and the ideas of their varied backgrounds. Here was a true melting pot. In Traill County and in Hillsboro today, this migration of settlers had mixed many strains; and in the veins of the present generation the blood of two, three and four nations had produced a new amalgam - AN AMERICAN.



Our Bank in 1881



Our Bank in 1891



Our Bank in 1885



Our Bank of 1971

NORTHWESTERN STATE BANK

In the spring of 1881 two young men in their early twenties descended from the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba train to the wood platform of the depot at the new village of Hill City, Dakota Territory and began their lifetime careers in Traill County. They were the brothers Elmore Y. Sarles and Orlin C. Sarles of Sparta, Wisconsin. Captivated by the opportunities for success in a new land, by reports of bonanza farming, by the blandishments of James J. Hill and the advice of their family, they had selected Traill County and Hill City as the land of opportunity. Many of the Sarles families had long been engaged in the lumber, insurance, real estate and banking businesses; the exception was their father, Rev. Jesse D. Sarles, a Methodist minister. The two brothers had chosen banking and building supplies as their careers with capital furnished by their uncles, John H. Sarles of Boscobel, Wisconsin and Simeon B. Sarles of Minneapolis. They opened a bank and real estate office in a small one story frame building erected on the corner of Main Street and Caledonia Avenue. They built a lumber yard on the east side of the railroad track opposite the bank building. Orlin C. Sarles became the lumber merchant under the trade name "J. H. Sarles and O. C. Sarles." The bank, capitalized at \$25,000 was chartered "Traill County Bank." They knew that savings deposit's and time certificates of deposit would be few in a pioneer community and that profits derived from the sale of wheat would necessarily be used by homesteaders for purchase of farm machinery and building materials. Funds for farm mortgage lending would have to come from private lenders, mortgage bankers and insurance companies in eastern cities, and such arrangements were made. Profits of a small bank such as theirs had to come from the buying and selling of real estate rather than from business generated by bank deposits and local lending. Hill City proved to be a growing community and both businesses prospered.

Day by day records of a bank reveal the success and failure of businesses and men, the ups and downs of the economy of the area, changes in business and management of a variety of enterprises, and the establishment of new businesses. Unfortunately all such records were lost in the big fire of 1891. Upon inquiry the State Banking Department was unable to furnish any records of that nine year period as all records were lost when the State at Bismarck was destroyed by fire in 1930.

However, some information was gleaned from early issues of the Hillsboro Banner, cancelled notes and checks of early customers, and the bank's advertising and letterheads. Advertisements show that John H. Sarles was the first president of the bank, O. C. Sarles, vice president, and E. Y. Sarles, cashier. The Sarles also owned a bank at Caledonia, known as "The Bank of Caledonia, Associate Bank of Traill County Bank, Hillsboro, Dakota Territory," and its advertising bears the names of the same officers. There was a daily Concord stage coach line between Hillsboro and Caledonia for the convenience of people of both towns, for transaction of business, and the transportation of mail.

In 1885 the Traill County Bank obtained a national banking charter under the name "First National Bank of Hillsboro." Its incorporators were Simeon B. Sarles, Orlin C. Sarles, Elmore Y. Sarles, Lynn C. Stanford, Guido von Steinwehr, William von Steinwehr, John E. Paulson, Lyman E. Francis, William H. S. Brady, John H. Hanson, Asa H. Morgan, Erick T. Jahr and

Albert Potterud. They were an interesting cross section of the community - men who were bankers, lumber merchants, retailers of general merchandise, a lawyer, a hardware merchant and a saloon keeper. One merchant had earlier been a Hudson's Bay Company factor and one of the four bonanza farmers was a German count. Of these incorporators S. B. Sarles was elected president of the bank, O. C. Sarles, vice president and E. Y. Sarles, cashier. S. B. Sarles had replaced J. H. Sarles as president. The bank's capital was increased from \$25,000 to \$50,000. Another member of the Sarles family appeared as a director in the 1890s. He was S. E. Sarles, engaged in the lumber and banking business in Monticello, Iowa. In 1898 The Bank of Caledonia consolidated with the First National Bank of Hillsboro and surrendered its charter.

The year the bank obtained its national charter it entered upon a building program. The old frame building was moved to another location and a two-story brick building was erected. A news story described it as a "two-story brick building finished on the inside with cherry wood, having plate glass windows, tile and parquet floors, furnished with all modern conveniences and as complete and elegant a banking house as to be found anywhere." Its life, however, was short for on January 21, 1891 it burned to the ground together with most of the other buildings in the block. Within twenty-four hours the bank was again in full operation in the O. C. Sarles and Company building; the name had been changed from J. H. and O. C. Sarles and now had lumber yards at Hillsboro, Kelso, Grandin and Cummings. In the spring of 1891 a temporary 24 x 38 one story building was erected at the rear of the bank lot and during the summer a new bank building was built on the original site. The building was described in the Fargo Record as "one of the handsomest bank buildings in the state. It is built of Cleveland pressed brick and Lake Superior brownstone trimmed with Perth Amboy terracotta, the inside of antique oak, Pollard finish."

From 1881 to 1933 the bank was operated by the Sarles family under presidents, J. H. Sarles, S. B. Sarles, E. Y. Sarles and Earle R. Sarles. In 1904 E. Y. Sarles was elected Governor of North Dakota, an honor to him and the little city on the Goose River. In 1922 his son, Earle R. Sarles, was elected president and E. Y. Sarles became chairman of the board of directors. O. C. Sarles died in 1919, E. Y. Sarles died in 1929, and Earle R. Sarles died in 1970.

In 1920 wheat was still king in North Dakota, but the farm price depression after World War 1 caused a devastating loss of values in real estate, farm machinery and equipment purchased during the war years. Farm debt was heavy, grain prices were low, and bank deposits fell rapidly; the state guaranty fund proved inadequate and banks called their loans to meet withdrawals; there remained no funds to lend. The stock market crash occurred in 1929 and the economic system of the world broke down. Brokerage houses collapsed, large city banks went into receivership, factories closed as there were no funds available for operations, and the public had no money to buy even if products were available for purchase. All business declined and there was mass unemployment throughout the land. The situation was no longer just a farm depression but a nation wide depression. In addition there was the great drought of 1934 and the grasshopper plague as of old in the midwest. There was no European market for farm produce, and a depressed market in the United States with wheat selling for 32c per bushel and barley, oats and flax for a few pennies per bushel. The result was foreclosure of

mortgages, forced sales, and delinquent taxes; thousands of acres of land passed from private ownership to insurance companies, to the Bank of North Dakota and to the Federal Land Bank. Thousands of farmers in North Dakota and elsewhere abandoned their land and moved west where they hoped to find greener pastures.

Federal and state governments were not idle during the emergency, but there was little they could do to revive the world's economy. Congress authorized the Farm Security Administration, Reconstruction Finance Corporation, Federal Emergency Relief Administration, Civil Works Administration, Civilian Conservation Corps, Resettlement Administration, Home Owners Loan Corporation, and the Works Progress Administration. Even with all these aids, and they were very important, there was no actual recovery until World War II.

Then, as if ordained, rain again fell in adequate amounts, crop yields were big and farm income was the highest in fifteen years. Statewide, crops were the greatest ever experienced. Farmers were again on a cash basis, loan demands were down, bank deposits expanded rapidly and millions of dollars in War Bonds were purchased; farmers who stuck it out in some manner bought back their land, and the insurance companies, the Bank of North Dakota, and the Federal Land Bank were able to sell the farms they had acquired during the great depression.

The years from 1920 to World War II had been hectic years with great losses for farmers, business men, and banks. Traill County was not drought stricken as was most of North Dakota, but was financially depressed due to low grain prices. It is satisfying to record that Traill County was the last county in the state to receive Federal aid and that was in November of 1935.

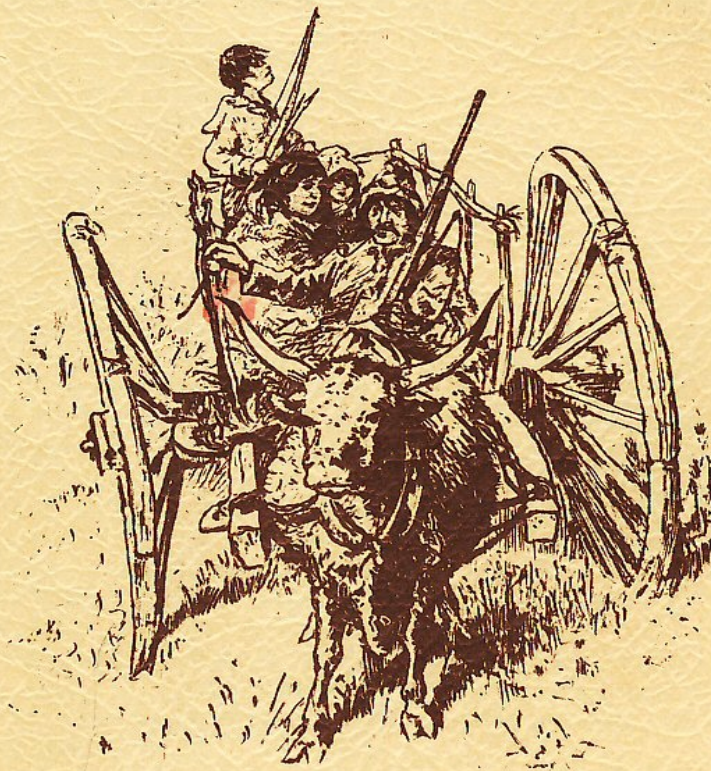
Hillsboro did not escape the depression. The Hillsboro National Bank developed financial difficulties and its deposit liabilities were assumed by First National Bank in 1929. The bank reorganized its staff with Earle R. Sarles as president and P. B. Peterson of the Hillsboro National Bank as vice president. The same year the deposit liability of the bank at Grandin was assumed and that bank was liquidated. The Peoples State Bank of Hillsboro went into receivership.

In 1930 the First National Bank of Hillsboro and other banks at Fargo, Minot, Bismarck, Mandan, Jamestown, Valley City, Grafton, and Wahpeton were purchased by Northwest Bancorporation to strengthen the banking structure of North Dakota.

In 1933 under a management change at First National Bank of Hillsboro, P. B. Peterson, vice president, and E. A. Iverson, cashier, resigned and J. I. Hegge of Maddock, N.D. and Leonard Beal of Valley City, N.D. were elected to replace them. In 1934 Mr. Hegge was elected president and Mr. Beal, cashier. In 1940 it was deemed advisable to obtain a state bank charter and the bank's name was changed to the Northwestern State Bank. In 1951 Mr. Hegge retired and Mr. Beal succeeded him to the presidency. After serving thirty-three years as cashier and president, Mr. Beal retired at the close of 1965 and Harry Eisenbeis was elected president.

Continually serving since 1881 through periods of growth, money panics, global wars, inflation, deflation, through the farm price depression of the early 1920s and the great depression of the 1930s, the Hillsboro bank is an unbroken chain linking yesterday with today. Its first published report of

condition extant, dated February 26, 1891, shows its capital, surplus and undivided profits at \$70,134.03, deposits of \$166,340.90 and total resources at \$250,603.16 (An interesting item in that report is of the \$22,833.02 in currency and coin on hand \$20,145.00 - nearly all of it - was in gold coin.) Today the bank's capital account is \$1,527,473.16 and deposits are \$16,626,132.98. Northwestern State Bank is now both the oldest and the largest bank in Traill County. Its total resources are \$18,478,606.14 and it is further supported by the seven billion dollar resources of Northwest Bancorporation which owns the majority of stock in 81 midwest affiliated banks and a number of bank related financial service companies. The growth of Northwestern State Bank is just one instance of the great American ideal of private enterprise founded on service and integrity of purpose and principle. We are proud to relate the story in this Centennial Year of Traill County.



Compliments of

NORTHWESTERN BANK

Of Hillsboro

An Affiliate of Northwest Bancorporation

Member FDIC

