

Delta Marsh History Initiative, Steering Committee Meeting
9:00 am, 15 January 2002
Home of Shirley Christianson, Portage la Prairie

Present: Barry Bills, Shirley Christianson, Heidi den Haan, Denzil Gamble, Gordon Goldsborough (sec), Bob Jones, Garnet & Shirley Love, Winnie Pauch, Glen Suggett

1. **Minutes** of the last meeting (27 November 2001) were approved by consensus.
2. **Delta discoveries** - There were a large number of discoveries reported at the meeting:
 - a) Goldsborough reported that he had checked the photograph on display at the Wright Spot restaurant in Portage la Prairie, reputed to show the arrival of an early steam locomotive at Delta. Coincidentally, he had recently found the same photo reproduced in two places in a 2001 book on the history of the T. A. Burrows Lumber Company by M. M. Andison. According to captions in that book, the photo was taken either at Dauphin in December 1896 (page 55) or Swan River in October 1899 (page 81). The true nature of the photo is obviously unclear.
 - b) Sheila Fraser loaned us some original photos taken at Delta. They were brought to the meeting by Shirley Love and given to Barry Bills for initial cataloguing in addition to copies received previously.
 - c) Glen Suggett reported on the "Murder Oak" tree located about ½ mile from his home on the south side of the marsh. According to sketchy information he has found so far, the last person to be executed in Manitoba committed murder at the site, possibly in the 1950s. A young woman who was working at a nearby shooting lodge had her wrist slit by a beau named Baldi Johanneson and she died by the tree. He then put the corpse in an automobile and drove away but did not get far before the car became stuck in mud. Johanneson tried unsuccessfully to commit suicide and was later found by a man named Wilkinson who was passing by with his horse and team. The RCMP investigator for the case was named Vachon. Suggett will follow up on details of the case and report at a future meeting.
 - d) Shirley Christianson reported several contacts she has located: 1) Jim Benzie in Winnipeg whose grandmother worked at the Younghusband Lodge, 2) Don Pelechaty (living at 1839 El Sereno Drive, Victoria, BC V8N 6K4, 250-477-0900) who will send some photos, 3) Brenda Rutledge Borland at Macdonald will send photos, 4) Lois Forsythe will provide a story about the Forsythe family, 5) Bea Dalzell, wife of Freeman Dalzell, is not in good health but Shirley will call her again, 6) Judy Thompson, whose aunt is Mary Forsythe Kirkwood, will look for photos, 7) Tom Cadham (801-1770 Davie Street, Vancouver, BC V6G 1W4, 604-681-6919) to whom Shirley has written a letter asking for information, and 8) Jim Robertson at Lynch's Point who once operated a fur farm there and will provide photos.
 - e) Bob Jones has a copy of a history of the Bell family, who established the Delta Waterfowl Research Station and owned a large amount of land in the marsh. He will try to find it.
 - f) Christianson has a copy of the CGIT history report by Mrs. McIvor, including photos by Lois Scott (a cousin of Shirley's). This is apparently the same report as contained in a log book for the CGIT camp held by Isabel Heal and seen by Goldsborough in fall 2001.

- g) Shirley Love brought an album of photos and newspapers clippings pertaining to Delta. She will bring it again when there is more time to peruse its fascinating contents.
- h) Goldsborough reported a recent conversation he had with Ed Anderson of Fairford who mentioned that the Big Sandy Lake First Nations Band had once occupied the west area of the marsh and referred to it as “Totoganung,” meaning “swampy land.” It is interesting that an early white settlement in this area, now long abandoned, apparently adopted an anglicized version of the name: Totogan.
- i) Shirley Love reported that a book entitled “Dreaming Again” by Louise Labelle contains the author’s memories of her childhood at Delta. Her father was an early fish buyer and peddler in the area. Shirley does not know if there is a copy of the book available for perusal. Barry Bills thought that the Portage Library may have one; he will check and report at a future meeting.
- j) Goldsborough reported that one of his colleagues, Dr. Dale Wrubleski, recently met a gentlemen named Norm Emerson who owns a lodge on the east side of the marsh, who has some early photos of the area. Goldsborough and Wrubleski plan to meet with Mr. Emerson in the near future to talk about his recollections and to obtain copies of his photos.
- k) Goldsborough reported his conversation with Bill Hutchinson at Delta late in 2001, in which Mr. Hutchinson mentioned a book written by a woman named Enid Palmer in which there is a chapter on her childhood memories of Delta. He recalls her description of arriving at Delta by train and being met by a large man named Labelle. He had borrowed a copy of the book from Mr. George Robb, a nearby cottager residing in Winnipeg. In a related vein, Shirley Christianson reported that she has a letter (provided to her by Richard Morgan of Brandon) from a man named Andrew Parker from New Zealand, who is a distant relative of the Palmer family. She read some portions of the letter, which indicated Mr. Parker is a great-nephew of Alfred Henry Palmer (born 1880 in England), who ran a store at Delta in the 1920s. His daughter Enid was born in 1905 at Dominion City, Manitoba. Shirley will copy the letter for us.
- l) Garnet Love, in talking about the railway to Delta, said that Train #1310 ran to Delta, later replaced by Train #1367.
- m) Shirley Love has a copy of an article from the *Portage Daily Graphic* of the 1970s describing the Portage residents who had cottages at “Sun-Burn-‘Em Beach” before the arrival of the railway at Delta in 1901. It was apparently located at the present site of the University’s Field Station. These early cottagers included: Dr. Cowan, Dr. Lundy, Mr. Burns, Mr. Garland, Mr. McPherson (an ancestor of Sandra Lamont of Portage), Mr. T. A. Newman (whose granddaughter Norma Cheater lives in Winnipeg), Mr. Fairburn (related to the Carmichaels of Portage), Mr. Stevens, and Mr. Heath. We should check with relatives of these people to see if they have any old family documents and photos of those early cottages. Heidi den Haan said that she will check with Jody Fletcher, who lives at #40 West at Delta, whose mother is a Fairburn. Shirley Christianson will check for descendants of the Heaths, Lundys, and Garlands.
- n) Shirley Love reported that she has a copy of a 14-page family history written by Joyce Ward. She will bring it to a future meeting. Shirley also noted that Mrs. Ward may have a diary kept by Rose Campbell at Delta in the 1920s; she will call her about it.

3. Publicity

- a) The next Fish Fry will be held on 2 March between 11:00 am and 2:00 pm at the Herman Prior Center in Portage la Prairie. Goldsborough will make up posters and 800 tickets, and deliver them to Shirley Christianson so she and Barry Bills can distribute them. The poster will mention that tickets are also available at the door. Bills will also arrange other publicity for the event. Goldsborough will prepare another slide presentation similar to the one displayed at the November Fish Fry at Delta. Suggett will make several poster-sized prints of some historical photos. Shirley Christianson reported that McCains will donate 10 cases of pies; she will write them a letter of thanks afterwards. The ovens at the Portage Co-op will be used to cook the pies. Heidi den Haan will pick up the pies at McCains and deliver them to the Co-op. Maurice Blanchard will arrange for a beverage service from McDonalds. Shirley Christianson reported that the Prior Center charges \$275 for use of the facility, which includes coffee pots, tables and chairs. There is a \$50 charge for cleanup. There is an additional charge of \$150 for use of their kitchen but the smaller "back kitchen" is free. It was thought that we should not need the larger kitchen because the food preparation will be done by Blanchard outside, as at Delta. Final arrangements, and scheduling of volunteers, will be done at the next meeting.
- b) Goldsborough distributed a draft copy of the first "Delta History" newsletter for comment. It presently comprises two pages. It will be edited so there is room for an advertisement of the March Fish Fry. He will make 1000 copies for distribution as follows:

<i>Destination</i>	<i>Number of copies</i>	<i>Distributed by</i>
Gladstone (Library)	50	Den Gamble
High Bluff	50	Heather Greenlay
Langruth	50	Shirley Christianson
McGregor	100	Bob Jones
Oakland	20	Shirley Love
Oakville	50	George Storey
Portage (Library)	100	Barry Bills
Portage (Museum News)	300	Barry Bills
St. Ambroise	50	Glen Suggett
Westbourne	60	Den Gamble
Miscellaneous	50	Glen Suggett
Extra copies	120	?

4. **Finances:** Goldsborough reported the finances for the Initiative, as of 15 January, as follows:

Manitoba Conservation grant	\$3,000.00
University account	\$410.00
Royal Bank chequing account	\$737.88
Receivables (fish fry tickets)	\$25.00
Total	\$4,172.88

He proposed that, if the next Fish Fry is as successful as the first, we will have sufficient resources to hire a student during the upcoming summer to do interviews, scan photos, etc. There was general agreement on this idea. Goldsborough has a lead on a possible student for the job. He will report at a future meeting.

5. **Other business:** Goldsborough reported his upcoming meeting with Donalda Johnson, who owns a cottage on the Far West Beach, and who has volunteered to assist us with entry of information about collected materials into a computer database. Barry Bills gave him one of two copies of a

three-ring binder containing Barry's initial catalogue information on acquisitions to date. Goldsborough will pass it on to Ms. Johnson, and will show her how to access the database at the DMHI web site. Goldsborough proposed that we adopt a systematic procedure for cataloguing new acquisitions (see attached flow diagram). He will also increase security on our on-line database, providing separate user identification and passwords for each person accessing it.

6. **Next meeting:** The next meeting will be held at the home of Shirley Christianson (118 Wilkinson Crescent, Portage la Prairie) at **9:00 am on Tuesday, 26 February**.
7. **Adjournment:** The meeting adjourned at 11:15 am.

Delta Marsh History Initiative Protocol for handling new acquisitions

