



North Saskatchewan River Heritage Research

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Cover Image:
Map of key locations along the
North Saskatchewan River in Alberta.
Credit: Know History.

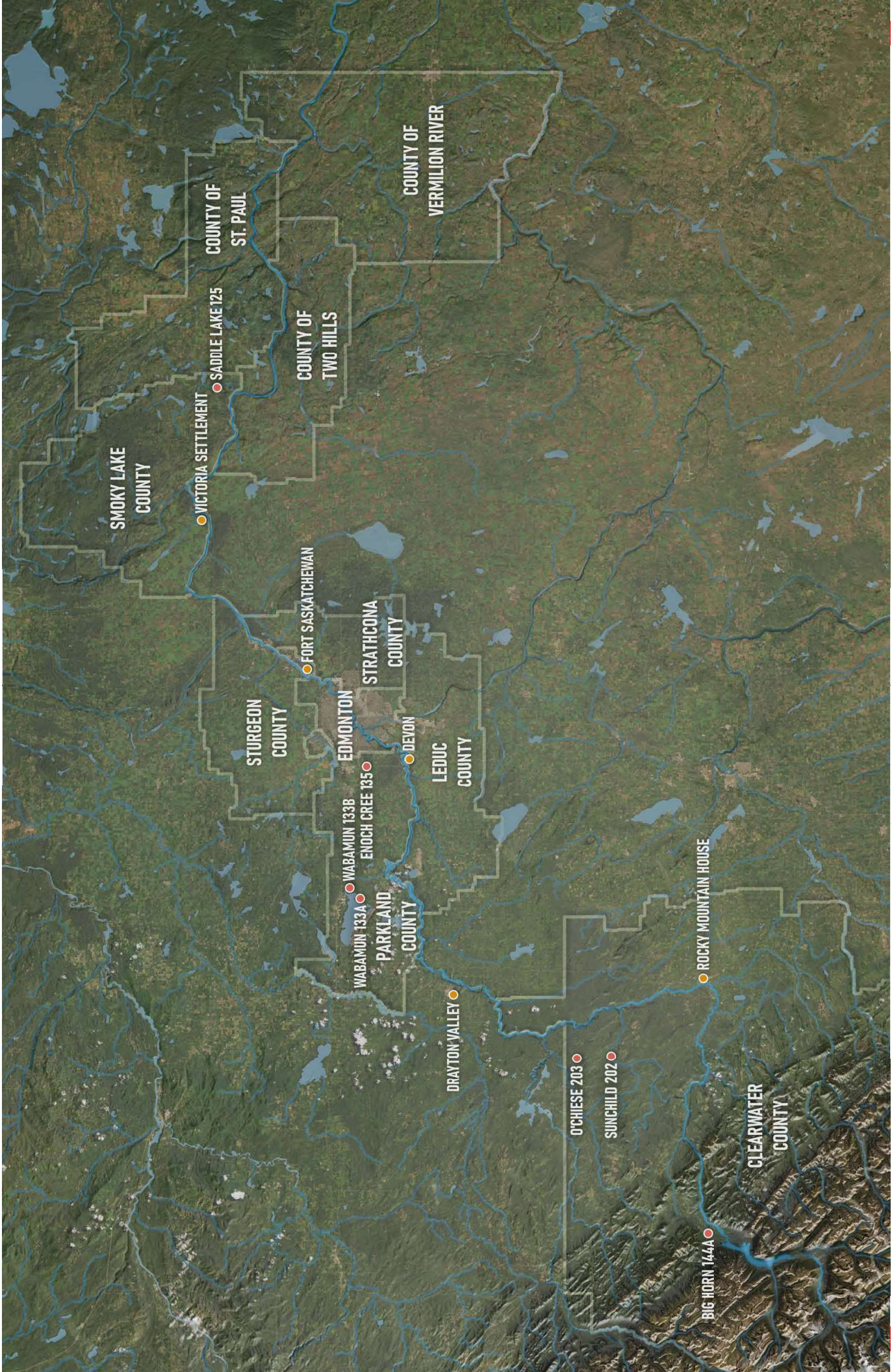
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SMOKY LAKE
COUNTY

VICTORIA SETTLEMENT

SADDLE LAKE 125

COUNTY OF
ST. PAUL

COUNTY OF
TWO HILLS

COUNTY OF
VERMILION RIVER

STURGEON
COUNTY

FORT SASKATCHEWAN

STRATHCONA
COUNTY

EDMONTON

DEVON

LEDUC
COUNTY

WABAMUN 1338
ENOCH CREE 135

WABAMUN 133A

PARKLAND
COUNTY

DRAYTON VALLEY

O'CHIESE 203

SUNCHILD 202

ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE

BIG HORN 144A

CLEARWATER
COUNTY

The North Saskatchewan River where it is now covered by Abraham Lake, pictured in 1924. Credit: Mountain Legacy Project.

Clearwater County

Historic Overview

The present-day site of Clearwater County is the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa, Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Stoney Nakoda, Tsuut'ina, Nehiyaw (Cree), and Métis peoples. The region's grasslands, once heavily populated with big game like bison, elk, and deer, were hunting grounds for these nomadic and semi-nomadic groups. The river provided fish to supplement their diets.

The North Saskatchewan River was a transportation corridor through the grasslands and foothills to the Rocky Mountains. For the Ktunaxa, the river was a key passageway between their territory west of the Rocky Mountains and the Kootenay Plains, where they hunted—bison, especially—and traded with other First Nations.

The Stoney Nakoda had a particularly strong presence on the Kootenay Plains, part of which is now covered by Abraham Lake. They established seasonal camps and, later, more permanent cabins, barns, and horse pastures and corrals. The plains also had spiritual and ceremonial importance: the Stoney Nakoda held Sundances, built sweat lodges, and maintained burial sites on the Kootenay Plains.

Fur traders and Europeans reached the Kootenay Plains in the early 1800s by travelling along the North Saskatchewan. David Thompson and Joseph Howse led the first expeditions to cross the mountains at what is now Howse Pass in 1807 and 1809, respectively. However, fur traders had to find a new route after 1810, when the Piikani (part of the Blackfoot Confederacy) warned them against using the pass, which was located on their hunting grounds. Between the foothills and Rocky Mountain House, the North Saskatchewan River remained a primary trade route for both European and Indigenous traders.

European settlement began in the early 1900s, when the ranching and mining industries reached the area. Ranchers like Tom Wilson arrived on the Kootenay Plains, encroaching upon pastures maintained by Stoney Nakoda ranchers. The coal mining industry developed to the east, in what is now Nordegg, in the 1910s. As settlements grew, hunting and fishing tourism began. Both Indigenous peoples and settlers acted as outfitters and guides. Tourists hunted big game, like elk, deer, moose, and bighorn sheep, and fished on the North Saskatchewan and its tributaries.

Clearwater County

The course of the North Saskatchewan River was altered in 1972 with the construction of the Bighorn Dam, the first hydroelectric project on the river's main stem. It was constructed in 1972 as part of Calgary Power Ltd.'s efforts to expand its electricity supply. The dam created the Abraham Lake reservoir, which flooded a large portion of the Kootenay Plains and the traditional territory of the Stoney Nakoda. Abraham Lake was named after Silas Abraham, a Stoney rancher and guide, whose traditional land was flooded by the reservoir.

North Saskatchewan River

Human interaction with the North Saskatchewan River in Clearwater County has included the following:

- ▶ The river was a key transportation route for Indigenous peoples, particularly as the main corridor through the Rocky Mountains.
 - ▶ The Ktunaxa travelled along the North Saskatchewan River between their western territory and the Kootenay Plains, where they hunted and traded.
- ▶ Europeans travelled along the North Saskatchewan River as they began exploring the West.
- ▶ Fur traders paddled the North Saskatchewan River as a trade route to the West.
 - ▶ During the fur trade, the river remained a key route for both Indigenous and European traders.
 - ▶ Indigenous peoples in the western part of the region travelled along the river to trade at Rocky Mountain House.
- ▶ In the twentieth century, the river began to attract tourists, who came to the region to hunt and fish. This led to the development of a tourism and outfitting industry.
- ▶ Bighorn Dam was the first hydroelectric dam on the main stem of the North Saskatchewan River. It manipulates the flow of the North Saskatchewan to maximize power generation and adjust water levels on Abraham Lake.
- ▶ The construction of Bighorn Dam created Abraham Lake, a 13,700-acre reservoir. The lake is now a popular destination for hikers and tourists; however, the water is too rough for boating and other recreational use.

Archival Assets

The following table provides a list of archival collections that contain additional information on this region of the North Saskatchewan River.

Archive & Fonds	Date	Extent & Description
R. E. Taylor fonds Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies	1971-1975	Contains 17 photographs of Bighorn Dam, Abraham Lake, and the Tom Wilson cabin at Kootenay Plains. The photographs were taken in the early 1970s by Calgary Power employee R. E. Taylor.
Tom Wilson family fonds Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies	1861-1982	Includes photographs and textual records created and collected by the Wilson family. Tom Wilson and his sons were guides, outfitters, and ranchers in Kootenay Plains, Nordegg, Banff, and Morley between the 1880s and mid-1900s. The fonds contains approximately 400 photographs, including of the Kootenay Plains, Nordegg region, and Stoney peoples.
Whyte Museum Oral History Programme collection Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies	1967-1989	A collection of oral history interviews and other recordings conducted and collected by the Whyte Museum.
Calgary Power Company Ltd. Fonds Glenbow Archives	1886-1960	Consists of textual and photographic material created by Calgary Power Ltd. (now TransAlta Utilities Corporation). Includes photographs and slides of power plant and dam construction.
Tom Wilson fonds Glenbow Archives	1879-1954	Includes textual and photographic records created and collected by Tom Wilson, an American-born rancher and guide, who settled on the Kootenay Plains in the 1880s. The collection of 210 photographs consists largely of images of Stoney peoples on the Kootenay Plains.
Geodetic Survey of Canada sous-fonds Library and Archives Canada (digitized by the Mountain Legacy Project)	1888-1958	Consists of more than 57,000 photographs, prints, and glass plate negatives collected during Dominion Land surveys, primarily in Alberta and British Columbia. Many of these photographs have been digitized by the Mountain Legacy Project, where you can search by location and compare historical and contemporary views.

Digital Assets

The following images offer a sample of available graphic material relating to the history of the North Saskatchewan River in this region.



Figure 1. Horses pasturing on Kootenay Plains, ca. 1905-1914. Credit: Elliott Barnes fonds, V48 / NG - 5. Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies.



Figure 2. The North Saskatchewan River where it is now covered by Abraham Lake, pictured in 1924. Credit: Mountain Legacy Project.

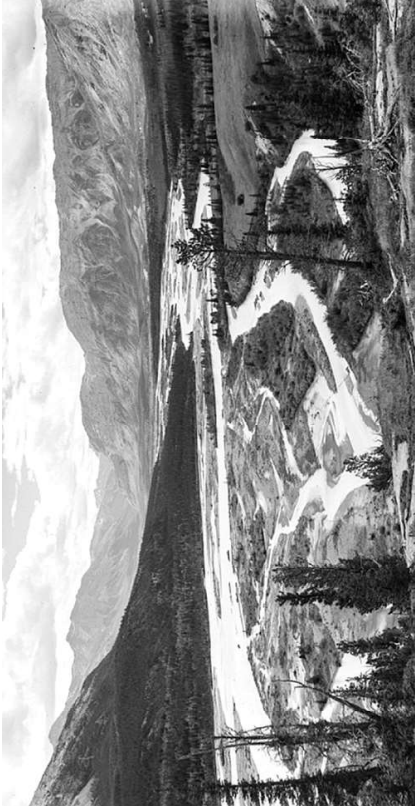


Figure 3. The North Saskatchewan River where it is now covered by Abraham Lake, pictured in 1924. Credit: Mountain Legacy Project.



Glenbow Archives NA-696-1

Figure 4. Tom Wilson's trading post on the Kootenay Plains near what is now Abraham Lake, ca. 1903-1911. Credit: Glenbow Archives, NA-696-1.

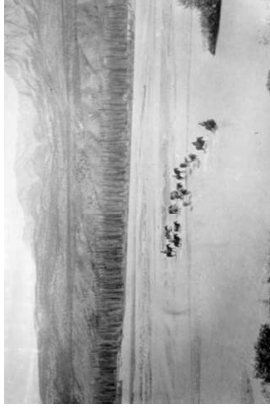


Figure 5. Geological surveyor D.B. Dowling's pack horse team fording the North Saskatchewan, east of the Kootenay Plains. Dowling completed a 1907 survey of coal deposits in Alberta. Credit: Glenbow Archives / NA-5711-8.



Figure 6. Silas Abraham, after whom Abraham Lake was named. Credit: Glenbow Archives / NA-4212-13.

Rocky Mountain House

Historic Overview

Rocky Mountain House sits on the traditional territory of the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Stoney Nakoda, Tsuut'ina, Cree, and Saulteaux peoples. The river valley and surrounding plains, once heavily populated with bison, were part of these groups' traditional hunting grounds. By the 1700s, the Piikani, part of the Blackfoot Confederacy, were the dominant nation in the area.

The fur trade at Rocky Mountain House began in 1799, when both the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company established posts—Rocky Mountain House and Acton House, respectively—at the confluence of the North Saskatchewan and Clearwater rivers. The posts were strategically located to attract trade with the Ktunaxa, whose territory had a large beaver population. However, the Piikani blocked the route between Rocky Mountain House and the Kootenays. Both posts were closed in 1802, but opened in 1805, with the Piikani becoming their primary trading partners.

As the westernmost fur trade post, Rocky Mountain House became a base for traders and explorers travelling west to the foothills and Rocky Mountains. Explorer David Thompson lived at Rocky Mountain House for several years. From there, he launched his travel expeditions, including his 1807 expedition through the Rocky Mountains, travelling along the North Saskatchewan River to Howse Pass.

The North West Company closed Rocky Mountain House again in 1807 after Thompson established Kootenae House in the Columbia Basin. Growing violence in the region led the Hudson's Bay Company to follow suit. Both posts reopened in 1819 and, in 1821, became one post under the name Rocky Mountain House following the merger of the North West and Hudson's Bay companies. Rocky Mountain House continued to close and reopen in response to trading conditions and the demand for furs.

In 1835, a new post was constructed near the site of the original. It remained in operation until 1861, when it was abandoned after the depletion of resources in the area led to the starvation of the post's inhabitants. In 1864, the Hudson's Bay Company tasked chief trader Richard C. Hardisty with reestablishing Rocky Mountain House. The post was active for another ten years before it was permanently closed in 1875.



During the fur trade, Rocky Mountain House's location on the North Saskatchewan River made it a major boat-building centre. Canoes and York boats were constructed at Rocky Mountain House to carry supplies and transport furs east to Hudson Bay.

Rocky Mountain House is also part of the Métis Homeland. Métis employed by the Hudson's Bay and North West companies lived and worked at the post and raised families there. As skilled boat builders, Métis likely participated in building canoes and York boats. After Rocky Mountain House closed, Métis families continued to live near the old post until the land was bought by the Brierley family, who began farming the land in the 1920s.

European settlement of Rocky Mountain House began in 1906. Settlers took advantage of free land to establish farms and found work at logging camps and lumber mills. In 1910, the Alberta Central Railway and Canadian Northern Railway began to lay tracks that would create access to the newly-discovered coalfields near Nordegg. Alberta Central Railway (which was bought out by Canadian Pacific in 1912) laid the bridge across the North Saskatchewan River the same year.

Settlement continued to grow after the completion of the railroad enabled the growth of coal mining at Nordegg and continued investigations into nearby oilfields. Farming and logging were the primary industries at Rocky Mountain House into the latter half of the twentieth century.

Approximately 30 kilometres northwest of Rocky Mountain House, near the junction of the North Saskatchewan and Baptiste rivers, is the community of Baptiste River. From the 1930s to 1945, Baptiste River was a Métis settlement occupied by the extended Fleury family. It consisted of five cabins, two outbuildings, and a shared barn. The family was forced to move to the Crimson Lake area in 1945 after Alberta began pushing Indigenous peoples off Crown lands.

North Saskatchewan River

Human interaction with the North Saskatchewan River in the Rocky Mountain House area has included the following:

- ▶ The Pikani camped along the banks of the North Saskatchewan, especially in winter. In the spring and fall, they hunted bison on the surrounding plains.
- ▶ The Pikani travelled by horseback on trails along the North Saskatchewan and Clearwater rivers near Rocky Mountain House.
- ▶ Bison were plentiful in river valleys like the North Saskatchewan, making the region around Rocky Mountain House suitable for the First Nations and Métis bison hunt.
- ▶ Rocky Mountain House became a major boat-building centre during the fur trade. Its location along the North Saskatchewan, a critical artery, was ideal for constructing and deploying canoes and York boats. Boats were loaded with supplies or furs, bound for Hudson Bay and, from there, Europe. The journey from Rocky Mountain House to Hudson Bay via York boat took about three months.
- ▶ The North Saskatchewan River made Rocky Mountain House a suitable launching point for traders and travellers like David Thompson as they sought to expand their reach further west.
- ▶ Before ferries and bridges, travelling from Rocky Mountain House across the North Saskatchewan River was a dangerous task. The river was forded by foot or horse, and fur traders and other Europeans relied on First Nations guides to help them cross safely.
- ▶ Lumber was floated along the river as the logging and lumber industries began in the early 1900s.
- ▶ Settlers at Rocky Mountain House and the surrounding area crossed the North Saskatchewan by ferry from 1909 until the 1940s. The ferry was used to transport people, livestock, mail, and supplies.
 - ▶ Crossing the river was sometimes impossible for days at a time; the ferry could not run when water levels were too low, or when broken ice was present in spring and fall.
 - ▶ In 1935, the ferry cable broke, and the ferry was swept more than a kilometre down the river, where it became lodged in a sandbar. Returning the ferry to the wharf was an arduous task. A road had to be cleared along the river bank and through the forest before the ferry could be towed back by horses. It took another two weeks for a replacement cable to arrive from Ontario, leaving farmers and lumber workers without transportation.
- ▶ To commemorate Canada's centennial, and in recognition of the site's significance during the fur trade, Rocky Mountain House was the launching point of a 5,000 km canoe race in 1967. The Centennial Canoe Pageant terminated in Montreal.

Archival Assets

The following table provides a list of archival collections that contain additional information on this region of the North Saskatchewan River.

Archive & Fonds	Date	Extent & Description
Hudson's Bay Company, Rocky Mountain House Hudson's Bay Company Archives	1799-1985	Records pertaining to the Hudson's Bay Company post at Rocky Mountain House. Includes post journals and account books.
Richard C. Hardisty fonds Glenbow Archives	1825-1958	Consists of Hudson's Bay Company and personal correspondence of HBC clerk and chief trader Richard C. Hardisty. Hardisty was responsible for reestablishing Rocky Mountain House in 1864. Fonds includes several series of correspondence and other records relating to Rocky Mountain House.
Henry Stelfox fonds Glenbow Archives	1940-1972	Consists of textual records created by Henry Stelfox, a nature conservationist who settled at Rocky Mountain House in 1920. Fonds contains essays and notes on Rocky Mountain House and the Indigenous peoples and settlers who lived there.
Mabel Fleming fonds Glenbow Archives	1906-1922	Textual and photographic records created by Mabel Fleming, the first schoolteacher in Rocky Mountain House. Includes photographs of Rocky Mountain House.
Canadian National Railway Company fonds Provincial Archives of Alberta	1897-1999	Consists of textual, photographic, and cartographic records created by the Canadian National Railway and its predecessors.
Canadian National Railway fonds Library and Archives Canada	1825-1990s	Contains textual, photographic, and cartographic material created and maintained by Canadian National Railway and its predecessors.

Digital Assets

The following images offer a sample of available graphic material relating to the history of the North Saskatchewan River in this region.

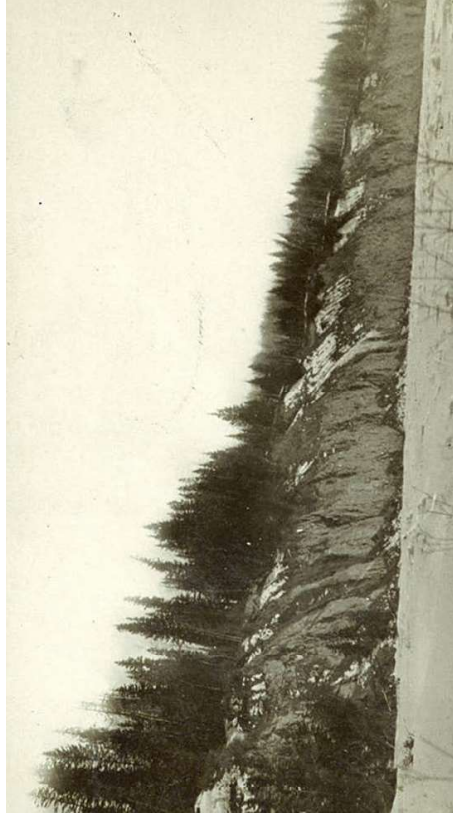


Figure 7. The North Saskatchewan River near Rocky Mountain House, circa 1905-1930. Credit: Peel's Prairie Provinces / Prairie Postcards Collection / PC010879.



Figure 8. The North Saskatchewan River and bridge, Rocky Mountain House, before 1920. Credit: Peel's Prairie Provinces / Prairie Postcards Collection / PC004774.



Figure 9. Remnants of chimneys at the Hudson's Bay Company Rocky Mountain House post, taken in 1905. Credit: Elliott Barnes / Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies / 148 / MA-22.



Figure 10. Group of Pikani at Rocky Mountain House with Priest Jean l'Heureux, 1872. Credit: Charles Horetzky / D.M. Beach Old & Rare Books Collection / Library and Archives Canada / e011308320.



Figure 11. View of Rocky Mountain House, Alberta. Sketch by Jean l'Heureux, 1873. Credit: Glenbow Archives / NA-577-2.



Figure 12. Ruins of Rocky Mountain House from the south side of the Saskatchewan River, 1884. Credit: Geological Survey of Canada / Library and Archives Canada / PA-438031.



Figure 13. Lantern slide showing Rocky Mountain House circa 1886. Credit: Mary Schaffer / Whyte Museum of the Canadian Rockies, MS27 / PS 1-402.

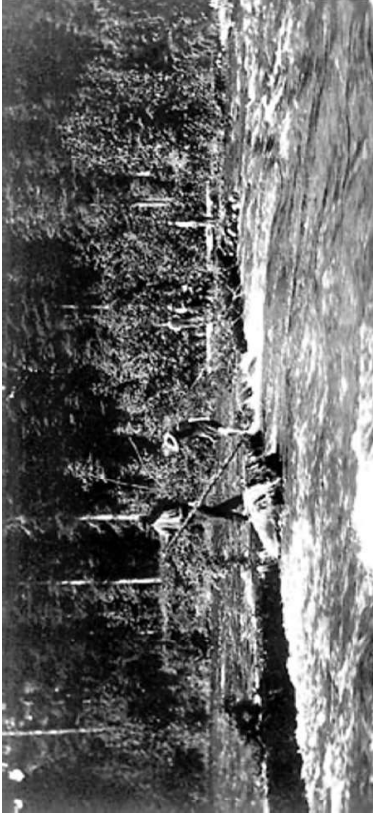


Figure 14. Alberta Central Railway surveyors crossing river near Rocky Mountain House, Alberta, 1910. Credit: Glenbow Archives / MA-4093-8.



Figure 15. Ferry over North Saskatchewan River, Rocky Mountain House, Alberta, circa 1913-1914. Credit: Glenbow Archives / NA-4093-23.



Figure 16. Voyageur Canoe Pageant on their way to Expo 67, from Rocky Mountain House to Montreal. Credit: Frank Grant / Library and Archives Canada / PA-185322.

Drayton Valley

Historic Overview

Drayton Valley is located on the traditional territory of the Tsuut'ina, Plains Cree, Stoney, Cree, and Métis. Once populated with thick forests, it may have been a camping spot during hunting trips on the nearby plains, or during travel along the North Saskatchewan.

European explorers and fur traders passed Drayton Valley on their western route along the North Saskatchewan. In 1800, the North West Company established a post at Boggy Hall, approximately 20 kilometres southwest of Drayton Valley. The post was abandoned eight years later.

In 1810, David Thompson travelled to Boggy Hall on his second expedition to the Rocky Mountains. It was near here that he was intercepted by a Piikani blockade. Fearing violence, Thompson turned around and was forced to take an alternate route from his 1807 expedition, this time crossing the Rockies at the Athabasca Pass.

It was nearly 100 years later that settlement in Drayton Valley began. The growth of the lumber industry in the early 1900s brought loggers to the region. As the settlement grew during the early logging days, the town of Drayton Valley became known as "Power House." It was named for an intended hydroelectric dam, planned to be installed just south of the present townsite. The plan was cancelled after the First World War broke out.

By the 1930s, there were 30 lumber camps near Drayton Valley. Lumber harvested at these camps was transported downstream along the North Saskatchewan River to be processed at sawmills in Edmonton. The lumber industry remained the dominant trade in Drayton Valley until forests were largely depleted by 1945.

Farming replaced logging as the region's primary industry until 1953, when oil was discovered southwest of Drayton Valley, just above the North Saskatchewan. The Pembina oil field was the province's biggest oil discovery to date and attracted a large influx of workers. The town grew significantly, and roads and bridges were built to accommodate the rising population and industrial demand. Oil remains the predominant industry in the region.



North Saskatchewan River

Human interaction with the North Saskatchewan River in Drayton Valley has included the following:

- ▶ Indigenous peoples used the river for transportation and sustenance.
- ▶ Europeans and fur traders travelled along the river to reach the Rocky Mountains.
- ▶ From the 1900s to 1920s, trappers shipped their furs to Edmonton on rafts.
- ▶ Lumber harvested in the Drayton Valley region from the early 1900s to the 1940s was transported downstream to Edmonton via the North Saskatchewan River.
- ▶ Until the 1960s, people living in Drayton Valley crossed the North Saskatchewan by ferry or by ice bridge. The nearest ferry to the town of Drayton Valley was the Berrymoor Ferry near Tomahawk. After the Pembina oil field was discovered in 1953, Drayton Valley built its own ferry to keep up with demand.
- ▶ In the 1950s, people drove to the riverbank to wash their vehicles. Drayton Valley only had dirt roads, so vehicles grew very muddy. They often became stuck on their way to the river.
- ▶ The discovery of oil near Drayton Valley brought a surge of settlers to the area. Insufficient transportation into and out of the area led to the construction of a bridge over the North Saskatchewan River in 1956. The bridge was completed in 1958.
- ▶ Construction of the Brazeau storage and hydroelectric dam occurred in the 1960s. The dam was built on the Brazeau River near the confluence with the North Saskatchewan.
- ▶ The Brazeau Dam created the Brazeau Reservoir, which is now used as a recreational lake for boating and fishing.

Archival Assets

The following table provides a list of archival collections that contain additional information on this region of the North Saskatchewan River.

Archive & Fonds	Date	Extent & Description
Alfred Rathgeber fonds Provincial Archives of Alberta	c. 1940-1955	Fonds consists of photographs of lumber operations in the Drayton Valley region, including sawmills at Alder Flats, Wenham Valley, and on Sunchild First Nation Reserve #202. Includes photographs of bridge construction on the North Saskatchewan, above the Brazeau River.
Audio Visual and Exhibit Services files, Public Affairs Bureau sous-fonds Provincial Archives of Alberta	1936-1998	Contains textual and audiovisual records created and collected by Alberta's Public Affairs Bureau. Series includes photographs of Brazeau Dam and its construction.
Marvin C. Coombs fonds Provincial Archives of Alberta	1929-1962	Consists of records created and collected by Marvin C. Coombs, an amateur historian of the Drayton Valley area. Contains 19 photographs, including of paddle steamers in the region.
W. S. B. Loosmore collection Provincial Archives of Alberta	1986-2014	Photographic collection of Dr. W. S. B. Loosmore, a medical doctor who moved to Drayton Valley in 1976. Contains 584 photographs and 886 photographic negatives of the Drayton Valley region.
Drayton Valley Museum	N/A	The Drayton Valley Museum does not have an online finding aid or collections list; however, the museum frequently shares photographs online and should have a sizable collection available.
Calgary Power Company Ltd. Fonds Glenbow Archives	1886-1960	Consists of textual and photographic material created by Calgary Power Ltd. (now TransAlta Utilities Corporation). Includes photographs and slides of power plant and dam construction.

Digital Assets

The following images offer a sample of available graphic material relating to the history of the North Saskatchewan River in this region.



Figure 17. View of the North Saskatchewan River east of Rocky Rapids, Alberta, circa 1930s. Credit: Glenbow Archives / NA-2991-7.

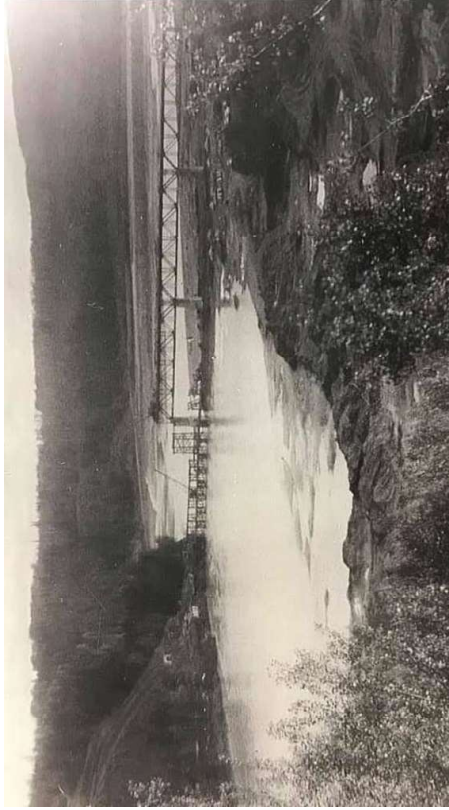


Figure 18. Construction of the bridge over the North Saskatchewan at Drayton Valley, circa 1956. Credit: Drayton Valley Museum.

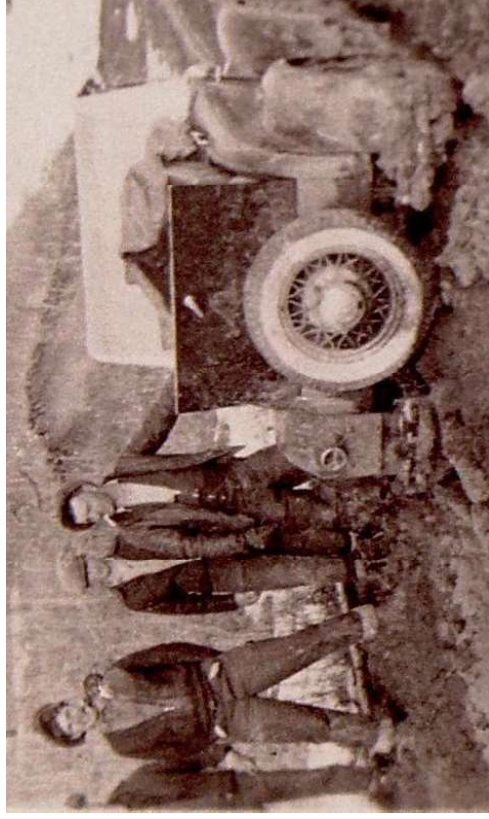


Figure 19. In the 1950s, people living in Drayton Valley would drive their cars down to the river to wash them. Dirt roads meant that cars became very dirty but also frequently got stuck on their way to be washed. Credit: Drayton Valley Museum.



Figure 20. Aerial view of the Brazeau River hydroelectric dam, circa 1960s. Credit: Glenbow Archives / PA-1864-468.

Parkland and Leduc Counties

Historic Overview

Parkland and Leduc counties are located on the traditional territory of the Plains Cree, Stoney, Tsuut'ina, and Cree peoples, as well as the Métis Homeland. Due to their location on the North Saskatchewan, Indigenous groups likely would have passed through these counties as they travelled along the river to Edmonton, a traditional gathering place.

The fur trade reached the region in the eighteenth century, as Europeans sought to expand westward. Edmonton grew into a trading hub, and traders travelled along this stretch of the North Saskatchewan on their way to western posts and the Rocky Mountains. First Nations and Métis also travelled and camped along the river when they came to trade at Edmonton.

Because there was a large fort at Edmonton, there were only small outposts located in this region of the North Saskatchewan River. As early as 1808, Fort Muskey—also known as Quagmire Hall—was established by the North West Company near the present site of Berrymoor. The post was abandoned by 1811.

Homesteading began in the late 1800s. In addition to farming, the primary industries from the late 1800s to mid-1900s were logging and coal mining. Coal towns emerged at Wabamun and Genesee, and coal-fired power generating stations were established at Genesee and Keephills.

In 1947, the discovery of oil at Leduc transformed the region's industrial landscape. This marked the beginning of Alberta's oil boom and substantially increased the region's population, as workers travelled to the counties seeking employment in the oil industry. It changed the economic base of First Nations like Enoch Cree Nation, which had previously relied on farming. Oil and gas revenues from wells drilled on their reserve became a major source of funding. However, some First Nations did not have easy access to revenues and experienced fewer benefits from oil drilling on and near their reserve lands.



North Saskatchewan River

Human interaction with the North Saskatchewan River in Parkland and Leduc counties has included the following:

- ▶ The North Saskatchewan River provided food, water, and transportation for Indigenous peoples.
- ▶ Fur traders travelled from Edmonton to the Rocky Mountains along this portion of the North Saskatchewan. While it was mainly a travel route, there were several trading posts along the way.
- ▶ Quagmire Hall, a North West Company fort, was located approximately 1.5 km west of Berrymoor. David Thompson referred to it as Fort Muskey when he passed the site in 1808. Quagmire Hall was abandoned by 1811.
- ▶ Farmers, lumber workers, and other settlers relied on ferries as their primary means of crossing the river from the early 1900s to the 1970s.
- ▶ In this region of the North Saskatchewan River, there were ferry crossings at Genesee and at Berrymoor near Tomahawk. Both were operated by the province. The Berrymoor ferry was opened around 1916. The Genesee ferry opened in 1917 and was known as Fraser's Landing for its first seven years of operation.
- ▶ In the early 1900s, the region also had privately-operated ferries. Timberman Charlie Cropley built a scow in 1906 and ferried passengers across an old river fording site on the trail to Lac Ste. Anne. In 1910, Cropley installed a cable ferry. Downstream, the Scheideman family operated a private ferry from their homestead.
- ▶ By the 1980s, bridges had largely replaced ferries. The Berrymoor ferry, closed in the early 1980s, was the last ferry operating on the Alberta portion of the North Saskatchewan River. The bridge that replaced the Berrymoor opened in the fall of 1982.
- ▶ Lumber harvested in this region was transported downstream to sawmills in Edmonton.
 - ▶ Along the river, structures were built to contain the log booms. Around Burtonsville Island, however, the river's naturally occurring snyes (side channels in the river) were used to hold log booms in place.
- ▶ During the Great Depression, people panned for gold along the North Saskatchewan in hopes of locating gold they could sell or trade for groceries.
- ▶ Since the 1970s and 1980s, the river has provided water for coal mining and coal-fired power production in the region.
 - ▶ Water is required to extract and wash coal.
 - ▶ Water from the North Saskatchewan is used for the artificial cooling ponds at Genesee Generating Station, Keephills Power Plant, and Sundance Power Plant.

- ▶ Since the first provincial natural areas were established in the 1960s, people have used these areas for recreational use, including canoeing and camping. There are five provincial natural areas located along the North Saskatchewan River in this region: Modeste Creek, Modeste Saskatchewan, Coyote Lake, St. Francis, and Burtonsville Island.

Archival Assets

The following table provides a list of archival collections that contain additional information on this region of the North Saskatchewan River.

Archive & Fonds	Date	Extent & Description
J. A. L. McDougall family fonds City of Edmonton Archives	1890-1926	Consists of the business and family records of lumberman John A. L. McDougall. McDougall's business operated in Edmonton, Telfordville, and Keephills. Fonds includes photographs of lumbering in these areas of the North Saskatchewan River.
Northern Alberta Pioneers and Old Timers' Association fonds City of Edmonton Archives	1885-2009	Consists of records created and collected by the Northern Alberta Pioneers and Old Timers' Association. Includes textual and photographic records.
Imperial Oil Limited fonds Glenbow Archives	1860-2014	Consists of textual records, photographs, and audiovisual recordings created by and documenting the operations of Imperial Oil Limited. Includes records on the company's operations in western Canada.
Canadian Energy Museum	Unknown	While the Canadian Energy Museum does not provide an online summary of its collections, it holds records on the Leduc oil discovery.
Charles William Jefferys fonds Library and Archives Canada	1880-1958	Consists of graphic and textual records created and collected by illustrator Charles William Jefferys. Contains two Imperial Oil collections, which include photographs and illustrations.

Digital Assets

The following images offer a sample of available graphic material relating to the history of the North Saskatchewan River in this region.



Figure 21. Lumberman J. A. L. MacDougall (MacDougall) pulling on a rafting oar. Credit: Provincial Archives of Alberta / A5493.

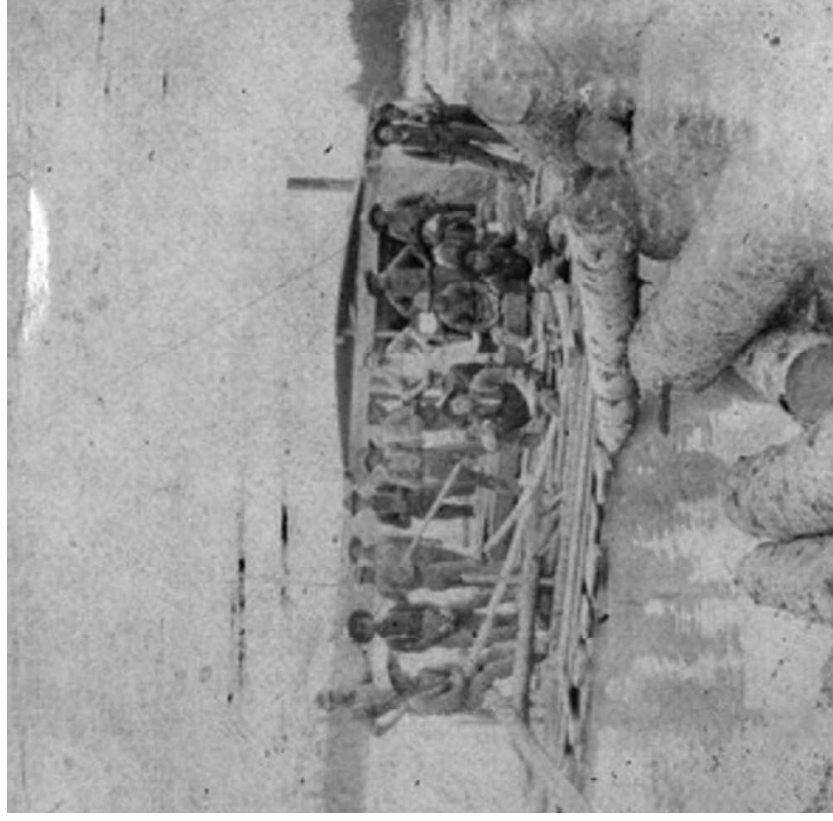


Figure 22. Logging raft on North Saskatchewan River, circa 1907. Credit: City of Edmonton Archives / EA-34-16.

Town of Devon

Historic Overview

The town of Devon is located on the traditional territory of the Plains Cree, Stoney, Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Tsuut'ina, Cree, and Métis peoples. For generations, the Stoney and Niitsitapi travelled across the region, following bison herds. The fur trade brought Cree and Métis to the area, as well as European traders.

The 1795 establishment of Fort Edmonton by the Hudson's Bay Company and Fort Augustus by the North West Company marked the beginning of the fur trade in the region. While there were no known trading posts where Devon is now located, both traders and Indigenous peoples would have travelled along the North Saskatchewan River past Devon to reach Edmonton.

After the fur trade declined, farming—mainly wheat—became the region's primary industry. Homesteaders arrived in the 1890s, drawn by Canada's western settlement efforts. Many of these homesteaders came from what is now Ukraine.

On February 13, 1947, the Leduc No. 1 oil well was discovered by a team of Imperial Oil seismologists. The discovery led to the town of Devon's establishment. Knowing that existing communities near Leduc could not accommodate the anticipated increase in oil workers, Imperial Oil decided to build a new town. Devon was carefully planned by Imperial Oil and a regional planning committee, gaining the nickname of "Canada's Model Town." Within a year, prefabricated homes were erected, businesses established, and infrastructure built.

The discovery of Leduc No. 1 ushered in Alberta's modern oil industry, transforming the province's—and the Devon region's—economic and physical landscapes. Leduc No. 1 was active until 1974.



North Saskatchewan River

Human interaction with the North Saskatchewan River in the Devon area has included the following:

- ▶ The Stoney and Niitsitapi hunted bison herds throughout the river valley.
- ▶ After the fur trade reached Edmonton in 1795, this portion of the North Saskatchewan would have provided travel for traders pushing west, and for First Nations and Métis travelling to and from Fort Edmonton to trade.
- ▶ The river provided irrigation water for farmers.
- ▶ The North Saskatchewan River provides water for the Town of Devon.
 - ▶ The town's water system included a pumping station that could be hauled up the riverbank during high water periods.
- ▶ Residents of the new town of Devon worried that their children would want to swim in the North Saskatchewan River. To provide an alternative, the town built a large community swimming pool in 1949.
- ▶ Devon residents crossed the North Saskatchewan by ferry during the town's first years.
- ▶ In spring of 1951, a bridge crossing the North Saskatchewan was completed.
- ▶ In 1948, a pipeline was installed across the river, linking the Leduc No. 1 oil well with the Nisku pipeline that already linked the Woodbend oil well with Edmonton.
- ▶ Water from the North Saskatchewan River was used to quell a six-month disaster at the Atlantic No. 3 oil well near Leduc.
 - ▶ On March 8, 1948, a 150-foot blast of oil burst upwards from the well. Atlantic No. 3 thus became a "wild well," with massive amounts of oil and natural gas escaping. For six months, water from the North Saskatchewan was pumped into relief wells designed to reduce the threat of fire.
 - ▶ However, fire did break out. On September 6, 1948, the wild well ignited. The fire raged for two months. During this time, water was pumped from the North Saskatchewan to quell the flames.
- ▶ Panning for gold on the North Saskatchewan was popular at various points in time.
 - ▶ In 1950, even after the oil boom, people panned for gold as a way to make a living or supplement income.
 - ▶ During construction of the bridge in 1951, former farmhand Thomas Staley panned for gold in the gravel being used for construction. He found about an ounce each day.

- ▶ Beginning in 1950, the Voyageurs Canoe Club of Edmonton hosted an annual canoe race down the North Saskatchewan, from the Devon ferry to Edmonton's Fifth Street Bridge.
- ▶ The Sourdough Raft Race, part of Edmonton's annual Klondike Days, began in 1960. The race began in Devon, where contestants built log rafts before racing them up the river to Edmonton.

Archival Assets

The following table provides a list of archival collections that contain additional information on this region of the North Saskatchewan River.

Archive & Fonds	Date	Extent & Description
Imperial Oil Limited fonds Glenbow Archives	1860-2014	Consists of textual records, photographs, and audiovisual recordings created by and documenting the operations of Imperial Oil Limited. Includes records on the company's operations in western Canada.
Canadian Energy Museum	Unknown	While the Canadian Energy Museum does not provide an online summary of its collections, it likely holds records on the Leduc oil discovery and the founding of Devon.
Charles William Jefferys fonds Library and Archives Canada	1880-1958	Consists of graphic and textual records created and collected by historical illustrator Charles William Jefferys. Contains two Imperial Oil collections, which include photographs and illustrations.
Devon Dispatch Library and Archives Canada	1976-present	Archived issues of the Devon Dispatch newspaper, which began in 1976.

Digital Assets

The following images offer a sample of available graphic material relating to the history of the North Saskatchewan River in this region.



Figure 23. Imperial Leduc No. 1, pictured on February 13, 1947, the day oil was discovered. Credit: Henry Pollard / Provincial Archives of Alberta / P2732.

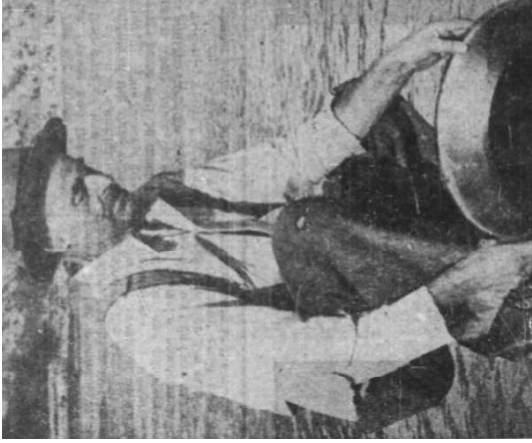


Figure 24. Thomas Staley panning for gold on the North Saskatchewan near Devon, 1950. Credit: Calgary Herald / September 27, 1950.



Figure 25. Welding truck constructing two 8-inch lines from Nisku to Devon Field, Leduc, Alberta, circa 1947. Credit: Glenbow Archives / PA-3027-8.



Figure 26. Mayor George Thompson examining a wall map of Devon, summer 1951. Credit: Glenbow Archives / IP-14a-9535.

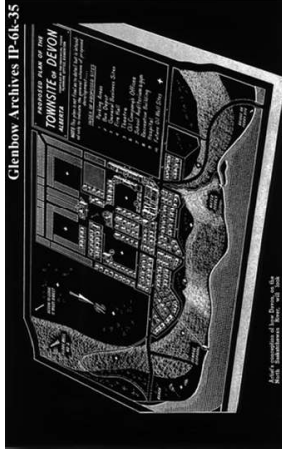


Figure 27. Proposed plan of the townsite of Devon, Alberta, circa 1947. Credit: Glenbow Archives / IP-6k-35.



Figure 28. Voyageurs Canoe Club members paddle from Devon to Edmonton during the first annual canoe race, June 1950. Credit: City of Edmonton Archives / EA-600-4554.



Figure 29. Preparing ice on the North Saskatchewan River at the Devon ferry for car crossing, December 1949. Credit: City of Edmonton Archives / EA-600-3473.



Figure 30. Bridge crossing the North Saskatchewan River on highway between Edmonton and Devon, Alberta, circa summer 1951. Credit: Glenbow Archives / IP-14a-9530.



Figure 31. Construction of the new Devon bridge over the North Saskatchewan, October 1950. Credit: City of Edmonton Archives / EA-600-6016b.

Edmonton

Historic Overview

For thousands of years, Edmonton has been inhabited by First Nations, including the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Cree, Nakoda, Anishinaabe, and Dene. These Nations were semi-nomadic, following the bison hunt across the plains. Edmonton, and the wider Beaver Hills region, was a traditional gathering place where First Nations camped, hunted, traded, and conducted ceremonies.

Europeans arrived in the late eighteenth century as the fur trade expanded west. In 1795, at the present site of Fort Saskatchewan, the North West and Hudson's Bay companies established rival forts. Both companies relocated to Edmonton's Rosedale Flats area in 1802. The forts remained there until warfare between Cree, Nakota, and Blackfoot tribes forced their temporary relocation to Smoky Lake from 1810 to 1813. In 1830, Fort Edmonton—now a single fort owned by the Hudson's Bay Company following its amalgamation of the North West Company—moved to its final location at the present-day site of the Alberta Legislature Building. At all locations, the proximity to the river was essential for traders and Indigenous peoples to reach the site.

During the fur trade era, First Nations and Métis camped along the river when coming to trade at Fort Edmonton. Métis began to settle more permanently around Fort Edmonton in the late 1830s, establishing farms on river lots on both sides of the North Saskatchewan. Many Métis lost these river lots when the Canadian government began surveying the land for settlement, using the scrip system to extinguish Métis title to these lots. The government maintained the river lot system when assigning land to homesteaders.

Settlement grew slowly until the Canadian Northern Railway arrived in 1905, after which point the population quickly rose. Agriculture remained Edmonton's predominant industry until the mid-twentieth century. When oil was discovered in the region in the late 1940s, oil refinement became a major industry. The city also became a strategic centre for northern military operations. The construction of an international airport in 1955 made Edmonton a major transport centre for both cargo (especially to northern communities) and passengers.



North Saskatchewan River

Human interaction with the North Saskatchewan River in the Edmonton area has included the following:

- ▶ Archaeologists have determined that ancient peoples camped along the bend in the river where Edmonton lies. These peoples camped on the river flats, where they could fish at spawning sites near creeks and gather rocks and stones to fashion tools and weapons.
- ▶ Edmonton was a traditional gathering place for many Indigenous peoples living in the region. The river provided transportation for those travelling by canoe.
- ▶ Rosedale Flats was a sacred site for First Nations in the region, and a burial site for those living at or near Fort Edmonton. It is also known as Edmonton's birthplace, as it became the new site of Fort Edmonton in 1802. One hundred years later, in 1902, it became the new site of Edmonton's only electrical generating station, known as the Rosedale Power Plant.
- ▶ Fort Edmonton's location was selected for its placement along the North Saskatchewan, as the river was a fur trade route between the West and Hudson Bay.
- ▶ First Nations and Métis camped on the river flats when they came to Fort Edmonton to trade.
- ▶ Traders at Fort Edmonton relied on the river for sustenance.
 - ▶ Fish from the river supplied food to those living at the fort.
 - ▶ Waterfowl living along the river was another source of food.
 - ▶ Grains grown along the river were processed at Fort Edmonton's grist mill.
- ▶ The river was used for recreation by those living at Fort Edmonton.
 - ▶ Toboggan slides were held on the river.
 - ▶ Dog-train races were held along a three-mile stretch of the river.
- ▶ Proximity to the river influenced the types of industry that developed in early Edmonton.
 - ▶ Its location along the fur trade highway of the North Saskatchewan made Edmonton a suitable place for Hudson's Bay and North West Company forts.
 - ▶ Sawmills were established on the river flats, where mills could access timber floated on the river from locations upstream. Processed lumber could be shipped out on the river as well.
 - ▶ Boatbuilders and larger boatbuilding companies operated on the river flats.
 - ▶ Brickyards took advantage of clay deposits on the riverbanks to produce and sell bricks.

- ▶ Coal seams present in the river valley led to a large coal-mining industry. Coal was also used in power plants built near the river.
- ▶ Tanneries used river water in leather production.
- ▶ Edmonton experienced a small gold rush on the North Saskatchewan River from the 1860s to 1890s. In addition to panning for gold, wealthier commercial prospectors operated steam-powered gold dredges along the river.
- ▶ Flooding on the North Saskatchewan influenced settlement in the Edmonton region.
 - ▶ In 1829, a flood destroyed Fort Edmonton. When rebuilt, the fort was moved to higher ground at the present-day site of the Alberta Legislature Building.
 - ▶ Edmonton Power and Light Company's powerplant was flooded in 1899. After a second, smaller flood the following year, the company decided to move the plant to higher ground.
 - ▶ In 1915, a historic flood inundated much of the river flats surrounding Edmonton, destroying homes and business and displacing an estimated 2,000 people.
 - ▶ Both scow and steamboat ferries were the primary means of crossing the North Saskatchewan River between Strathcona and Edmonton from the late 1800s until 1913 when the High Level Bridge was constructed.
- ▶ Canoe and raft races were held on the river during the annual Klondike Days summer festival, which began in the 1960s.
 - ▶ The Sourdough Raft Race began in 1960. Contestants would meet at Devon to build log rafts, which they then raced up the river to Edmonton. By the 1970s, the rafts were much more elaborate, and the race drew hundreds of participants each year.

Archival Assets

The following table provides a list of archival collections that contain additional information on this region of the North Saskatchewan River.

Archive & Fonds	Date	Extent & Description
Hudson's Bay Company, Edmonton Hudson's Bay Company Archives	1795-1938	Records pertaining to the Hudson's Bay Company's Edmonton post. Records include post journals, correspondence books, account books, and district reports.
Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee fonds City of Edmonton Archives	2003-2004	Contains audio, textual, and photographic records created during the Rossdale Flats Aboriginal Oral History Project. Includes copies of 27 interviews conducted with Elders and other community members discussing the significance of the Rossdale Flats site on the north shore of the river.
Northern Alberta Pioneers and Old Timers' Association fonds City of Edmonton Archives	1885-2009	Consists of records created and collected by the Northern Alberta Pioneers and Old Timers' Association. Includes textual and photographic records.
Thomas Walker fonds City of Edmonton Archives	1915	Consists of photographs taken by Thomas Walker during the 1915 flood of the North Saskatchewan River.
Ernest Brown fonds Provincial Archives of Alberta	1759-1965; 1880-1960	Contains 11,000 photographs captured or collected by photographer Ernest Brown. Includes photographs of early settlement near Edmonton.

Digital Assets

The following images offer a sample of available graphic material relating to the history of the North Saskatchewan River in this region.



Figure 32. Construction of the new Devon bridge over the North Saskatchewan, October 1950. Credit: City of Edmonton Archives / EA-600-0016b.

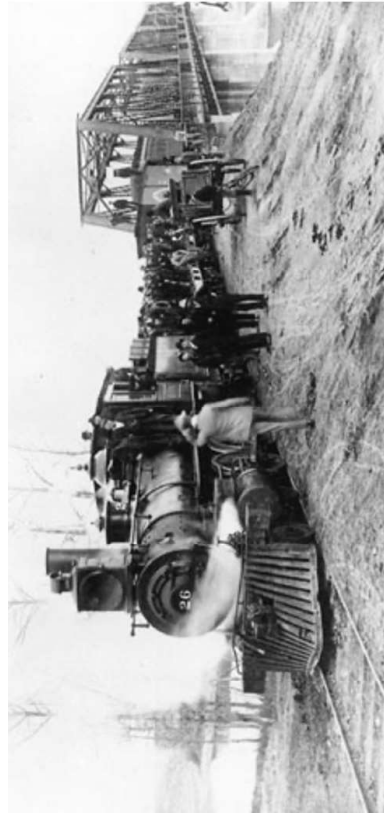


Figure 33. The first train to cross the bridge over the North Saskatchewan River at Edmonton, October 20, 1902. Credit: Glenbow Archives / NA-1244-1.

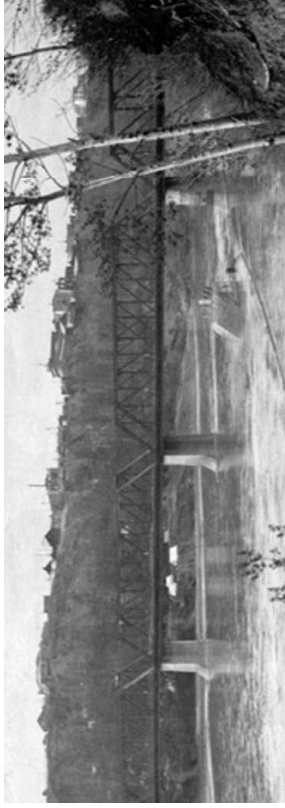


Figure 34. Low Level Bridge, Edmonton, circa 1910. Credit: Glenbow Archives / PA-1175-7.

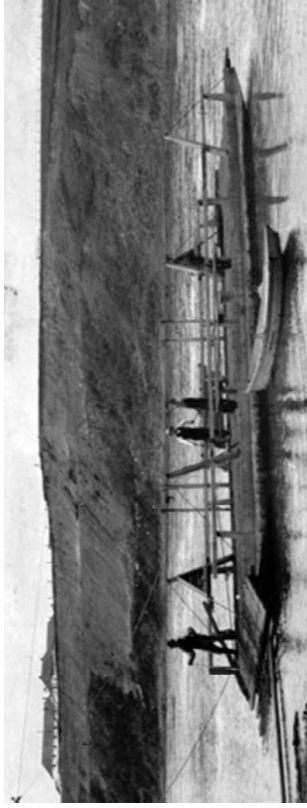


Figure 35. Edmonton to Straithcona ferry at Edmonton, circa 1910. Credit: Glenbow Archives / PA-1175-5.



Figure 36. Man washing gold at Edmonton, 1890. Credit: Library and Archives Canada / e011303100-040.



Figure 37. Edmonton Power's Desmond the Dragon raft at the 1986 Sourdough Raft Race. Credit: City of Edmonton Archives / Edmonton Power fonds / EA-84-10.



Figure 38. Klondike Days Sourdough Raft Race, 1980. Credit: City of Edmonton Archives / City of Edmonton Parks and Recreation Department fonds / ET-28-1214.

Strathcona County

Historic Overview

Strathcona County sits on the traditional territory of the Tsuut'ina, Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Cree, Plains Cree, and Stoney peoples, as well as on the Métis Homeland. For thousands of years, these Nations hunted bison on the plains. The former townsites of Strathcona, now part of Edmonton, was a traditional gathering place for camping, ceremony, and trading. Trading also occurred throughout the Beaver Hills region.

Europeans arrived in the late eighteenth century as they sought to expand the fur trade west. The Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company established forts at Fort Saskatchewan in 1795. In 1802, both companies relocated to the Rosssdale Flats in what is now Edmonton. First Nations and Métis from across the region camped on the river flats when they came to trade at the forts. Métis and Cree settled more permanently on the flats in the 1830s. The south side of the river was home to a poorer working class, who were unable to afford any formal title to their land and were eventually pushed off the river lots when the government began surveying the area for settlement in 1882.

European settlement increased in 1891, after the Calgary and Edmonton Railway selected Strathcona as a railway terminus. The railway terminated south of the North Saskatchewan River to avoid the high cost of building a bridge across the river to Edmonton. Strathcona was first established as a hamlet, later growing into a town and then a city. In 1912, the city of Strathcona was incorporated into the City of Edmonton.

Other hamlets in the region grew around farming and coal mining. Largely populated by immigrants from eastern Europe, these communities included Clover Bar and Josephburg. There were more than a dozen coal mines in the area, including at Clover Bar, Whitemud Creek, and the present site of Strathcona Science Park. Coal mining lasted until the 1950s, when oil and petrochemical production became the dominant industries, cementing Strathcona County's place within the province's "Industrial Heartland."



North Saskatchewan River

Human interaction with the North Saskatchewan River in Strathcona County has included the following:

- ▶ Archaeologists have determined that ancient peoples camped along the bend in the river where the former town of Strathcona lies. These peoples camped on the river flats, where they could fish at spawning sites near creeks and gather rocks and stones to fashion tools and weapons.
- ▶ The Edmonton area, including the former town of Strathcona, was a traditional gathering place for many Indigenous peoples living in the region. The river provided transportation for those who reached the gathering place by canoe.
- ▶ Indigenous groups have camped along the North Saskatchewan River for thousands of years, using the river as a source of transportation and sustenance.
- ▶ The North Saskatchewan River was the region's primary fur trade highway. Traders and Indigenous peoples travelled along the river to and from Fort Edmonton.
- ▶ First Nations and Métis camped on the river flats when they came to Fort Edmonton to trade.
- ▶ Métis lived on river lots on both sides of the North Saskatchewan River. Those living on the south side, including what would become Strathcona, were working-class Métis who, unlike those living on the north side, were unable to gain formal title to their lots. The scrip system resulted in most being pushed off their lands.
- ▶ Both scow and steamboat ferries were the primary means of crossing the North Saskatchewan River between Strathcona and Edmonton from the late 1800s until 1913 when the High Level Bridge was constructed.
- ▶ Logging operations upstream floated logs downriver to Edmonton and Strathcona, where they were processed at sawmills. One located at Strathcona's river flats was owned by former Hudson's Bay Company employee John Walter.
- ▶ John Walter also started a ferry to carry people, animals, and goods across the river between Strathcona and Edmonton.
- ▶ Dredging and panning for gold was a common practice on the river, especially between the 1860s and 1890s.
 - In the 1860s, Thomas H. Clover of Edmonton found gold at what is now known as Clover Bar.
- ▶ In June 1915, the North Saskatchewan flooded. The flood demonstrated the interconnectedness of communities along the river, as the flood warning that reached John Walter at Strathcona came from Rocky Mountain House.

Archival Assets

The following table provides a list of archival collections that contain additional information on this region of the North Saskatchewan River.

Archive & Fonds	Date	Extent & Description
Northern Alberta Pioneers and Old Timers' Association fonds City of Edmonton Archives	1885-2009	Consists of records created and collected by the Northern Alberta Pioneers and Old Timers' Association. Includes textual and photographic records, including many photographs of old Strathcona.
Thomas Walker fonds City of Edmonton Archives	1915	Consists of photographs taken by Thomas Walker during the North Saskatchewan River flood of June 1915.
Peter Fidler fonds Hudson's Bay Company Archives	1790-1809	Consists of records created by Peter Fidler, a surveyor and officer of the Hudson's Bay Company. Records include Fidler's journals, surveys, and sketches created during his travels in the West, including the area around what is now Fort Saskatchewan.
Hudson's Bay Company, Edmonton Hudson's Bay Company Archives	1795-1938	Records pertaining to the Hudson's Bay Company's Edmonton post. Records include post journals, correspondence books, account books, and district reports.
Ernest Brown fonds Provincial Archives of Alberta	1759-1965; 1880-1960	Contains 11,000 photographs captured or collected by photographer Ernest Brown. Includes photographs of early settlement near Edmonton.
Strathcona County Museum & Archives	Unknown	The Strathcona County Museum & Archives holds a variety of regional history records. While they do not have an online collection, research could be done in person or by contacting the centre.

Digital Assets

The following images offer a sample of available graphic material relating to the history of the North Saskatchewan River in this region.

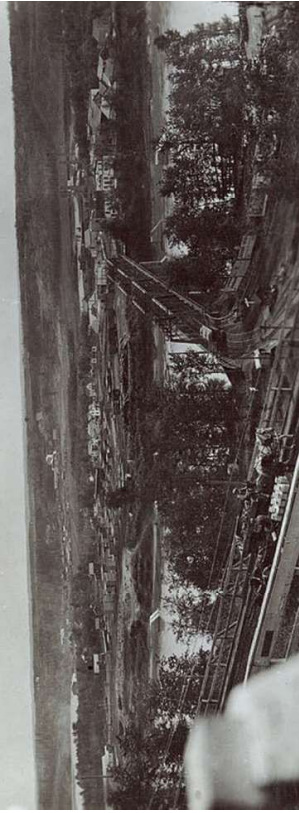


Figure 39. Low level bridge over the North Saskatchewan River, looking from Edmonton to Strathcona, circa 1900. Credit: Prairie Postcards Collection / Peel's Prairie Provinces, / Postcard 6935.

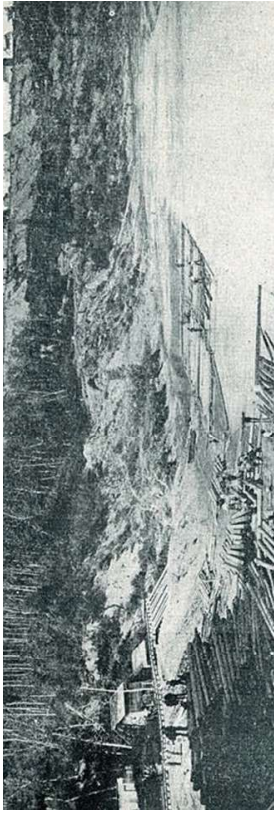


Figure 40. Lumbering on the North Saskatchewan River, Strathcona, circa 1903. Credit: Prairie Postcards Collection / Peel's Prairie Provinces, / PC006342.4.

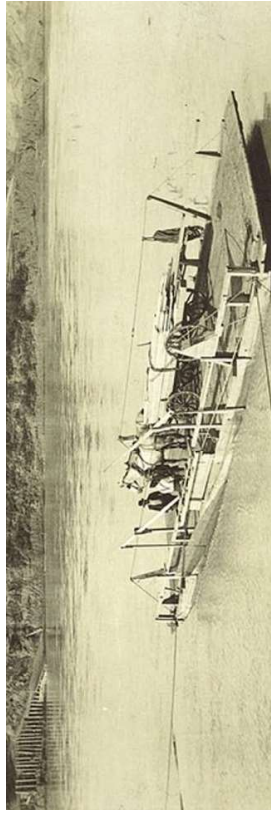


Figure 41. The Edmonton to Strathcona ferry, circa 1906. Credit: Prairie Postcards Collection / Peel's Prairie Provinces / PC006953.



Figure 42. View of Imperial Oil refinery at Strathcona, with the North Saskatchewan River in the background, circa 1975. Credit: Glenbow Archives / IP-10-12-3.



Figure 43. Clover Bar Ferry crossing at the North Saskatchewan river between Edmonton and Strathcona. Credit: Prairie Postcards Collection / Peel's Prairie Provinces / PC017853.

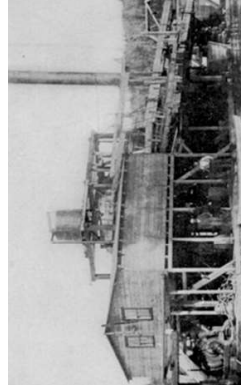


Figure 44. Gold dredging on the North Saskatchewan at Strathcona, 1898. Credit: City of Edmonton Archives / ea-10-1363.

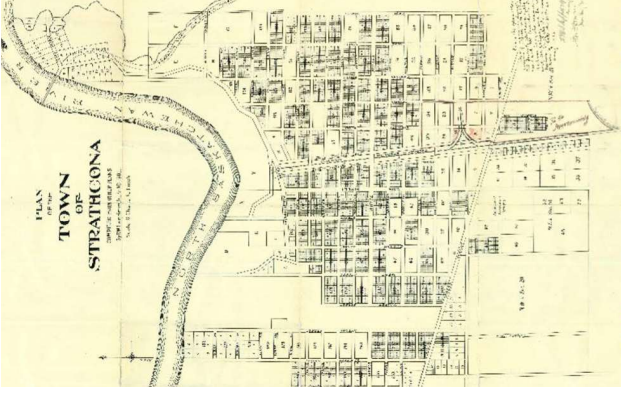


Figure 45. Plan of the Town of Strathcona, 1905. Credit: City of Edmonton Archives / EAM-241a.

Sturgeon County

Historic Overview

The present site of Sturgeon County has been home to the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), Nehiyaw (Plains Cree), Stoney, and Cree for thousands of years. It is also part of the Métis Homeland. The confluence of the North Saskatchewan and Sturgeon rivers was a traditional boat-building encampment for the Niitsitapi and Nehiyaw due to the abundance of birch trees. Known as Birch Hills, its location provided access to both waterways, which were key transportation routes.

Europeans reached the region in the mid-eighteenth century, as explorers and surveyors were sent by fur trading companies to investigate the western expansion of the fur trade. In 1795, permanent forts were established: Fort Augustus by the North West Company and Edmonton House by the Hudson's Bay Company. The adjacent forts were located on the north side of the North Saskatchewan River, just upstream from present-day Lamoureux. This location was advantageous due to its proximity to the North Saskatchewan, which became the major fur trade highway between the West and Hudson Bay (and, from there, the European market). The rival forts remained here until 1802, when they were relocated to Edmonton.

French Canadian settlement began in the 1870s. In 1872, brothers Joseph and Frank Lamoureux of Quebec settled along the river after the location was recommended to them by the Canadian Pacific Railway survey crew. Their families joined them, and more French-Canadian homesteaders soon followed, establishing farms on river lots. Though agriculture was the predominant industry, the enterprising Lamoureux brothers brought several other businesses to the region. They operated a ferry across the North Saskatchewan River between Lamoureux and Fort Saskatchewan; a lumber mill; a grist mill; and a steamboat freighter.

Settlement continued to grow after the railway arrived in 1905 and the Canadian Northern Railway built a bridge across the North Saskatchewan River to connect Fort Saskatchewan with the north side of the river. Many of the new settlers were Ukrainian farmers, and small communities developed, such as Eldorena.

North Saskatchewan River

Human interaction with the North Saskatchewan River in Sturgeon County has included the following:

- ▶ The Niisitapi (Blackfoot) and Nehiyaw (Cree) built canoes at the confluence of the North Saskatchewan and Sturgeon Rivers. This was a popular canoe-building encampment because of the abundance of birch trees and the connection to both waterways. This was one of several locations along the North Saskatchewan that bore the name “Birch Hills,” suggesting that the name may have been used broadly to refer to boat-building spots.
- ▶ Fort Augustus and Edmonton House were established along the riverbank because they provided essential access to the river for travel, the transportation of goods, and subsistence.
- ▶ First Nations and Métis canoed along the North Saskatchewan River to reach Fort Augustus and Edmonton House. They camped along the river flats during trading visits.
- ▶ In the 1870s, French Canadian farmers began settling on river lots along the North Saskatchewan. River lots provided irrigation for crops and access to transportation.
- ▶ The Lamoureux brothers operated a freighting service between Edmonton and Battleford using their steamboat the S.S. Minnow.
- ▶ The Lamoureux brothers operated a ferry across the North Saskatchewan, bridging the gap between settlements on either side of the river until the railway bridge was built in 1905.
 - ▶ The first ferry was a scow boat used between 1874 and 1882.
 - ▶ In 1882, a cable ferry was installed. The cable broke several times, leaving people without transport.
 - ▶ In 1894, the ferry sank, as it was overburdened with bricks, lumber, and horses. A new location was selected for the replacement ferry, but shallow water forced it to move back to the original Lamoureux brothers’ site.
- ▶ The Athabasca Landing Trail, a land route frequented by fur traders and gold prospectors travelling between Edmonton and northern communities, followed the North Saskatchewan River before turning north to follow the Sturgeon River. Also known as the “100 Mile Portage,” the trail was built by the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1876.
- ▶ The growth of Ukrainian settlement meant increased demand for transportation across the river. In 1908, the government ferry at Victoria Settlement was relocated to Eldorena, where it ran until 1967.

Archival Assets

The following table provides a list of archival collections that contain additional information on this region of the North Saskatchewan River.

Archive & Fonds	Date	Extent & Description
Lamoureux Family fonds Provincial Archives of Alberta	1860-1972	Contains photographs and textual records created by the Lamoureux family, the first French Canadian settlers in the area.
Gilda Rath fonds City of Edmonton Archives	1870-1971	Consists of textual records created and collected by Gilda Rath, a descendant of the Lamoureux family. Includes material on the history of the Lamoureux family and settlement. Also includes material on steamboat transportation and on local First Nations and Métis.
Hudson’s Bay Company, Edmonton Hudson’s Bay Company Archives	1795-1938	Records pertaining to the Hudson’s Bay Company’s Edmonton post. Includes records on the original Edmonton House post located down the river from Lamoureux. Records include post journals, correspondence books, account books, and district reports.
Peter Fidler fonds Hudson’s Bay Company Archives	1790-1809	Consists of records created by Peter Fidler, a surveyor and officer of the Hudson’s Bay Company. Records include Fidler’s journals, surveys, and sketches created during his travels in the West.
Ernest Brown fonds Provincial Archives of Alberta	1759-1965; 1880-1960	Contains 11,000 photographs captured or collected by photographer Ernest Brown. Includes photographs of early settlement near Edmonton.

Digital Assets

The following images offer a sample of available graphic material relating to the history of the North Saskatchewan River in this region.

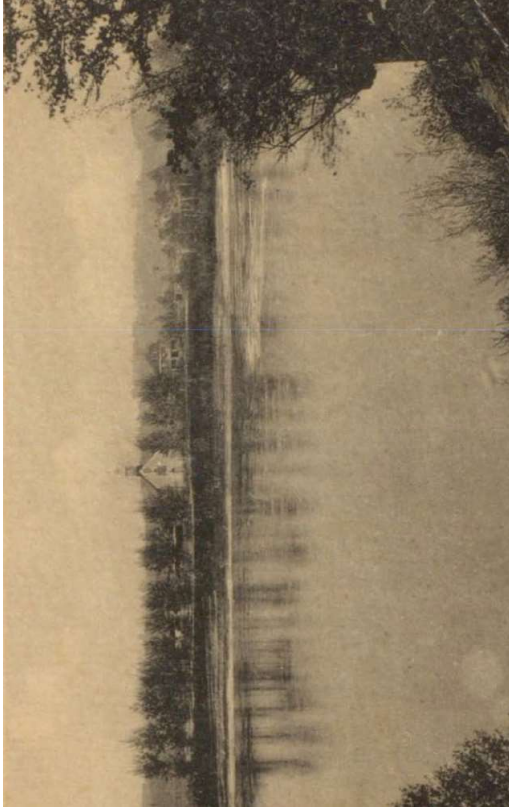


Figure 46. Saskatchewan River, Lamoureux, Alberta. Credit: Prairie Postcards Collection / Peel's Prairie Provinces / PC041126.



Figure 47. Launching the Minnow at Medicine Hat, 1884. The Lamoureux brothers purchased the steamboat in 1887. Credit: Glenbow Archives / NA-550-14.



Figure 48. Sturgeon River Mouth. Credit: City of Edmonton Archives / MS-59-1-EA-160-657.



Figure 49. Elcorena Ferry, 1918. Credit: Provincial Archives of Alberta / A2212.

Smoky Lake County

Historic Overview

Smoky Lake County sits on the traditional territory of the Plains Cree, Stoney, Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), and Cree, and is part of the Métis Homeland. The area was part of these groups' hunting grounds and used for seasonal campsites.

The first Europeans in the region were fur traders travelling along the North Saskatchewan to Edmonton and the Rocky Mountains. Between 1810 and 1813, Fort White Earth operated near present-day Pakan. Fort White Earth was a pair of competing forts operated by the Hudson's Bay and North West companies, both of which had temporarily relocated to the site from Fort Edmonton and Fort Vermillion.

Victoria Settlement (now Pakan) is one of the oldest settlements on the North Saskatchewan River. For thousands of years, it was a seasonal Cree campsite. By the early 1860s, there was a growing population of Métis fur traders and buffalo hunters in the area. In 1862, Wesleyan Methodist George McDougall and his family established the Victoria Mission. In 1864, the Hudson's Bay Company built a small post near the mission so that it could better compete with free traders. Attracted by the mission and the Hudson's Bay Company post, more Métis families began to arrive from Red River, and by 1865, between 25 and 35 Métis families had established river lot farms at Victoria Settlement. Other Métis families took lots up the river in nearby Lobstick Settlement. There was also a large Cree population along the river, with encampments of up to 100 tents at a time.

Victoria Settlement gained a church, school, post office, and several businesses. As the surrounding land was opened for settlement in the early 1900s, European and Canadian settlers, many of them Ukrainian, established farms in the region. Victoria was expected to remain the region's major economic centre until 1918, when instead Smoky Lake became the area's railway point.

The wider Smoky Lake County region was primarily agricultural. Farming communities developed at Wasel, Waskatenau, Smoky Lake, Shandro, Desjardais, and Egg Lake.



North Saskatchewan River

Human interaction with the North Saskatchewan River in Smoky Lake County has included the following:

- ▶ The river was an unofficial boundary between Cree and Blackfoot territory to the north and south of the river, respectively.
- ▶ The area that became Victoria Settlement was a seasonal campsite and gathering place for First Nations, especially Cree. It was also a fording site for First Nations.
- ▶ The Victoria Trail, part of the Carlton Trail between Fort Garry and Fort Edmonton, was an overland route that followed the North Saskatchewan River from Victoria to Edmonton.
- ▶ Free traders operated along the North Saskatchewan River in the mid-nineteenth century.
- ▶ From 1810 to 1813, the Hudson's Bay and North West companies relocated their posts near Edmonton to what would become the Victoria Settlement. The temporary, shared location offered similar advantages to Edmonton, providing river access for trade and transportation.
- ▶ In 1864, the Hudson's Bay Company opened another post, Fort Victoria, at Egg Creek near the Victoria Mission so that it could compete with free traders. It selected this spot because it intersected the river and two overland routes, making it advantageous for travel.
- ▶ Métis established farms on long river lots at Victoria Settlement and Lobstick Settlement, which gave them access to water for transportation and agriculture.
- ▶ From the 1860s to the 1890s, miners panned for gold along the North Saskatchewan near the Victoria Settlement.
- ▶ Victoria Settlement was a stopping point along steamboat routes to Edmonton between the 1870s and 1910s. Steamboats also carried supplies to and from the settlement.
- ▶ Ferries provided essential transportation for people, livestock, mail, and supplies.
 - ▶ Ferries were privately operated until the 1890s, when the territorial government began operating their own ferries.
 - ▶ The first government-run ferry at Victoria was opened in 1892. It ran until 1972, when a bridge was built near Pakan.
 - ▶ As homesteaders arrived and the demand for transportation grew, ferries were installed at Shandro (1900), Eldorena (1908), Warspite (1920), and Waskatenau (1921). The ferries ran until 1963, when a bridge was built at Waskatenau.
- ▶ In the winter, people could walk or drive horse teams or cars over the river. When the ice was not yet frozen but the ferry still unable to run, the nearest bridge was at Fort Saskatchewan.

- ▶ The Shandro ferry crossing (1900-1964) was a popular place for fishing, harvesting timber, and doing laundry. People living in Shandro on the south side of the river would cross the North Saskatchewan on the ferry to pick blueberries and Saskatoons on the north banks.
- ▶ The river was used for recreational activities like fishing, swimming, and skating.

Archival Assets

The following table provides a list of archival collections that contain additional information on this region of the North Saskatchewan River.

Archive & Fonds	Date	Extent & Description
Hudson's Bay Company, Victoria (Alta.) Hudson's Bay Company Archives	1864-1883, 1887-1898	Contains annual reports from the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Victoria post.
Hudson's Bay Company, Edmonton Hudson's Bay Company Archives	1795-1938	Records pertaining to the Hudson's Bay Company's Edmonton posts, including the one at Fort White Earth. Records include post journals, correspondence books, account books, and district reports.
Nicholas W. Gavinchuk fonds Provincial Archives of Alberta	1917-1994	Consists of approximately 10,000 records created by Nicholas W. Gavinchuk, a Ukrainian immigrant who settled around Smoky Lake in 1919. A photographer, Gavinchuk captured images of Smoky Lake communities, people, businesses, and events.

Digital Assets

The following images offer a sample of available graphic material relating to the history of the North Saskatchewan River in this region.



Figure 50. Victoria, 1898. Credit: George M. Dawson / Library and Archives Canada / PA-038161.



Figure 51. View of ferry on river, Pakan, Alberta, 1929. Credit: Glenbow Archives / ND-5-4684e.



Figure 52. Fort Victoria. Credit: Ernest Brown / Provincial Archives of Alberta / B.2406.



Figure 54. Fishing in Saskatchewan River near Pakan, circa 1935. Credit: Nicholas W. Gavinchuk / Provincial Archives of Alberta / G368.



Figure 53. Piling cordwood, Smoky Lake, Alberta, circa 1925-1933. Credit: Provincial Archives of Alberta / Nicholas W. Gavinchuk fonds / G20.

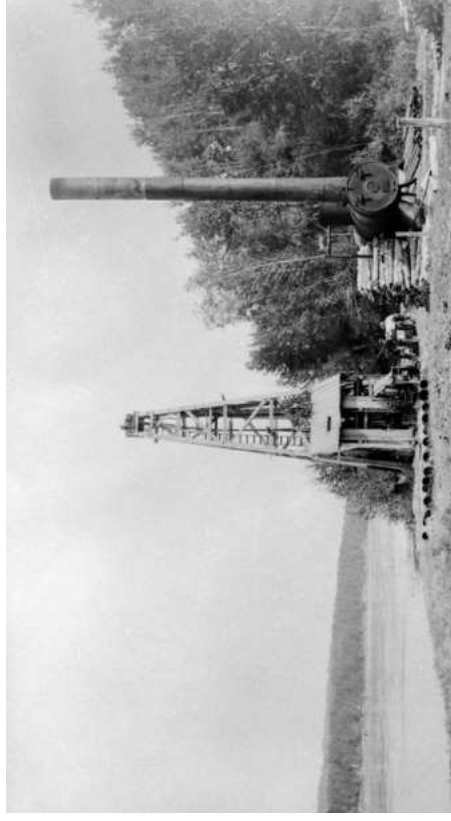


Figure 55. Drilling plant, Victoria Settlement, 1898. Credit: George M. Dawson / Library and Archives Canada / PA-038160.



Figure 56. Shandao ferry across the North Saskatchewan River, 1925. Credit: Canada, Dept. of Mines and Technical Surveys / Library and Archives Canada / PA-019901.

Two Hills / St. Paul / Vermilion River Counties

Historic Overview

The Two Hills / St. Paul / Vermilion River counties are the traditional territory of the Nehiyaw (Plains Cree), Stoney, Niitsitapi (Blackfoot), and Cree peoples. These groups followed the buffalo hunt throughout the region and camped seasonally on the banks of the river.

The fur trade arrived in the region in the late eighteenth century. Before there were forts in the vicinity, traders and Indigenous peoples travelled along this stretch of the North Saskatchewan while investigating the western trade and while returning east to Hudson Bay.

In 1792, both the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and the North West Company (NWC) established forts on the north side of the North Saskatchewan River near the present site of Elk Point. The NWC fort was called Fort George, and the HBC post Moose Hills (later Buckingham House). The forts were abandoned in 1800, when the HBC moved operations to Island House and the NWC to Fort de l'Isle. Both were located on Fort Island in the North Saskatchewan River.

Around 1802, Fort Vermilion (sometimes known as Paint Creek House) was established by the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company on the north bank of the North Saskatchewan, near Marwayne. Like Fort George and Buckingham House, Fort Vermilion was a pair of forts operated by the two companies. This offered shared protection against any violence in the region. The fort was abandoned in 1810 but revived in 1814, when visiting trader Gabriel Franchère found there were about 90 people living at the abandoned fort. Fort Vermilion operated until approximately 1821.

In 1865, Catholic missionary Father Albert Lacombe established St. Paul des Cris Mission on the north side of the North Saskatchewan River at what is now Brosseau. Father Lacombe aimed to convert the local Cree population to Catholicism and push them to adapt to an agricultural lifestyle. The mission was largely unsuccessful in this and, after a devastating smallpox outbreak that decimated the population, closed in 1874.

Homesteading began after 1905. European and Canadian homesteaders established farms in the region, and agriculture became the region's primary industry. In 1948, the Alberta Salt Company began harvesting salt from a natural salt deposit in the North Saskatchewan River, near Lindbergh. The salt plant operated under various owners until 2022, providing employment for generations of workers.

North Saskatchewan River

Human interaction with the North Saskatchewan River in the Two Hills / St. Paul / Vermilion River area has included the following:

- ▶ The riverbanks near the Saskatchewan border may have been used by Indigenous peoples as riverside buffalo jumps. Buffalo pounds were also located near the river.
- ▶ For thousands of years, First Nations harvested river clay to make pottery and decorative items. The names Paint Earth Creek and Vermilion River were derived based on this use.
- ▶ The north side of the river at Brosseau was a traditional Cree gathering place.
 - ▶ This influenced Father Lacombe's selection of the site for St. Paul des Cris Mission in 1865.
- ▶ In 1767, HBC employee William Pink had a seasonal canoe-building site at Mooswa, near present-day Lindbergh.
- ▶ Fort George and Buckingham House were built on the north banks of the river, where the North West and Hudson's Bay Companies—and the Indigenous peoples with whom they traded—had easy access to transportation.
- ▶ At least two independent fur traders were also operating posts near Fort George and Buckingham House.
- ▶ In 1796, the first York boat built for the Saskatchewan River system was crafted at Buckingham House.
- ▶ Ferries were located along the North Saskatchewan River, allowing people to cross the river during the warmer months.
 - ▶ Among the ferries in this region were ones located at St. Paul (1901), Lea Park (1908), Hopking's Crossing, near St. Paul (1908), Hood's Crossing, near Elk Point (1909), Lindbergh (1911), Myrnam (1914), Heinsburg (1914), and Forbesville (1917).
- ▶ Cattle were often transported to their summer pastures by ferry.
- ▶ At Elk Point, residents could cross the river in a cable car called a "go-devil." This was an enclosed cage suspended by a cable running across the river. There was also a jigger, which was a ferry attached to the cable.
- ▶ Ice cut from the river was used to make ice cream served at C. A. Johnson's ice cream parlour in Elk Point, which opened in 1914.
- ▶ A natural salt deposit near Lindbergh was mined from 1948 to 2022. The salt plant, originally owned by the Alberta Salt Company, used water from the North Saskatchewan River in its salt wells.

Archival Assets

The following table provides a list of archival collections that contain additional information on this region of the North Saskatchewan River.

Archive & Fonds	Date	Extent & Description
Hudson's Bay Company, Buckingham House Hudson's Bay Company Archives	1792-1800	Consists of post journals from the Hudson's Bay Company's Buckingham House post, which operated from 1792-1800.
Hudson's Bay Company, Fort Vermilion (Saskatchewan River) Hudson's Bay Company Archives	1808-c.1821	Consists of post journals from the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Vermilion post, which operated from 1808 until at least 1821.
Hudson's Bay Company, Island House Hudson's Bay Company Archives	1800-1804	Consists of the Island House post journal for the year 1800-1801.

Digital Assets

The following images offer a sample of available graphic material relating to the history of the North Saskatchewan River in this region.

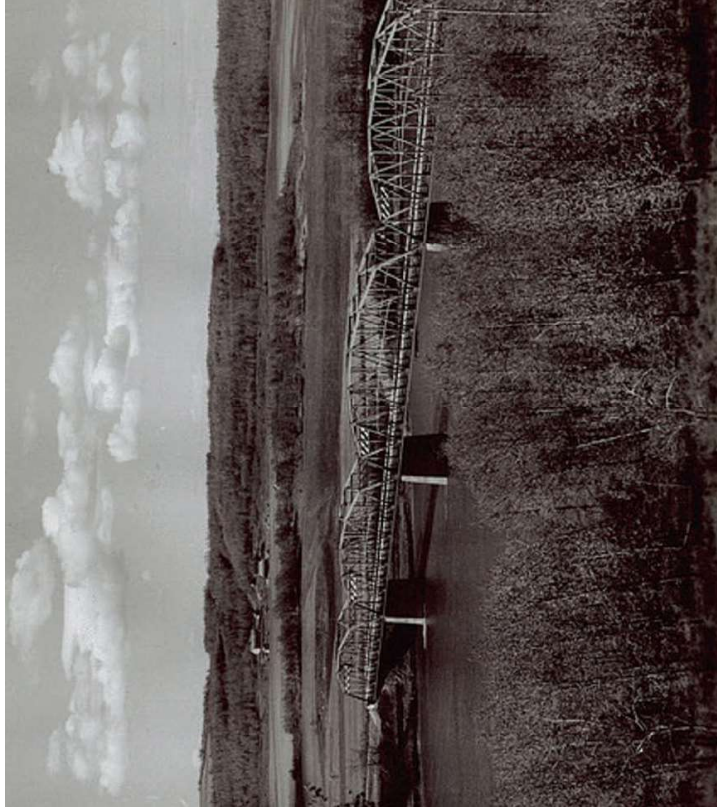


Figure 57. Bridge over the North Saskatchewan River at Elk Point, circa 1930. Credit: Prairie Postcards Collection / Peel's Prairie Provinces / PC003552.

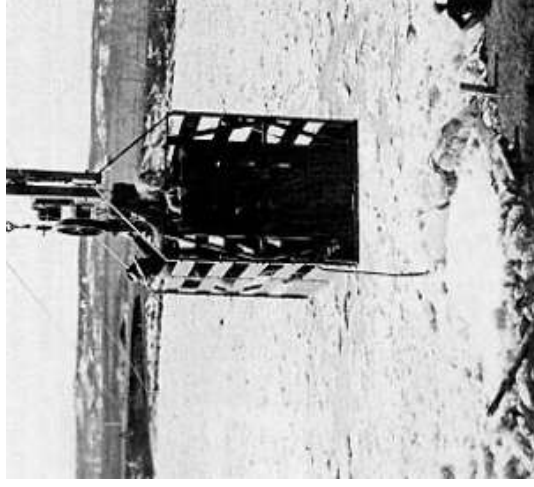


Figure 58. "Go-devil" ferry at Elk Point, circa 1936. Credit: Elk Point Historical Society.



Figure 59. Ferry at Heinsburg, Alberta, circa 1930s. Credit: Glenbow Archives / NA-4055-1.

Fort Saskatchewan

Historic Overview

The present site of Fort Saskatchewan has been occupied by the Niitsitapi (Blackfoot) and Nehiyaw (Cree) peoples since time immemorial. First known as Birch Hills, the site was a boat-building encampment for both the Niitsitapi and Nehiyaw due to the abundance of birch trees and its proximity to the North Saskatchewan River, a major transportation route.

Europeans first explored the region in the mid-eighteenth century, looking to establish a western fur trade. It was not until 1795, however, that permanent trading posts were constructed near what is now Fort Saskatchewan. The first was Fort Augustus, built by the North West Company on the north bank of the North Saskatchewan River. Just months later, in the fall of 1795, the Hudson's Bay Company established its own fort, Edmonton House, adjacent to Fort Augustus. Both forts were abandoned and relocated within six years, as fur-bearing mammal populations were depleted, along with resources like firewood.

French Canadian settlement began in the 1870s, when the Lamoureux family began farming on river lots across from Fort Saskatchewan. The Lamoureux family also started a lumber mill and freighting business. More farmers arrived, and the settlement grew as a church, school, and various businesses were established.

Much of this growth was spurred on by the arrival of the North West Mounted Police (NWMP). In 1875, seeking to establish law and order in the West, the NWMP built Sturgeon Creek Post, later renamed Fort Saskatchewan. Fort Saskatchewan was the NWMP's second fort, thus it played a significant role in the early establishment of the institution. Located on the south side of the river, the fort was surrounded by a tall palisade and consisted of a men's building, officers' quarters, guardroom, and horse stables. In 1885, the fort was expanded due to fear of conflict during the North West Resistance. It was expanded again in 1889 to become the NWMP's G Division headquarters.

The railroad through Fort Saskatchewan was completed by the Canadian Northern Railway in 1905. The line included a bridge across the North Saskatchewan River, offering residents and visitors an alternative to the ferry crossing, previously the only means of crossing the river. The railroad brought continued growth, as settlers from Canada and Europe sought new opportunities in the Canadian West.

In the 1910s, the NWMP relocated its G Division headquarters to Edmonton and sold its land at Fort Saskatchewan to the provincial government. The government used the land to construct a provincial jail and courthouse. Fort Saskatchewan grew around the jail and industries such as agriculture, nickel refinement, and chemical manufacturing.

Fort Saskatchewan

North Saskatchewan River

Human interaction with the North Saskatchewan River in Fort Saskatchewan has included the following:

- ▶ The Niisitapi (Blackfoot) and Nehiyaw (Cree) built canoes at the confluence of the North Saskatchewan and Sturgeon Rivers. This was a popular canoe-building encampment because of the abundance of birch trees and the connection to both waterways. This was one of several locations along the North Saskatchewan that bore the name “Birch Hills,” suggesting that the name may have been used broadly to refer to boat-building spots.
- ▶ Fort Augustus and Edmonton House were established along the riverbanks because they provided essential access to the river for travel, the transportation of goods, and subsistence.
- ▶ The NWMP selected Fort Saskatchewan for the site of its barracks due to the gentle slope of the riverbank (as opposed to the steep banks on the Edmonton side). They also anticipated that Fort Saskatchewan would be the crossing point of the transcontinental railway due to shallow water levels, as well as the suitability of the surrounding land for agriculture (versus the swampy land around Edmonton).
- ▶ French Canadian farmers settled in river lots on both sides of the North Saskatchewan, at Fort Saskatchewan and a few kilometers away at what is now Lamoureux.
- ▶ The river provided irrigation for farmers.
- ▶ The NWMP used the North Saskatchewan River to move soldiers and supplies, especially during the North West Resistance.
- ▶ The river was used for freighting, beginning with the Lamoureux brothers in the 1870s. Timber for building construction in Fort Saskatchewan was transported down the North Saskatchewan by raft.
- ▶ The Lamoureux brothers operated a ferry across the North Saskatchewan, bridging the gap between settlements on either side of the river until the railway bridge was built in 1905.
- ▶ In 1910, the town of Fort Saskatchewan built a hydroelectric dam on the Sturgeon River to provide electricity to homes and businesses. However, the dam lasted less than two years before being destroyed by the force of water.
- ▶ The river supplies the water necessary for the refining and manufacturing industries in Fort Saskatchewan.
- ▶ Recreationally, the river has been the site of annual boat races since 1966.
- ▶ From the 1880s to the 1920s, the hills along the river were used for sleighing in the winter.

Archival Assets

The following table provides a list of archival collections that contain additional information on this region of the North Saskatchewan River.

Archive & Fonds	Date	Extent & Description
Hudson's Bay Company, Edmonton Hudson's Bay Company Archives	1795-1938	Records pertaining to the Hudson's Bay Company's Edmonton post. Includes records on the original Edmonton House post located across the river from what is now Fort Saskatchewan. Records include post journals, correspondence books, account books, and district reports.
Peter Fidler fonds Hudson's Bay Company Archives	1790-1809	Consists of records created by Peter Fidler, a surveyor and officer of the Hudson's Bay Company. Records include Fidler's journals, surveys, and sketches created during his travels in the West, including what is now Fort Saskatchewan.
CN Images of Canada Collection Ingenium Archives (Canada Science and Technology Museum)	1850s-1999	Consists of images capturing the history and evolution of the Canadian National Railway and its predecessors.
Royal Canadian Mounted Police fonds Library and Archives Canada	1868-1999	Records created and maintained by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and its predecessors, including the North West Mounted Police. Includes textual records, photographs, architectural drawings, and maps. Contains a series dedicated to the NWMP and RCMP's G division, which was originally headquartered at Fort Saskatchewan. Annual reports and a large photograph collection also included.
Canadian National Railway fonds Library and Archives Canada	1825-1990s	Contains textual, photographic, and cartographic material created and maintained by Canadian National Railway and its predecessors.
Sydney Prior Hall fonds Library and Archives Canada	1878-1890	Consists of 313 sketches, paintings, and lithographs created by artist Sydney Prior Hall. This includes artwork produced during Hall's trip to the North West (including the North Saskatchewan River) alongside the Governor General in 1881.
Canadian National Railway Company fonds Provincial Archives of Alberta	1897-1999	Consists of textual, photographic, and cartographic records created by the Canadian National Railway and its predecessors.

Digital Assets

The following images offer a sample of available graphic material relating to the history of the North Saskatchewan River in this region.

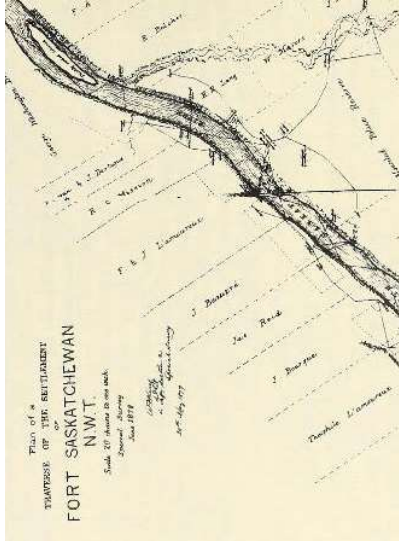


Figure 60. Survey of the Fort Saskatchewan settlement in 1878. The Lamoureux family's river lot can be seen on the far northwest side of the map. Credit: Department of Highways, Edmonton. Digital copy printed in Heinz Pyszczk, *Archaeology Guide and Tour of Greater Edmonton Area* (Edmonton: Provincial Museum of Alberta, 1996), 55.



Figure 61. Plan of Fort Saskatchewan Settlement surveyed by M. Deane D.L.S., 1883. Credit: Library and Archives Canada / e011368895.



Figure 62. Bridge at Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, circa 1912. Credit: Prairie Postcards Collection / PC0003652.



Figure 63. Fort Saskatchewan, circa 1900-1905. Credit: Galt Museum / Accession no. 19731724000-068.



Figure 64. C.N.R. Bridge, Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, circa 1906. Credit: Peck's Prairie Provinces, Prairie Postcards / PC003653

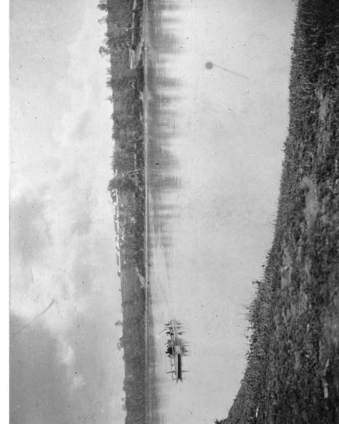


Figure 65. Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, August 16, 1898. Credit: Geological Survey of Canada / Library and Archives Canada / PA-051443.



Figure 66. Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta, October 26, 1879. Credit: George M. Dawson / Library and Archives Canada / C-03427

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