LANARK PLACE
Memories of an Ontarian West

MOTHERWELL HOMESTEAD NATIONAL HISTORIC PARK
This booklet has been written to commemorate the life and achievements of the late Hon. William Richard Motherwell. It is about those Ontarian settlers, too, who first populated the prairies when the West was opened for settlement and the Macdonald government was building a railroad to unite this vast land.

Motherwell was one of those first settlers. A graduate of the Ontario Agricultural College in 1881, he was eager to apply his knowledge to the virgin prairie and build a life in the West. Honest, ambitious and hard-working, he became a leader in his community, a legislator and administrator but remained, first and last, a farmer.
The booklet is written in a narrative style as seen through the eyes of Motherwell's only daughter, Alma Motherwell Mackenzie, who died in 1974. It is based on a series of reminiscences she wrote for Parks Canada in the late 1960s in which she described life at Lanark Place and told of her father's beginnings and his public life. It is not an autobiography. The material has been complemented by information provided by other family members and friends, and research done by Parks Canada historians. Separate sections describing Ontarian settlement and society, agrarian unrest and the development of scientific agriculture have been included to give a wider view of the times in which Motherwell and his family lived.

In May 1943, W. R. Motherwell died. His son Talmage's child, Dick, agreed to purchase the family home in order to provide an income for his grandfather's widowed second wife, Catherine. Dick had followed in his grandfather's footsteps, deeply interested in politics and agricultural affairs, and was eager to make Lanark Place his home. He had grown up on his father's farm, a mile from Lanark Place, and later graduated from the University of Saskatchewan College of Agriculture which had been founded by his grandfather. After further studies and three years as executive secretary to the Hon. James G. Gardiner, federal Minister of Agriculture, Dick returned to Abernethy. He took up residence at Lanark Place with his wife and three daughters, well prepared to follow his grandfather's example and enter politics.

Tragically, three months later, Dick died in the polio epidemic then sweeping the prairies. His widow, Patricia, continued to run the farm while teaching school and raising her daughters. In 1965 Mrs. Motherwell sold the farm to Mr. Hugh Stueck, greatnephew of W. R.'s former neighbour and friend, Englehardt, with the stipulation that house, barn, outbuildings and the land on which they stood be donated to the people of Saskatchewan as her husband had requested.

In 1966 Parks Canada acquired the farmstead and since that time has been involved in its restoration to the period 1910-1914 when Lanark Place was at its peak.

Special thanks are due to Mrs. Patricia Motherwell; to Mrs. Laura Jensen, W. R. Motherwell's granddaughter; and to Donald Mackenzie, Alma's son, for their assistance, donation of family artifacts and their patience since the project began.
Ontarian Settlement in Western Canada 1870-1914

At the time of Confederation in 1867, the Canadian West was a vast, scarcely populated land inhabited chiefly by Indians, fur traders and missionaries. While a few settlers had established farms at the junction of the Assiniboine and Red rivers in Manitoba, the Canadian West needed more people. Prime Minister John A. Macdonald and his colleagues were concerned that the rapid settlement of the American West would soon expand north to Canada and threaten Canada's territorial sovereignty. As a result, a free homestead policy and building of a transcontinental railway were initiated to unite the nation and transform the wilderness into a settled agricultural region. Large tracts of land were given to the CPR in exchange for expanding the railway. This land, sold cheaply to newcomers, along with the government's free homestead properties, lured the people west.

First to Manitoba, then gradually westward, young Anglo-Saxon men from Eastern Canada travelled, answering the call for settlers. They came by train, as far as it would take them; then, joining long Red River cart trains amid the din of squeaking wooden axles, set out for their new homes. They struggled through the Western gumbo which frequently mired their carts (oxen were preferred to ponies for hauling—their hooves would spread and not sink so deeply in marshy ground) and suffered the heat and mosquitoes.

Having staked claim to their 160-acre homestead quarter sections, erected tents, sod huts or log cabins, the men began to break the land with their ox-drawn ploughs. Many
took advantage of special provisions in the Dominion Lands Act for second homesteads. For those who arrived before 1900, adjacent quarter sections of CPR land could be purchased at low prices.

Later arrivals, mainly Eastern Europeans and Americans, found that the cheapest and the best land had already been taken. In 1886 second homestead privileges were abolished and in 1889 pre-emption privileges were cancelled, restricting the newcomers to a single quarter section of free-grant land. Because their land, for the most part, was inferior to the land acquired by the earlier settlers, the Europeans struggled for many years to establish their small farms while the Ontarian Anglo-Saxons prospered and laid the foundations for the new society.

The society they built was based on Victorian values: a belief in hard work, individual enterprise and Christian living. The Ontarians tended to idealize the small independent farmer and the virtues of domestic life. They brought with them the community organizations of the East: agricultural societies, Mechanics' and Literary Institutes, Homemakers' Clubs, and men's lodges such as the Masons, Oddfellows and Loyal Order of the Orange Lodge. The temperance movement was also a focal point of community life and both W. R. Motherwell and his second wife, Catherine, were prominent Abernethy prohibitionists.

By virtue of their early arrival, the Ontarian settlers established schools, churches, courts, and legislative assemblies based on Eastern-Canadian models. Since some settlers were prosperous enough to later rent their land or hire foremen to run the farms, they could devote their energies to community affairs, hence dominating the society.

Their schools were modelled after the British system used in Ontario; their churches Presbyterian, Methodist or Anglican. In 1890, Manitoba's Greenway Government passed acts abolishing the former dual Protestant and Catholic school system and the status of French as an official language.

The West had become, and for a long while would remain, English-speaking and Protestant.
Let me introduce you to my home, Lanark Place. It didn't always look like this; so green and surrounded by trees.

When my father married my mother, Adeline Rogers, in December 1884, it was bald, bleak prairie—not a tree in sight. Can you imagine yourself as a bride, arriving at your new home—a two storey log cabin in the middle of nowhere? I suppose, because my mother was a homesteader's daughter herself and had lived on the prairie near Carberry, Manitoba, that it wasn't too shocking. I admire her spirit and my father's perseverance and hard work.

Those first few years were hard. My mother bore two children before my brother Talmage
and I were born, and each of them died as infants. They’re buried near my parents in the Abernethy cemetery.

As I said, those first few years as homesteaders were hard for my parents. While my father was busy in the fields or breaking new land with the plough drawn by his oxen, my mother was tending the chores that kept all farm wives busy in those days. She churned butter, made soap and candles, gathered hops from the Pheasant Creek coulee to make yeast for bread, put up preserves, sewed and knitted all our clothes. My brother Tal was born in July 1890 and I arrived two years later, so our mother certainly had her hands full after that. She was an excellent seamstress and won prizes at the local agricultural fairs for her hand and machine-made shirts, knitted socks and mittens. Her pride and joy was a Raymond sewing machine which was operated by a hand-crank. Tal loved to turn that for her while she sewed. I was younger and more interested in playing with my dolls or following my father around the garden.

My father once claimed, after he had unhitched the stubborn animals from the plough, that it was not possible to remain Christian and drive oxen. Soon afterward, horses took their place on our farm. A handle from that plough hangs in the upstairs front hallway as a reminder of those early days.

My father won ribbons at fairs, too, for the garden vegetables he grew, the wheat and oats. In October of 1884 he won a $10 special prize for a Durham bull at the first fair at Indian Head. When asked what he did with the prize money, he said, “I bought a wedding ring and quit batching.” After he and my mother married, my father would load up the old buckboard with all sorts of vegetables and poultry and drive 14 miles to sell them at Fort Qu’Appelle. He believed you could be most successful if you had a mixed farming operation such as they had in Ontario—where he was raised and educated.
I'm going to digress a bit here and tell you how my father came to homestead in the West.

He was born near Perth, Ontario in Lanark County—hence our farmstead's name. He studied at Perth Collegiate and graduated with honours from the Ontario Agricultural College at Guelph. His father was a farmer too, but did not have enough land to divide between his five sons. Like so many other farmers' sons from Ontario who were unable to inherit land, my father decided to head west. At that time the Dominion government was offering, through its free homestead policy, quarter sections of land on the prairies to those men willing to break the sod and establish a farm—it wouldn't be easy but it was a golden opportunity to acquire land of their own.

So my father set out in July of 1881 with two of his classmates from the agricultural college, in high spirits and ready for adventure. They rode as far as the train could take them that summer to Portage La Prairie, Manitoba.
and, after some travel, hired out to a farmer. When harvest was done they went back to Ontario—eager to return to the West.

The following spring my father and a friend set out once more. They left the train, this time at Brandon, and joined a caravan of Red River carts and waggons wending their way along the prairies to the North-West Territories. In Brandon my father had met a well-travelled member of the North West Mounted Police who advised him that the place to stake his claim was the Pheasant Hills district north of Qu'Appelle—an area with good land, wood, hay, grass and water.

At Fort Qu'Appelle, my father engaged a land surveyor to go with him and locate a homestead. Although his was one of the first homesteads in the Abernethy district, within a week much of the Pheasant Plains had been settled—homesteaders had poured into the district in great numbers.

Among the early settlers were my mother's brothers, Tom and Will Rogers from Carberry, Manitoba—originally from Leeds County in Ontario; and the Gillespie family from Teeswater, Ontario. Little did my father know, as he prepared to spend the first winter on his land, that he would eventually marry a young woman from each of those families—my mother, Adeline Rogers, in 1884; and Catherine Gillespie who, in 1908, became my stepmother.
The Early Years

Our log house, which my father later sided with clapboard to make it warmer, was a snug, comfortable home to my parents for thirteen years—and my home for five.

I remember how I hated to move from it to the big fieldstone house that my father and Adam Cantelon, the stone mason, built in 1897. They built the house a year after constructing the stone stable. Mr. Cantelon carefully split and shaped each of the large stones before raising them in place with a block and tackle. For years my father had collected the stones from the fields and Pheasant Creek coulee. He used to say he could tell you the history of every stone in the house.

While Mr. Cantelon was working on the second storey, he had a terrible fall from the top and badly fractured his leg. Andy Sproule, our hired man at the time, had to take a horse and ride to Indian Head—50 miles there and back—to fetch the doctor.
Finally, the house was made ready for us and we moved in. Everything smelled so new and clean, but it seemed enormous to me. I could never find my mother and would grow frantic if she were out of sight. I wept that first night and cried that I wanted to go home immediately. Later, I grew to love the stone house, especially as my mother filled the windowsills with bright geraniums and happy times took place.

Many a hoedown we had in our dining room on the hardwood maple flooring brought all the way from Ontario. On Sunday evenings we gathered around the old Doherty organ to sing hymns. In the long winter evenings we played all sorts of games—chequers, a card game called Pit, table tennis or crokinole. We had grand parties for the young people at our house and toboggan parties down the Pheasant Creek hill. Some of the more venturesome boys would tow on skis behind the big bob-sleigh that came to take us up to the house. Afterwards, we had a
hot supper of baked beans and brown bread and apple tart.

We had not many books—Ralph Connor's The Sky Pilot, Glengarry School Days; Pilgrim's Progress—but there were plenty of papers that came to the post office—The Manitoba Free Press, Family Herald—and a magazine called The Ram's Horn which had all sorts of puzzles my brother and I loved to solve.

For many years my mother suffered with asthma and gradually became an invalid. She never slept until nearly morning and could not get up until the dampness of scrubbed floors or the dust of sweeping had cleared away. By this time we had hired girls to help cook and clean—girls who were more like companions than servants. In those days there was no stigma attached to hiring out to do housework—it was simply something many farm girls did between school and marriage.

In the spring of 1905, when I was 12, our mother died. It was a relief to know she was out of suffering but she left a sad and lonely family.
Request for a Rail Line

During the previous eleven years my father had been active in the affairs of the community. He was highly respected for his involvement and his abilities as an agriculturalist.

He was a school trustee, a justice of the peace, as elder in our nearby Presbyterian church and he had been instrumental in forming the Territorial Grain Growers’ Association in 1901. Two years later he was the spokesman for the farmers of our district when they decided to approach the CPR to request a branch line be brought north through Abernethy. Farmers in other districts, too, were lobbying for a rail line north of the Qu’Appelle River.

All were concerned over the marketing of their wheat; having to rise at 2 a.m. on a winter morning and haul grain by wagon over the valley to Indian Head in order to be home the next day. There was always the danger of losing an entire load of bagged grain over a slippery hill—a loss of time, loss of grain, loss of money, and almost loss of courage. Sometimes, when they arrived at the market centre, there were not enough cars to load their grain and more time was lost.

So, a meeting was arranged on board the train carrying Sir William Whyte, Assistant to the President of the CPR. The delegation boarded the train at 9 a.m. as it passed through Indian Head, and rode it for an hour before Sir William could see them. When they were ushered into his private car, my father stated the farmers’ case requesting a branch line to Abernethy. Sir William then asked, “And how far were you planning to travel on this train?” “Just as far as it will take to get the railway,” my father replied.

The following year the Kirkella branch line was begun and when it reached Abernethy it was a great day of celebration. My father took my mother up to the village in a dog cart to see the steel being laid. Soon it became a regular Sunday afternoon walk to go down to cross the Pheasant Creek bridge.

In the Fall of 1905, when my father accepted Premier Walter Scott’s invitation to join the first Saskatchewan government as Commissioner of Agriculture, he found that one of the people who had recommended him for the position was Sir William Whyte.

Trestle bridge over Pheasant Creek, 1904.


Invitation to Political Life

In the fall of 1905, when my father accepted Premier Walter Scott’s invitation to join the first Saskatchewan government as Commissioner of Agriculture, he found that one of the people who had recommended him for the position was Sir William Whyte. Tal and I moved to boarding homes in Regina to live near our father and attend school in 1906, yet we looked forward always to those weekends and holidays when we could return home. Father supervised the farm work very closely through correspondence with his hired men and, of course, he and Tal worked alongside them when at the farm.
Western farmers had other grievances besides railway branch line construction to small communities like Abernethy. They resented the CPR policy of granting exclusive grain loading rights to the elevator companies and felt that the farmers should be allowed to load the grain directly onto rail cars themselves. They felt, too, that the elevator companies often gave short weight and charged excess dockage.

The Macdonald government's tariff system also angered Western farmers. It forced the farmers to sell their grain at low world prices yet allowed Eastern-Canadian manufactured goods to be sold at artificially high prices while preventing the import of cheaper foreign goods.

A series of farmers' protest movements was formed between the years 1876 and 1925. Some, like the Grange and the Patrons of Industry, evolved in the United States and the East before appearing in Western Canada. They sought to effect change for farmers but they avoided direct political involvement. It was not until 1901 that the successes of the Territorial Grain Growers' Association showed the farmers that an organized approach could help their cause. Founded by W. R. Motherwell and his neighbour, Peter Dayman, at a meeting they had
called at Indian Head on December 18, 1901, the TGGA grew into a large and powerful organization across the prairie provinces.

W. R. Motherwell was elected provisional president at that first meeting and, two months later, at the first annual convention, was elected president. At that convention he proposed important changes to the Manitoba Grain Act which had been passed by Parliament in 1900. Motherwell's proposals stated that railways should provide loading platforms within a reasonable time after demand and, if platforms were not available, farmers should have the right to load rail cars directly from their wagons. Another resolution adopted by the Convention recommended that if there were a shortage of cars, they be apportioned on a first-come-first-served basis. All the proposed amendments were passed by Parliament and, in a test case at Sintaluta, Saskatchewan in the fall of 1902, the CPR was forced to abide by the car distribution provisions of the Act.

During Motherwell's tenure as President of the TGGA, permanent co-operative associations were formed in each of the prairie provinces: the Manitoba Grain Growers' Association was formed in 1903 and, in 1905, the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association and the United Farmers of Alberta. 1906 saw the creation of the first producers' grain marketing company at Sintaluta and later, in the 1920s, provincial wheat pools were organized.
Farm Work

The work on our farmstead was very much like the work on any prairie farm at the time—although my brother sometimes thought it was never-ending. He became a farmer himself, learning from our father and working with the hired men.

The workday began early. The hired men and Tal, when he was home, rose at five, dressed and went out to the barn. The hired girls, in the meantime, started the fire in the big cookstove and began preparing breakfast—something hearty that stuck to your ribs: porridge, eggs, home-cured bacon, biscuits and such. The men cleaned the stable and pens, fed the livestock, milked the cows and harnessed the teams of horses.

At eight they returned to the house for breakfast then went back to work. One of them hitched a team and went off to the fields and the other did more farmyard chores: separating cream, feeding the chickens, sheep and pigs before hoeing the garden or scuffling weeds between the shelterbelt trees. Occasionally a wild duck's nest would be found between the poplars and my father would tell the man to skip that part until the young ones were hatched and out on their own. He was always considerate of all living creatures—and never allowed anyone to shoot on our farm.
There was always so much to do with more than 900 acres of oats, bromegrass, winter rye or hay to tend to.

Ploughing, harrowing, seeding, haying, binding, stacking, stacking—it never stopped. All year long there was work in the fields and on the farm. Harvest-time was always exciting. Before we bought our own tractor and separator in 1911, the three Stueck brothers would arrive on their giant steam traction engine which belched black smoke and pulled behind it a separator and the caboose for the threshermen to sleep in. We would have at least 20 men sit down to two long tables piled high with hearty food. The womenfolk baked and canned for weeks preparing for their arrival. Sometimes, if there was a shortage of threshermen, the separating of the grain could not be done until December so, in the meantime, the hired hands did the fall ploughing.

Before the rail line came to Abernethy, grain had to be bagged for the long wagon journey over winter roads to Indian Head. This meant extra cost—for the sacks—and extra hours of work to fill them. After 1904 however, the men could load the grain directly into the wagons and haul it, 30 or 40 bushels at a time, to be sold at the grain elevators a mere 1½ miles away. When they weren't busy with that work, they mended harness and equipment, cared for the animals or chopped and hauled wood.
Scientific Agriculture
1880-1920

W. R. Motherwell's contribution to scientific agriculture was one of the greatest among politicians of the period. Principally a publicist of the new farming techniques, he was a frequent speaker before agricultural societies and, through a series of pamphlets, lectures and voluminous correspondence, he advised farmers on all aspects of dry-land farming.

The harsh, dry climate of the prairie landscape necessitated different farming methods from those practised in Eastern Canada. As a result, individuals, institutions and all levels of government participated in a co-operative effort. New crop and livestock varieties were experimented with and agricultural societies organized fairs at which farmers could display the products of advanced farming practices. Governments issued publications and held public forums on all aspects of the new methods. Debates occurred in the agricultural press as traditionalists and innovators discussed the relative merits of hard and soft wheat. Not all the techniques were adopted immediately—many farmers clung to the old ways. Yet by 1920, most farmers accepted and practised the new methods.

More than anything else, the success of prairie field agriculture depended upon the development of high quality cereal grains capable of maturing in the West's dry climate and short growing season. Huron, Preston, White, and then Red Fife wheat were grown, but in 1905 the Dominion Cerealist Charles Saunders, through crossing Red Fife with Hard Red Calcutta, discovered the famous Marquis wheat. It combined the hardiness of Red Fife with the earlier-ripening quality of Hard Red Calcutta and yielded 400-800 pounds more seed per acre than Red Fife.

During this period of experiment and discovery, the Dominion government established research farms in the West. Two of the most important were the experimental stations at Brandon and Indian Head. New species of shrubs and fruit trees were developed and farmers, given cuttings and seed, were encouraged to plant them. Angus MacKay, of the Indian Head Experimental Station established in 1886, carried out extensive research into summerfallowing. He determined that this method of cultivation in which fields were cropped for two years then left fallow for one, best conserved soil moisture. District farmers, including W. R. Motherwell, supported MacKay's research by practising the new technique in their own fields. More than any other single factor, summerfallowing permitted the successful cultivation of dry-belt farmlands.

Another technique which followed established crop rotation as an alternative to summerfallowing. By planting leguminous forage crops in rotation with cereal grains, farmers could enrich the soil while profiting from their plantings. In the Abernethy area, W. R. Motherwell experimented with Austrian brome grass as a forage in his rotation patterns.

During his tenure as Minister of Agriculture for Saskatchewan, Motherwell founded the College of Agriculture at the University of Saskatchewan. He transferred to it certain activities of his provincial department to enable the college to assume an active role in the community. Later, as federal Minister of Agriculture, he instituted standardization...
and grading of all forms of agricultural produce and contributed to the eradication of tuberculosis in cattle by setting up Restricted T.B. Areas. In each of the provinces, selected areas were set aside where cattle that reacted positively to a tuberculin test were destroyed and the owners of the cattle compensated for their loss. Through this, the people of Canada, especially the children, were protected from contracting the disease through the use of unpasteurized milk from infected animals. Another important contribution made by W. R. Motherwell was the establishment of the Dominion Rust Research Laboratory in 1926 where rust-resistant wheat varieties were developed.
Late in the summer of 1908 our lives changed once again.

For three years my father had been a widower, watching over Tal and me when we lived in Regina, running Lanark Place by proxy and, of course, directing the agricultural affairs of Saskatchewan. I doubt if he really had time to be lonely, but I'm sure he missed the caring attention and companionship of a wife. So, on August 26th, my father married Catherine Jane Gillespie, the lady principal of the File Hills Indian Reserve Boarding School. She was a handsome, intelligent woman, interested in my father's public career and a most gracious hostess to all his personal and political friends. She managed the farm in his absence, relaying my father's instructions to the hired men which she would write on the blackboard in the summer kitchen. When the men had completed the task, they would mark an 'X' beside the instruction for Catherine to see.

Catherine had been a missionary and teacher at File Hills for eleven years before she and my father married. She and her staff taught the children home-making and farming skills and Catherine devoted many hours ministering
to the sick and attempting to Christianize the older Indian people. After her marriage, on any warm summer day, a waggon-load of her friends from the reserve could be found on our lawn, talking and enjoying cups of stout tea. Since she frequently hired Indian girls from File Hills to help with housework, there would often be one of their relations come to visit and share a meal at our table.

Catherine, seated fifth from left, at File Hills School
Janet, standing, far right

"The World for Christ"

Women's Missionary Society
Presbyterian Church in Canada, Western Division

"Helping together with prayer.
Every woman in the Presbyterian Church in Canada is invited to join in these petitions, remembering them in private devotion, at the monthly meeting, at "the prayer hour" between four and six o'clock Sabbath evening.

SUBJECTS FOR PRAYER

January

That the Holy Spirit may take possession of the hearts of the members of our society, enabling them to realize their responsibility towards all God's children so that they may plan for more active work; that He will enable us to consecrate ourselves anew to this work, to give liberally of our time, our abilities and our possessions; that our churches may be centres of Christian activities under the leadership of a devoted ministry.

February

For all our educational missions.

"Mac, if you're not good enough to eat with me, you're not good enough to work for me."

My father insisted as well that there not be any distinction at our table between family and the hired help—we all ate together, even when we entertained company from town.

One of our farmhands, Mr. Major McFadyen, once asked my father if he could take his supper out in the kitchen since there were visitors coming. (Mac didn’t tell my father, but he really didn’t feel like changing to a clean shirt for supper!) My father just looked at him and said, "Mac, if you’re not good enough to eat with me, you’re not good enough to work for me," then turned on his heel and left the barn. Needless to say, Mac put on a clean shirt and came to the table.

After supper every day, we each placed a penny in the ‘cent-a-meal’ box to be donated to the Presbyterian Women’s Missionary Society (Catherine was an active long-time member). Prayers were said, my father read from the scripture and we sang hymns. I do remember though, that some of the hired men weren’t terribly keen on taking part. Major McFadyen in particular would fidget and squirm and was always first one out the door to the barn for evening chores.
TWO MATTERS THAT my father and Catherine were very strict about were drinking and smoking. They were staunch temperance supporters and anyone caught drinking, or for that matter smoking in the barn, was promptly paid for the full month and driven to Indian Head. My father had a great fear of fire, and with good reason: hot ashes or live coals dropped in the barn's hay mows or onto a dry stook in the fields would destroy the farm in no time. My father was always quick to give a word of praise but there was no nonsense about smoking rules. Half an hour was allowed after meals in the kitchen or on the veranda, but never in the barn.
For a few years we kept sheep in the pasture—
wool was a good price and sheep added greatly
to the pastoral scene.

But as we lived near Pheasant Creek where
coyotes occasionally lurked, it was necessary
to have especially close fencing or someone to
keep watch.

By this time, my step-mother's sister Janet
had come to live with us. She had been matron
and housekeeper at the File Hills School while
Catherine was principal and later ran a ladies'
boardinghouse in Abernethy for a few years.

She moved to Lanark Place to help run the
household and be Catherine's companion while
my father was away.

A devout Presbyterian like her older sister,
Aunt Janet taught Sunday School in the village
church for many years. Aunt Janet would also
play the role of shepherdess to our black-faced
sheep in the pasture and on scorching hot days
could be seen—armed with a parasol and sun
hat—sitting in a kitchen chair and keeping
watch over her small flock. She would entertain
us, too, on winter evenings by telling our
fortunes in a teacup or sending a wish up the
chimney. We would write our secret wishes on
slips of paper which were then tossed in the
fireplace. Those that were drawn up the chim­
ney by the draught were supposed to come true.
Machines & Horses

Tal returned from Guelph in 1910 where he had been studying at the Ontario Agricultural College, our father’s alma mater, and began work on the farm full time.

A Hart-Parr gasoline tractor was purchased in 1911 so Tal went to the University of Saskatchewan for a course of instruction on its operation. My father was more than happy that Tal wanted to learn its intricacies, and said he would much rather drive a horse himself—he had a better understanding of how they functioned. He was proud of the fact that he never once rode the binder completely around the field. He preferred to walk behind and do the stooking while the hired men rode the machine. Even though my father purchased sophisticated ploughs, harrows, discs and cultivators, they were usually pulled by his six-horse teams. We had Clydesdales for the field work—big, gentle animals—and driving horses, Wobano (who was Tal’s favourite mount) and Prince, to pull my father’s surrey. It was a lovely carriage that held six people with a top, mud splasher and the extra touch of two carriage lamps on the sides. Catherine had a beautiful phaeton, a two seater, which was drawn by our high-stepping hackney pony. We needed special permission to use that carriage.
Tal and I, when we were younger, drove to school in a small two-wheeled cart which gave one a very rough and bumpy ride. In winter we had a little red jumper, a sleigh which sometimes rode up on Wobano's heels and would toss us out on a slippery corner. Of course Tal did like to drive it quickly to 'test' it, as he said. Each time these vehicles were used they were run into the implement shed afterwards, even though you thought you might later go up to town for the mail. My father insisted we do this; nothing was ever allowed to stand out at the mercy of the elements. Besides housing the carriages, cart and the little red jumper, the implement shed (built between 1903 and 1905) housed most of the farm machinery.
The Barn Raising

Vehicles and implements were seldom stored in the barn. Its purpose was to house the animals, and to store hay, grain and feed.

The barn, designed in the Central Ontario style with stone basement stable and gambrel roof, was built in two stages. In 1896 my father and Adam Cantelon, the stone mason, erected the nine-foot walls and roofed them over with poplar poles and straw. As in the house, built a year later, each of the stones was collected from the surrounding fields and coulees and dragged to the farmstead on the stoneboat.

It wasn't until 1907 that the barn superstructure was erected on the stable walls at one of those old-time gatherings called a barn-raising bee. Unfortunately, my father couldn't be there to supervise. There were many delays in the arrival of the lumber that summer and by the time everything was assembled, he could no longer delay his return to Regina. Tal and I were obliged to return to Regina as well for school, though we pleaded in vain to be allowed to attend the bee.

In any case, Mr. Conrad Krug, a carpenter who had constructed many barns in the district, supervised our barn-raising. Neighbours and friends from all over the district—150 of them—congregated at our farm on that fall morning ready for a full day's activity. The women brewed gallons of coffee and made certain no one went hungry while the men, under Mr. Krug's capable instruction, raised the barn.

The large beams, some of them ten inches square or larger, were grooved and fitted on the ground, then raised in place by block and tackle. Everything had to fit with precision. By nightfall the major structure was up and everyone, tired but pleased, sat down to an enormous supper the women had spread on long tables and planks on the lawn.

The Men's Cottage

Aside from the threshermen's caboose, the only other building on the farmstead was the Men's Cottage.

It was built about 1908 and located northeast of the barn at the end of what we called Lovers' Lane: a long lane shaded by maple and chokecherry trees. The hired men stayed there in spring, summer and fall, then moved to a bedroom over the kitchen in the big house for the winter. The cottage was useful, too, to house the extra threshermen at harvest time. They slept on the second floor and used the caboose as a cookhouse.

The Men's Cottage, Lanark Place
quadrant, barn quadrant, garden quadrant and dugout quadrant—to fulfill specific functions. The rows of shelterbelt trees surrounding each quadrant that he and Tal began planting in 1897 protected the farmstead from the harsh prairie winds. They reproduced, too, the sheltered qualities of the landscape my father left behind in Lanark County, Ontario.

The Dugout Quadrant

The dugout and its surroundings existed to overcome the greatest of the prairie farmer’s problems—lack of water. In our area especially, there was not enough ground water for which to dig a well—and not everyone had a creek or stream on his property. (My father hauled water on a stoneboat, pulled by two horses, from Pheasant Creek a half-mile away. In 1897, the year the house was built, he began to execute his plan for the dugout and afterwards many followed his example.) A horse-drawn scraper was used to excavate the hole and the earth which it turned aside was piled, east and west of the depression, to form mounds. Those mounds, especially when planted with willow, acted as an effective snow fence. The winds blowing in through the openings in the north and west sides of the tree belts were slowed by the mounds and dumped their burden of snow in the hole. Also, the ground around the dugout had been graded so that in the spring all the meltwater flowed into the depression to become the farm’s water supply.

A pump, fed by an underground sand and gravel vein, was used to supply all the water for the house, barn and animals, although it was too hard for washing. For that, one used the rainwater collected in a cistern beneath the kitchen which we replenished with ice at the proper season. Our hired girls were never expected to carry water from the well—that chore was performed by the men at Lanark Place.

The Garden Quadrant

A large garden, contained within surrounding shelterbelts, produced our vegetables and a great variety of fresh. In addition to the garden, there was a shelterbelts behind the implement shed to give an early start to tomatoes, cauliflower and cucumbers. The women on our farm had, it seemed, a never-ending supply of vegetables for canning and pickling, as well as rhubarb and different berries for jellies and jams. The strawberries that grew there were so large we served them in soup-plates.

The rows of the garden were planted north to south, rather than in the usual east-west manner, because fewer turns of the plough were needed in its long rectangular shape. Half of the garden was left unplanted each year, too, since my father strongly believed in the value of summerfallow to conserve soil moisture. He and others discovered the merit of that practice by accident. In 1885 my father leased his horses to carry supplies to the North-West Field Force engaged in the Riel Rebellion, which meant he could not seed all his land. When weeds appeared in the unseeded field that July, he hitched his recently returned horses and ploughed the weeds out of the soil. The following year, in the midst of a drought, the field produced his only crop, yielding 25-30 bushels per acre.
Leaving Home

My brother and I both left Lanark Place before the First World War.

Tal married Marion Diehl, a young woman who had come to Abernethy from Minnesota in February of 1912 to visit her parents. On her first evening in the village, Marion was asked if she would assist in judging at the ice carnival that night. Tal won first prize; resplendent in the gold-braided evening coat, doeskin breeches and tricorn hat that our father had worn the year before at King George V's coronation.

On November 22, 1913, Tal and Marion were wed. They took up residence on the two north quarter sections of land that my father presented to them as a wedding gift, a mile from the family home. Tal farmed the land and raised dairy cattle. He was involved as well in the Abernethy Agricultural Society and community life. Two children were born to Tal and Marion: a son, Richard Edward, in 1914 and two years later, a daughter, Laura Adeline.

Like many other young women from middle-class families of that time, I travelled in Europe to further my education. After completing Normal School in Regina in 1911, I returned
home to teach at Abernethy School. In 1913 I went to France and Germany to study languages and learn more of European culture. The tour was cut short, however, in August of 1914 by the imminent war declared two days after my hasty departure.

Once again, I returned to Lanark Place and taught at Abernethy School. By this time, Catherine and my father had been married for six years. My father was busy still with his work as head of a provincial department: promoting scientific agriculture, giving speeches and writing papers on the new farming practices of the West. He nonetheless found time to give explicit directions for the operation of our farm and incorporated new varieties of trees, shrubs and fruit trees which were recommended as the best for our region. My father's good friend, Angus MacKay of the Indian Head Experimental Farm, provided him with cuttings for these, including Manitoba maple, black ash, Russian poplar and acute-leaf willow.

After a few years of teaching, I returned to school myself and eventually obtained a Master's degree in languages. I taught at Regina Central Collegiate for 8 years, then in 1932 married Angus Donald Mackenzie, a United Church minister.
"I took a vow to myself that if I ever got in a position where I could do it, I would try to reverse the idea that farming is a subservient occupation."
As early as 1883, my father had shown an interest in becoming involved in politics.

His friend, W. G. Ross, with whom he had graduated from the Ontario Agricultural College, wrote to my father on June 20th of that year requesting that he send a copy of his recently written report on North-West farming. Mr. Ross wrote, "...I shall delight in reading and storing its points away in my cranium...," and adding, "I am glad you are getting settled and are liking the prospects, and I hope one day that the district in which you reside will give themselves into your hands to represent them first in the local and then in the Dominion Parliament."

Twenty-two years later, after my father had turned his small homestead into a large comfortable farm, he took up the challenge and became Minister of Agriculture in the first Saskatchewan government. He once said, "I took a vow to myself that if I ever got in a position where I could do it, I would try to reverse the idea that farming is a subservient occupation." He spent the next 34 years involved in that task.
Provincial Career

During his tenure as Minister of Agriculture in the Saskatchewan legislature from 1905 to 1918 my father became an ardent spokesman for the scientific agricultural practices of the day.

He gave speeches, issued bulletins, corresponded with farmers, and initiated the Better Farming Train tours. My Aunt Janet even got into the spirit of it all and managed the Nursery Car on one train. She cared for the children so their parents could attend demonstrations and see exhibits in other cars.

In 1908, when the University of Saskatchewan was founded, my father maintained his vow and convinced Premier Scott and his colleagues that a 'universal' education could not be given in the strict sense of the word unless agriculture was included as a faculty of the university.

In December, 1918 my father resigned from the provincial Cabinet, in part over the issue of French language rights. He was a staunch supporter of minority rights and saw himself as a spokesman for the common people. In his letter of resignation he told his colleagues "...we are confronted with the strong possibility of a mighty conflict in Canada between the privileged classes and the common people. As my sympathy and my heart are with the latter, I must have perfect freedom to champion their cause at every opportunity, in season and out."

During what he termed his convalescence from political life, my father lived with Catherine at Lanark Place, absorbed in farming and the cultivation of brome grass. He did, however, want to return to politics. He contested the federal seat in the Assiniboia by-election of 1919 but was unsuccessful. Two years later in December of 1921, nearly 62 years old—when most people would be thinking of retirement—my father again contested a federal constituency.
On to Ottawa

This time he won and was invited by Prime Minister Mackenzie King to become Minister of Agriculture for Canada.

For the next 17 years my father proceeded to carry through a program of reforms which, as a farmer and an experienced administrator, he felt were necessary to upgrade the standing of agriculture in Canada.

In 1927, W. R. Motherwell was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Letters by the University of Saskatchewan for his contribution to Canadian agriculture.
Six months before my father's 80th birthday he announced his retirement from politics. The announcement was made at a gathering held in Abernethy on June 13th, 1939 to celebrate the 57th anniversary of the day he first turned the sod on his homestead. Four hundred citizens gathered to do honour to him on that day.

My father and Catherine retired to Lanark Place, able at last to enjoy their home after a 17 year absence in Ottawa. Unfortunately, the farmstead had been allowed to deteriorate under the supervision of various farm managers through the years: paint never freshened, the fences unrepaired, and though Barbara Gillespie, Catherine's sister-in-law, had maintained the flower beds, they would never again look as fine as when we all lived at Lanark Place.

On May 24th, 1943 my father died. Loved by his family and regarded by many as the 'Grand Old Man of Canadian Agriculture,' he was buried near my mother in the Abernethy village cemetery.
Credits

Unless otherwise noted, the photographs published in this booklet have been selected from the Motherwell Collection, Parks Canada.

Page
3 Lanark Place, c. 1909
4 Settlers removing goods from baggage car, c. 1880s
Man, dog and dugout barn
5 Ukrainian family, c. 1903
“Old and new homesteads” Family at Archie Roberge homestead, Plunkett, Saskatchewan
7 Man with walking plow and oxen
8 Ontario Agricultural College, 1878
Wagon Train
9 Surveying party, c. 1887
14 Sir William Whyte Railway gang
15 Trestle bridge over Pheasant Creek
Alma and Talmage Motherwell, c. 1907
16 Wheat Market at Wolseley, N.W.T., 1902
17 Grain wagon on platform
18 Barn at Lanark Place, 1907
19 Man milking cow, cat drinking
20 Hauling wood in Pheasant Creek
21 Threshing near Abernethy
24 University of Saskatchewan Farm Laboratory at Experimental Farm, Lethbridge, Alberta
25 Experimental Farm, Indian Head, 1923
37 Detail of men at barn raising near Pense, Saskatchewan, 1908
42 Hill’s hay tedder
44 Better Farming Train
Janet Gillespie in Nursery Car

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