

For Further Reading

Patrick A. Dunae, Gentlemen Emigrants: From the British Public School to the Canadian Frontier, Douglas McIntyre, 1981.

Doug Owsram, Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900; University of Toronto Press, 1980.

Contact Information:

Inquiry Centre

(306) 953-3751

Within Canada

1-800-205-7070

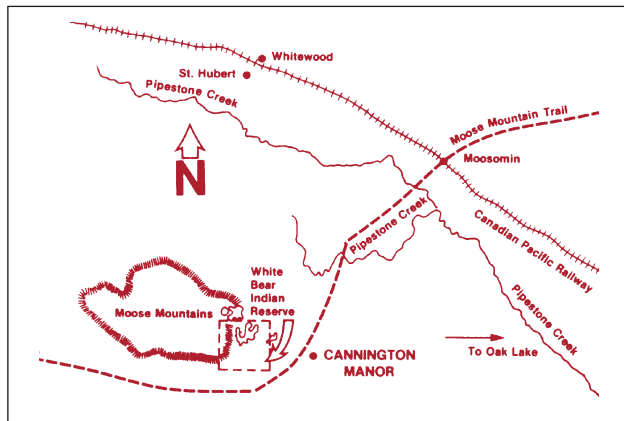
Mon-Fri 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Saskatchewan Environment

3211 Albert Street Regina, Saskatchewan S4S 5W6

Website: www.serm.gov.sk.ca

If you do not wish to keep this brochure, please return it.
Recycling helps the environment.



The Cannington Manor area, 1890



06/5M
Printed in
Canada

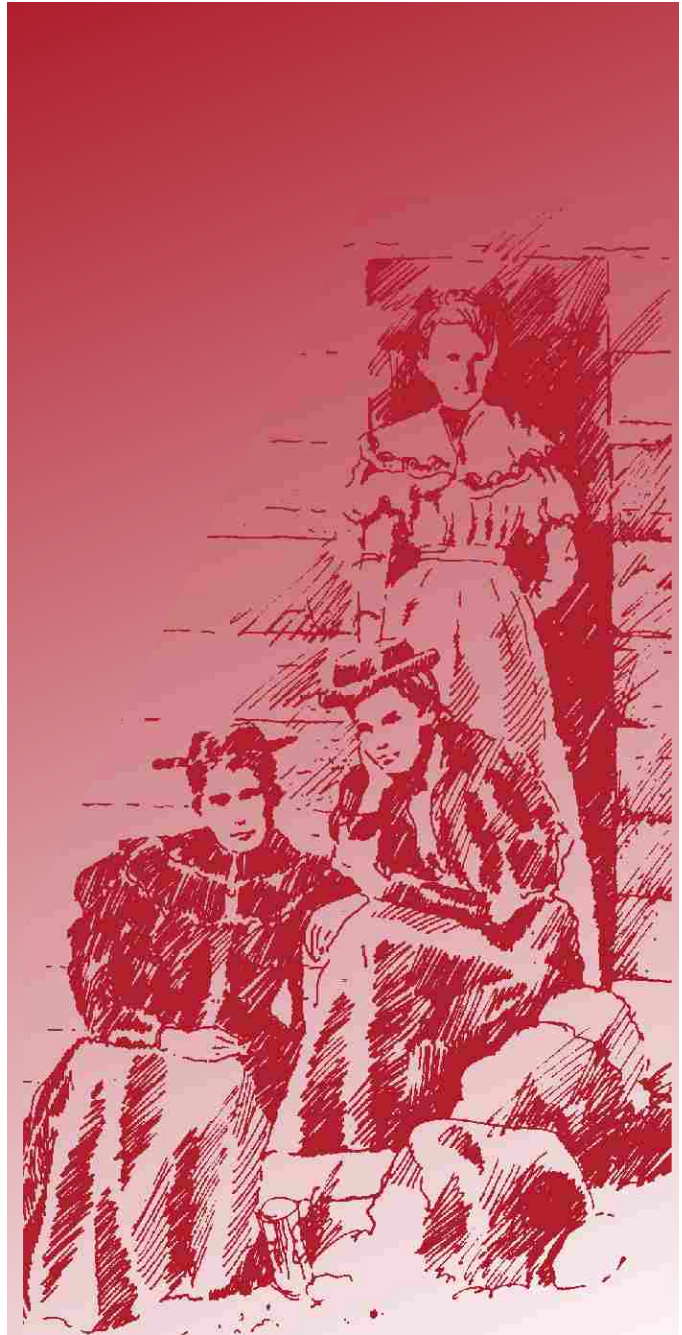


Saskatchewan
Environment

SASKATCHEWAN
PARKS

Cannington Manor

Provincial Park



A Walk Through History

Cannington Manor

Provincial Park



In the 1880s and 1890s Cannington Manor epitomized the vision held by the Canadian government and others of working to establish a British agricultural society on the prairies. This vision, like Cannington Manor, did not survive the realities of the prairies.

In 1882, settlers from Great Britain, Ontario and other parts of the British Empire began homesteading southeast of the Moose Mountains. Within a few years, Edward Pierce and his partners in the Moose Mountain Trading Company established the village of Cannington Manor to serve these settlers and to encourage others to come to the area. Many village residents and area settlers struggled for years to establish and maintain the social customs of Victorian England and an agricultural base for their society.

By the mid-1890s the futility of their efforts was apparent, and by 1900 the village of Cannington Manor was abandoned.

Today, selected village buildings have been reconstructed or restored to recapture this short but intriguing era. Interpretive staff are on site to answer questions and to demonstrate period activities.

This booklet is a self-guide to the village and the people who once lived there. The Visitor Centre is the best place to start.



Beckton Ranch

The input of Beckton dollars must certainly have helped the economic situation at Cannington Manor. The early 1890s were terrible years for farmers. Frost and drought destroyed crops and wheat prices plummeted to an all-time low in 1894.

The failure to secure a rail line doomed the agricultural industries. They were isolated from potential markets and paid extra both to have goods freighted into the village and products freighted out to the rail line at Moosomin. They could not compete in Eastern markets and local demand was not sufficient to keep the businesses operating.

The homesteaders who struggled through the 1890s were rewarded with an upswing in the economy during the first years of the 20th century. For the village, however, the change came too late. The businesses had failed and most residents had left. Perhaps Inglis Sheldon-Williams described Cannington Manor best:

“Built upon a raw new country, on unstable foundations, the anomaly could not endure, but the short life was a merry one. . . If we did nothing else, we contributed a piquant chapter to the literature of pioneering.”

Cannington Manor

Site Guide

They tended to initiate and dominate most of the community organizations and social clubs. They built large homes and many had servants. However, what none of these families had was large amounts of money. Indeed for many it was a loss of income that prompted their move to Canada. This attitude was summed up most simply by Edward Pierce's statement that prospective settlers could "live like princes on the money required in England just for taxes."

The third group consisted of young, unmarried English gentlemen with no visible means of support "remittance men", or as they were known around Cannington Manor, "the bachelors".

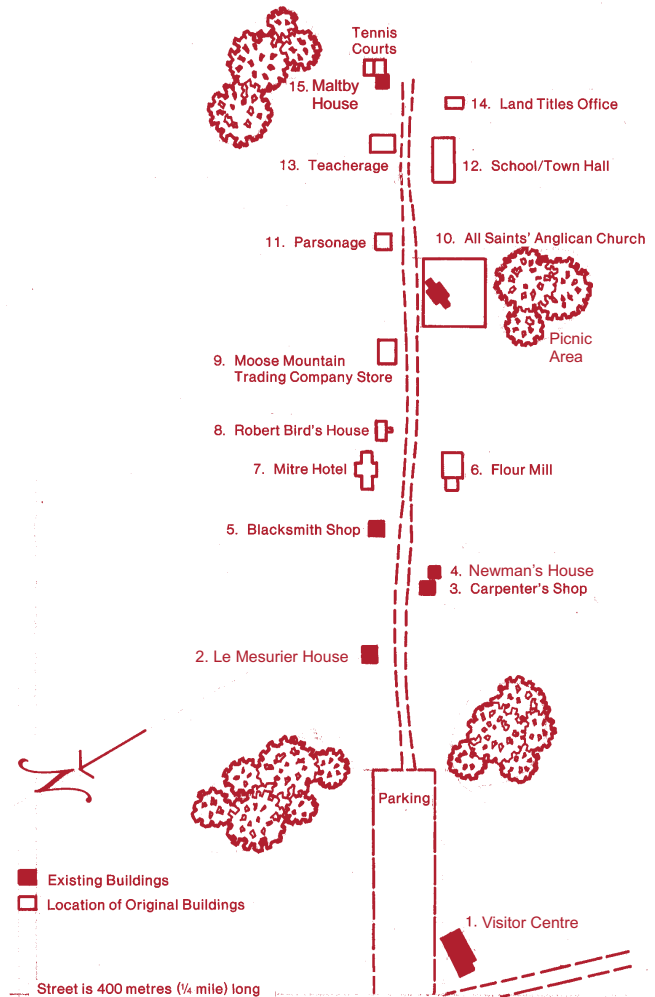
Some, like Inglis Sheldon-Williams and Jack Stanier were sent ahead to prepare a homestead for the arrival of the rest of their family. For the most part, the bachelors were younger sons of prosperous families, who had graduated from select English schools. Most had left England frustrated by social barriers and lack of career opportunities. Many had come as agricultural students or "pups". None had any practical preparation for life in the North West.

The typical bachelor refused to take anything too seriously and hated to miss any social or sporting event. A few, like Arthur Le Mesurier, managed to obtain a homestead patent, while others picked up temporary work from farmers or the Moose Mountain Trading Company.

Eventually, most left for more secure employment or for further adventures in the Boer War or Yukon gold fields.

The Beckton brothers deserve special mention, since most of the stories that abound about "the dudes" at Cannington Manor involve their exploits. Originally, they had come as agricultural pupils of Edward Pierce, but a sizeable inheritance from their grandfather changed their situation. The Becktons were the only truly wealthy people in the community and they spent their money on a grand scale.

The three brothers and their wives were the centre of the "sporting set" and devoted much time, energy and money to horse racing, fox hunting and generally having a good time. While those of a more serious nature scorned this lifestyle, it should be remembered that the Becktons created employment for many people in the community. Joseph Newman, for example, had three years of steady carpentry work while the Becktons were building Didsbury, their stock farm.



1. Visitor Centre

The modern displays in the Visitor Centre will help to familiarize you with the village. Take the time to look through them before beginning your visit.

2. The Le Mesurier Home - or Bachelors Cabin

Most of the bachelors at Cannington Manor built cabins or shacks very similar to this one. This cabin is a reproduction of Arthur Le Mesurier's.

Arthur Le Mesurier homesteaded eight kilometres west of the village. Unlike many young men who left Cannington Manor to seek further adventures, Arthur married and settled permanently in the area.

Try making rope when you visit this building.



A Bachelor Cabin Interior

3. Carpenter's Shop - Joseph Newman

Joseph Newman was in his late fifties when he came to Cannington Manor.

In the small shop rented from the Moose Mountain Trading Company, he made a variety of items needed in a rural area with everything from utilitarian furniture to coffins.

4. Carpenter's House - Newman Family

When their daughter died, Joseph and Elizabeth Newman took their four youngest granddaughters to live with them at Cannington Manor.

Mrs. Newman was an invalid for much of this time, but everyone worked hard to make the small shanty-roofed house into a real home. Today, when you visit you might be able to sample some baking from the wood stove.



Four of the Newman's granddaughters

The second group of people at Cannington Manor consisted of families such as the Pierces and the Humphrys, who expected something more from life than eke out a living on a homestead. They intended to live as gentlemen farmers, but supported themselves by establishing agricultural businesses and industries. Their ventures included the Moose Mountain Trading Company, Humphrys' Pork Packing Industry and two cheese factories.

IF YOU WANT THE
CHOICEST

Bacon and Hams

Like English Wiltshire,

BUY

•• **HUMPHRYS & SONS** ••



CELEBRATED BRAND

PORK PACKERS,

Cannington Manor, Assa.

Pure Lard, Cambridge
Sausage, etc.

B. D. McNaughton & Co.,
Agents for Moosomin.

These people were not prepared to give up the amenities of life, and attempted to transplant the social customs and activities of upper-middle class England to the prairies.

The Moose Mountain Trading Company, headed by Edward Pierce, was the impetus behind the early development of Cannington Manor village. Agricultural growth depended on the gritty determination of settlers like the Downeys, Hindmarches, Turtons and Brayfords to hang on through drought, frost and poor markets.



Breaking the Land

1888-1900: Aspirations Meet Reality

The year 1888 brought many changes to Cannington Manor. In June, Edward Pierce died of a stroke. The Canadian Pacific Railroad decided to build the branch rail line 16 kilometres south of the settlement. Still, the spring and summer brought new families and more bachelors to Cannington Manor.

Elsewhere in the North West, support was being given to immigration from other parts of Europe. Romanian, German, French, Mennonite, Danish and Icelandic settlements were beginning to dot the map. The Moose Mountain region, however, and especially Cannington Manor, continued to be a haven for immigrants of British origin.

With the influx of new people, a complex social order was beginning to emerge with three distinct groups of people: the homesteaders and tradesmen; upper-middle class families; and the bachelors.

Although often overlooked, the homesteaders and tradesmen were the economic foundation of the community. Indulging in none of the frivolous activities of the “English group”, these people knew what to expect in the North West. Their goals were simple. They wanted their own land and were prepared to work and sacrifice for it. Some of these people came from Ontario, while others, originally from Britain, had been living in other parts of Canada for a number of years. Others, like the Brayfords, came to Cannington Manor directly from England.

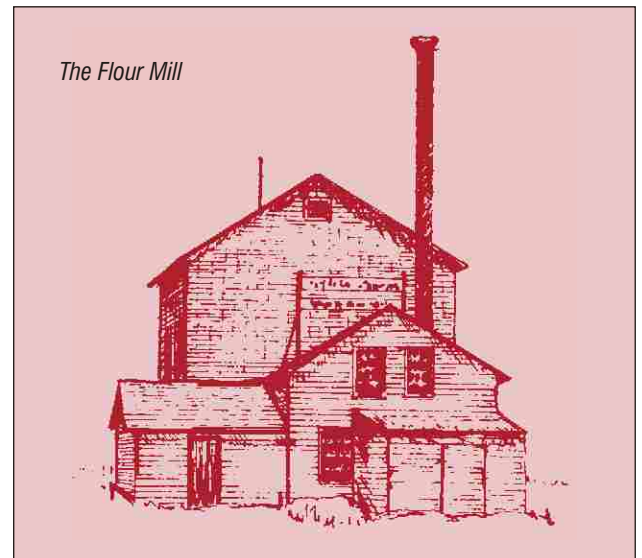
5. Blacksmith Shop - Hume Robertson

As with all the village businesses and tradesmen, Hume Robertson rented his blacksmith shop from the Moose Mountain Trading Company. In this small building he shod horses, repaired machinery and ran a Massey-Harris implement dealership. Like the Le Mesuriers and the Newmans, the Robertson family settled permanently in this area.

6. Flour Mill - Harold Fripp

Although not the first nor only miller at Cannington Manor, Harold Fripp was the best known for grinding high quality flour. His “Snowdrop” brand won first prize at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair.

Owned by the Moose Mountain Trading Company, the mill was a vital part of the village economy. Men found work either in the mill, or cutting and hauling wood for the steam-powered engines. Also, farmers waiting for grain to be milled brought much-needed business to the village.



The Flour Mill

7. The Mitre Hotel

The Mitre Hotel was the resting place for travellers and farmers doing business in the village. After prohibition was repealed in 1892, the Mitre Hotel also became a social haven for many of the area bachelors. Here, the chores and drudgery of the homesteads or cordwood camps could be forgotten in the atmosphere of friendly camaraderie.



Relaxing at the Mitre Hotel

8. Robert Bird's House

A partner in the Moose Mountain Trading Company, Robert Bird also worked as the store keeper. He and his wife, Mabel Shaw Page, lived in a small stuccoed bungalow beside the store until 1898, when they moved to British Columbia.

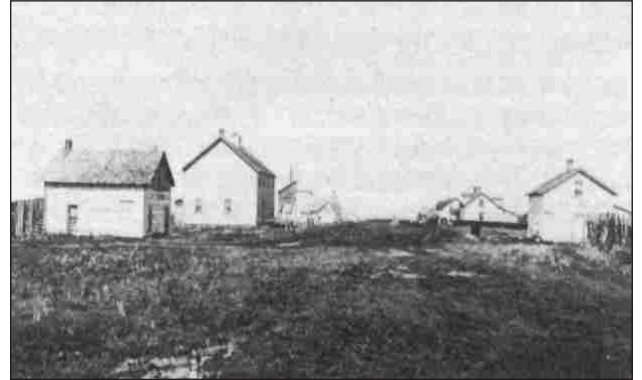


Robert and Mabel Bird's Wedding

9. Moose Mountain Trading Company Store

The general store provided a link to the outside world, especially for the women. Here, they could pick up the mail and buy goods from England or Ontario. Sometimes, however, there were few items to choose from, since all goods had to be shipped by rail to Moosomin, then hauled by wagon to the village.

With the energy and optimism typical of an upper-middle class Victorian, Pierce set about doing the "pile of work". In 1882 and 1883, he corresponded with the federal government about problems in opening the land around the Moose Mountains for settlement. He started his well-known, if ineffectual, Agricultural College to train the many young bachelors coming to the area.



Cannington Manor Village circa 1897

He and his son Duncan wrote letters to English newspapers to stimulate immigration.

He donated land for the church and parsonage.

He founded the Moose Mountain Trading Company.

In 1884, Pierce formed a partnership with Robert Bird to start the Moose Mountain Trading Company. Two years later, Robert's brother Harry and his friend Ernest Maltby completed the partnership.

The Moose Mountain Trading Company was the heart of Pierce's vision of Cannington Manor as a base for rural industrial development. In many ways, Cannington Manor was a company town. During 1884-1889, the Carpenter's Shop, School/Town Hall, Land Titles Office, Teacherage, the Maltby House and Robert Bird's House were constructed by the Company.

Besides owning these buildings and businesses, the Moose Mountain Trading Company also provided post office facilities, building materials, implements, seed grain, pure-bred cattle and sheep, freighting services to Moosomin, marriage licences, handling of land transfers and mortgages, and implement and fire insurance.

Cannington Manor

A Brief History - 1882-1900

Introduction

When the federal government bought its claim to Western Canada from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1869-70, it planned drastic changes for most of the territory. Wilderness fur trade was out; economic expansion through settlement was in.

During the 1870s and 1880s, Canadian settlement policy for the west sought to establish a thoroughly British social order based on an agricultural economy.

Land was surveyed and selected areas opened for settlement. Immigration offices appeared in British and European cities. While literature celebrated the quality of life in the North West, Canada waited for the floods of immigrants to arrive. The flood proved to be a mere trickle.

There was a modest influx in 1882, but available land in the Dakotas drew many south to the United States. With the Canadian Pacific Railroad still incomplete, transportation to homesteads was next to impossible. A continuing economic depression crushed wheat prices while frost and drought destroyed crops.

In many respects, Edward Michell Pierce could not have chosen a worse time to emigrate.



1882-1888: Edward Pierce and the Moose Mountain Trading Company

Although Edward Pierce founded Cannington Manor, he was not the first settler in the area. Nevertheless, Pierce did see himself as leader and spokesman for the district.

Edward Michell Pierce

In a letter to Ottawa he stated;

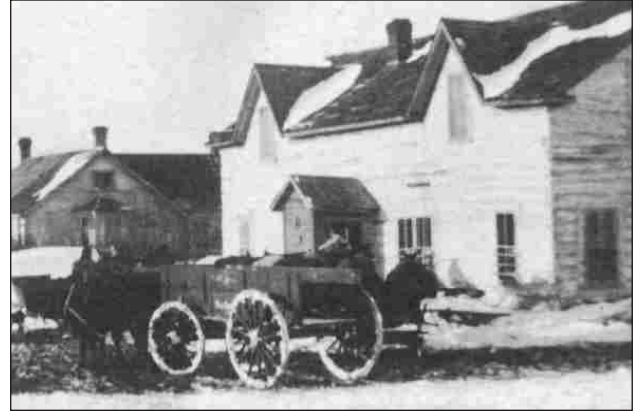
“...it is the universal desire, as soon as the districts are incorporated, that I shall represent the people at Ottawa.”

and later in the same letter;

“There is a pile of work to be done here of which I am more fitted to undertake, than grubbing up of the land around me for grain growing, etc.”

Jessie (Pierce) Beckton wrote,

“With the . . . opening of the mill and store, we thought we had stepped back into civilization, and life took on a new aspect.”



The Store



Interior of Church

10. All Saints Anglican Church - The Pierce Family

Soon after they arrived at their father's homestead, Jessie, Lily and Francis Pierce decided a church was needed and convinced Edward Pierce to donate the land. Their brothers and neighbors hauled logs for the building, and in June 1884 a church-raising was held. Local carpenters were paid with funds solicited in England to finish the interior. While they lived in Cannington Manor, the Pierce family was involved in various church activities.

Today, the church is the property of the Diocese of Qu'Appelle, and is used still by the local congregation. Please respect the church grounds and property.

11. Parsonage - Anglican Clergy

With the church came the need for a parsonage. The modest frame building housed a succession of Anglican clergymen, all of whom came from England to the North West. Many adapted remarkably well to their isolated parish.

12. School/Town Hall - The Children

In September 1889, 13 children came to the newly-built School/Town Hall for their first day of school. Prior to this, there had been no formal system of education. Spencer Page assumed the teaching duties at the new school. Lessons were held on the first floor of the large frame building, while the upstairs functioned as a Town Hall.



School Children

13. The Teacherage - Louis Kent

When Louis Kent moved to Cannington Manor in 1894, the log house built on this site in 1887 by the Moose Mountain Trading Company became a teacherage. Kent took over the teaching position when Spencer Page left to pursue a political career. Tragically, Kent died of appendicitis two years later, and his family returned to England.

14. Land Titles Office - C. E. Phipps

In 1889, the federal government opened a Land Titles Office in Cannington Manor and appointed Charles Phipps the agent.

Phipps, a former page to Queen Victoria and a Major in the Royal Irish Regiment, worked in the village until 1891 when both he and the operation were relocated to Oxbow.

15. Maltby House - Ernest and Mary Maltby

As well as being the fourth partner in the Moose Mountain Trading Company, Ernest Maltby was also the local Post Master.

In 1892, he married Mary Humphrys and they settled into Ernest's house in the village. By then, two new wings and clapboard siding had been added to the original log building.

Both Mary and Ernest led active social lives. He was a member of various sports clubs, while she was a talented amateur artist. The Maltbys moved to the town of Manor at the turn of the century, where they lived for nine years before moving to British Columbia.



Ernest and Mary (Humphrys) Maltby



Tennis party assembled at the Maltby House