

Laying the Foundations:  
Arthur Silver Morton  
and His Early Saskatchewan Heritage Activities

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## Abstract

This study examines Arthur Silver Morton's (1870-1945) Saskatchewan heritage activities. From 1914, when he arrived to teach history at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon until his death thirty-one years later, Morton worked to collect, preserve, and commemorate the textual and material remains of the province's past. He is best known for his historical writings, including his major work, A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71 (1939). Morton's accomplishments, however, went much further than his writings for an academic audience. He was, in many ways, a pioneer in the field of public history in his efforts to bring historical knowledge to a general audience. Morton founded and was active in several local and provincial historical societies. An avid explorer of historic sites, Morton also discovered the remains of many fur trading posts in Saskatchewan. Finally, Morton's concern for the preservation of historical documents led to his appointment in 1937 as Keeper of the Public Records for the province's Historical Public Records Office--the precursor of the present-day Saskatchewan Archives Board--at the University of Saskatchewan. This side of Morton's career has never been examined by Canadian historians. This study first recounts Morton's background and examines what motivated him to immerse himself in the history of his adopted province.

It goes on to describe and appraise his heritage activities in Saskatchewan. The principal sources for this work were the papers of A.S. Morton held at the University of Saskatchewan Archives and the Saskatchewan Archives Board.

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I also wish to acknowledge my gratitude to the College of Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Saskatchewan for the financial assistance I received as I worked towards my degree.

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## Chapter One

### "To Begin at the Very Beginning"

In his introduction to the second edition of Arthur Silver Morton's monumental work, A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71 (1939; 1973), the distinguished western historian, Lewis G. Thomas, said of Morton: "He was not without talent as a popularizer and his work for extension in a university that saw itself as dedicated to the needs of the people of a predominantly agricultural province was a major factor in giving Saskatchewan a consciousness of its history, one deeper perhaps than that of any other western province."<sup>1</sup> Morton is generally remembered for his historical work, A History, which has added enormously to the knowledge of the Canadian prairie region. Yet, as Lewis' description indicates, there was another dimension to Morton's work. Morton was in fact the leading figure in the early Saskatchewan heritage movement from 1914, when he arrived to teach history at the University of Saskatchewan at the age of forty-four, until his death in 1945.

Morton came to Saskatchewan late in his life with origins, education and experience far removed from the field in which he would soon immerse himself. He was born in the village of Iere in Trinidad, British West Indies on May 16,

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<sup>1</sup>Lewis G. Thomas, "Introduction," in Arthur Silver Morton. A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71, 2nd ed. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), p.xxii.

1870. His father, Reverend John Morton, of Scotch Presbyterian descent, was born in Pictou County, Nova Scotia. His mother, Sarah Etter Silver, was the daughter of an Anglican Halifax merchant. In the winter of 1865, John Morton was sent to the Caribbean to recover his health. During his visit to Trinidad he was deeply disturbed at the plight of nearly 20,000 Hindu labourers brought from India to work on the sugar estates there.<sup>2</sup> On his return to Canada, he convinced his church to establish a mission in Trinidad for the East Indians, stating that it was "important that these be saved from their dark idolatry or Mohammedan delusion."<sup>3</sup> Morton and his wife were the first Canadian missionaries in Trinidad. They arrived on the island in February 1868 and began a lifetime of work educating and converting the Indians.<sup>4</sup>

The Morton's had one daughter, Agnes, and three sons, Arthur, Nyren and William. While John Morton was concerned about the spiritual plight of his Hindu charges, he felt that their character was morally unprincipled.<sup>5</sup> He therefore sent his three sons to Queen's Royal College, an exclusive boys' school in Port of Spain. Prejudice and

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<sup>2</sup>Donald Wood, Trinidad in Transition; The Years After Slavery. (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), p. 279.

<sup>3</sup>Sarah Morton, John Morton of Trinidad. (Toronto: Westminster Co., 1916), p. 8.

<sup>4</sup>Donald Wood, Trinidad in Transition, p.279.

<sup>5</sup>Sarah Morton, John Morton in Trinidad, p. 8.



bigotry flourished in Trinidad. The small Scottish community sought to maintain their sense of ethnic identity in a crown colony with a large immigrant population drawn from all corners of the world. The college, a symbol of British Protestant intransigence in Trinidad, set very high academic standards.<sup>6</sup> Morton received the equivalent of a British public school education in the tropics, passing the Cambridge Local Examinations in 1889 with five honours. He was awarded one of the four scholarships for study at a British university granted annually by the colonial government of the island.<sup>7</sup> Departing in 1889 for six years of study at the University of Edinburgh in Scotland, Morton returned only once in his life to Trinidad for a short visit.<sup>8</sup>

While Morton had led a relatively sheltered life in Trinidad, it is doubtful that he felt intimidated in the Presbyterian atmosphere of the University of Edinburgh. The traditional values of Scottish Calvinism by which he had been raised provided him with a strong sense of independence and self-assurance. Morton had the capacity for sheer hard work and discipline that were required to complete the Edinburgh Master of Arts in humanities. As well, family

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<sup>6</sup>James G. Greenlee, Sir Robert Falconer: A Biography. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988), pp. 11-12.

<sup>7</sup>University of Saskatchewan Archives (UA), Morton Papers, I.11, Autobiography, n.d.

<sup>8</sup>Sarah Morton, John Morton of Trinidad, p. 308.

tradition and personal piety had instilled in Morton a sense of responsibility to work for the benefit of others. It was thus a natural step for him also to complete the two year course in theology required for the Bachelor of Divinity degree at Edinburgh. Neither could Morton have felt isolated during his years at Edinburgh. A high proportion of students from overseas, usually from families like Morton's with Scottish backgrounds, attended the university in the years before 1900.<sup>9</sup> His boyhood friends, Robert and James Falconer, sons of another Trinidadian missionary of Nova Scotian descent, attended Edinburgh around the same time. Morton also came to know Walter Murray, a Canadian Maritimer who was to become his lifelong friend and who was to have a major impact on his subsequent career.

Prior to 1889, the year of Morton's arrival at the University of Edinburgh, an arts candidate at a Scottish university was required to follow a restricted curriculum, with seven traditional subjects forming its core. The Universities (Scotland) Act of 1889 significantly broadened the curriculum, resulting in the creation of new chairs in history and modern European languages at Edinburgh in the 1890s. Morton was thus among the first students to be educated under the reformed system, and was able to choose

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<sup>9</sup>R.D. Anderson, Education and Opportunity in Victorian Scotland. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), p. 294.

from a wide range of arts and science subjects.<sup>10</sup> He specialized in church and medieval history, and studied French as well. He spent one summer of his university years in France furthering his fluency in the language.

Major intellectual developments were taking place in historical scholarship during the latter part of the nineteenth century at a time when history as an academic discipline was in its infancy in Victorian England. The extent to which these developments influenced Morton is reflected in his later career in the heritage movement of Saskatchewan. Morton's enthusiasm for collecting documents and artifacts, his insistence on "attaining a complete mastery of the facts",<sup>11</sup> and his emphasis on the close study of historical geography can all be traced to the Victorian fascination with the past.

Even before history won academic recognition at the ancient universities, historical pursuits were immensely popular among the literate classes of nineteenth century England. Amateur historians, or antiquarians, had an enormous range of interests, including archaeology,

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<sup>10</sup>The reforms of the 1890s allowed university students in Scotland to choose seven subjects from a whole range of arts and science subjects in four departments: language and literature (including modern languages), mental philosophy, science, and history and law. Four of the seven subjects chosen had to be Latin or Greek, English or a modern language or history, logic or moral philosophy, and mathematics or natural philosophy. *Ibid.*, p. 270.

<sup>11</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.11, A.S. Morton, "Application for Carnegie Corporation Grant," Dec. 2, 1932.

numismatics, genealogy, and even botany.<sup>12</sup> The antiquarian method was overwhelmingly empirical and involved the collection and classification of both documents and artifacts as a means of recreating the English past. Typically, members of the antiquarian community were involved in learned societies, which were, as one historian has observed, "the characteristic institution of the age."<sup>13</sup> While the antiquarians saw themselves as the guardians of the nation's heritage, their focus was primarily on local history. As members of learned societies they held monthly meetings, published journals and editions of old documents, and made excursions to sites of local interest.<sup>14</sup>

Professional historians, on the other hand, had little time for antiquarian pursuits, preferring to work almost exclusively from written sources. British government initiatives in the field of record and manuscript preservation and administration during the late nineteenth century had resulted in the greater accessibility of sources for the emerging historical profession.<sup>15</sup> Influenced by the new "scientific" methodology made mandatory by the German

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<sup>12</sup> Philippa Levine, The Amateur and the Professional: Antiquarians, Historians and Archaeologists in Victorian England, 1838-1886. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp.13-23.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p.40.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 40-69.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 122.

historian Leopold von Ranke, British historians began to develop a more critical approach to their sources and to insist upon a more rigorous analysis of documents.<sup>16</sup>

Ranke's famous statement that "[h]istory...wants to show only what actually happened," became the rallying cry for professional historians. The text, always a key source for historical investigation, became the only valid source of knowledge about the past. The study of physical relics, the domain of antiquarians and archaeologists, was relegated to the fringes of historical enterprise.<sup>17</sup> Archival work became the main research activity of the professional historian by the turn of the century.

Although historians in the late 1800s regarded their work as superior to that of the antiquarians, they in fact owed much to the forms of antiquarian research. The well known Greek and Roman historian Arnaldo Momigliano has observed that the antiquarians helped to bring about the nineteenth-century revolution in historical method. The antiquarian "...rescued history from the sceptics," Momigliano states. "His preference for original documents, his ingenuity for discovering forgeries, his skill in collecting and classifying the evidence and, above all, his unbounded love for learning are the antiquary's contribution

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<sup>16</sup>Rosemary Jann, The Art and Science of Victorian History. (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1985), pp. xxiii-xv.

<sup>17</sup>Philippa Levine, The Amateur and the Professional, p. 173.

to the 'ethics' of the historian."<sup>18</sup> The antiquarian approach has been absorbed into historical studies to the extent that there is no longer any need to make a distinction between the two disciplines.

An indication of the nineteenth century professional historians' debt to the antiquarian method can be found in their insistence on a physical acquaintance with the geography of the area under study. In her book outlining the major intellectual traditions that converge in Victorian historiography, scholar Rosemary Jann states that the historian of the "romantic" tradition aimed to bring the past to life by immersing himself into the entire era so that the past could be "felt" rather than merely observed. "Before he could understand the significance of the facts," Jann writes, "he had to 'resuscitate' them: he had to recreate the past in all its specificity before it would divulge its unifying principles."<sup>19</sup> Often, this process of resuscitation involved the close study of geographical and archaeological detail. One nineteenth century historian who most successfully integrated geographical data into his historical writings was John Richard Green. Green was among the first English historians to incorporate geographical and archaeological detail into his political accounts. He

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<sup>18</sup> Arnaldo Momigliano, "Ancient History and the Antiquarian," in Arnaldo Momigliano, Studies in Historiography, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1966), p. 27.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., pp. xxi-xxii.

considered on-site visits essential, and never travelled without a notebook, recording descriptions, notes and sketches of natural features or historical remains.<sup>20</sup> Green was convinced that "History strikes its roots in Geography; for without a clear and vivid realization of the physical structure of a country the incidents of the life which men have lived in it can have no interest or meaning."<sup>21</sup> Green helped other historians, including E.A. Freeman, to appreciate the importance of terrain in history, and by the end of the century, on-site visits were, according to Jann, "de rigueur" for the finished historian.<sup>22</sup>

The degree to which Morton was influenced by the collecting impulses of the antiquarians, the scientific research methods of the Rankean school, or the geographical "realism" of the romantic historians can only be surmised. Lewis G. Thomas, a western Canadian historian, has asked: "[H]ow far is it possible, given the resources available for the investigation of the social, intellectual, and cultural history of Canada, for any scholar to perceive and accurately represent the relationship between a Canadian

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<sup>20</sup>W.G. Addison, J.R. Green, (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1946), p. 92.

<sup>21</sup>John Richard Green and Alice Stopford Green, A Short Geography of the British Isles, (London: Macmillan, 1880), p. xi.

<sup>22</sup>Rosemary Jann, The Art and Science of Victorian History, p. 192.

intellectual and the tradition in which he is nurtured?"<sup>23</sup>

That Morton was a enthusiastic collector of both textual and material evidence of culture is clear. From his arrival in Saskatchewan in 1914 he built up the University library's excellent history collection. After many years of amassing historical documents, Morton was appointed Keeper of the Provincial Records for the Historical Public Records Office in 1937. Morton also organized the Museum Committee of the University Historical Association for the purpose of collecting pioneer artifacts. That he was convinced that a true perspective of history could be gained only through the careful use of documents is undeniable. His 932-page book, A History of the Canadian West, 1870-1871, was based entirely on primary sources which he tackled with great enthusiasm and diligence. The historian, Morton stated, must "follow in the footsteps of those before [him]..." and collect his facts "...some hidden in material...only to be found by the most searching...analysis...others again to be gathered in wholly unexpected places like so many boulders carried away by a glacier from their native stratum--but all to be subjected to the most rigid criticism."<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Lewis G. Thomas, "The Writing of History in Western Canada," in David Jay Bercuson and Phillip A. Buckner, eds., Eastern and Western Perspectives; Papers From the Joint Atlantic Canada/Western Canadian Studies Conference. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1981), p. 80.

<sup>24</sup>UA, Morton Papers, II.43, A.S. Morton. "Problems in the Study of the History of the Canadian North West", n.d., n.p.



Morton believed that an intimate knowledge of the geography of a region was essential for solving historical problems. Of all the materials available to the historian, Morton maintained that "the most important at the outset is the geography--the physical conditions under which people have had to live."<sup>25</sup> An avid explorer of the historic sites of the province, Morton was fascinated by the problems of determining the exact locations of old trading posts. His explorations turned up the remains of many forts and resulted in a substantial collection of papers on the historical geography of Saskatchewan--some fifteen volumes--which are presently housed in the Provincial Archives. Because of his vast knowledge of Saskatchewan's physical heritage, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) frequently consulted Morton regarding the selection of sites, the form of monuments, and the accuracy of historical data for monument inscriptions.

After Morton completed his studies at Edinburgh, he spent the summer of 1896 at the University of Berlin furthering his study of theology under Adolf Harnack. Harnack, the foremost New Testament scholar of the time, was best known for his three-volume work, The History of Dogma (1886-1889). He minimized the role of dogma and advanced the discipline of history as the key to penetrating

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<sup>25</sup>Ibid., n.p.

the heart of the Christian religion.<sup>26</sup> Harnack taught that careful historical scrutiny could reveal the fundamentals of religion. Morton's friends, the Falconer brothers and Walter Murray, had attended Harnack's lectures during the summer of 1891, and possibly their enthusiasm for the course persuaded Morton to follow in their footsteps.<sup>27</sup> The 1860s marked the beginning of what scholar S.E.D. Shortt has called an "age of transition" during which traditional Christian assumptions were challenged by new, secular modes of thought.<sup>28</sup> "The result," in Shortt's words, "was a frantic search for an ideal, a new world view which would explain the nature of man and his place in the universe."<sup>29</sup> Possibly, Morton was suffering from a similar intellectual quandary. The product of vigorous family piety in early life, and profoundly committed to Christian ethics, Morton may have been wrestling with the doubt and scepticism presented in the modern ideas of Darwinian sociology and higher criticism. Harnack may have provided Morton with a secure intellectual foundation by showing him how religion

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<sup>26</sup>James G. Greenlee, Sir Robert Falconer, pp. 42-43.

<sup>27</sup>James G. Greenlee, Sir Robert Falconer, pp. 41-45.

<sup>28</sup>S.E.D. Shortt, The Search for an Ideal; Six Canadian Intellectuals and Their Convictions in an Age of Transition, 1890-1930, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), pp. 3-4.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

and historical inquiry might live comfortably together.<sup>30</sup>

After a few months' study under Harnack, Morton came to Canada--the land of his family origins. Following in his father's footsteps, he was ordained by the Presbytery of St. John, New Brunswick. For the next eight years, Morton served as home missionary to three parishes including Shediac, Fairville, and St. Stephen. Then personal tragedy struck--a tragedy that led to a crisis in Morton's faith. The death of his first wife, Louise, in childbirth less than one year after their marriage devastated Morton. He believed that he could not carry on with the ministry and in 1904, he moved to Halifax where he was appointed as a lecturer in church history at Pine Hill Presbyterian College.<sup>31</sup> Robert Falconer had been lecturing at Pine Hill since 1892, and shortly after Morton's arrival, Falconer was appointed principal of the college. While at Pine Hill, Morton became a member of a remarkable club which had been formed by a group of young ministers and one or two others, all former classmates from Edinburgh. This small group, who called themselves the "Round Table," included Robert and James Falconer, Walter Murray, D.M. Gordon, Alfred Gandier, Clarence Mackinnon, and A.S. Morton: men who were destined to achieve positions of academic influence in prominent

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<sup>30</sup>James G. Greenlee, Sir Robert Falconer, p. 45.

<sup>31</sup>Eve M. Wyatt to Joan Champ, Aug. 11, 1989.

Canadian institutions of higher education.<sup>32</sup> The stated purpose of the club was to stimulate the intellectual life of its members but social activities were also important. The close association that Morton formed with the other club members remained with him throughout his life.<sup>33</sup>

Morton was well-loved by his students at Pine Hill and soon gained a reputation as an excellent teacher.<sup>34</sup> Conflicts with older faculty members concerning Morton's secular approach to the teaching of church history, however, resulted in his resignation from the College in 1907.<sup>35</sup> Morton's first published work, The Way to Union (Toronto, 1912), written shortly after he left Pine Hill, expressed his views on theology and church organization--views considered to be quite radical in Canadian Protestant

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<sup>32</sup>James G. Greenlee, Sir Robert Falconer, pp. 71-73.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., pp. 71-73.

<sup>34</sup>The students of the Presbyterian College said of Morton in their newspaper: "His kind and sympathetic interest in the welfare of the students, and his friendly manner, have already won for him a large place in our hearts." "Professor Morton," The Theologue, Vol. XVI, No. 1, Nov. 1904, p. 16.

<sup>35</sup>Eve M. Wyatt to Joan Champ, Aug. 11, 1989; Clarence Mackinnon, President of Pine Hill College from 1909 to 1937, wrote to Walter Murray: "Since coming [to Pine Hill] I have thought more than once, what is responsible for the loss of Morton...we have not got his equal as a historian in any of our Colleges...It is sad that the disinterested love of knowledge, which is the real servant of Truth, should have no recognition in this utilitarian age." UA, Jean E. Murray Collection (JEM), A.IV.38, C. Mackinnon to Murray, Apr. 11, 1912.

circles at that time.<sup>36</sup> Morton's gifts as a teacher and a scholar were eventually acknowledged by the administration of the Presbyterian College at Pine Hill when, in 1922 as part of the college's centenary celebration, they presented him with the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.

Morton left Pine Hill in 1907 to pursue post-graduate research at the British Museum in London. His chief field of interest was the historical geography of the Roman Empire, the Middle Ages and, in part, the Reformation. During the course of his work at the Museum, Morton prepared several maps showing the development of Europe from the beginning of the Roman Empire to the end of the Middle Ages. He later used these maps in his history lectures at the University of Saskatchewan, and often loaned them to other scholars, but they were never published.<sup>37</sup> During this five year period Morton also wrote The Way to Union.

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<sup>36</sup>Arthur Silver Morton, The Way to Union (Toronto: William Briggs, 1912). In the years preceding the merging of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches into the United Church of Canada, Presbyterian church leaders were divided on the issue of union. High Presbyterians, especially in the Maritimes, were passionately opposed to union due in part to their antipathy towards Methodism and Methodists and in part to their fear that they would be deprived of their power within a united church. In his book Morton called this opposition "a barren conservatism." (p. 253) Church union, he argued, was not a radical step; rather union was simply "reorganizing the Churches to meet a new situation and new needs." (p. 7) Further, Morton asserted that the people had to be educated in the principles of union. "...I do not see how any important matter in which the deciding factor is the sympathy and sentiment of the great masses of the people can be wisely issued either way without prolonged education and discussion." (p. 7)

<sup>37</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.11, Autobiography, n.d.

Morton returned to Canada in 1912 and secured a position as temporary lecturer in church history at Knox College in Toronto. Morton was visited by his friend Walter Murray, president of the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon, in December 1913. Afterwards, Murray wrote to Clarence Mackinnon, president of Pine Hill College from 1909 to 1937, telling him that Morton's work in Toronto had been excellent. "He is regarded as the most stimulating teacher at Knox," Murray said, "...I sincerely hope that we may have him out here, but I know where his heart is and what he would prefer."<sup>38</sup> Murray was planning to expand his university's History Department which in 1913 consisted of one professor, Dr. E.H. Oliver. He approached Morton whose special training in Roman and medieval history appealed to him. Morton, however, turned down Murray's offer, stating: "The work I want to do is essentially religious."<sup>39</sup> There were few vacancies though in the field of church history in 1914, and when Murray offered him a faculty position again in the spring of that year, Morton heartily accepted. He was officially appointed university librarian and lecturer in history with the rank of assistant professor on July 1, 1914.

Walter Murray had a tremendous influence on Morton's

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<sup>38</sup>UA, JEM, A.IV.38, Murray to Mackinnon, Dec. 30, 1913.

<sup>39</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, Series I, A-49, Morton to Murray, Aug. 12, 1913.

career as a historian. Born in New Brunswick in 1866, Murray graduated from the University of New Brunswick in 1886 and was awarded a scholarship enabling him to further his education in Edinburgh. In 1891 he received his M.A. in philosophy from that university. After sixteen years of teaching at Dalhousie University, Murray was appointed the first president of the University of Saskatchewan in 1908. Murray's and Morton's shared background in academic training and experience at Edinburgh and in the Maritimes was enlarged by their similar temperaments and interests. Both men tended to solve human problems in a direct and personal manner, preferring an informal chat to written communication.<sup>40</sup> Murray and Morton were avid curlers, a sport at which they both excelled. As well, both men shared a keen interest in heritage issues--an interest that was to have a great impact on Saskatchewan's historical consciousness.

Morton's appointment to the university faculty came at approximately the same time that Frank Underhill, a recent graduate of the University of Toronto and Oxford University, took up a teaching post in the History Department at the university. Morton was unclear about the courses he would be teaching. In June he wrote to Murray: "It is important that I should know as soon as possible what you wish in the

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<sup>40</sup>G.W. Simpson, "Murray and Morton: Maritimers in Western Canada," Dalhousie Review, vol. 25, no. 8, October 1945, pp. 279; 281.

way of lecturing next winter. If Underhill takes Classical or modern history, and Oliver Medieval, what would be left for me?"<sup>41</sup> Morton suggested the possibility of Biblical literature, noting that a historical course in the New Testament would be in line with some of the work he had already done. Murray replied: "According to our present understanding, Oliver will take Mediaeval History, Underhill British and Colonial History, leaving you with European History fairly free. We are leaving the matter of Biblical Literature in the background at present."<sup>42</sup> Morton accepted this arrangement and arrived in Saskatoon anxious to take up his new duties on September 3, 1914.

The outbreak to World War One in August 1914 created serious problems at the University of Saskatchewan, not the least of which was the shortage of professors due to enlistment in the armed forces. Both Oliver and Underhill enlisted--Oliver as chaplain of the 196th Western Universities Battalion, and Underhill as a private in the Canadian army--leaving Morton, who was too old to fight, as the sole member of the History Department. Morton spent the summer of 1915 in Toronto, assisting his mother with her book about his father.<sup>43</sup> Underhill was also in Toronto preparing to go to the front. In a letter to Murray, Morton

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<sup>41</sup>Ibid., Morton to Murray, June 13, 1914.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., Murray to Morton, June 20, 1914.

<sup>43</sup>Sarah Morton. John Morton of Trinidad.



wrote: "It is very hard for you to arrange for [Underhill's] work at such short notice...Anything that I can do within the limits of my knowledge and my physical strength I would gladly do as my extra burden taken up for the war's sake. I am entirely in your hands."<sup>44</sup>

Part of the extra burden which Morton took up for the University of Saskatchewan was extension work. Throughout the war years, Morton gave many public lectures around the province. While most of his speeches covered topics relating to World War I, his interest in the history of the region was quickened. Perhaps it was the many hours he spent on the road taking in the prairie sights. Perhaps it was the many evenings spent talking to the people of the prairie communities. Whatever it was that aroused Morton's interest, he was soon hooked, and from that time forward his energies were directed toward the collection and preservation of materials related to the history of the Northwest and to the writing of that history.

Morton's travels along Saskatchewan's rural roads during the Great War cannot by themselves, however, explain his devotion to the history of western Canada. After all, Morton had arrived at the University of Saskatchewan with a reputation as a scholar and a teacher in the fields of medieval and church history. What motivated Morton to turn

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<sup>44</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, Series I, A-49, Morton to Murray, circa summer, 1915.

his attention to the study of his adopted province's past? Certainly, as an earlier biographer of Morton has written, the circumstances of war prevented him from conducting further research in his chosen fields by cutting him off from his sources.<sup>45</sup> Morton's Scottish heritage also cannot be overlooked in the search for an explanation of his ready adaptation to his new situation. A scholar describing the role of the Scottish tradition in Canadian higher education has stated that the chief contribution of the Scots "was to identify themselves with the Canadian environment and to make their ideas part of the intellectual tradition of the Canadian community. Of all the ethnic groups who have come to Canada, the Scots were the quickest in acclimatizing themselves."<sup>46</sup> Morton's urge to learn more about Saskatchewan's past was part of his need to gain a sense of place and identity. As an immigrant living and working in a unfamiliar land he sought to acclimatize himself through his heritage activities. By populating his new surroundings with historical events and buildings and figures, Morton came to call Saskatchewan his home.

Morton's Calvinistic-Presbyterian background was also a significant factor in his determination to explore Saskatchewan's heritage. Presbyterian standards tended to

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<sup>45</sup>Lewis G. Thomas. "Introduction," p. xxii.

<sup>46</sup>D.C. Masters, "The Scottish Tradition in Higher Education," in David M. Stewart, ed., The Scottish Tradition in Canada (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), p. 267.

emphasize personal responsibility; often individuals worked to apply these standards in their everyday life for the benefit of others.<sup>47</sup> Morton felt morally obliged to embrace the early provincial heritage movement. Explaining his new-found interest, he stated: "During the war I was left alone to carry on the work of the Department and became impressed with the duty lying upon the Department of History of a State University towards a Province whose institution it is."<sup>48</sup> Morton believed that by collecting and preserving and writing about the Western Canadian past, he was laying the foundation for future generations of historians. Not only would succeeding generations of scholars at the university benefit from his work, but "the citizenship yet to be of this Province" would reap the rewards of a broadened heritage awareness.<sup>49</sup>

Morton's new inspiration was also consistent with the scholarly crucible in which he had been trained. Morton's study of medieval and church history had provided him with sharp-edged research tools; he was eager to apply these tools to the elucidation of the history of the Canadian West.

Perhaps the primary reason for Morton's attraction to

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<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 254.

<sup>48</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.11, A.S. Morton, "Application for the Carnegie Corporation Grant", December 2, 1932.

<sup>49</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, Series I, A-49, Morton to Hon. J.W. Estey, November 14, 1938.

the history of his new home, however, was the immense challenge that it presented to him. In 1914, western Canadian history was still a relatively uncharted field. In the years prior to World War One, western Canadians looked to the future, not to the past for their "Golden Age." According to cultural historian, Gerald Friesen, "the West was to be the home of a new society...its most important characteristic was that it represented an opportunity and a challenge; it was not seen for what it was but for what it could become."<sup>50</sup> New westerners were generally preoccupied with the creation of a livelihood and the search for material gain--not with the delineation of the western past.<sup>51</sup> Historians from eastern Canada also viewed the West in terms of its potential and thus tended to dismiss the region's past as irrelevant.<sup>52</sup> After 1914, westerners underwent a reorientation in their thinking fed by a growing sense of alienation from eastern Canada. Perceived and real threats to the western vision of growth, prosperity and power from an amalgam of forces emanating from the East bred a deepening regional consciousness on the part of western

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<sup>50</sup>Gerald Friesen, "Three Generations of Fiction: An Introduction to Prairie Cultural History," in R. Douglas Francis and Howard Palmer, eds. The Prairie West: Historical Readings (Edmonton: Pica Pica Press, 1985), p. 186.

<sup>51</sup>Doug Owram, Promise of Eden: The Canadian Expansionist Movement and the Idea of the West, 1856-1900 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), p. 198.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., pp. 192; 198.

Canadians. Emerging regionalism in turn led to a new awareness of the past--an awareness that the West was not merely an empty wilderness before 1870.<sup>53</sup> Westerners gradually came to realize that their region had a history of its own distinct from that of eastern Canada. The most prominent characteristic of this reorientation after 1914 was, according to Friesen, "the cult of the pioneer or homestead days which...is reflected in the extraordinary contemporary interest in local history, local museums, and prairie memoirs."<sup>54</sup>

By the time Morton had arrived at the University of Saskatchewan, a handful of western historians had already begun the ground-breaking work in western Canadian history. Manitobans George Bryce and R.C. MacBeth had written historical works in the 1880s and 1890s following the course of prairie history from a western perspective rather than from the perspective of eastern involvement in the region.<sup>55</sup> Historian Norman F. Black wrote the History of Saskatchewan and the Old North West, the first history of the province, in 1913, intending to "inform the rising generation of the

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<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 203; Gerald Friesen. "Three Generations of Fiction", p. 190.

<sup>54</sup>Gerald Friesen, "Three Generations of Fiction," p. 191.

<sup>55</sup>Doug Owsam, Promise of Eden, pp. 199-207.

doings of generations passed and passing."<sup>56</sup> Although Black was most concerned that the stories of the pioneers "should be preserved from oblivion,"<sup>57</sup> he bemoaned in his preface the fact that no systematic effort was being made to collect and preserve the available documents. "The outstanding fact impressed upon the author at every turn, in connection with the monumental task of collecting information for the following work," Black stated, "is that of the crying need in Saskatchewan of the services of a Provincial archivist."<sup>58</sup> Morton's colleague, E.H. Oliver, had also edited a two-volume compilation of documents, The Canadian North-West; Its Early Development and Legislative Records in 1914-15. He published this work in order to provide a comprehensive overview of pioneer legislation and a survey of constitutional developments in the prairie provinces.<sup>59</sup> "The inhabitants of the Prairies are so lately come to the West, and the care taken of official documents has in general been so unsystematic and inadequate," stated Oliver, "that ready access to these documents has been

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<sup>56</sup>Norman Fergus Black, History of Saskatchewan and the Old North West (Regina: North West Historical Society Co., 1913), p. 2.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. iii.

<sup>59</sup>Edmund H. Oliver, ed., The Canadian North-West; Its Early Development and Legislative Records, 2 vols. (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1914-15), n.p., Preface.

impossible."<sup>60</sup>

Morton, with his background of rigorous training, soon recognized the problems involved in the study of the history of the West. "In the well-beaten paths of history the great historians [had]...dictionaries, encyclopaedias and critical periodicals...but there is none such for the history of the Canadian North West," he once wrote. "You have to begin at the very beginning."<sup>61</sup> Morton also discerned a distinct bias in the accepted version of the early history of the Northwest: "[T]he history has been written...wholly from the point of view of the French and in heroics, while the characteristically dogged struggle of the English to maintain their position on the [Hudson Bay]...is lost to view."<sup>62</sup> Morton attributed this bias to the fact that the "colourful" French documents were readily accessible, while the English sources remained largely out of sight in the private library of the Hudson's Bay Company in London. He believed that a balanced perspective could be achieved only through a "careful use of documents originating from both the English and French participators."<sup>63</sup> "Only when we gain

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., n.p., Preface.

<sup>61</sup>UA, Morton Papers, II.43, "Problems in the Study of the Canadian North West," n.d., n.p.

<sup>62</sup>Arthur Silver Morton, "The Early History of the Hudson Bay," Canadian Historical Review, vol. 12, no. 4, December 1931, p.412.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 412.

access to the journals and papers of the servants of the Hudson's Bay Company," continued Morton, "will we have a true account of the happenings in the North West and get a true vision of the heroic struggle made by the company to maintain its trade and to keep the flag of England flying in the bay."<sup>64</sup>

In the thirty years following Morton's arrival in Saskatchewan, he established himself as a leading authority in the field of western Canadian history. Morton was active in several local and provincial historical societies, including the Saskatchewan Historical Association and the Saskatoon Historical Society. His enthusiastic exploration of the historic sites of the province led to his involvement in an advisory capacity with the HSMBC. And his concern for the preservation of historical records led to his appointment as the first official archivist of Saskatchewan.

Morton was bestowed with a number of honours during his career, including his election as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1933, the award of the Tyrrell Medal in 1941, and, perhaps his most remarkable distinction, an address presented in 1943 by the government and people of Saskatchewan expressing appreciation for his work for provincial heritage. Yet despite Morton's accomplishments and the recognition that he received during his lifetime, his work of a non-literary nature--that is, his work in the

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<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 425.



heritage movement of Saskatchewan--has been ignored by Canadian historians. Perhaps this can be attributed to Morton's preference for the quiet seclusion and security of the library and the archives over the wide arena of public affairs. His role as a popularizer and conservator of the history of Saskatchewan has therefore remained on the periphery of western Canadian historiography. This is unfortunate, for Morton's heritage activities helped to lay the foundation for the more regional approach developed by later western historians. In the 1970s and 1980s the dominant centralist focus of traditional Canadian historical research was challenged by emerging regional interpretations. Morton's role in the provincial heritage movement merits serious investigation, for he made important contributions to the articulation of Saskatchewan's history. The new generation of historians in the West owes Morton a debt of gratitude, not only for shedding light on the region's history in his written work, but for his efforts to preserve and commemorate the tangible remains of the prairie past.

## Chapter Two

### "To Cultivate the Historic Sense"

The main focus of Morton's heritage work in the 1920s was the collection of documents relating to the history of western Canada. As he began his new career as head of the Department of History and Librarian at the University of Saskatchewan during the Great War years, Morton felt a sense of duty to facilitate the study of the history of his new home. In his words: "The History Department in a State University is under obligation to train at least a portion of the students in the history of the Province."<sup>1</sup> Prairie history, however, was a field which--in the early 1900s--offered very little in the way of documentation. While others had begun to write Saskatchewan's history, little had been done in the way of document collection in the province. Documents, Morton believed, were the raw materials of history; it was essential to save them if the past was to be understood. His ambition to stimulate research in western Canadian history led him to collect, preserve, and organize the source material so essential for scholarly investigation. Morton was a pioneer in his efforts to collect documents in Saskatchewan. By 1930, he had amassed and preserved a large body of material on the prairie

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<sup>1</sup>University of Saskatchewan Archives, (UA), Morton Papers, I.15, A.S. Morton to Maj. Gen. John Booth Richardson, Dec. 29, 1926.

provinces for the benefit of contemporary and future generations interested in learning about the region's past.

It was in his role as University Librarian that Morton found his first opportunity to promote the study of Canadian prairie history. He saw that the library was in short supply of books relating to Canada. In his report on the library for 1914-1915, Morton suggested that the selection of books for purchase "...should be guided less according to the call for them than by the policy to create an interest and demand...[W]e should look forward to the time when we shall have a really good Canadian Library, especially for the West."<sup>2</sup>

In order to create an interest in western Canadian history, Morton founded the Historical Association of the University of Saskatchewan. Morton was one of the most popular professors on campus;<sup>3</sup> when he brought up the idea of forming a historical society before the various history classes, the response was enthusiastic.<sup>4</sup> On January 20, 1917, a committee consisting of Morton and seven students met to establish the association. One member of this

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<sup>2</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, Series I, B.38/41, A.S. Morton. "Draft of Librarian's Report, 1914-15."

<sup>3</sup>Michael Hayden, Seeking a Balance; The University of Saskatchewan, 1907-1982 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), pp. 186-7.

<sup>4</sup>Morton's lectures were highly appreciated by his students. George W. Simpson, Hilda Neatby, Jean Murray, Bruce Peel, and Lewis H. Thomas were students of Morton's who went on to pursue important careers in the field of Canadian history.

committee was Vivian W. Brown, a student of Morton's who was to become his wife in the spring of 1919.<sup>5</sup> The stated aim of the Historical Association drafted by the committee and adopted at the first meeting of the society on January 25th was rather general. The association wanted "...[t]o cultivate the historic sense and interest in history including methods of study and teaching with special emphasis to [sic] modern problems."<sup>6</sup> Morton, however, had more specific objectives for the association. His travels around the province had made him aware of the urgent need to collect and preserve material relating to the history of

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<sup>5</sup>Vivian Brown, the daughter of a Methodist minister, was born in 1896 in Amherstberg, Ontario. After receiving her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Saskatchewan in 1917, she went on to study music at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. While visiting Toronto, Morton began to court Vivian. They were married in May 1919. In the fall of that year, Mrs. Morton returned to Toronto to complete her studies with her husband's support and encouragement. The Mortons' first daughter, Mary Vivian, was born in 1923. Sarah Silver, their second daughter, was born in 1925. Mrs. Morton was active in a variety of cultural and community affairs in Saskatoon and the province. The many offices she held included president of the University of Saskatchewan Alumni Association, chairman of the Saskatoon Arts Centre, president of the Saskatoon Arts and Crafts Society, fourteen years as the chairman of the handicrafts committee of the Saskatchewan Arts Board, president of the Saskatoon University Women's Club, charter member of the Saskatoon Branch of the Canadian Institute of International Affairs, and three years as president of the Canadian Federation of University Women. In 1962, the University of Saskatchewan presented Mrs. Morton with the honorary degree of laws (LL.D). She passed away on July 10, 1990 at the age of 94 in London, Ontario. Eve M. Wyatt to Joan Champ, Aug.11, 1989. Ms. Wyatt is the granddaughter of A.S. and Vivian Morton.

<sup>6</sup>UA, Students' Representative Council (S.R.C.), C.1.a, Minutes of the Historical Association of University of Saskatchewan, Jan. 20, 1917.

Saskatchewan before it was lost. The university's new Historical Association now provided him with a vehicle to enlist students in this project. Two days after the association was created, the executive, with Morton as Honourary President, appointed two working committees. The first, the Museum Committee, was to take charge of collecting "curios" for a folk museum on campus. The second, the Canadiana Committee, was to collect written works published in or relating to the prairie provinces. These works were to be deposited in the University of Saskatchewan Library in a section called the Prairie Province Collection.

From the beginning, Morton defined his work for provincial heritage preservation in broad terms. He was not content to limit his activities to the university campus. In his April 1917 report on the Historical Association for The Sheaf, the campus newspaper, Morton voiced his expectation that its members would continue their relations with the society after they graduated. By remaining active, members dispersed throughout the province could promote the aims of the association and continue to cultivate an "historic sense" in the citizenship of the province at large.<sup>7</sup> An early pamphlet issued by the Historical Association provided some suggestions and directions for

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<sup>7</sup>UA, A.S. Morton, "Historical Association," The Sheaf, Vol. 5, No. 3, April 1917, p. 272.

graduate members and "Others at Present Out of Bounds."<sup>8</sup> They were encouraged to form groups for historical study in their communities, as well as collect historical documents and ethnological artifacts for the association. In this manner, the Historical Association would "...contribute to the larger life of the University and share in the building-up of a strong citizenship in Western Canada."<sup>9</sup>

Interest in the activities of the University of Saskatchewan Historical Association remained high throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and into the 1940s. In the university yearbook for 1938, the Historical Association reported its highest membership to date. The society changed its name to the Morton Historical Association in 1941, with Morton remaining as Honourary President until his death in 1945. The association continued its activities on campus until 1953.

President Murray and Professor Oliver had planned to form a campus historical museum during the first years of the university, and had even begun the task of collecting artifacts.<sup>10</sup> The Museum Committee of the Historical

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<sup>8</sup>UA, S.R.C., C.1.a, The Historical Association of the University of Saskatchewan. "Suggestions and Directions for Graduate Members of the Association and Others at Present Out of Bounds," n.d.

<sup>9</sup>UA, "Historical Society," The Sheaf, Vol. 6, No. 4, April 1918, p. 212.

<sup>10</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, Series I, B.64, E.A. Oliver to W. Murray, n.d.; Murray to Mrs. Lawrence Clarke, May 13, 1911.

Association established by Morton in 1917 was a continuation of this project. The goal of the committee was, according to a museum pamphlet, to preserve "...the memory of the customs and art of the people from non-English speaking lands who have made Canada their home."<sup>11</sup> The museum was to be divided into sections, each devoted to a specific ethnic group, including Ukrainians, Doukhobors, and Icelanders. The first artifacts acquired by the museum in 1917 were Ukrainian Easter eggs. Morton hoped that the Ukrainian section would eventually acquire clothing, furniture, kitchen utensils, toys, and even, he stated, a "skeleton of a Ruthenian specimen."<sup>12</sup> The pamphlet called for "...absolutely anything and everything that will keep alive the memory of the Ukrainians of the first and immediately subsequent generations among us."<sup>13</sup>

It was believed, and indeed desired, by Morton and the leading members of Saskatchewan's social and political life that the so-called "New Canadians" would quickly be assimilated into Canadian society. The Director of Education Among New Canadians in Saskatchewan and later

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<sup>11</sup>UA, S.R.C., C.1.a., Museum Committee of the Historical Association of the University of Saskatchewan, "Appeal to Students of the University and of the Provincial Normal School and Others to Collect Material for an Ethnological Museum," n.d.

<sup>12</sup>UA, A.S. Morton. "Historical Association," in The Sheaf, Vol. 5, No. 3, April 1917, p. 273.

<sup>13</sup>"Appeal to Students...to Collect Material for an Ethnological Museum," n.d.

premier of the province, J.T.M. Anderson, asserted in his book, The Education of the New Canadian (1918), that "peasant" languages and customs would have little or no influence over second generation members of immigrant families. Rather, the generation born in Canada would quickly discard the "unattractive" customs of their immigrant parents and adopt Anglo-Saxon customs and forms of dress.<sup>14</sup> Morton shared this view, and thus it was a matter of great urgency for him that the cast-off material culture of these groups be collected and preserved. Morton believed that as the years went on such a collection would increase in historic value and become "...a real addition to the educational institutions on the campus."<sup>15</sup>

Morton hoped that eventually a museum facility would be erected at the university. He contemplated the day when a collection, properly displayed, would illustrate the life of the pioneers in western Canada. No such facility, however, was ever constructed. Initially, the museum was housed in the attic of the Physics Building. This space was less than ideal, and, according to Morton, "...very dirty owing to dust storms."<sup>16</sup> In the spring of 1922, when the collection

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<sup>14</sup>J.T.M. Anderson, The Education of the New Canadian; A Treatise on Canada's Greatest Educational Problem (Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1918), pp. 61-2.

<sup>15</sup>"Historical Association," p. 273.

<sup>16</sup>Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB), University of Saskatchewan Historical Association, Museum Committee Records and Correspondence, B43, "Interview with Professor Morton re Museum,"



had grown to substantial proportions, a formal opening of the museum was held. Thereafter, the museum opened only once a year, at which time a tea was held and the collection shown to the public. The costs of keeping the museum open on a regular basis were too prohibitive. The annual teas, which President Murray called "one of the social events of the year,"<sup>17</sup> provided the Museum Committee with a meagre revenue averaging \$50 to \$60 per year. The committee also received occasional grants from the university through the President's office to purchase artifacts.<sup>18</sup>

In 1936, the museum moved from the Physics Building to new quarters in the tower of Qu'Appelle Hall. This space was woefully small, consisting of three rooms and a hallway. A bathroom was the designated storage space. After Murray retired in 1937, the Museum was requested to vacate Qu'Appelle Hall. The bulk of the collection was moved into the Little Stone Schoolhouse on campus where it fell victim to acts of theft and vandalism.<sup>19</sup>

Morton's official responsibilities for the museum ended with his retirement from teaching in 1940, although he remained interested in it and continued to act in an

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<sup>17</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.35, Morton to Mr. Yatchu, Nov. 17, 1923.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid.

<sup>19</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.35, A.S. Morton, "For President Thompson. Report on the Museum After the Raid of the Boys," n.d.

advisory capacity. In 1943, there was renewed interest in the museum on the part of several professors, including J.L. Jackson, Professor of Anatomy, Grant MacEwan, Department of Agriculture, J.B. Mawdsley, Department of Geology, and W.M. Whitelaw, Department of History. These men formed another museum committee and submitted several recommendations to the university administration. These recommendations, which called for proper facilities for the preservation, storage and display of the collection, fell on deaf ears. Dr. Jackson resigned as chairman of the committee in October 1943, stating in a letter to President J.S. Thomson: "I feel that under present conditions the committee is serving no useful purpose."<sup>20</sup> The museum collection made its final move in the summer of 1946 to the attic of the College Building, now the old wing of the Administration Building, where it was destroyed by a fire on October 27, 1947.<sup>21</sup> Since then, museum activities within the university have been confined to various departments.

Whereas the museum enjoyed little success, the Canadiana Committee of the Historical Association made a

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<sup>20</sup>SAB, Museum Committee Records and Correspondence, B43, Jackson to Thomson, Oct. 20, 1943.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., Memorandum, M.W. Hagerman to Lewis H. Thomas, Oct. 30, 1947. The early morning fire started in the attic in a pile of War Assets Corporation blankets. It destroyed the roof and north wing of the College Building, causing \$25,000 to \$50,000 damage. The library was threatened, but a "human chain" of students cleared 90,000 to 100,000 books out of the fire's way. Saskatoon Star Phoenix, Oct. 27, 1947.

significant contribution to the university library's history section. In 1917, Morton reported that the Canadiana Committee was "...gathering everything that will make our library a real repository of the publications of western Canada."<sup>22</sup> This committee began its task by preparing a bibliography of published works dealing with the prairie provinces. The collection of regional material, however, was its top priority. As the membership of the association grew, Morton could point in his annual library reports to the "...increasing interest of the students in the problems of the Dominion and particularly of our own prairie provinces." This interest, Morton stated, "...should be reflected in a growing library of Canadian works."<sup>23</sup> Thus, Morton was able to justify the further development of the library's Canadian history collection.

The acquisition of the Shortt Collection was also an important step in the strengthening of the University of Saskatchewan's Canadiana collection. In August 1918, the university's Board of Governors gave President Murray the authority to purchase for \$5,000 part of the Canadiana library of Adam Shortt, a former Queen's University professor and member of the Civil Service Commission. Shortt, an old acquaintance of Murray's, was exceedingly

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<sup>22</sup>"Historical Association," p. 272.

<sup>23</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, Series I, B.38/41, A.S. Morton.  
"Report of the Librarian for the Session 1917-18."

pleased to have a permanent home for his collection at the University of Saskatchewan. Murray was equally delighted: "We all greatly appreciate the opportunity of having your library here, and we are expecting to make [it] the instrument for more thorough and far-reaching work in Canadian History."<sup>24</sup>

Morton had helped to bring the Shortt Collection to the university and was quite excited about its acquisition. In 1924 he noted that the history honours students were making much use of the valuable material in this library. "The more I explore the [Shortt] Library," stated Morton, "the more convinced I am that we made a great catch when we procured it...[A] Queen's professor of History has said...that it was a blow to Queen's when the Shortt Library came West."<sup>25</sup> Morton was instrumental in strengthening the Shortt Collection. In 1928, after paying a visit to Shortt, Morton advised Murray that the University of Saskatchewan should acquire the remaining valuable material before other collectors got it.<sup>26</sup> Murray acted on Morton's suggestion and over the course of the next three years, almost 1,500 books, including the personal library of Canadian Pacific

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<sup>24</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, Series I, A-65, Murray to Shortt, Nov. 28, 1918.

<sup>25</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.34, A.S. Morton. "Report of the Library, 1923-24."

<sup>26</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, Series I, A-49, Morton to Murray, August 30, 1928.

Railway Chief Engineer, Sir Sanford Fleming were added to this prestigious collection.<sup>27</sup>

Besides the Shortt material, some of the most significant additions to the Canadian History section of the University of Saskatchewan's library were the materials which Morton himself gathered in the Dominion Archives in Ottawa during the summers from 1923 to 1930. Morton received permission from Dr. Arthur Doughty, Dominion Archivist from 1904 to 1935, to photostat hundreds of pages of journals and papers related to the fur trade. As well, Morton had to copy by hand several journals and pages of the correspondence of fur traders such as William M'Gillivray and La Verendrye because the originals were nearly indecipherable or too dim to photostat.<sup>28</sup> Morton's purpose in spending his summers at the Dominion Archives was both to master the primary source material of the history of western Canada for himself and to provide the university library with permanent additions to its collection for the use of students. In this way, Morton helped to lay the foundations for the future study of western Canadian history at the University of Saskatchewan.

President Murray wholeheartedly supported Morton's summer research work and saw to it that the university

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<sup>27</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, Series I, B.38/41, library reports, 1928 to 1931.

<sup>28</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.34, Morton to Riches, Aug. 2, 1928.

provided him with expense money.<sup>29</sup> While the academic benefits for the university were clear, Murray was also anxious to foster contacts between the University of Saskatchewan faculty and groups and individuals in the rest of Canada.<sup>30</sup> According to the Canadian historian Carl Berger, the Dominion Archives of Canada in the 1920s was "...a vital scholarly centre...not only a place for research but also a clearing house for the discussion of work in progress, mutual criticism, and education in the techniques of critical, documentary history."<sup>31</sup> Murray believed that the affiliations with central Canada established and maintained by Morton helped to counteract the dangers of intellectual isolation for the small western campus. Morton's networks of communication were fundamental not only to the academic process; in the long run they helped to foster the recognition of the University of Saskatchewan as a prestigious institution of higher learning.

By 1927, Morton could state with conviction: "We are in a fair way to having the best Canadian Library outside of

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<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>David R. Murray and Robert A. Murray, The Prairie Builder: Walter Murray of Saskatchewan (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1984), p. 88.

<sup>31</sup>Carl Berger, The Writing of Canadian History; Aspects of English Canadian Historical Writing Since 1900 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986), pp. 29-30.

a few great centres in the East."<sup>32</sup> As in the case of the museum, however, Morton's ambitions for the library were unfortunately plagued throughout his years as university librarian by a chronic lack of space. In a memorandum written around 1928, Morton described the dispersion of the library. The main block of books was located in four rooms of the College of Agriculture, with periodicals stacked in closets or in the basement two floors below. The Shortt Collection was in the basement of the Physics Building, with the maps from this collection in the attic of the same building. Government documents were stored in the Little Stone Schoolhouse on campus, where there was no heat or light. The Prairie Province Collection was in an office often used for tutorials and meetings, and valuable books and manuscripts were kept in a vault controlled by the Bursar. Morton stressed in his memorandum that the growing numbers of students and staff using the library made efficiency almost impossible. "Add to this," continued Morton, "that the range of reading and research carried on by the Faculty and graduate students has been greatly widened and intensified and that the books once little used and put away in corners or in the Stone School House are being called for as never before. The President will

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<sup>32</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, Series I, B.38/41, A.S. Morton. "Report of the Library for 1926-27."

realize that relief must be found--and that very soon."<sup>33</sup> Despite Morton's plea, Murray was unable to secure funding to build an adequate library during his years as president of the university. The library was moved to the College Building during the 1940s where it narrowly escaped destruction by the same fire that wiped out the museum collection in 1947. It was not until 1956 that the current University of Saskatchewan Library, the Murray Memorial Library, was finally constructed.<sup>34</sup>

The Historical Association of the University of Saskatchewan was, in many respects, the parent organization of several other important societies concerned with the preservation of the province's heritage. One of these was the Saskatoon Historical Association. In January 1922, a group of history professors from the university, including Morton and Frank Underhill, met with several Saskatoon pioneers in order to record the reminiscences of early settlers in Saskatoon and region. Up until this time, Morton had concentrated upon the collection of documents and other tangible remains of the province's past. Now he was taking his heritage preservation activities a step further and tapping the minds of the "old timers." The Saskatoon Historical Association held eight meetings throughout the

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<sup>33</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.34, A.S. Morton, "Memorandum in re Dispersion of Library," n.d. (attached to letter, Business Manager to Morton, dated Oct. 5, 1928.)

<sup>34</sup>Hayden, Seeking a Balance, pp. 226-27.



early part of 1922, during which the conversations between pioneers and members of the group were recorded. Brought together by Morton in a 1927 book entitled Narratives of Saskatoon, these oral histories have been described by a leading Saskatoon heritage authority as "the single most important source of information on early Saskatoon."<sup>35</sup>

By the fall of 1922 Morton's ambitions for the preservation of heritage had grown to provincial proportions, and he began to promote the establishment of the Saskatchewan Historical Association (SHA). Morton envisioned this association as a network of independently operating local societies throughout the province functioning under the umbrella of a central executive. The influence of President Murray was a key factor in the expansion of Morton's heritage activities. Murray had been an active member of the Nova Scotia Historical Association during the early 1900s.<sup>36</sup> In speeches throughout the province, Morton often credited Murray as the prime mover behind the founding of a provincial historical association in Saskatchewan. "It is the aim and purpose of Dr. Murray," Morton claimed, "that the University shall play its part along with others in placing the Province of Saskatchewan at the side of Nova Scotia in the preservation of the precious

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<sup>35</sup>Don Kerr, "In Defense of the Past, a History of Saskatchewan Heritage Preservation, 1922-1983," unpublished paper, n.d. [c. 1983], p. 5

<sup>36</sup>Murray and Murray, The Prairie Builder, p. 27.

story of its early settlers."<sup>37</sup>

The support of the University of Saskatchewan was an essential part of Morton's plan to form the SHA. Pleased with the results of the Saskatoon experiment in taking down the statements of pioneers, Murray encouraged Morton to go forward at the expense of the University and arrange for the formation of similar groups in other communities throughout Saskatchewan.<sup>38</sup> From the outset, Morton saw the university as the heart and soul of the SHA. He envisioned a central group or executive for the association "...in which the University will be the dominating force."<sup>39</sup> Once the university had inaugurated the SHA, members of the university staff--in particular the professors of history--would be active members, perhaps serving on the society's executive. The university would also help to finance the

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<sup>37</sup>Ibid.

<sup>38</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.27, Morton to D.H. MacDonald, Dec. 5, 1922.

<sup>39</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, Series I, B.85, A.S. Morton. "Report of the Department of History for Session 1926-7," draft, n.d. Morton was careful not to stress the role of the university too heavily when promoting the SHA in other communities. This was especially true in Regina where feelings of bitterness presumably still existed after the loss of the university to Saskatoon in 1907. In a letter to the editor of the Regina Leader regarding the organization of the SHA, Morton said: "Probably there should...be a little group at...Regina directing all this...which would include us at the University studying the material..." To the librarian at the Regina Public Library, Morton wrote: "Whatever is done [regarding the SHA] requires the assistance of the men in Regina, who know the province as we up here do not. The most that we can do is to stimulate and give some help." UA, Morton Papers, I.38, Morton to Butler, Sept. 23, 1922; Ibid., I. 36, Morton to Honeyman, Sept. 23, 1922.

publication of worthy manuscript material. "The great gain to the University," Morton stressed, "will be in having the material gathered and published which students need to specialize in the History of Saskatchewan."<sup>40</sup>

The goals of the SHA were based on those of the Nova Scotia Historical Association. A pamphlet issued by Morton outlined the aims of the association as follows: "The object of the Association shall be the collection and preservation of all information which may serve to throw light upon and illustrate the History of the Prairie region and the Province of Saskatchewan in general...; the encouragement of all those to put it down in permanent form; the provision of facilities for the preservation and publication of same; the reading at the general meetings of the Association of papers on Historical subjects."<sup>41</sup> Morton also circulated a list of desired items to be collected. This list included the letters, journals, and narratives of pioneer settlers; newspapers, books, pamphlets and other publications relating to Saskatchewan; church records; records of corporations such as the Hudson's Bay Company; drawings and descriptions of Hudson's Bay forts and factories; and "[f]acts illustrative of our Indian tribes, their history, characteristics, sketches of their prominent

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<sup>40</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.27, Morton to MacDonald, Dec. 2, 1922.

<sup>41</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.27, A.S. Morton, "The Aims of the Historical Association," Nov. 2, 1922.

chiefs, orators and warriors."<sup>42</sup>

Despite Morton's considerable efforts, the SHA did not succeed in the way he had hoped. As early as 1923, Morton was calling the movement a failure.<sup>43</sup> Only a few communities in Saskatchewan attempted to establish local historical societies, and those that did, did not do so successfully. The Regina Association, according to Morton, had indifferent leadership and accomplished nothing, despite "...having everybody historically worthwhile in its membership..."<sup>44</sup> The Prince Albert Historical Society, contrary to Morton's earnest advice, limited their membership to old timers. "They gathered considerable material," Morton reported, "but...the Association gradually became moribund..."<sup>45</sup> And although the Saskatoon Historical Association had gathered some good material, "[a]ny success here is largely due to the encouragement of the University."<sup>46</sup> Small committees had been formed in Melfort, Moose Jaw, Maple Creek, Yorkton, and Kamsack, but none were really active. The Battleford group, led by high school

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>UA, Morton Manuscript Collection, MSS C555/2/4.13, A.S. Morton, "The Historical Association of the Province of Saskatchewan, 1923," n.d.

<sup>44</sup>Ibid.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, Series I, B.85, A.S. Morton, "Report of the Department of History for Session 1926-27," draft, n.d.

principal Campbell Innes, did not cooperate with Morton. According to Morton, Innes warned him not to come into his territory. Innes "treated his collections practically as his private property," stated Morton. "Even when I was in his house, I was not allowed to see them."<sup>47</sup>

While some local historical societies flourished for several years, the SHA was ultimately an organizational failure. This was due for the most part to lack of participation or cooperation. Morton's speeches at meetings throughout the province sparked the interest of his audience, but only momentarily. He could not seem to instill in them the same heritage preservation zeal that he himself possessed. Morton also did not always answer his correspondence promptly, largely because of his busy

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<sup>47</sup>UA, Morton Manuscript Collection, MSS C555/2/4.13, A.S. Morton. "The Historical Association of the Province of Saskatchewan, 1923," n.d. When Morton first approached Innes about his plan for the SHA, Innes was quite defensive. He informed Morton that, while the Battleford Historical Society was heartily in sympathy with the movement, the history of that town and district was already being prepared. Morton wrote Innes to assure him of his good intentions, to which Innes replied: "...I alone am doing the researching and writing in regards to this area...[b]ut it is quite secret." Although Morton tried to encourage Innes to cooperate with the University, Innes seemed to feel that Morton was overstepping his role as a history professor. In 1926, Innes changed the name of his organization to the Canadian North-West Historical Association and began to publish what he called "the simple stories" that he had gathered. At that time he expressed to Morton his belief that "...it is for the University to research and develop the science of history and therefore discover a proper interpretation. That field I will not touch." The implication was that Morton should not touch the field of collecting. UA, Morton Papers, I.38, Innes to Morton, Jan. 3, 1923; Ibid., Innes to Morton, Jan. 15, 1923; Ibid., I.2, Innes to Morton, Dec. 27, 1926.

schedule. Morton's delay in responding to enquiries may have discouraged interested individuals from participating in the SHA. One gentleman from Kindersley who wished to join the association wrote Morton to express his frustration at having to wait five months for a reply to his initial query. "Before being willing [sic] to cooperate with your Committee," he wrote, "I wish to be assured that letters will be answered..."<sup>48</sup>

Morton's campaign to establish the SHA was not a total failure. The material gathered by the SHA and other historical societies, as well as the material gathered each summer at the Dominion Archives of Canada, enabled Morton to become thoroughly conversant in the early history of the western region. Beginning in 1926, Morton felt confident enough to offer a new course at the university in the history of the fur trade and the organization of the North West.<sup>49</sup> The following year, Morton started to write his major work, the History of the Canadian West. By 1930, Morton was able to state with confidence that "...we now have in our Library the largest body of material outside of the Archives in Ottawa, for the history of the prairie

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<sup>48</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.27, Howes to Morton, Feb. 18, 1925.

<sup>49</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, Series I, B.85, A.S. Morton, "Report of the Department of History for Session 1926-7," draft, n.d.

provinces."<sup>50</sup>

Due largely to Morton's considerable efforts during the 1920s, significant collections had been established which facilitated the study of the history of the Canadian West at the University of Saskatchewan. Students and other scholars now had the source material they needed to learn about the prairie past. There remained, however, one more critical step before Morton could feel totally knowledgeable about the history of Saskatchewan. He felt compelled to explore the historical geography of the province, for he firmly believed that the facts of nature "...have shaped beyond all others the history of our land..."<sup>51</sup> This task--the study of the land--would occupy him for the rest of his life. It would have enormous implications for the heritage movement of Saskatchewan.

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<sup>50</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.15, Morton to Gordon Whyte, June 30, 1930.

<sup>51</sup>UA, Morton Papers, II.43/106, A.S. Morton. "Problems in the Study of the History of the Canadian North West," n.d.

### Chapter Three

#### "Beating the Bounds on the Saskatchewan"

In the fall of 1926, Arthur Silver Morton embarked on what was to become a lifelong quest to discover and preserve the ruins of Saskatchewan's forgotten fur trading posts. He went to great lengths to discover the precise location of the lost posts. His investigations in the archives and in the field contributed to the creation of his master work, A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71 (1939). More importantly for Saskatchewan heritage, his research added significantly to the inventory of known historic sites in the province.

There were several reasons for Morton's extensive field work to unearth the sites of Saskatchewan's fur trading posts. First, his antiquarian instincts led him to go beyond the written text and examine at first hand the West's historical landscape. Morton had a deeper reason, however, for working to find and protect the old fort sites. His strong sense of duty as a professional historian to the people of Saskatchewan inspired him to provide them with as complete a picture as possible of their region's history. This picture had to include the surviving landmarks of their great heritage. The sites of the old fur trading posts would, he believed, evoke a sense of the full flavour of the past and stimulate historical awareness in the public. It was imperative in Morton's view that steps be taken to save



the tangible remains of Saskatchewan's rich fur trading heritage before they were lost forever. Thirdly, the remains of the Hudson's Bay Company posts provided Morton with a sense of identity; they were tangible evidence of other British citizens who had lived in the West before him. His attachment to the values and traditions of the British Empire led him to glorify the achievements of its fur trading company in the Canadian West. "[T]he Hudson's Bay Company has had a record as honourable as it is long," Morton once wrote. "...[I]n the height of their struggle with the unscrupulous North West Company they never ceased to play fair game."<sup>1</sup> By discovering and preserving the remains of the British forts, Morton believed that he was discovering and preserving the symbols of honour and fair play upon which the West had been built.

Morton's historical bias in favour of the Hudson's Bay Company resulted in a clash of opinion with historians in eastern Canada who traditionally viewed the British company as an obstacle to Canadian expansion prior to 1870. This clash manifested itself in Morton's struggle to have the fur trading posts commemorated by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) throughout the 1920s and 1930s. His desire to commemorate the fort sites was inconsistent with the board's focus on the "civilization" of

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<sup>1</sup>A.S. Morton, "The Early History of the Hudson Bay." Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 12, No. 4, Dec. 1931, p. 428.

the West after the Northwestern Territory and Rupert's Land were transferred to Canada. Morton's experience as an advisor to the national board was fraught with tension, due, for the most part, to conflicting priorities. Few of the Saskatchewan sites recommended by Morton were recognized by the national marking programme until after his death in 1945; most were commemorated by the Province of Saskatchewan as part of the 1955 Golden Jubilee celebrations.

The HSMBC was formed in 1919 to advise the Dominion Parks Branch of the Canadian Department of the Interior on historic sites of national significance and therefore worthy of national monuments. Founded and dominated by historical interests in central and eastern Canada, the Board concentrated its commemoration efforts in those regions.<sup>2</sup> During the period from 1919 to 1923 there was no representative on the HSMBC from the West; no western sites were marked or even designated for commemoration by the Board. Things began to change in 1923 when the Board was reorganized by James B. Harkin, the member representing the Department of Interior. Monuments were rationed to five per

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<sup>2</sup>C. James Taylor, "National Historic Parks and Sites, 1880-1951: The Biography of a Federal Cultural Program," Ph.D. diss., (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1986), pp. 103; 105; 115. For twenty years the chairman of the HSMBC was Brig.-Gen. E.A. Cruikshank, an Ontario nationalist, according to Taylor, whose heritage concerns focused largely on a single area: the War of 1812 in southwestern Ontario. (p. 83) Other original Board members included James B. Harkin, representative of the Department of the Interior, James H. Coyne from Ontario, Benjamin Sulte from Quebec, and William O. Raymond and William C. Milner from the Maritimes.

year in four regions: the Maritimes, Quebec, Ontario, and the West. As well, the first representative from the western region was appointed to the Board in that year. Unfortunately for Saskatchewan, Judge Frederick W. Howay from New Westminster, British Columbia was expected to represent not only his native province, but the entire region west of the Great Lakes as well. While Howay endeavored to be fair in his recommendations of sites to the Board, his representation east of British Columbia was weak. As historian C. James Taylor explains in his study of the HSMBC, "...it simply was not possible for [Howay] to represent such a vast region."<sup>3</sup> As a result, few Saskatchewan historic sites were marked prior to 1950.<sup>4</sup>

1923 was also the year that Morton was first contacted by the HSMBC and asked to submit a list of nationally significant Saskatchewan sites for possible commemoration by the Board. He wrote to local historical societies affiliated with the Saskatchewan Historical Association (SHA) asking them to forward their suggestions. Morton noted in one of his letters that while it was necessary to care for the "national sites" such as Batoche and Duck Lake, battle sites of the 1885 Rebellion, "an important part of

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<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>4</sup>In 1951 the Massey Commission Report noted that out of 388 designated historic sites in Canada, 119 were in Ontario, while Saskatchewan had only eight. Canada, Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, Report, p. 124.

our Association's duty [will be] to push the claims of our Saskatchewan sites..."<sup>5</sup> The sites initially recommended to the HSMBC by Morton and others consequently included not only the North-West Rebellion sites of Batoche, Duck Lake, Fish Creek, Battleford, and Cut Knife Hill, but also several fur trading posts, including Fort Carleton and Fort à la Corne.<sup>6</sup>

Although fur trading posts and exploration routes in other parts of Canada were recognized by the Board as national historic sites, it preferred during the 1920s to give prominence to the North-West Rebellion sites in Saskatchewan. This preference was a reflection of the Board's eastern Canadian bias. "The battlefield sites of the North-West Rebellion," writes Taylor, "received early and full attention because they could be understood within the context of the eastern historical mentality. From this perspective the battles were important as victories of the Canadian militia over reactionary forces and signified the establishment of Canadian civilization in the western hinterland."<sup>7</sup> Morton, on the other hand, traced the first stirrings of civilization in the West to an earlier period.

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<sup>5</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.23, Morton to W.D. McDougall, Feb. 20, 1923.

<sup>6</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.3, M.D. McDougall to Morton, June 6, 1923.

<sup>7</sup>C. James Taylor, "National Historic Parks and Sites, 1800-1951," p.160.

In his view, Saskatchewan's rich heritage was most accurately represented by the ruins of the early fur trading posts, where, he stated, "all unsupported by organized law, a handful of men subdued a wilderness with a minimum of bloodshed."<sup>8</sup> The fur trading posts, particularly those of the Hudson's Bay Company, were, in Morton's view, "...the birthplace of national qualities to which we must hold...understanding, tolerance, and mutual appreciation among the races..."<sup>9</sup> The battlefield sites of the North-West Rebellion, while interesting historically, were an aberration in the otherwise peaceful and orderly opening of the Canadian West. "We have very few spots on the prairies made famous by such [a] clash of peoples or of arms," Morton asserted.<sup>10</sup> While he was happy to advise and assist the HSMBC with their work in commemorating the 1885 Rebellion sites during the 1920s, he felt that the Board would eventually have to bring the fur trading posts within the range of their activities.<sup>11</sup>

Despite Morton's recommendations, the HSMBC decided to commemorate only the North-West Rebellion sites in 1925; it

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<sup>8</sup>UA, Morton Papers, II. 26, A.S. Morton, "Historical Rambles" or "Beating the Bounds on the Saskatchewan", unpublished manuscript, n.d, [c.1937], p. 19.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>10</sup>UA, Morton Papers, II. 27, A.S. Morton, "Historical Landmarks", unpublished manuscript, n.d., n.p.

<sup>11</sup>UA, Morton Papers, Morton to McGeachy, Mar. 18, 1929.

was an exercise fraught with conflict. Two important battlefield sites--Duck Lake and Fish Creek--were somehow overlooked by the Board and excluded from the list of Rebellion sites to be marked that year.<sup>12</sup> Of the remaining designated sites--Batoche, Cut Knife Hill, Battleford, and Frog Lake--errors in judgement were made on the part of Board members which led to some of the most virulent controversies in the Board's history.<sup>13</sup> The tablet commemorating the Batoche site proved to be particularly contentious.

Morton was involved in the planning of all of the unveiling ceremonies for the North-West Rebellion sites much to the relief of Judge Howay, who never pretended to be an expert in prairie history. In April 1925, Howay wrote to Morton, "I am anxious to keep as much in the background as possible because while I know the story I do not know it with the intimacy that your people do...and hence might either talk in generalities or fall into egregious blunders...[Y]ou as the local man must be well to the front."<sup>14</sup> The unveiling ceremonies were scheduled for the first week in June, 1925. Frog Lake, Battleford, and Cut

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<sup>12</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.3, Howay to Morton, Nov. 9, 1924; I.14, Morton to McDougall, Apr. 27, 1925.

<sup>13</sup>C. James Taylor, "Some Early Problems of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada," Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 64, No. 1, 1983, pp. 3-24.

<sup>14</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.3, Howay to Morton, Apr. 21, 1925.

Knife Hill were marked on schedule; the unveiling of the cairn at Batoche, however, had to be postponed until July due to heavy rains. Morton took part in the June unveilings but he decided not to attend the ceremony at Batoche, scheduled for July 10th. "...[T]he unveiling of the tablets has already eaten too much into my summer's work," he explained to the Prince Albert organizing committee, "and I leave within a couple of days for Ottawa."<sup>15</sup> Two days later, on June 19, the first indication of trouble concerning the Batoche tablet surfaced. Father Jan, a parish priest, wrote to Morton advising him that he had heard "unpleasant comments and the sentiments of dissatisfaction expressed..." regarding the inscription of the tablet.<sup>16</sup> The inscription read:

North West Rebellion  
BATOCHÉ  
Headquarters of the Rebels

Its capture by General Middleton,  
after four days fighting,  
9th, 10th, 11th and 12th May 1885,  
ended the Rebellion.

The Midland Regiment, 10th Royal  
Grenadiers, 90th Regiment,  
Winnipeg Battery, "A" Battery,  
Boulton's Mounted Infantry and  
French's Scouts took part in the battle.

According to Jan, the Métis resented being branded as rebels

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<sup>15</sup>Prince Albert Historical Society Archives, File 76/4, Morton to H.E. Ross, June 17, 1925.

<sup>16</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.5, Father Jan to Morton, June 19, 1925.

on the cairn. They were insulted that the inscription ignored the Métis cause, glorifying instead the exploits of the Canadian militia. Most of all, the people of the French-speaking region were offended by the fact that the inscription on the Batoche cairn was in English only.

It was fortunate that Morton was in Ottawa at the time that the controversy broke out, in that he was able to act as mediator between the HSMBC and the disgruntled French and Métis faction. On June 22, President Murray of the University of Saskatchewan, who had also received a letter from Father Jan, wired Morton in Ottawa asking him to tell the Board that an acceptable French inscription was absolutely necessary, and that the text of the inscription must be announced publicly prior to the upcoming unveiling ceremony.<sup>17</sup> Morton faced a difficult task. Judge Howay was vehemently opposed to a French tablet.<sup>18</sup> Morton's urgent request to the Board asking for the immediate publication of a French inscription in order to quiet the feelings of the Métis succeeded in pressuring Howay to withdraw his objections.<sup>19</sup> Howay refused to budge, however, on the matter of the wording of the French tablet. He insisted that it must be a direct translation of the English version.

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<sup>17</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.5, Murray to Morton, June 22, 1925.

<sup>18</sup>C. James Taylor, "National Historic Parks and Sites, 1880-1951," p. 161.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 161; UA, Morton Papers, I.5, Howay to Morton, June 24, 1925, (copy).



The only concession that the Board made was to change the word "rebel" into the word "Métis" in the French translation.<sup>20</sup>

Professor Frank Underhill, Morton's colleague, represented the University at the unveiling ceremony at Batoche. In his report to Morton, written the same day as the ceremony, Underhill advised that the representative of the Catholic diocese, Father J.H. Brodeur, would not be content with a mere translation of the English tablet. "Mgr. Brodeur," Underhill wrote, "says that nothing will be satisfactory except the redrafting of the English inscription as well as a suitable French one."<sup>21</sup> Underhill went on to comment: "Personally...I think that to put up an inscription in the midst of [a Métis community] in the English language and without a word of honour for the metis [sic] who fought just as bravely as the troops, such an action is pretty nearly criminally stupid."<sup>22</sup>

After the ceremonies, Morton was contacted in Ottawa by the disgruntled Father Brodeur and asked to plead the Métis case before the HSMBC. Brodeur complained that the existing tablet constituted a "breach of contract" by the Canadian

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<sup>20</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, I. A-49, Morton to Murray, June 27, 1925.

<sup>21</sup>UA, JEM, A.III, Underhill to Morton, July 10, 1925.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid.

government.<sup>23</sup> Morton, who chose not to correspond directly with Brodeur, replied to Father Jan that it was unwise to take the "breach of contract" position. "It will be well," stated Morton, "to conserve the sympathy of the members of the Board which is now an actual reality."<sup>24</sup> Several weeks later Morton wrote to the HSMBC enclosing a favourable report on the Batoche ceremony from the Prince Albert Historical Society. He indicated that he believed that it was only a small group who protested the inscription, and that the ceremony had actually been quite "enjoyable and very impressive."<sup>25</sup>

It is clear from these comments that Morton did not forcefully present the Métis case in Ottawa. While Morton succeeded in obtaining a French translation of the Batoche tablet, he did not press the demands for a new, more acceptable inscription too strongly. He did not wish to alienate the members of the HSMBC, fearing, perhaps, that further historic site commemorations in Saskatchewan might be jeopardized. A year later, however, Morton again met with J.B. Harkin of the HSMBC in an effort to persuade the Board to change the English inscription. Harkin argued that the Board had already "bent over backwards" in permitting the French tablet and in not providing an exact translation

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<sup>23</sup>UA, Morton Papers, Fr. Brodeur to Morton, July 14, 1925.

<sup>24</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.5, Morton to Jan, July 15, 1925.

<sup>25</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.3, Morton to Pinard, Sept. 8, 1925.

by substituting "Métis" for "rebels". If the English tablet were changed, Harkin predicted, "the whole of English Canada with the Orange drum at its head would rise up against it..."<sup>26</sup> Morton wrote to Murray, saying: "...[M]y feeling is that Harkin is probably right."<sup>27</sup> Apparently Murray had suggested a plan to Morton which would involve surreptitiously changing the English inscription. Morton replied that such a plan "...would be very dangerous because if it ever came to be known that the inscription was changed--as by a thief in the night or by violence--the Orangemen would find both the men and the money to undo everything done and great would be the storm." Morton wished to remain on "strictly neutral and firm legal ground" and to watch for the time when mediation would again be "wise and safe."<sup>28</sup> This rather cautious approach accomplished nothing in the short term. The Batoche plaque was not changed until 1947--over twenty years later, and one year after the death of Judge Howay.

While the Batoche controversy remained unresolved, Morton continued his quest to discover and preserve the fur trading posts in Saskatchewan. Morton was motivated not only by preservationist concerns; to a large degree, his

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<sup>26</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, Series I, A-49, Morton to Murray, June 17, 1926.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

quest was also inspired by his desire to write a major work on the history of western Canada during the fur trade era. He began his search for the forts in the fall of 1926, a year before he had entered into an agreement with a publishing firm to write his book, A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71. In the spring of 1926, Campbell Innes of Battleford had asked Morton to publish a paper on the fur trading posts of Saskatchewan for the Battleford Historical Society. Morton asked to be excused, stating: "The paper when it is given should be exhaustive and as far as possible final...We are not yet in a position to publish...[W]hen you do publish you should be able to say that you were marking the spots on which the forts stood as far as known."<sup>29</sup>

In 1927, Morton was approached by Professor Kennedy of the University of Toronto and asked to contribute a volume on the Canadian West to a planned series on the history of Canada. Morton agreed to join the project and began to write. With the fall of the stock market in 1929, however, Irwin and Gordon, the publishing company involved in the venture, ran into financial difficulties and closed down. Only three of the proposed eight volumes in the series had been completed, and the deal with Morton fell through.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, Morton continued to collect, research and

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<sup>29</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.37, Morton to Cambell Innes, May 31, 1926.

<sup>30</sup>UA, Jean E. Murray Collection, A.III, A.S. Morton, "Memo re: History of the Canadian West," n.d.

write. By 1932, he had completed all save the last twenty years of the pre-Confederation history of the prairie provinces, and was using copies of his manuscript as a textbook for his class in fur trade history at the University of Saskatchewan.<sup>31</sup>

In conjunction with his historical work on western Canada, Morton compiled fifteen volumes of material relating to the historical geography of the region.<sup>32</sup> Representing the vast knowledge which Morton gathered over a period of twenty years or more, this unpublished geographical series, which he referred to as "a companion" to A History, "...was prepared [to] ease the work of cumbersomeness of arguments as to the sites of forts and certain chronological obscurities..."<sup>33</sup> The material contained in these volumes includes extracts, hand-copied by Morton, of contemporary fur trade documents relating to the location of fur trading posts; Morton's notes taken during his field trips in search of forts; maps, sketches and descriptions of the remains of fur trading posts discovered by Morton; and correspondence between Morton and others interested in finding the lost forts.

In his typically methodical manner, Morton preceded his

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<sup>31</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.11, A.S. Morton, "Application for Carnegie Corp. Grant," Dec. 2, 1932.

<sup>32</sup>SA, A32 A.1, Papers of A.S. Morton, A.S. Morton, "Historical Geography," unpublished manuscript, 15 vols., n.d.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

quest for the remains of fur trading posts with a "practice run" in the fall of 1926 in which he searched for forts whose locations were already marked on survey maps. With the assistance of the maps and the knowledge of local residents, Morton was able to locate Fort George, Buckingham House, and the Vermilion forts in Alberta. "I regard my explorations [on this trip]," explained Morton, "as sort of training in helping me to find some of the forts which are now unknown."<sup>34</sup> He soon developed a set of guidelines for locating the trading post remains. A week after his "training" excursion, Morton set out these guidelines in a memorandum to the committee of the Prince Albert Historical Society that had been appointed to search for the sites of forts in their region. Morton provided the Prince Albert committee with an estimate of the probable sites of forts in its neighbourhood, based on such primary sources as contemporary maps and journals. In the search for post remains, Morton stressed local knowledge as the most valuable tool of the explorer. He suggested that the committee launch a publicity campaign urging anyone who knew of remains to report either to the Prince Albert society or to himself at the university in Saskatoon. Morton then went on to describe what to look for:

The remains of the forts are in the form of

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<sup>34</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.37, Morton to A.H. Gibson, Nov. 6, 1926.

cellars, and beside the cellars of the more important houses will be found mounds with stones about six to nine inches across. These are the chimneys which were made of a stone and mud plaster, the upper part being mud. At times the line of the palisade can be traced out--forming a square around the fort. It will also assist in fixing the doubtful sites of forts to remember that the rival companies built not far from one another so as to protect their own interests at the hands of their opponents. The forts were usually on a "low bottom" easily approached from the river...<sup>35</sup>

In this search for the fur trading posts, Morton saw himself as a "scientific historian", delving into the documents, building up evidence as to the location of the forts, and then, armed with the evidence, going forth into the countryside to search for the ruins along the riverbanks.<sup>36</sup> He derived immense pleasure from these excursions in search of the forgotten forts; it was an activity that he enjoyed until the end of his life. In an unpublished manuscript entitled "Historical Rambles" or "Beating the Bounds on the Saskatchewan" written in the late 1930s, Morton provides an account of one weekend's trip along the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers in search of forts. He describes "the pleasure of a ramble along the beautiful wide sweeping valley of the Saskatchewan..."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.37, "Fur Traders' Forts in the Region of Prince Albert," draft attached to letter, Morton to Ross, Nov. 11, 1926.

<sup>36</sup>UA, Morton Papers, II.27, "Historical Rambles" or "Beating the Bounds on the Saskatchewan," p.3.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

With one companion--an "amateur historian"--Morton discovered, on this outing, the remains of three forts. They were assisted by a "historically minded local merchant" and a farmer's wife who, although she had never heard of any ruins in her neighbourhood, knew of some "old graves or something" which proved to be the remains of Fort de l'Isle.<sup>38</sup> Morton described the excitement he felt at making these discoveries. "The historian," he wrote, stood "viewing the ruins of [an] old storied fort with something of the elation with which Mackenzie first viewed the Pacific."<sup>39</sup> The "rambles" closed with "the fullness of satisfaction which comes from a feeling of accomplishment."<sup>40</sup> As they travelled homeward, Morton and his companion "enthusiastically laid their plans for future explorations, and visualized the day when provision would be made for the preservation of their finds."<sup>41</sup> In an enlightening conclusion to the article, Morton provides his justification for the preservation of fur trading posts. He compares the preservation of the forts to an old English custom called "beating the bounds." This custom involved taking young people of a community around to the boundary markers in the countryside and knocking the youngsters'

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., pp. 11-12.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid. p. 3.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 19.



heads against the markers to ensure that they would remember their locations.<sup>42</sup> Morton likened the fort remains to the English boundary markers: if lost to memory, the community would lose something of fundamental value. "We may well beat the bounds of these marks of our history," wrote Morton, "and in the old fur trade forts see the birthplace of [civilization in the West]."<sup>43</sup>

Morton saw the preservation of historic sites in Saskatchewan as having a utilitarian side as well. His lobbying efforts for the commemoration and preservation of the fur trading posts always made reference to the benefits such activities would have for the tourist industry in the province. As early as 1925, Morton envisioned what he called "an historic highway"--a triangular route connecting the various points of historical interest between Saskatoon and Prince Albert. This plan was described in a paper entitled: "Plan for Saskatchewan's Historic Way."<sup>44</sup> Although the North-West Rebellion sites figured prominently in Morton's proposed route, he also hoped to incorporate the sites of old trails and fur trading posts in the area into his scheme. Morton even supported a suggestion from the Saskatoon Board of Trade that a buffalo herd be introduced

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 19; David Lowenthal. The Past is a Foreign Country, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 250.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 19-20.

<sup>44</sup>UA, Morton Papers, II.41, A.S. Morton, "Plan For Saskatchewan's Historic Way," n.d., [c.1925].

into the Pine Forest Reserve between Duck Lake and Prince Albert, stating that it would be "historically appropriate."<sup>45</sup> "I do not think," declared Morton, "there is any region between Lake Ontario and the Rockies that offers a finer combination of historic interest and natural beauty. Let us make the public realize this and pass on to coming generations this our unique heritage."<sup>46</sup>

In a 1930 memo to Saskatchewan Premier J.T.M. Anderson regarding historic sites, Morton stressed the advantages that the preservation of historic sites would have for tourism. "...[M]otor tourists are intensely interested in the least detail of the country they pass through, and it adds to the pleasure of their journey to visit spots, beautiful in themselves, which touch the imagination and recall the past."<sup>47</sup> Morton even went so far as to suggest the reconstruction of two fur trading posts located along the Saskatoon-Prince Albert highway in order to attract tourist traffic. In 1944, Morton again put forward the idea of fort reconstruction in a letter to a Prince Albert alderman concerning the Peter Pond fort. "If the City Council of Prince Albert were undertaking to make the post

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<sup>45</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.3. Morton to Harkin, Dec. 18, 1925.

<sup>46</sup>UA, Morton Papers, II.41, A.S. Morton, "Plan for Saskatchewan's Historic Way," n.d., [c.1925].

<sup>47</sup>UA, Morton Papers, II.34, A.S. Morton, "Memorandum in re Historic Sites of Saskatchewan," n.d.; attached to letter, Morton to J.T.M. Anderson, July 3, 1930, Morton Papers, I.37.

presentable," wrote Morton, "they might possibly wish something more attractive to tourists. An attempt might be made to rehabilitate the fort."<sup>48</sup>

Over the years, Morton located the remains of scores of fur trading posts, either personally, or through the efforts of his students, former students, colleagues from other university departments such as Professor Grant MacEwan, and others interested in heritage preservation, including Campbell Innes of North Battleford. Morton worked closely with these individuals, and, indeed, directed their searches for lost forts. Among the sites found by Morton were: Fort à la Corne near Kinistino; the Francois-Finlay Fort at Nipawin; Joseph Frobisher's fort north of Melfort; Peter Pond's post four and a half miles west of Prince Albert; all of the posts on the South Saskatchewan River and nearly all on the Assiniboine and Qu'Appelle rivers.<sup>49</sup> For a variety of reasons, however, the forts that Morton worked so long and hard to locate were not commemorated during his lifetime.

One of the main obstacles that Morton faced in his efforts to have Saskatchewan fur trading posts commemorated was the HSMBC's determination that only sites deemed to be

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<sup>48</sup>Prince Albert Historical Society Archives, File 9(a) b, Morton to Blackwood, Nov. 4, 1944.

<sup>49</sup>"Arthur Silver Morton, M.A., B.D., D.D., LL.D., F.R.S.C.; Professor of History and Librarian in the University of Saskatchewan, 1914-1940." (Saskatoon: University of Saskatchewan, 1943), p. 20.

nationally significant be recommended for national recognition.<sup>50</sup> The selection of historic sites on the rather arbitrary basis of national criteria severely handicapped Morton's claims for the sites of fur trading posts. The question of national significance could not, (nor can it be today), be objectively determined. Frequently, as C. James Taylor points out, the recognition of any site as having national significance was dependent on the variables of time and place, and especially on the opinions of individual board members.<sup>51</sup> Morton often ran into this brick wall when making recommendations to the Board. In the spring of 1929, for example, the Board turned down the site of the Pine Island forts of the North Saskatchewan River, (which Morton and Campbell Innes had discovered two years before), on the grounds that "the site in question is not one of outstanding national significance or importance..."<sup>52</sup> In fact, the Board deferred its decision on all the fur trading post sites recommended by Morton until it could determine whether the sites were of "sufficient national importance."<sup>53</sup>

Morton was extremely frustrated by the Board's

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<sup>50</sup>C. James Taylor, "National Historic Parks and Sites, 1880-1951," p. 101.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>52</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.4, Harkin to Morton, June 19, 1929.

<sup>53</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.4, Harkin to Morton, Oct. 16, 1929.

position. He pointed out to Howay and Harkin that several fur trading posts had already been marked by the programme in Alberta and Manitoba; thus precedents had been set. When asked by Howay to submit a list of site recommendations along with a statement showing their national significance, Morton pointed out: "Our country is so varied in its interests and experiences from sea to sea that it would be somewhat difficult to get an all-comprehensive definition of 'national interest'.<sup>54</sup> Morton went on, however, to assert the national significance of the fur trading posts:

I should suppose that what played a very considerable part in the history of such a wide-flung corporations as the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company, in a real sense Dominion organizations, and that over a considerable period of time, no matter what its nature, should figure along side of the more striking remains in the East. Otherwise,<sup>55</sup> we would have no commemorative markers at all...

Another reason for Morton's failure to secure the commemoration of Saskatchewan fur trading posts was the incredible difficulty involved in pinpointing the site locations. The forts had been abandoned for over one hundred years before Morton began to look for them. Buried in isolated and often inaccessible locations, little remained of the forts to indicate their former existence. Morton described the situation this way: "The abandoned posts crumbled to ruins, the weeds, the sapplings [sic],

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<sup>54</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.17, Morton to Howay, Mar. 13, 1939.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid.

then the forest cloaked them, and, with the day of their generation lost, their very location became but a matter of legend."<sup>56</sup> All that Morton had to go on was the documentary evidence--some of it inaccurate and unreliable<sup>57</sup>--which took him years to sift through and analyze, as well as the knowledge of farmers and others who lived in the vicinities of the fort ruins. Often Morton would make several visits to the site of an old post, checking and double checking his findings against the fur trading company records. A cautious man by nature, Morton hesitated to announce the discovery of a post until all doubt had been eliminated. Often this process took years and resulted in the deferral of site commemorations by the federal board.

The example of Fort à la Corne illustrates quite vividly the problems that Morton had in pinpointing the exact location of a fur trading post. This post was significant for several reasons. Established in 1753 by Chevalier de la Corne, it was the first fur trading post, and, in fact, the only French post, in what is now the

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<sup>56</sup>UA, Morton Papers, II.27, A.S. Morton, "Historical Rambles" or "Beating the Bounds on the Saskatchewan," n.d., [c.1937], p. 19.

<sup>57</sup>W.M. Stewart, "David Thompson's Surveys in the North-West," Canadian Historical Review, vol. 37, no. 3, Sept. 1936, pp.289-303. Stewart points out inaccuracies in Thompson's surveys. "...[S]hould his estimated distances be used, say to locate Fort a la Corne by starting from the 'Forks'...of the Saskatchewan river," Stewart states, "they would place La Corne some ten miles too far upstream--an error of ten miles in an actual distance of twenty-four." p. 289.

province of Saskatchewan. Fort à la Corne was also worthy of note, according to Morton, because it was the site of the first attempt at agriculture within the boundaries of the province.<sup>58</sup> This site was first recommended to the HSMBC in June 1923. It was one of the few fur trading posts that the Board expressed interest in marking, perhaps because it was the first such post in Saskatchewan. The actual location of the post, however, had to be verified before the site could be commemorated. In February 1926, Howay asked for Morton's help in fixing the exact location of the fort. "I think that if the Board can be satisfied that the spot is identified," wrote Howay, "they would in all probability be willing to mark it."<sup>59</sup>

The region in which Fort à la Corne was situated was populated with the ruins of many forts; thus it presented Morton with an interesting problem of identification. Traditionally, La Corne's post had been placed about twenty miles down from the forks of the north and south branches of the Saskatchewan River. Morton had a hunch that this was wrong. "If I can definitely prove that my conclusions are right," he wrote Howay, "it would be awkward for the Board

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<sup>58</sup>UA, Morton Papers, Morton to H.G.L. Strange, July 20, 1938. Morton notes that the site of Fort à la Corne was known by the Cree Indians as "Ni'tawikichikan", which means "the place where wheat or oats or vegetables are grown." SA, A32.A.1, A.S. Morton, "Historical Geography," Vol. 8, p. 204b; *ibid.*, Edward Ahenakew to Morton, Dec. 29, 1941.

<sup>59</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.3, Howay to Morton, Feb. 8, 1926.

if they had placed the tablet at the wrong post. "<sup>60</sup> Morton believed that the most reliable information about the site location could be found in contemporary documents and, in 1930, he received special permission from the Hudson's Bay Company to study the journals of company servants Anthony Henday, Matthew Cocking and William Pink. These journals proved to be the only written record of Fort à la Corne. Unfortunately, the evidence regarding the location of the post was scanty and unreliable. Based on his readings of these journals, Morton initially--and incorrectly--placed the site of Fort à la Corne about forty miles down the river from the actual site, near present day Codette.

There the matter rested until 1930 when Morton found the remains of a post in the Codette vicinity. This discovery, especially the unusual dimensions of the remains at Codette, confirmed his belief that La Corne's fort was not located near the river forks. While English forts were usually square, the French built their forts in a rectangular form, with the narrow end facing the river. The ruins near Codette measured forty feet by about one hundred and fifty feet and the narrow end faced the river. Morton was aware that another post--the François-Finlay Fort (1768-1774)--had been built in the same area, and, in fact, he had found the remains of a second fort close by. To verify that the rectangular fort was indeed that of Fort a la Corne,

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<sup>60</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.4, Morton to Howay, May 17, 1928.



Morton arranged for a forest engineer, R.T. Pike, of the Dominion Forestry Service, to calculate the age of a white spruce stump found on the northern palisade of the rectangular post. Pike counted the rings of the stump and concluded that it was 139 years old at the time it was cut.<sup>61</sup> The farmer on whose land the fort was located remembered that he had logged the site in 1908, twenty-two years prior to Morton's investigation. Morton concluded that the tree began growing 161 years before 1931, or in 1770, and that therefore the rectangular post was La Corne's.

Morton wrote to the HSMBC that the Fort à la Corne had been found. He wanted, however, to check the Hudson's Bay Company records again before he sent the Board his final report.<sup>62</sup> Throughout 1931, various members of the Board wrote repeatedly to Morton asking him for his final conclusions regarding the site. Morton, in response, advised them that he was still checking the documents to confirm the site location. Morton's failure to provide Board members with his final opinion on the location of the fort may have led them to drop the matter, for communication between Morton and the HSMBC on the matter ceased until 1937. During the interim period, Morton was granted unrestricted access to the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in

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<sup>61</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.4, H.T. Pike to Morton, July 4, 1931.

<sup>62</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.4, Morton to Pinard, n.d.

London. The first scholar to be allowed such access, Morton went to London on sabbatical in 1933, and spent every summer from 1934 to 1937 working in the company's archives researching and completing his work on A History. At some point during this period, Morton changed his mind about the location of Fort à la Corne and located in 1935 the actual remains of the fort in the vicinity of the river forks.<sup>63</sup>

Once Morton had completed the research and writing of his book, he resumed his lobbying efforts for the commemoration of Fort à la Corne. His relations with the HSMBC, however, had deteriorated considerably over the years, due in no small measure to Morton's excruciatingly slow methods. He therefore asked H.G.L. Strange, an engineer and farmer from Winnipeg, to approach the Board for him.<sup>64</sup> In 1937, after contacting Judge Howay, Strange

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<sup>63</sup> Morton may have come across new evidence in Matthew Cocking's log which led him to correct his earlier mistake; it is likely, however, that it was this very source that threw him off course in the first place. Morton points out in a paper presented to the Royal Society in 1944 that Cocking's statement concerning the François-Finlay Fort contained several contradictions. Cocking described this fort as square, when in fact it, like La Corne's post, was rectangular in shape. Morton had learned that François Le Blanc, who built the fort for the Englishman, James Finlay, had worked with Chevalier Louis de la Corne in the 1750s. Thus, Morton concluded, François "would be likely to build the sort of post which his former master...had built." Indeed, both the François-Finlay Fort and the original Fort à la Corne had rectangular palisades. A.S. Morton, "Nipawi, on the Saskatchewan River, and its Historic Sites," Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, third series, section II, Vol. 38, 1944, (Ottawa: Royal Society of Canada, 1944), p. 127.

<sup>64</sup> UA, Morton Papers, I.17, Morton to H.G.L. Strange, Dec. 19, 1937.

informed Morton that the Board was ready to erect a cairn at Fort à la Corne now that the site had been found. In the fall of 1938, Howay wrote to Morton that progress was being made, but that "there is some disagreement as to exactly where this memorial should be placed."<sup>65</sup> Howay favored erecting the cairn for La Corne's fort in the neighboring town of Kinistino for reasons of publicity. Morton was extremely frustrated by this proposal. He believed that a monument erected miles away from the fort would not ensure the preservation of the site.<sup>66</sup> He must also have felt that the years spent working to pinpoint the post location had been for nothing if the site itself was not to be marked.

When Saskatchewan finally secured its own Board representative, J.A. Gregory, in 1938, Morton persisted in his petition for a monument at the La Corne site. In the summer of 1940 Gregory replied: "The Board last year passed a resolution to erect a cairn commemorative of Fort a la Corne at Kinistino...but I fear nothing further will be done along this line until the war [World War Two] is over."<sup>67</sup> Indeed, for the duration of the war, the work of the HSMBC was suspended. A cairn in Kinistino commemorating Fort à la

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<sup>65</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.17, Howay to Morton, Sept. 30, 1938.

<sup>66</sup>UA, Morton Papers, II.34, A.S. Morton, "Memorandum in re Historic Sites of Saskatchewan," n.d. Attached to letter from Morton to Premier J.T.M. Anderson, July 3, 1930. UA, Morton Papers, I.37.

<sup>67</sup>UA, Morton Paper, I.17, J.A. Gregory to Morton, June 4, 1940.

Corne was not unveiled until 1951, almost thirty years after the site was first recommended to the national board.

Morton's frustration with the HSMBC persuaded him that a new approach was required if Saskatchewan historic sites were to be properly looked after. In a 1930 memorandum to Premier J.T.M. Anderson, he wrote: "We cannot look to the Historic Sites Board of the Dominion to do anything adequate...[T]hey do not rank our sites as of national importance...It is therefore to the Province that we must look to preserve the landmarks of our heritage."<sup>68</sup> He suggested that the Government of Saskatchewan form a board for the purpose of caring for the historic sites in the province. In 1937 Morton again raised the matter of the creation of a provincial body to look after historic sites. In a meeting with W.F. Kerr, Minister of Natural Resources, Morton pointed out that a number of fort sites had come into the possession of the province with the transfer of natural resources from the federal government in 1930. In his report to the university president, Morton stated: "I discussed with Mr. Kerr my hopes of a Provincial Trust being empowered to hold sites of historic interest. He expressed himself as surprised that his Department was in actual possession of such sites...and he will co-operate in their

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<sup>68</sup>UA, Morton Papers, II.34, A.S. Morton, "Memorandum in re Historic Sites of Saskatchewan," n.d.; attached to letter from Morton to Premier J.T.M. Anderson, July 3, 1930, UA, Morton Papers, I.37.

preservation."<sup>69</sup> The Provincial Trust enabling the Board of Governors of the University of Saskatchewan to acquire historic sites was established in March 1937 by a bill amending Section 5, Subsection (1) of the University Act. The University was given the power to:

...acquire by gift, purchase or in any other manner, and hold in trust for His Majesty, land having a historical interest, or buildings, monuments or other erections having a historical interest and the land on which the same are situated or so much thereof as is deemed advisable, and provide for the care, maintenance, and preservation of property so acquired.<sup>70</sup>

An advisory committee to the Provincial Trust was then appointed consisting of two representatives of the Board of Governors of the university, President James S. Thomson and Andrew Knox, and two representatives of the provincial government, J.W. Estey, Minister of Education, and W.F. Kerr. Morton acted as the secretary to the committee. The main purpose of the Provincial Trust, according to Morton, was not to compete with the marking programme of the HSMBC, but rather to gain title to historic sites in Saskatchewan so that they would not be lost. "...[S]o far as the West is concerned," Morton wrote, "[the HSMBC has] refused to buy sites and have confined themselves to erecting monuments. This is good enough so far as it goes, but in the view of

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<sup>69</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, Ser. II, B-108, "Report of Mr. Morton's Visit to the Departments, Parliament Buildings, May 19, 1937," May 20, 1937.

<sup>70</sup>Bill 32, assented to on March 23, 1938.

the Government and the Board of Governors the sites should be acquired, for that will give us power to protect them..."<sup>71</sup> The move to acquire historic sites in Saskatchewan was a significant departure from the strategy of the HSMBC. The national board's activities concentrated on the erection of commemorative markers; in only a few exceptional cases--battle sites, for example--were actual sites acquired and preserved by the federal government.<sup>72</sup>

The first meeting of the advisory committee to the Provincial Trust was held on July 19, 1938. The committee met at the site of South Branch House where it was decided to petition the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) to transfer the title of the site to the trust.<sup>73</sup> The committee also visited the North-West Rebellion battle site at Duck Lake where it instructed Morton to pass along its request to the HSMBC that its plans to mark the site be carried out in the near future.<sup>74</sup> The committee met only

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<sup>71</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.17, Morton to R.S.E. Walsh, Mar. 10, 1940.

<sup>72</sup>C. James Taylor, "National Historic Parks and Sites, 1880-1951," pp. 8-9.

<sup>73</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.17, Morton to W.F. Kerr, July 21, 1938.

<sup>74</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.17, Morton to Howay, Aug. 18, 1938. An inscription for the Duck Lake site had actually been cast in the 1920s, however, as Howay explained: "The attempt to commemorate the places connected with the 1885 Rebellion raised so much opposition that for the time being the matter has been allowed to stand. Duck Lake can however be taken up in the near future, if thought desirable." I.17, Howay to Morton, Sept. 30, 1938. The Duck Lake cairn, inscribed in both English and Cree,

once again, in December 1943, at which time it discussed the potential acquisition of three posts, including Fort à la Corne.<sup>75</sup>

Among the sites pursued by Morton for the Provincial Trust were Fort à la Corne, Fort Esperance near Welwyn on the Manitoba border, the François-Finlay Fort, and Peter Pond's fort near Prince Albert. Only one or two sites, however, were actually acquired by the university. While there is some confusion over which site or sites were actually owned by the university, it is likely that title to the Hudson's Bay Company's South Branch House in the forest reserve north of Duck Lake was secured.<sup>76</sup> In 1944, Morton had a wire fence erected around both South Branch House and the François-Finlay Fort. As well, in the few months prior to Morton's death early in 1945, negotiations were being actively conducted for the acquisition of the first Fort Pelly near Pelly, Fort Esperance, Peter Pond's fort, and

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was unveiled in 1950.

<sup>75</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, Series II, B 145, A.S. Morton, "Report for President Thompson of the trip of Arthur S. Morton of Sept. 26 to 29, 1944, in connection with the survey of fur trade posts to be acquired in the fiscal year 1944-45," n.d.

<sup>76</sup>UA, George Simpson Papers, 3. Golden Jubilee, John Archer, "Report. Historic Sites Survey for the Saskatchewan Archives Board and the Inter-Departmental Committee on Historic Sites, July 1948," p. 16. SA, NR 1/4, 051 A, J.D. Herbert, "Report of a Preliminary Survey of Historic Sites in Saskatchewan, March 1951," p. 4.

Fort à la Corne.<sup>77</sup>

Little was actually achieved by the Provincial Trust for historic sites. During the Great Depression, the trust did not have the resources to purchase sites. The only funds available to the trust was \$500 granted by the DNR to be used to finance Morton's trips to the sites. The trust therefore depended upon the donation of the land on which historic sites were situated. As well, the Board of Governors of the University of Saskatchewan was not prepared to supervise the maintenance and preservation of acquired historical property. Thus, local historical societies were called upon by Morton to watch over the sites. This reliance on local societies proved to be unwise. Local interest in historic sites was unstable, and often these societies could not adequately finance site maintenance. As a result, according to a 1951 report on Saskatchewan's historic sites, the two sites marked and fenced by Morton in 1944 had been "...in a state of semi-neglect ever since."<sup>78</sup>

In 1945, it was decided that the duties of the advisory

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<sup>77</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, Series II, B-145, Morton to Kerr, June 23, 1944. Apparently, the owner of the La Corne site refused to sell the property for several years, believing that Chevalier de la Corne had buried silver in the vicinity of the post when he left to join his regiment in the defence of Quebec against General Wolfe. He finally agreed to sell in 1944 after he was informed by W.F. Kerr, Minister of Natural Resources, that if the silver were found it would become the property of the Crown. Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>SA, NR 1/4 051 A, J.D. Herbert, "Report on a Preliminary Survey of Historic Sites in Saskatchewan, March 1951, By J.D. Herbert," March 27, 1931, p. 3.



committee of the Provincial Trust would be transferred to the newly established Saskatchewan Archives Board. The Archives Act included the stipulation that the Board "shall have general supervision...of all historic sites held by the University in trust..."<sup>79</sup> Within two years, however, L.H. Thomas, the Provincial Archivist, reported to the provincial government that the Archives Board did not have adequate staff or money to look after historic sites.<sup>80</sup> Thomas suggested that the sections of the University Act and the Archives Act relating to historic sites be repealed. This was done in 1950, and jurisdiction over the sites was given to the Department of Natural Resources (DNR).<sup>81</sup>

Upon assuming responsibility for historic sites in the province, the DNR decided to carry out an inventory. This was conducted by J.D. Herbert, an employee of the Department, in 1951. Herbert's recommendations resulted in a very productive marking program by the province. In his report, Herbert identified sites that were already marked, including eleven sites commemorated by the HSMBC. He went on to recommend forty-six historic sites for future marking by the province. He observed that the efforts of local societies had been woefully inadequate, and concluded that

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<sup>79</sup>SA, NR 1/4, 051 D, L.H. Thomas, "Memorandum on Historic Sites," Nov. 4, 1949.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>SA, NR 1/4, 051B, C.A.L. Hogg to J.A. Young, Apr. 5, 1951.

if permanent interest in the marking and care of provincial historic sites was to be ensured, responsibility for site preservation had to be institutionalized.

In 1953, Herbert was appointed Saskatchewan's first director of historic sites. As well, he was temporarily assigned to the Golden Jubilee Sub-Committee on Historic Sites and Publications, chaired by Professor George Simpson of the University of Saskatchewan. As a result of this efficient organization's energetic work, over fifty historic sites had been designated and forty-nine marked by the end of the jubilee year.<sup>82</sup> The historic sites programme initiated jointly by the Saskatchewan Archives Board and the DNR as part of the 1955 Golden Jubilee celebrations succeeded on a scale beyond Morton's wildest dreams. Many of the sites marked for the Golden Jubilee were the fur trading posts that Morton had for years struggled to locate and preserve. No doubt he would have been pleased to see the fruits of his labours recognized and preserved for future generations.

Many factors militated against Morton's promotion of historic sites during the 1930s and 1940s--factors such as recent settlement, impoverishment, a world war, severe weather conditions, poor road conditions, and the vagaries of an agricultural economy. Political scientist David E.

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<sup>82</sup>SA, Saskatchewan Government Publications, Miscellaneous Committees, Saskatchewan Golden Jubilee Committee, "Report of the Saskatchewan Golden Jubilee Committee," 1956, p. 31.

Smith has suggested that "...the struggle for subsistence dulls historical awareness...", and that leisure provides the opportunity to promote culture.<sup>83</sup> By the 1950s, conditions had improved in Saskatchewan to such an extent that a desire to foster greater provincial awareness through the encouragement and development of Saskatchewan culture finally emerged.<sup>84</sup> These commemorative activities would not have been so successful, however, without Morton's pioneering work on behalf of historic sites. Indeed, he had a major impact on the evolution of Saskatchewan's historical consciousness. Not only did he help to give shape and form to the province's history through the delineation of its fur trade era geography, but he also created the first organization for the preservation of historic sites, encouraged and supported local historical societies interested in caring for the sites, and prodded the HSMBC to clarify and broaden its definition of what was of national historical significance. More importantly, Morton's commemoration and preservation efforts have been accepted as an essential and vital part of Saskatchewan's heritage movement and his work helped to lay the foundation for current heritage programmes.

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<sup>83</sup>David E. Smith, "Celebrations and History on the Prairies," Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol. 17, No. 3, Fall 1982, p. 46.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

## Chapter Four

### "The Way the Wind is Blowing"

During the last years of his life, A.S. Morton made his most important and lasting contribution to Saskatchewan heritage; he created the province's first archival institution for the preservation of government documents. The Historical Public Records Office (HPRO) set up at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon by Morton in 1937 was the precursor of the present-day Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB) established in March, 1945, two months after Morton's death. The HPRO was, in effect, a sub-division of the Provincial Archives. Two repositories for inactive documents now exist in Saskatchewan--the archives office on the Saskatoon campus and the Board office in Regina. This situation--unique in Canada--resulted from Morton's conviction that the university--and especially the History Department--had a much greater interest in non-current public documents than did the government departments which had generated them. A public records office on campus would, Morton believed, provide scholars with a "laboratory of research,"<sup>1</sup> and the documents preserved there would be "...by far the most important source for all branches of

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<sup>1</sup>Saskatchewan Archives Board (SAB), Office Records, A.1, A.S. Morton to Prof. A.R.M. Lower, Feb. 24, 1944.

history..."<sup>2</sup>

Morton's commitment to the preservation of public records was a continuation of his earlier heritage activities. The Prairie Province section of the university library set up by the University Historical Association in the early 1920s was, for example, an archival facility designed to stimulate research in western Canadian history. The many summers that Morton spent at the Dominion Archives in Ottawa researching the history of the fur trade in the West further strengthened his belief in the value of primary source material for historical study. The creation of the HPRO at the university was thus, in many ways, a natural conclusion to Morton's heritage work.

Morton was not the first person interested in the establishment of an archives in Saskatchewan; initial efforts to preserve government documents in the province, however, had met with little success. An ordinance creating the Department of the Territorial Secretary in 1897 stated that the Secretary was to keep the archives of the North-West Territories.<sup>3</sup> This provision was carried over into later acts governing the Provincial Secretary's Department after the creation of the province in 1905; this department,

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<sup>2</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.1, Morton to Prof. M.H. Long, Feb. 5, 1942.

<sup>3</sup>First Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Archives Board, 1945-46, p. 14.

however, never became a comprehensive government archives.<sup>4</sup>

At the University of Saskatchewan, Professor E.H. Oliver began to collect documents relating to the history of the province shortly after he joined the institution in 1909. The following year, Oliver held discussions with Walter Scott, premier of Saskatchewan from 1905 to 1916, concerning the preservation of publications and documents relating to the history of the province in an archival setting. Oliver suggested that both the Legislative Library and the university library should be involved in the collection and preservation of historical material.<sup>5</sup> University President Walter Murray backed up Oliver's efforts with a letter to Scott early in 1911 proposing that the government appoint a commission to examine the question of establishing a provincial archives.<sup>6</sup> A motion was actually made in the provincial legislature that year calling for "...early action...to collect and preserve historical and other documents relating to the early development of Saskatchewan."<sup>7</sup> While the house unanimously agreed that this was a desirable goal, the motion was not acted upon at that time. The Saskatchewan government was busy building

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<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>5</sup>Second Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Archives Board, 1946-47, pp. 29-30, copy, Walter Murray to Walter Scott, Jan. 19, 1911.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Regina Leader, Feb. 1, 1911, p. 1.

for the future during the "boom" years between 1900 and 1913;<sup>8</sup> preserving the past was not a high priority.

During World War One, provision was finally made for an archives branch of the Legislative Library, and William Trant of Regina was appointed Assistant Librarian and Archivist. Ill health apparently prevented Trant from accomplishing much in the way of document collection and preservation and after his death in 1924, the position of archivist was allowed to lapse.<sup>9</sup> In the meantime, the vaults of the Legislature were overflowing with non-current government records that had been accumulating since 1905. Relief for this problem was often found in the fires of the powerhouse located nearby.<sup>10</sup> The first statute to deal directly with the retention or disposal of old provincial records--the Preservation of Public Documents Act of 1920--was used primarily to facilitate the destruction of inactive public documents clogging the vaults. This act remained in effect until 1945. While it was a necessary beginning, the main result of the act was to allow the legal destruction of large quantities of records by order in council. A total of seventy-eight orders were issued for the disposal of

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<sup>8</sup>Gerald Friesen, The Canadian Prairies; A History (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), pp. 275; 283.

<sup>9</sup>First Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Archives Board, 1945-46, p. 14; SAB, Office Records, A.1, A.S. Morton, "Memo re the Historical Public Records Office, October 31, 1944."

<sup>10</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.18, A.S. Morton, "The Public Records of the Province of Saskatchewan," May 23, 1944.

records, while only two authorized the transfer of documents to "the archives of the province."<sup>11</sup> Unfortunately, no proper repository existed to receive inactive, though historically worthwhile, records. Lacking such an office, government departments tended to be negligent in their handling of old documents. Thus, much valuable material was lost.

Morton had actively collected material of a general historical nature over the years for the University of Saskatchewan library in his effort to lay the foundation for the study of western Canadian history. He became concerned, however, with the preservation of strictly government documents when control of western lands and natural resources was transferred from federal to provincial jurisdiction in 1930. As part of the transfer arrangement, a portion of the defunct Department of Interior records relating to land administration was turned over to the three western provinces.<sup>12</sup> The acquisition of these documents, Morton stated in a letter to a provincial Department of Natural Resources official, "...raises in a very immediate and pressing way the question of putting the Provincial Archives on a sound and efficient basis under an

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<sup>11</sup>First Annual Report of the Saskatchewan Archives Board, 1945-46, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup>Doug Bocking, "The Records Go West: Department of Interior Records in the Saskatchewan Archives," Archivaria, No. 25, Winter 1987-88, p. 107.



Archivist."<sup>13</sup> Morton felt that all public records should be carefully preserved, "...for we cannot know today what is valuable and what is not. The future only can settle that."<sup>14</sup>

Across Canada, a movement for the preservation of public records was growing, spearheaded by various members of the Canadian historical profession, including Morton's brother-in-law, George Brown, editor of the Canadian Historical Review. Brown had written articles in the September 1934 and March 1935 issues of the journal calling for the more conscientious preservation of archival material across Canada.<sup>15</sup> Brown sent letters to the premiers and archivists of all the provinces, enclosing copies of his articles. He wrote to Morton in the fall of 1934, stating: "If there is anything further which the Review could do to promote the interests of the provincial archives, we should be only too pleased to co-operate with you."<sup>16</sup> While attending a Canadian Historical Association meeting in Ottawa in the spring of 1936, Morton was persuaded by a group of fellow history professors to make a personal appeal

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<sup>13</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.15, Morton to Barnett, Jan. 8, 1930.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid.

<sup>15</sup>Brown, George, "A Practical Plea," Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 15, No. 3, Sept. 1934, pp. 245-47; Brown, George, "The Archives in Canada," Canadian Historical Review, Vol. 16, No. 1, Mar. 1935. pp. 1-19.

<sup>16</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, Series I, A-49, George Brown to Morton, Oct. 6, 1934.

to the government of Saskatchewan for the need for a provincial archives. On September 14, 1936, Morton addressed his plea for the preservation of inactive provincial records to J.W. Estey, Minister of Education from 1934 to 1944. Morton outlined the value of archival institutions to the government, to scholars, and to the general public:

We may take it as certain that future generations will charge us with betraying our trust if we cast away the material without which the history of the Province, of the administration of its several departments, and of the development of its several regions and interests cannot be written. I speak, therefore, not only for the historians of the Dominion but for the citizenship yet to be of [Saskatchewan], when I put in the plea that careful consideration be given to the preservation of the archival material of the Province.<sup>17</sup>

The provincial government was receptive to Morton's appeal. Both Estey and Premier W.J. Patterson had recently been frustrated in their attempts to obtain background documents for speeches they were preparing.<sup>18</sup> Thus, when Estey brought up the question of a provincial archives before the cabinet, he received a favourable response. In February 1937, Morton received word from Estey that the government was taking his representations regarding the preservation of public records into consideration. Further, Estey stated that the Patterson administration would be glad to grant Morton--a respected historian with a reputation as a

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<sup>17</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.1, Morton to Estey, Sept. 14, 1936.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., Morton to Prof. M.H. Long, Feb. 5, 1942.

prominent figure in the provincial heritage movement-- permission to consult with officials of government departments, as well as make available for his perusal any documents that he desired.<sup>19</sup>

Throughout this period, Morton had kept university president Walter Murray informed of his communications with provincial government officials. Murray had a keen interest in all areas of heritage preservation and realized the need for an archival institution in the province. He became actively involved in the lobby for a provincial archives during the winter of 1936-37. He discussed the matter with Estey on several occasions and was responsible for bringing up the matter before the university's Board of Governors at that time.<sup>20</sup> As the Liberal administration could not find the money to set up a provincial archives, Murray proposed--after consulting with Morton and Estey--the creation of the HPRO at the university and the appointment of Morton as provincial archivist.<sup>21</sup> In April 1937 the Board of Governors

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<sup>19</sup>UA, Presidential Papers, Series I, A-49, Estey to Morton, Feb. 2, 1937.

<sup>20</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.1, "Minutes of the Committee on the Public Records of the Province of Saskatchewan," Jan. 13, 1938.

<sup>21</sup>Murray had a personal motive for promoting a provincial archives: he was anxious to secure a comfortable retirement plan for his old friend Morton. Morton was due to retire from teaching in 1938, however, he wished to continue his research activities as long as he was able. Financial constraints made it unlikely that Morton could support this work on his pension alone. During the 1930s, faculty salaries at the university had been significantly reduced owing to adverse economic conditions. Morton's salary had been cut by twenty-five per cent, and this

offered to house inactive provincial records of historical value in a room in the basement of Saskatchewan Hall at the University of Saskatchewan and to name Morton "Keeper of the Public Records."<sup>22</sup> As part of the arrangement, Morton's retirement date was extended to 1940, at which time he was to receive a salary of \$50.00 per month in addition to his pension. In the interim, he continued to teach, although he was relieved of routine administrative duties in the History Department.<sup>23</sup> In this way, Morton was able to devote his energies to the preservation of documents bearing on the history of Saskatchewan and, in the process, lay the groundwork for the Saskatchewan Archives Board.

Morton's new appointment meant significant scholarly advantages for the University of Saskatchewan. The university gained an on-site research facility which allowed scholars greater access to original documents. In addition, Morton firmly believed that the members of his profession would benefit from involvement in archival organization. Historians, he asserted, had a broader role to play in

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factor, combined with the expenses that he had incurred during his travels back and forth to Ottawa and London, England to conduct his research, had left him with very little savings for retirement. Michael Hayden, Seeking a Balance; The University of Saskatchewan, 1907-1982 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983), pp. 161-2; UA, Morton Papers, I.12, Morton to George Brown, Apr. 22, 1937.

<sup>22</sup>UA, Board of Governors Minutes, April 10, 1937 and April 17, 1937.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid.

archives beyond the simple use of the records contained within their walls. They were more qualified than the members of any other profession to take care of archives, Morton maintained, for they possessed a greater sense of the value of documents for research. Archivists must be historians, Morton once stated: "The historian who is studying and writing the history of the province and who knows what material is wanting and where gaps exist in our knowledge, is the best guide for the collecting of the material..."<sup>24</sup> The enormous amount of energy that Morton put into the creation, organization and care of Saskatchewan's early archives testifies to his conviction that historians had a wider role to play in society beyond teaching, researching and writing.<sup>25</sup>

The provincial government also benefited from its cooperative archival relationship with the university. The need for a proper repository for inactive records was obvious, yet it would have been difficult for the Patterson administration to justify spending money on archives during

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<sup>24</sup>University Archives (UA), Morton Papers, I.15, Morton to Major Barnett, Jan. 8, 1930.

<sup>25</sup>Morton believed that historians should be trained in the principles of archival organization. In the early 1940s, he proposed a scholarship scheme for junior members of history staffs to conduct archival research at the University of Saskatchewan and at the same time, organize their source material. SAB, Office Records, A.1, A.S. Morton, "Memo re the Rockerfeller Foundation and the Historical Public Records Office," Sept. 1, 1943; UA, Morton Papers, II.32, A.S. Morton, "Looking Toward a Centre for the Study of the History of the Prairie West," Oct. 1941.

the financial crisis of the 1930s. The university's offer to provide a facility and an archivist, and to cover the operating costs involved, was welcomed by the government. It avoided possible political confrontation in the provincial legislature, and the appointment of the archivist was removed from the political arena.

The archival system which Morton set up in Saskatchewan was modelled on that of the British Public Records Office. Morton believed that it was important to make a distinction between government archives and archives containing general historical material such as the papers of private individuals and newspapers. For this reason, he chose to use the term "public records office" and to avoid the term "archives" which, he said, "...has been used so loosely, so broadly, that actually in the Public Archives in Ottawa you will come on General Wolfe's baby boots."<sup>26</sup> The HPRO-- concerned only with the preservation of inactive government records--was created as a sub-division of the provincial archives. The inactive documents transferred to the campus office remained the property of the provincial government and thus were regarded as authentic for legal purposes.<sup>27</sup> Other "more or less unauthenticated material," Morton stated, would be collected and preserved by the university

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<sup>26</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.18, A.S. Morton, "The Public Records of the Province of Saskatchewan," May 23, 1944, p. 2.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

and parliamentary libraries and by the various historical societies.<sup>28</sup>

In the spring of 1937, Morton made an exploratory visit to the Parliament Buildings in Regina in order to appraise the volume of inactive documents stored there. Later that summer he travelled to London, England to familiarize himself with the British archival methods and meet with Sir Hilary Jenkinson, Deputy Keeper of Public Records and author of a recently published manual on archives administration.<sup>29</sup> In December, an informal committee was formed in Regina to advise on the preservation of public records and to oversee the selection of those of historical value for transfer to Saskatoon. The members of this committee were J.W. Estey, who served as chairman, S.J. Latta, Commissioner of Publications, Library and Archives, J.W. McLeod, Clerk of the Executive Council, Daniel Morrison of the Parliamentary Library, and Morton. In 1942, Morton's colleague, Professor George Simpson, was added to the committee. Morton's role as Keeper of Historical Public Records was to assist in the selection of documents and to organize and prepare suitable calendars for them.<sup>30</sup> This committee--never constituted on

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<sup>28</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.1, Morton to Prof. M.H. Long, Feb. 5, 1942.

<sup>29</sup>Sir Hilary Jenkinson, A Manual of Archives Administration (London: Percy Lund, Humphries, 1937).

<sup>30</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.1, "Minutes of the Committee of the Public Records of the Province of Saskatchewan," Jan. 13, 1938.

a statutory basis--received its only official recognition through the passage of an order-in-council on January 31, 1938, authorizing the transfer of a group of documents relating to Territorial times from the vault of the Executive Council to Saskatoon.

With the transfer of this first set of North-West Territories documents in 1938, Morton set to work. He soon discovered that, while the material contained the minutes, acts, orders, and proclamations of the Territorial Council, all of the correspondence between the territorial government and the federal governments had disappeared. To remedy this situation Morton took steps while in Ottawa to secure copies of the missing correspondence. In 1939 he arranged to have the 1870 to 1888 files from the old Department of Interior sent to the Federal Building in Saskatoon, where he borrowed and made copies of them. Morton did not complete this project until the fall of 1942, when he also spent time at the Public Archives in Ottawa, securing copies of confidential correspondence between the Lieutenant-Governors of the North-West Territories and the prime ministers of Canada. A large bulk of this latter material consists of important letters between Lieutenant-Governor Edgar Dewdney and Prime Minister John A. Macdonald relating to the Riel Rebellion of 1885.

Morton's goal in establishing the HPRO on the University of Saskatchewan campus had always been to



preserve and make accessible material for local scholars studying the history of the Canadian West. In the fall of 1941, Morton's vision for the office expanded considerably--thanks largely to the visit of a Mr. Marshall of the Rockefeller Foundation in New York. Marshall was touring prairie universities enquiring into the resource available for the study of regional problems common to both the United States and Canada. The American foundation was prepared to offer financial support for the development of projects, such as archives, which would facilitate prairie studies.<sup>31</sup> Morton was greatly encouraged by this offer of support. He was particularly hopeful that a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation would go towards securing "respectable and safe quarters" for his rapidly-growing office.<sup>32</sup> He realized that the material he had collected over the years had great potential for scholarly research, yet without a proper archival facility--including adequate storage space and a comfortable reading room--use of the documents would be limited. A new space would, Morton believed, elevate the status of the HPRO to that of the centre of research for prairie studies in western Canada.

Morton outlined his plans to turn the HPRO into a

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<sup>31</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.1, A.S. Morton, "Memo re the Rockefeller Foundation and the Historical Public Records Office," Sept, 1, 1942.

<sup>32</sup>UA, Morton Papers, II.32, A.S. Morton, "Looking Toward a Centre for the Study of the History of the Prairie West," Oct., 1941, p. 4.

leading research facility in a 1941 memo entitled "Looking Toward a Centre for the Study of the History of the Prairie West." In this memo, sent to President Thomson and members of the Committee on Public Records, he suggested that, while much valuable material had been gathered by the archives, "American research students would probably be more interested in the documents of our farmers."<sup>33</sup> With this in mind, Morton opened discussions with representatives of the United Farmers and other similar farm organizations to see if they would be willing to transfer their archives to the HPRO. He received permission to continue his canvas of these organizations at a meeting of the Committee on Public Records on September 3, 1942. Morton was fully aware that the addition of material obtained from these groups would involve the broadening of the HPRO's mandate, "...authorizing it to receive not only the Government Archives," as he put it, "but the archives of companies incorporated by Act of the Government and Assembly."<sup>34</sup> He was confident, however, that the expansion of the office's mandate to include these records would strengthen the university's position and go a long way towards securing the financial support of the Rockefeller Foundation.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>34</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.1, A.S. Morton, "Memo re the Rockefeller Foundation and the Historical Public Records Office," Sept. 1, 1942.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid.

Early in 1943 the Committee on Public Records announced its intention to acquire the inactive documents of corporations.<sup>36</sup> The first such records shipped to the HPRO in December of 1943 were those of the Saskatchewan Cooperative Elevator Company, a farmer-controlled enterprise incorporated in 1911 and purchased by the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool in 1926.<sup>37</sup> Morton's plan to attract funding from the Rockefeller Foundation bore fruit in 1943 when the foundation granted the University of Saskatchewan \$15,000 in support of Morton's valuable work to collect and preserve the history of the prairies.<sup>38</sup> Unfortunately for Morton, this money was not put towards a new facility; most of it was used to catalogue the vast collection of material collected by him over the years.

Developments in Ottawa during World War Two increased Morton's optimism regarding the future status of the HPRO as

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<sup>36</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.1, press release, Feb. 6, 1943.

<sup>37</sup>Morton also arranged to acquire the archives of the Saskatchewan Grain Growers' Association, although this plan had to be put on hold in the fall of 1944 due to the pressing need for the transfer of provincial government records. T.C. Douglas, premier of the recently-elected CCF administration, visited Morton at his office and informed him that the Department of Natural Resources was pressed for space and wanted the HPRO to take over their inactive documents. "Valuable as is the material of the Grain Growers' Association," Morton wrote to committee member George Simpson, "it would appear to be our first duty to care for the Public Records of the Province and we should make it our chief aim to help the Departments in Regina solve their archival problems." SAB, Office Records, A.1, A.S. Morton, "Memo re Historical Public Records Office - October 31, 1944."

<sup>38</sup>Regina Leader-Post, Sept. 14, 1943. p. 4.

the centre for the study of western Canadian history. The files of the former Dominion Lands Branch of the Department of the Interior had not been among the archival records shipped to the western provinces after the natural resources transfer in 1930. These files were stored on three floors of the Vimy Building in Ottawa and were taking up space urgently needed for the war effort.<sup>39</sup> This collection consisted of millions of separate files created for each quarter-section of land homesteaded in the western provinces.<sup>40</sup> Case files relating to the patenting of land contained a considerable amount of information about the homesteader, including the patent application, correspondence between the Department of the Interior and the applicant, citizenship records, wills, and related data. In 1942 an order-in-council was issued, based on a report from the Department of Mines and Resources now responsible for the old land records, which gave the department the authority to offer the records to the three western provinces.<sup>41</sup> In the event that the provinces did not accept the files, the Department was authorized "...to destroy

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<sup>39</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.18, G. Lanctot to Morton, Oct. 26, 1943.

<sup>40</sup>Lanctot originally estimated that there were 40 million files. Ibid. This estimate was later revised to approximately 3 million files. SAB, Office Records, A.18, A.S. Morton, "Memo re the Documents of the Defunct Dominion Department of the Interior," Jan. 27, 1944.

<sup>41</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.18, Copy of P.C. 10772, Nov. 26, 1942.

those that appear of no value...and retain intact in the Department or turn over to the Dominion Archivist what is expected will be a relatively small balance."<sup>42</sup>

In 1943, Morton was contacted by Dr. Gustave Lanctot, Dominion Archivist, and asked to give his opinion regarding the historical value of the Dominion Lands files. Lanctot knew that Morton was familiar with the old Department of Interior records as a result of his work to reconstruct the lost correspondence files of the North-West Territories. He informed Morton that the response of the western provinces to the offer of the land files was "rather indifferent."<sup>43</sup> Morton replied that he was not surprised at this response. "The individual Departments of Natural Resources on the Prairie Provinces," wrote Morton, "have nothing to do with the past. It is all the present and future with them."<sup>44</sup> The only institution in the West that would be interested in caring for these records, Morton told Lanctot, was his office at the University of Saskatchewan. Morton went on to assess the value of the land files for historical research:

A very considerable proportion would be pure routine and would have little or no historical value save as indicating the party or parties who took the land. But a smaller proportion would involve correspondence such as I saw with people

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<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.18, Lanctot to Morton, Oct. 5, 1943.

<sup>44</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.18, Morton to Lanctot, Oct. 16, 1943.

who, from some trouble or another had not been able to make good the terms of their contracts. This correspondence would, in many cases, give an insight into questions of economics,...agricultural conditions, and history, or would expose matters which would come under the vaguer denominations of sociology...As it would be very difficult to separate the valuable items out from those exemplifying mere routine without much study, it would appear to be wise to save them all--to keep the chaff for the sake of the wheat.<sup>45</sup>

Morton had not previously considered the transfer of the homestead records to the HPRO. While working on the project to copy the missing territorial government correspondence in 1940 he had reported that "...it is not part of my duty to gather the immense body of documents that deal with the direct administration of the North West Territories, lands, woods, resources, etc., by the Department of the Interior, however valuable these may be."<sup>46</sup> It was his view that the HPRO must consist only of documents related to the administration of the North-West Territories and the Province of Saskatchewan; its acquisitions policy did not include purely dominion documents.<sup>47</sup> Fear of the imminent destruction of the land files, however, led Morton to take steps to secure storage space for the entire collection at the university. His

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<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.1, A.S. Morton, "Report of the Historical Public Records Office of the Province of Saskatchewan, 1939-40," n.d.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid.

motives for wishing to acquire and preserve these records were not entirely altruistic, however; he realized that the possession of the homestead documents would, in his words, "...make the Historical Public Records Office the leading institution of the West for historical research."<sup>48</sup>

Morton wanted, and, indeed, expected to get all the land files stored in the Vimy Building. He was convinced, he told Simpson, that when Lanctot spoke of the Dominion Lands files "...he means everything and not just the files of the Patents. There must be no mistake here."<sup>49</sup> Morton was primarily interested in the general correspondence files relating to government policy in the North-West Territories. The homestead files, Morton believed, had only limited value for historical research, as they often revealed only information about individual homesteaders and not about broader issues of government policy vis-a-vis the West. He advised Lanctot that should the land files be transferred to him, he would be willing to prepare copies of finding aids for the other provinces. Clearly, Morton envisioned the HPRO as a centrally located research facility for the entire western region.

Morton's hopes to receive the entire collection were dashed at the end of 1943, however, when he learned that the

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<sup>48</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.1, Minutes of the Committee on Public Records, Dec. 7, 1943.

<sup>49</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.18, Morton to Simpson, Nov. 19, 1943.

Alberta government, while refusing to accept its share of the land files, objected to Alberta documents being transferred to Saskatchewan.<sup>50</sup> Morton was also notified by Lanctot that Manitoba now wanted its files.<sup>51</sup> Lanctot went on to advise Morton that, thanks to their joint intervention, the documents no longer faced the danger of destruction. "...[W]e have succeeded in weathering the storm," Lanctot wrote, "[and we are] not pressed by an urgent necessity as before."<sup>52</sup> Thus, the Department of Mines and Resources in Ottawa was able to undertake a more careful assessment of the land files and to work out a clear policy for their disposal.

In the early months of 1944, Morton travelled to Ottawa at the request of the Deputy Minister of the Department of Mines and Resources, Dr. Camsell, to examine the land files more closely and make recommendations on their historical value and their ultimate fate. He spent ten days familiarizing himself with typical homestead files. In his report outlining his findings and recommendations, Morton first renewed his appeal to have the general correspondence files come to Saskatchewan. He then turned his attention to the bulk of the collection--the homestead files. He

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<sup>50</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.18, Prof. G.E. Britnell to Simpson. Nov. 27, 1943.

<sup>51</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.18, Lanctot to Morton, Dec. 16, 1943.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.



recommended that while "...a large portion of [this material] is formal...repetition of the usual formula," the homestead files should not be destroyed.<sup>53</sup> Morton's reasons for making this recommendation reveal the interesting choices facing archivists as they acquire material for future generations of researchers.

The main reason for keeping the homestead files, Morton argued, was to protect the provincial governments from future claims against them. The documents should be preserved, he said, "...in the interest of the Government itself."<sup>54</sup> Documents in these files would also be useful in answering enquiries concerning proof of age or naturalization. Historians studying agricultural, economic, or sociological problems in the West would find practical information in the files--especially in those of homesteaders who had failed to meet their patent obligations. The documents would be of great assistance, Morton went on, in the study of settlement patterns and the history of settlement on the prairies. "Of course," Morton concluded, "it is impossible to anticipate the ways in which such a mass of material would prove of use to the different types of historians..."<sup>55</sup> Indeed, Morton could not have

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<sup>53</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.18, "Report by A.S. Morton on his Visits to Ottawa, Winnipeg, and Edmonton re the Disposal of the Documents of the Old Department of the Interior," n.d., p. 3.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid. p. 5.

anticipated that the homestead file material now housed by the SAB has become one of the most heavily used collections in the provincial archives today. Yet by suggesting a wide range of possible uses for the land records, Morton played a key role in guaranteeing that they were preserved and thereby available to researchers.

Officials of the Department of Mines and Resources asked Morton to consult with the appropriate parties in the other western provinces regarding possible arrangements for the transfer of the land records. Morton was instrumental--as a result of his meetings with university and government representatives in Alberta and Manitoba--in getting the respective governments to make provisions for the organization and care of their public records. The outcome of his trip to Alberta, for example, was the appointment of a committee to look into the establishment of a public records office in that province, although it was still uncertain whether Alberta would accept its files from the federal government.<sup>56</sup> In the conclusion of his report to Thomson, Morton warned: "While Saskatchewan has been leading the West in this matter, should Manitoba and Alberta establish Departments of Public Records at the close of the war, they may well overshadow us unless we plan to provide for the future."<sup>57</sup> No further action on this matter was

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<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 10.

taken for several years. Negotiations with Alberta and the clerical work involved in sorting out the files of each province held up the transfer of the documents to Saskatchewan until the end of 1956, when approximately 200,000 homestead files in 3,800 document boxes were finally shipped to the SAB.<sup>58</sup>

The pending transfer of the Dominion Lands files pointed out the urgent need for a more adequate archival facility at the University of Saskatchewan. There was a serious obstacle, however, preventing the acquisition of such a facility. The joint archival enterprise between the university and the government, with its many advantages, had one major disadvantage: it was a completely informal

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<sup>58</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.18, "Report on the Servicing of Homestead Inquiries and the Need and Possibility of Making an Alphabetical Index," Fall, 1958. With the receipt of the homestead files, the SAB undertook, for the first time, to service inquiries from the general public. Within one month after the arrival of these files an archives employee reported that "...it appears that we can expect a fairly steady stream of [homestead] inquiries..." A report written in the fall of 1958 stated: Since the homestead files for Saskatchewan were transferred to this office...there have been over 700 inquiries for information from the files." BY 1960, most of the inquiries at the Saskatoon office had to do with the homestead records. The phenomenal growth of interest in genealogy and local history in recent decades further increased the demands placed on the reference service of the SAB. The chief source of information for this type of research is the extensive holdings of land records saved from destruction and transferred to Saskatchewan thanks in part to the efforts of A.S. Morton. Ninth Report of the Saskatchewan Archives Board, 1958-60, p. 13; SAB, Office Records, A.18, E. Eager to L.H. Thomas, Jan. 18, 1957; Ibid., "Report on the Servicing of Homestead Inquiries and the Need and Possibility of Making an Alphabetical Index," Fall, 1958; Sixteenth Report of the Saskatchewan Archives Board, 1972-74, pp. 12-14.

arrangement. The HPRO had no legislative authority on which to base its existence. There was no board supervising the office or the direction of its archival policy. The inadequacy of this situation became increasingly clear as the archives collection grew. Morton's energetic efforts to collect historical material relating to Saskatchewan found the HPRO bursting at the seams and in desperate need of a larger facility within four years of its creation.

Originally situated in the basement of Saskatchewan Hall, the HPRO had moved to a larger space in the School for the Deaf just off campus in the fall of 1942 to accommodate the records of farm organizations. Morton estimated that the land records would require approximately 3,000 shelf feet, and he attempted to secure temporary storage space for them until proper quarters could be constructed.<sup>59</sup> President Thomson advised Morton that while the Board of Governors generally supported the present plan to make the university a repository for provincial records, they were somewhat concerned about the possible financial obligations to which they would be committed in accepting the large number of land files from Ottawa.<sup>60</sup> While the university's Board of

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<sup>59</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.1, A.S. Morton, "Memo re the Possible Development of the Historical Public Records Office of the Province of Saskatchewan at the University, Saskatoon," n.d.

<sup>60</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.18, Thomson to Morton, Dec. 20, 1943. Thomson also wondered about the advisability of storing the documents on campus. "...[T]here is not a great deal of space left around the University, and there does not seem to be much sense in bringing documents merely to have them stored," he wrote

Governors had agreed to finance the operating costs of the HPRO in the late 1930s, they were unwilling in the early 1940s to seek funding from the provincial government for a new archival facility when the university was facing more pressing problems such as the education of veterans and obtaining money for scientific research and medical education.<sup>61</sup>

Morton realized that if a proper facility for his office was to be built, the informal arrangement between the university and the government would have to be put on a legal basis. The election of a new provincial government in the spring of 1944 led to more uncertainties regarding the future of the HPRO. The Committee on Public Records was reduced to two members--Morton and Simpson--with the loss of the members from the defeated Liberal administration. It was also not immediately clear whether the Commonwealth Co-operative Federation (CCF) administration would be committed to the preservation of public documents. As it turned out there was no cause for concern. The new government proved to be receptive to Morton's appeal for support. When T.C. Douglas became premier of the province, he found that "only empty cabinets" were left behind by Patterson's Liberal

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to Morton. "They should be made available for reference and study and this requires some kind of accommodation in which they will become accessible." SAB, Office Records, Thomson to Morton, Dec. 30, 1943.

<sup>61</sup>Michael Hayden, Seeking a Balance, p. 195.

administration.<sup>62</sup> All of the correspondence had been removed from the Premier's office and from other departments as well. This situation prompted the government to consider very seriously a public records policy for the province.<sup>63</sup>

Late in 1944, Morton called for an archives act to formalize the existing situation. The CCF administration heeded Morton's call. J.H. Sturdy, Minister of Reconstruction and Rehabilitation, was appointed as liaison member of the Committee on Public Records. Morton advised Sturdy of the urgent need for new archives legislation, and sent him a detailed description of the current system, as well as copies of archives legislation from other provinces.<sup>64</sup> Early in January 1945, Sturdy informed Morton that the government intended to introduce an archives bill at the coming session. Morton was delighted; unfortunately, he did not live to see the passage of the Archives Act that spring. After Morton died on January 26, 1945, Simpson wrote to Sturdy and conveyed to him Morton's gratitude for the government's interest in developing an archival policy. "To him," Simpson wrote, "it was a sort of crowning to his

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<sup>62</sup>Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, July 25, 1944.

<sup>63</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.S. Morton, "Report of A.S. Morton's Visit to Regina of January 8, 9, 10, 1945," n.d.

<sup>64</sup>"On the whole," Morton asserted, "the other Provinces have neglected their archives grossly, and have not much to teach us, except, possibly, in their legislation." SAB, Office Records, A.1, Morton to Sturdy, Dec. 26, 1944; SAB, A.2, A.S. Morton, "Memorandum. The Public Records of the Province of Saskatchewan," n.d.

life's ambition that provincial historical studies should be placed on a sound and permanent basis."<sup>65</sup>

The Archives Act assented to on March 30, 1945 formalized the scheme of cooperation between the University of Saskatchewan and the provincial government.<sup>66</sup> The responsibilities of the two parties were clearly defined. A board of five was created, with two members to be appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor in Council, and two to be appointed by the Board of Governors of the university. The fifth member was to be the Legislative Librarian, while the Provincial Archivist--also to be appointed by the Board of Governors--was designated Secretary of the Archives Board. Provision was made for annual payments to the university for the maintenance of the Saskatchewan Archives by the government. Contrary to Morton's rigid definition of a "public records office," the institution became known as the Archives of Saskatchewan, and its acquisitions policy was opened up to include all types of printed material bearing on the history of Saskatchewan.

There was some debate in the Legislature concerning the location of the archives office on the Saskatoon campus. Opposition leader Patterson contended that public records were the property of the province and should remain directly

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<sup>65</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.2, Simpson to Sturdy, Jan. 31, 1945.

<sup>66</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.2. Copy, Bill No. 49, Assented to March 30, 1945.

under the control and administration of the provincial government.<sup>67</sup> Sturdy argued, as Morton had, that maximum use of historical documents could be made at the educational centre where they would be most accessible to students.<sup>68</sup> An Archives office memorandum later confirmed this assertion:

The existence of this office [at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon]...increases the amount of research in the economic, social, and political background of present day Saskatchewan to an extent to which would not be possible if archival facilities were confined to Regina; this result is of benefit to the government and is also a significant contribution to the cultural life of the province.<sup>69</sup>

In fact, according to one eminent scholar, the large volume of historical research done on Saskatchewan in comparison to its two sister provinces can be attributed to the division of the provincial archives between the university and the Legislative Library orchestrated by Morton. "Ease of access to a large selection of well-catalogued public and private records," declares political scientist David Smith, "accounts in large part for the province's publishing record."<sup>70</sup>

Morton's work to preserve the public records of

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<sup>67</sup>Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, Mar. 22, 1945.

<sup>68</sup>Saskatoon Star-Phoenix, Mar. 17, 1945.

<sup>69</sup>SAB, Office Records, A.2, "Work Program; Archives," n.d.

<sup>70</sup>David Smith, "Celebrations and History on the Prairies," The Journal of Canadian Studies, Vol. 17, Autumn 1982, p. 46.



Saskatchewan in an archival setting was thus enormously influential. The existence of the HPRO--later the Archives of Saskatchewan--at the University of Saskatchewan proved to be a powerful stimulant for research, historical and otherwise, in the province. The large number of documents contained in the archives has facilitated the broadening of the range of western Canadian studies.<sup>71</sup> New fields of investigation such as social and cultural history have illuminated previously neglected aspects of western Canada's past. Morton anticipated these historiographical changes--changes which he knew would require a solid body of well-organized source material. In 1943 Morton wrote to Premier Patterson thanking him for supporting the preservation of Saskatchewan's heritage. In this letter, Morton predicted the expansion of prairie scholarship--an expansion that his archival work had helped to foster:

I believe that the writing up of our political

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<sup>71</sup>Shortly after the founding of the HPRO, studies were undertaken by faculty and students in the College of Education regarding the history of the school system of the North West Territories. Vernon C. Fowke, author of The National Policy and the Wheat Economy (Toronto 1957), used the papers of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company for his research during the 1940s. Recent works have proven the scholarly value of the homestead records transferred to the Archives of Saskatchewan in the 1950s. Researchers investigating ethnic and group settlement and the history of settlement have added much to our understanding of western Canadian history. As well, the homestead records hold enormous potential for scholars employing quantitative research techniques. SAB, Office Records, A.1, A.S. Morton, "Report of the Historical Public Records Office, 1939-40"; UA, Morton Papers, I.15, Morton to Col. Styles, Nov. 29, 1943; Diane Payment, Batoche, 1870-1910 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1983).

history is coming to a close. We cannot keep on forever discussing Responsible Government! Already books have been appearing on the problems of more recent settlement which throw light on the necessities of today. Then too, volumes are being written on the various lines of industry--the lumber industry, the dairy industry and the like...It shows the way...the wind is blowing.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup>UA, Morton Papers, I.15, Morton to W.J. Patterson, Nov. 29, 1943.

## Conclusion

In The Past is Foreign Country, a study of how mankind makes use of the tangible remains of the past, David

Lowenthal observes:

Those who lack links with a place must forge an identity through other pasts. Immigrants cut off from their roots remain dislocated; discontinuity impels many who grow up in pioneer lands either to exaggerate attachments to romanticized homelands or stridently to assert an adoptive belonging.<sup>1</sup>

These words apply to Arthur Silver Morton and his heritage work in Saskatchewan. Morton came to the province in 1914--an immigrant in an immigrant society--with the reputation as a rigorously trained medieval and church scholar. It must have been disconcerting for a man with a great love for history to arrive in a land so recently settled--a land seemingly without a past. Lacking few ties to his new home, Morton sought to create a sense of personal identity by applying his learning and experience to the preservation of the textual and material remains the province's heritage.

Among the ties that Morton did have with many of the inhabitants of Saskatchewan were the traditions and values of the British Empire. His work to establish historical societies, historic sites, a museum and a provincial archives reveals his attachment to these traditions and values. Morton's search for the forts of the Hudson's Bay

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<sup>1</sup>David Lowenthal. The Past is a Foreign Country, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 42.

Company was in effect a search for tangible evidence of other citizens of the Empire who had lived in Saskatchewan before him. As well, his insistence on modelling the Historical Public Records Office at the University of Saskatchewan in Saskatoon on England's archival system shows his attachment to British values--an attachment rooted in his Nova Scotian origins, his West Indian upbringing and his British education.

Morton's energetic campaign to save Saskatchewan's heritage also grew out of his sense of duty as a professional historian to all the citizens of the province--and especially to future generations--to work for the preservation of their history. He hoped that the documents that he amassed, the artifacts that he collected, and historic sites that he unearthed would help to foster in the general public an understanding and appreciation of the region's past. It was unusual during Morton's time--as it is today--for an academic historian to be as involved as he was in public aspects of history. Morton, a professional scholar, was engaged in what most of his peers considered to be an amateur pursuit. He was, in many ways, a pioneer in the modern field of public history in his efforts to bring knowledge of the past to nonacademic audiences. Beginning with his work for extension at the university in 1915, Morton consistently displayed throughout his lifetime a conviction that historical learning should be accessible to

everyone. Ultimately, his preservation efforts were successful in reaching a wide audience. Many of the historic sites that Morton located in Saskatchewan have been commemorated and preserved for all to enjoy. The Archives of Saskatchewan, Morton's greatest legacy to provincial heritage, has contributed greatly to the communication of the region's past. The documents he so carefully collected and organized have stimulated the publication of works on western Canada by historians as well as by scholars from other disciplines. These studies--generated by the vast body of source material in the collections of the University of Saskatchewan library and the provincial archives--have further educated the public about their heritage.

Morton's personal quest for a sense of belonging in his adopted province was an extremely creative process--one which had enormous benefits for the Saskatchewan heritage movement. Morton was a force in providing the people of Saskatchewan with a consciousness of their history, not only through his written work, but through the construction of foundations upon which others could build. While Morton was more of an imperialist than a regionalist, he helped to lay the foundations for the regional perspective that has recently emerged in the works of western historians. And, most importantly, Morton's energetic drive for heritage preservation was instrumental in giving shape and form to Saskatchewan's history in the mind of the public.

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