

D E V E L O P M E N T

1881 – 1896

Development Era (1881 – 1896)

The 15 years following Manitoba's pioneer stage of brick-making activity, thus from 1881 to 1896, saw the industry grow exponentially, throughout the increasingly settled southern areas of the growing province, as well of course in Winnipeg and St. Boniface (at that time its own municipality).

The first few years of this period were defined by two interconnected developments – the arrival (finally) of the main line of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), and almost immediately following that, a real estate and building boom in Winnipeg, which affected a few other urban centres as well, Brandon included.

The wait for the CPR line had been long, and frustrating. The Winnipeg business community had feared since 1874 that the main line would bypass the city for a more northerly route, which in Manitoba would be through Selkirk. Only their agreement to provide the CPR with tax exemption in perpetuity, and the construction at their own expense of the Louise Bridge, had changed the route. Outside the city, small town sites were established in what were thought to be likely points on the final route – many of these expectations were dashed when the final route was selected, and whole communities, often with their buildings, moved to the line. And thus when the track finally made its way across the province through 1881 and 1883, a great deal of pent-up energy was released. Now, finally, mail and goods and people could make their way west in no time.

In Winnipeg, this new connection to the east led to a spectacular real estate boom. Within months, 3,000 real estate offices sprang up in Winnipeg. The population quickly doubled and the town came to be heralded as the "Chicago of the North." The price of real estate skyrocketed. Buying and selling land became an obsession and



Views of the Louise Bridge in Winnipeg, which was a major enticement that brought the CPR mainline into the city, ensuring its continued growth as the West's major metropolis. (Courtesy Archives of Manitoba)

speculators bought land, then sold it swiftly, sometimes selling property in nearby communities that did not exist.

When the bubble finally burst, in the early summer of 1882, real estate values collapsed, and paper fortunes vanished. But there was a tangible legacy to this fevered period. According to Charles Napier Bell, then a customs officer in the city, in accounts published in the *Winnipeg Daily Sun* in 1887, "The total value of the buildings erected, as ascertained by a direct canvas of the city, amounted to \$1,710,850. When it is borne in mind that Toronto, the same year, showed but \$500,000 invested in new buildings, an idea may be had of the commercial activity that prevailed." A review of photographs from this time shows the physicality of this legacy, and also reveals that more and more of the city's buildings were of brick.

View of Winnipeg's Main Street, ca. 1882, looking south from City Hall area. (Courtesy Archives of Manitoba) This image shows a lot of brick buildings lining both sides of the street, and suggests the levels of brick production (both local and imported) that were required in the city's building frenzy of the early 1880s. The spire visible at top right is of the new Knox Presbyterian Church actually over on Portage Avenue. The church was itself a major new brick addition to the community, but only stood until the late 1880s, after the congregation had relocated to a site further west and north.



Brick Making in Winnipeg, 1881-1896

In Winnipeg, the real estate boom brought a number of new brick operations to the city, joining the four pioneering firms of the 1870s that were gearing up for even greater production – including the three yards in Point Douglas—McDonald/Holley (productive to 1884), John Mould (to 1882) and Saul Bros. (through the 1881 season)—as well as Samuel Biggs’s Portage Road Brickworks just west of the-then city limits.

A few new clay deposits had been identified – west of the city in what is now St. James, along Portage Avenue within the city, as well as in the north end. In the still-raw urban environment of the day, these sites were too good to pass up, and yards might be established in downtown areas or even in residential enclaves.

As was the case during the first decade of brick production in Manitoba, most of the start-ups were gone within a year or two. A yard set up ca. 1881 on the east side of Salter Street between Selkirk and Pritchard by John Woods and N.N. Stevens lasted only one season. David Saul’s 1882 yard near St. John’s Anglican Church east of Main Street (where he had moved after his earlier Point Douglas operation was exhausted) lasted two seasons, but with notable production and useful information: the yard consisted of four slop-brick and two Martin brick machines, employing 32 men and 14 horses, producing about 40,000 bricks per day, with the clay actually extracted on the west side of Main Street. In its first year the yard was expected to make between four and five million bricks, and in its last year, 1883, it burned three million bricks. Newspapers noted that the operation had a “drying bed” for the brick that was 75 feet by 300 feet and a “kiln shed” measuring 33 feet by 300 feet. It is supposed that the kiln shed was a rough structure that protected the actual scove kilns from the elements; if it was in fact 300 feet long, it is presumed that there were at least five kilns in operation at a time—given that the average dimensions of such kilns would have been at most about 30 feet by 50 feet—thus making the Saul yard a truly remarkable achievement at this time, and more tragic for its poor start-up timing.

Another short-lived operation was that of T.J. Jones, whose yard was located at the western end of Winnipeg, on 20 acres of Lot 44, St. James, near the Manitoba and South-western (CPR) railway line. While short-lived, the operation generated some interesting coverage about brick-making at this time: T.J. Jones arrived in Winnipeg during September of 1881 to scout out a location for a brick yard. With his 30 years of experience, Jones knew what he was looking for, and so also visited Brandon, Portage la Prairie and Selkirk. He finally settled on the St. James location because the clay was two to three feet deep and lay near the surface. He bought the site in the spring of 1882, and set up his “brickery,” with a Townsley brick machine from Toronto that was powered by a two-horsepower Waterous steam engine. The yard began making bricks on 1 August, and turned out 10,000 bricks per day. Jones’s first kiln fired 200,000 bricks, with another kiln in mid-September of 350,000 bricks. Jones planned to turn out one million “white” bricks before winter, employing 30 to 40 workers, who laboured from 7:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. It is presumed that this yard succumbed in the post-boom depression of 1883.

The economic downturn that followed the collapse of Winnipeg’s real estate and building boom lasted for at least five years. And with that downturn, the city’s brick-making fraternity shrank, and nearly dried up. Only brick-making activity in St. Boniface (see next section) provided any product for the few new building projects from this period.

It was not until 1888 that brick-making activity resumed in Winnipeg, with the development of three new yards: that of William Rourke and Edward Cass (building contractors) who established a small yard on Toronto Street, north of Portage Avenue that operated to the early 1890s; Mr. Bowles, whose yard on Portage Avenue, probably in the St. James area, only operated for the 1889 season (but did produce 2.5 million bricks for sale, “on cars or at kiln”); and a much more enduring operation – that of the Kelly Bros., Thomas and Michael, and later Martin.

The Kellys had a yard in St. Boniface (see next section), begun in 1882, and had also exploited a clay deposit at the construction site of the Clarendon Hotel (at Portage and Donald) to burn bricks in 1882 for that and other buildings. Their new Winnipeg yard, formerly that of T.J. Jones (see above) was north of Portage Avenue in St. James, and was productive for nine years (near present-day Sanford Street, along nearby CPR tracks). The Kelly's St. James yard ultimately reached 68 acres in extent by 1899, at which point the clay appears to have been exhausted, for the Kellys had moved the machinery of this operation to their St. Boniface yard.



The Clarendon Hotel, which went up in 1883 (and was demolished in 1920), was at the northwest corner of Portage and Donald. During its construction, by Kelly Brothers, the clay extracted from its basement area was used by the Kellys to produce the very bricks of the building's walls. (Courtesy Archives of Manitoba)

Brick Making in St. Boniface 1881-1896

The solitary pioneering St. Boniface operation of Pierre Chartier from 1879 was joined by 11 new brick yards in that community in the early 1880s, establishing the area along the banks of the Seine River and south of Mission Street as a major brick-making location for the next 70 years.

As was the case in earlier days, and also in Winnipeg at this time, most of the firms that started brickyards in the early 1880s only lasted a season or two (not a surprise given the economic bust noted above), but with sufficient newspaper coverage to define the nature of their operations. Accounts of two of these operations—McDonald & Holley and Thomas, Benoit & Co—are illustrative of this group.

The firm McDonald & Holley (seen in 1880 at its Point Douglas yard) expanded their brick-making into St. Boniface in April of 1881, and had a good run for three years, until bankruptcy took them down. McDonald was well known in the community and to the newspapers of the day, and so his new St. Boniface operations received some attention. By early June of 1881, under the management of Willis Goodenow, the new yard had two Penfold brick machines turning out 70,000 perforated bricks per day, while two Martin machines turned out 30,000. The yard was 250' x 415' in size and was said to contain 1.4 million manufactured bricks at any one time. The brick shed was 415' x 23' in size, and could contain 2.5 million bricks which were awaiting the kiln. On 28 July 1882, the St. Boniface yard made 105,000 bricks, considered a one-day record at a time when the yard employed 70 men.

Also in 1882, Thomas, Benoit & Co., leased a 12-acre tract of land with brick clay from the Roman Catholic Church in St. Boniface, alongside the Seine River bridge. The firm imported several brick-making machines which had been established on LaFleche Street - two Penfield brick machines, as well as a 35-horsepower steam engine. The firm employed 50-70 workers and eight horses, and expected to produce four million bricks that year. The site was considered to be convenient, being within 100 yards of

both the Seine River and the CPR tracks. The yard reportedly supplied 750,000 bricks for the Cauchon Block (Empire Hotel), built in 1882 at Main Street and York Avenue. In March 1884 the partnership between P. Thomas and Michel Benoit dissolved, and the brick plant effects were put into liquidation and sold by architect L.A. Desy, who had designed the Cauchon Block.

One of the newcomers to St. Boniface, J. & P. Lyons, was active for nine years. The Lyons were building contractors who operated a St. Boniface brick yard after October 1881, making bricks for their own use. According to a June 1882 account, the Lyons yard had five slop machines and one Martin brick-making machine, though they planned to soon add another Martin machine. A recent flood had destroyed their four Red Wing brick machines, but the yard nevertheless employed 20 workers and used 12 horses. The Lyons planned to make three million bricks that year, and their product was used in the Kennedy Street Legislative Building and Government House. They often advertised a large supply of veneering brick, “always on hand.” It is not clear when the operation shut down, but it is thought around 1890.

Three of the newcomers to St. Boniface would go on for decades: Cartier/Lamontagne (22 years, from 1882 to 1904), McCutcheon (for 26 years, 1884-1910) and one of the longest-lived in Manitoba brick-making history, the yard of Kelly Brothers (43 years, from 1882 to 1925).

Cartier/Lamontagne

According to one source, this brick yard was started in 1882, and was located near the Seine River on Youville. Its owners were Eugene Cartier and Modeste Lamontagne. Cartier appears to have dropped out of the partnership during 1888, leaving Lamontagne on his own account. Very little is known of the plant’s output, but given that it was in business until at least 1904 (when Lamontagne died) it was surely as productive as any other yard. Subsequent to this, former employees Zoel Marion and his son Joseph Alderic, along with Elzear Goulet, bought out the Lamontagne Estate, which had started advertising itself as “The Oldest Brickyard in Manitoba.” Couture

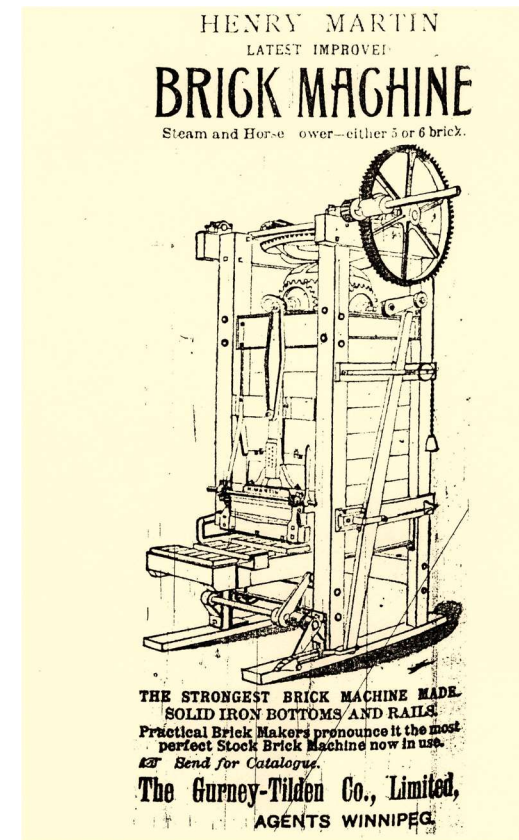
and Marion carried on this slogan after they began operating the yard under their own names

A.N. McCutcheon

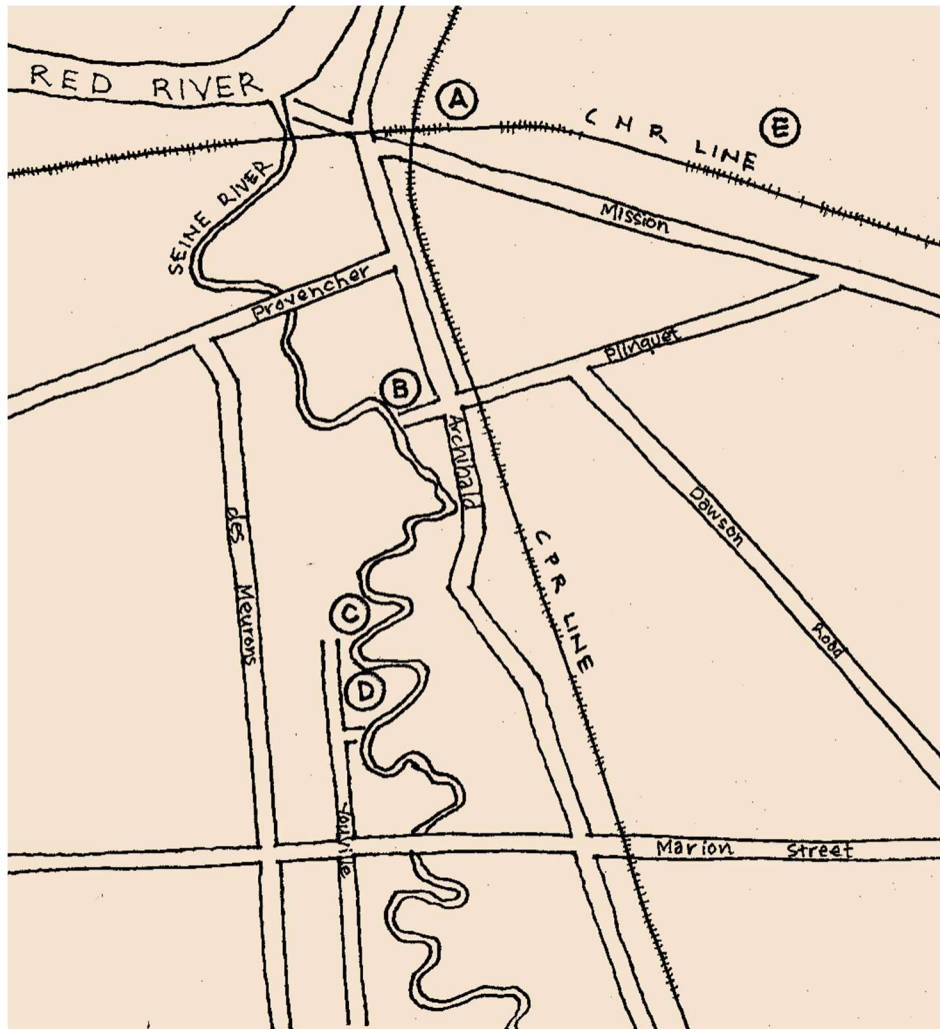
Albert Ney McCutcheon operated a brick yard in St. Boniface from 1884 to 1910. This was located on the north side of Mission Street. By the 1890s it appears that the local clay deposit was being depleted, for McCutcheon was reported to be using clay from the Souris Valley, which also was said to produce a light red brick. McCutcheon reported that these bricks did not take as much burning as his St. Boniface brick, and were hard and tough in quality. The McCutcheon yard was gone by 1910, but the man himself was not done with brick-making, which he pursued at Morris and Whitemouth.

Kelly Brothers

In the spring of 1899, Kelly Bros. moved their Portage Avenue operation, which was worked out, to a new site in St. Boniface. With a succession of corporate names—Manitoba Construction Company, Kelly Brothers and Mitchell, Ltd., Thomas Kelly and Sons, Ltd.—the firm was a major Winnipeg building contractor. It is presumed that during this period, the brick-making operation was an in-house undertaking, providing product for their contracting arm. The brick manufacturing aspect of the enterprise faltered after 1915, but the firm was back in business by 1919 and remained in the directories, possibly as a distributor of brick, until 1925.



It is likely that any number of brick-makers in Winnipeg, St. Boniface and other smaller communities, were using portable brick-pressing machines like this, from the Gurney-Tilden Company, which as noted in this advertisement in a February 1894 edition of the *Manitoba Free Press*, had agents in Winnipeg.



This simplified map of north-central St. Boniface shows the concentration of major brick factories in an area west of Archibald Avenue and mainly south of Mission Street, with a notable collection along Youville Street. This general area was known for years as an excellent source of friable clay, with access to water from the adjacent Seine River, and for its enviable situation near the Canadian Pacific rail line, and later a Canadian Northern line. There were at least 11 operations located here during this period, making this area the province's most productive brick-making locale. The operations noted here were the most enduring: A) A.N. McCutcheon (1884-1910; B) J.&P. Lyons (1881-90). C) Cartier/ Lamontagne (1882-1904; succeeded by Couture/Marion); D) Kelly Brothers (1882-1925); and E) Alsips, which is technically from the next period (active form 1898-c1925), but included here to highlight the big names in one image.

Small Urban and Rural Brick Making 1881-1896

The extension of the CPR mainline through the province—at Brandon in early October of 1881 and to Virden by the summer of 1883—inaugurated the transformation of southern Manitoba, opening whole new areas for agricultural settlement, and the development of support communities. And additional branch lines feeding the mainline were critical for even greater development. The Manitoba and South-West Colonization Railway (which ultimately came under the aegis of the CPR) extended its lines south of the CPR line, bringing places like Morden, Carman, Boissevain and many others into its orbit. And north of the mainline, the Manitoba & Northwestern Railroad brought Neepawa, Minnedosa and other communities into the network by 1885.

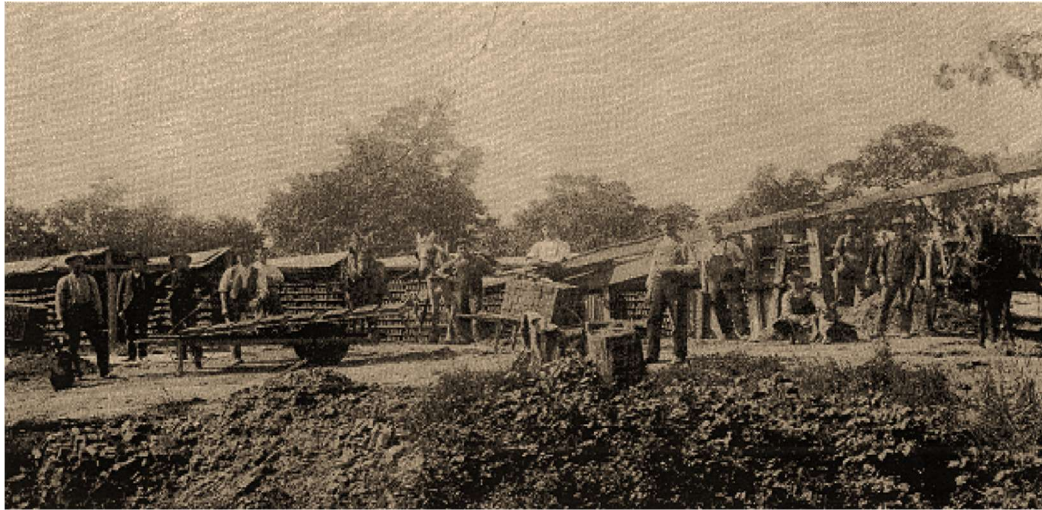
The building needs of all of these places were stupendous. And while many of the thousands of new structures—houses, commercial structures, barns, churches, schools—were mostly of wood, brick gradually made its way into the local building repertoire. And with that need came brick-makers and brickyards. As usual, many of these operations were short-lived, but some from this period were enduring.

There were at least 25 start-up brick operations in small towns and rural areas that followed the arrival of the CPR in 1881, and the yearly extension of that line and branch lines through to 1886. It is thought that at least 10 of these were developed at least in part to service the construction boom in Winnipeg of these years – thus three small yards in East Selkirk, three in Stony Mountain, two in Emerson and two in Dominion City. And not surprisingly, when the Winnipeg boom went bust, by 1883, nearly all of these yards were closed.

Where there was coverage of these operations, it revealed familiar facts and data: For example, at Stony Mountain (interestingly a satellite yard of Winnipeg's Kelly Brothers) the operation was reported in August of 1882 as producing 900,000 bricks using slop machines. News reports advised that one of these machines, operated by

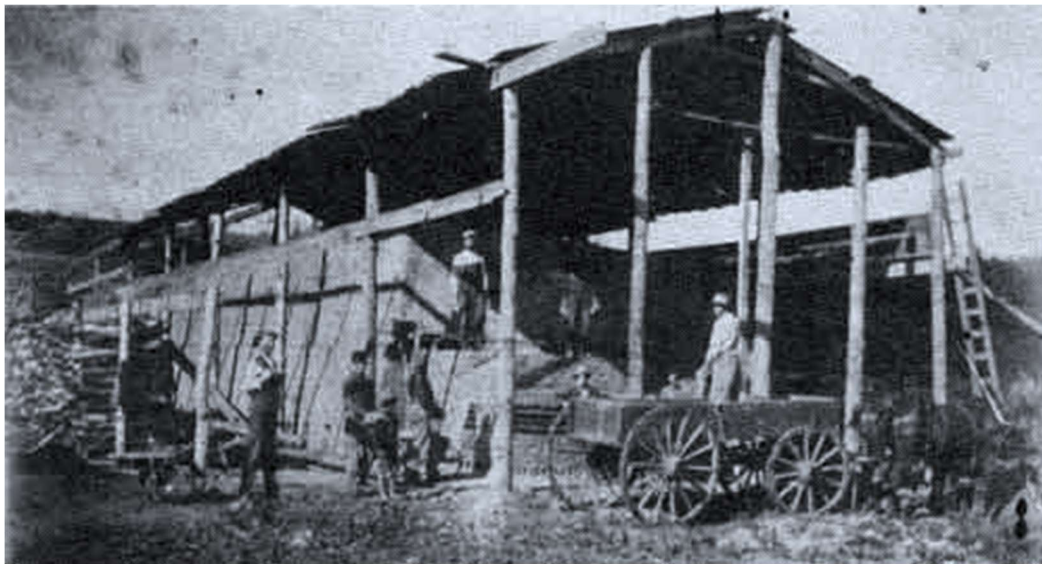


A typical 1880s-era CPR locomotive with attached freight and passenger cars. (Courtesy Toronto Railway Historical Association) Rail lines and train transport transformed southern Manitoba during the 1880s and 90s. The network fostered easy movement of people and goods, and allowed for the import of all kinds of machinery for the growing brick-making industry.



These two images suggest the nature of rural brick-making in Manitoba in the late 1880s and early 1890s (and even beyond).

At top is a yard near Carman, perhaps in Clark's Grove, where it is possible to see the many drying racks on the left and the pug mill on the right. There are 11 men in the image and two teams of horses – typical for a smallish operation. This kind of place might turn out 5,000 bricks per day. (Courtesy *Up to Now*)



Below is George Leary (left) supervising the dismantling of a kiln. (Courtesy Ina Brabant) This important photograph suggests the typical clamp kiln practice that defined many brick operations in Manitoba in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This kiln size would have had a capacity for about 10,000 bricks for a single burn.

four men over a nine-hour period, turned out 17,000 bricks, “a feat said to be without parallel in the manufacture of brick.” And at the new Emerson yard of David Douglas, there were between eight and 18 men employed depending on activity at the site. Mr. Douglas had two Bulmer & Shepherd machines from Montréal, one of which was expected to turn out 30,000 bricks per day, and Douglas expected to burn his first kiln of 150,000 bricks by mid-July.

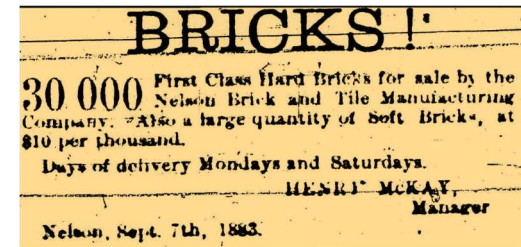
Brick production at Dominion City generated considerable local attention, and even though the industry there was short-lived — only lasting three seasons, from 1881 to 1883 — local newspaper accounts contain fascinating information that helps animate the usual dry facts presented in so many accounts of brick-making at this time.

Brick clay had been found in the Dominion City area during the summer of 1881 and by June of 1882, the firm of Grange & Trull were engaged in brick-making “full blast.” They were turning out two to three carloads of brick per day, mainly destined for Winnipeg. At the time this yard was being run by a practical brick-maker named Peter Phillippe, who had formerly operated a brick yard at Emerson (see previous section). He would continue to run the Dominion City operation after it was purchased by D. and W.W.H. Creighton, Emerson dry goods merchants. Competition to the Creightons came in the form of the Dominion City Brick Company, Ltd., incorporated in July 1882. The firm’s promoters consisted largely of a group of Nova Scotia businessmen, including building contractor Samuel Manners Brookfield, an associate of the Winnipeg contractor James G. McDonald (see above). The Dominion City Brick Company was especially well financed, presumably looking to capitalize on the Winnipeg building boom. When it was announced in May of 1882 that the company was interested in the prospects at Dominion City, local citizenry purchased 10 acres of land on the north bank of the Roseau River for \$1,000, and presented it to the nascent brick company. The new firm was expected to employ 75 to 80 local men and turn out 50,000 bricks per day. Buildings erected on the property included an office, stables and a large boarding house. The yard was said to be up and running by late June, with a 65-horsepower engine and two Penfold brick machines.

In commenting on these developments, the Dominion City correspondent for the *Emerson International* was given to comment that “the yard will soon look like a village,” and later reported that “the operation would eventually employ 300 men.” That autumn the firm shipped bags of clay to England in order to test some of that country’s brick machines, with results confirming their clay as first class material. This allowed the firm to increase its capitalization to \$150,000 (translating this value to an early 21st century amount is difficult, but it is likely that this would have been at least equivalent to \$4 million today). Clearly, the Dominion City Brick Company was going to be a major enterprise, with a large clay bed, high quality clay, the most modern of machinery, top-notch personnel and a rail access to Winnipeg. In early April of 1883 a new site manager arrived from Halifax, and by mid-April two rail carloads containing five new brick machines were on site. The CPR had even run two spur tracks into the yard to allow the efficient shipment of its products, which consisted of a light red brick produced by a dry-pressed method. But it was all for naught. This astonishing story ends here – by mid-August, with the boom in Winnipeg clearly over, work at Dominion Brick was suspended, never to be resumed.

There were several other brick operations established in small towns that were not tied directly to the Winnipeg building boom, and its demand for bricks. But when the boom went bust, in 1883, many of these too were left in the lurch. Modest newspaper coverage provided a few details on short-lived operations at Pilot Mound, Rapid City, Darlingford and Nelsonville, as well as of the more substantial and slightly more enduring operations at Brandon, Minnedosa and Portage la Prairie, discussed here with a few more details.

There were two short-lived brick operations at Brandon in the early 1880s, both active for four seasons, from 1882 to 1885. The first was that of local entrepreneur J.E. Woodworth, who established Brandon Brick Works in June of 1882. T.D. Whiting, formerly of the Pullman Brick Works near Chicago, was the yard’s brick master. Two Philadelphia-made Martin brick machines were ordered, which were said to be



An advertisement in Nelsonville’s *Manitoba Mountaineer* newspaper of 7 September 1883 advised that the Nelson Brick and Tile Manufacturing Company was offering 30,000 “First Class Hard Bricks” for sale, along with a “large quantity of Soft Bricks, at \$10 per thousand.”

capable of turning out 50,000 bricks per day. It was said in the summer of 1882 that Woodworth's bricks had problems with cracking while drying. The second Brandon yard was set up Alexander Lang, who claimed 15 years' experience in the brick-making business. Just south of the city, this yard employed 15 hands when in operation, and during the 1882 season Lang expected to turn out half a million bricks.

Brick-making in Minnedosa began in May of 1883 when John Crerar and Dr. J.B. Hunter engaged as brick-maker a Mr. Bull of Salt Lake City, who had several years' experience in the Winnipeg brick yards. The new yard was put into shape late in May, a boarding house for workers was erected along with a horse stable, and brick-making proceeded immediately. Soon, the operation was turning out 12,000 bricks per day, with all product going into local buildings. including G.W. Beynon's block on Minnedosa Street, the local school, and Town Hall. The Minnedosa operation chugged along for seven seasons, to 1887, after which A.S. Walker purchased the brick plant and moved it to Neepawa where he was starting a new yard.

The most successful of the small-urban brick operations established in the early 1880s was that of W. Lockey in Portage la Prairie, who likely took over Mr. Turber's brick yard that had operated from 1879 to 1881, and called his operation Portage Brick Yards. In the 1881 season, Portage Brick Yards had burned 400,000 bricks. Lockey assumed a partner that autumn, William Patterson Smith, whose contribution was his farm, at the east end of Portage la Prairie, that had a superior bed of brick clay which produced brick of a yellow-grey colour and possessed an unusual strength and toughness. The two men planned to acquire steam-powered brick machines for the 1882 season in order to produce three million bricks (40,000 per day), employing 30 to 35 men. By the time the 1882 season had started in June, Lockey had departed the firm, leaving Smith as sole proprietor. It is doubtful that the Smith yard turned out the planned number of bricks that summer, as the bottom had fallen out of Winnipeg's land and building boom. As construction projects fell off, and many people experienced financial problems, so too went the fortunes of the brick yard. Smith was



Brandon in 1885. (Courtesy Archives of Manitoba) This image shows several brick buildings lining Rosser Avenue.

fortunate in owning the land, and possibly did not owe much money on the machinery. It is believed that his yard was moth-balled for several years, reopening in 1889 (see below for that upgrade).

The Winnipeg bust had taken down a number of the early small-town operations of the early 1880s, and it would take several years for the provincial economy to recover, and for the construction industry to regain its momentum. But when it did, it did so with a vengeance. The last few years of the 1880s and the first half of the 1890s were impressively active outside of Winnipeg. And by this point, local needs took nearly all product that the 34 yards could pump out.

As was characteristic of the industry, at least 15 of the operations from this 10-year period were short-lived, only active for a season or so: St. Alphonse (Sabin F. Fecteau, from c1887-1890); at Carberry, two operations (John Shaw and Dougald McVicar, both only in 1890); at La Broqueire (Joseph Pion, in 1890); at Oak Lake (Lemon Cook, in 1892); at Whitewater (W.H. Cameron and W.S. Barker, from 1894-95); at Hamiota (John Guttridge, a brick mason, with a yard in 1895); at Deleau (E. Lapham beginning in 1895 and perhaps for a year or two); at Minnedosa (Major S. Fairbairn, in operation from 1895-97); at Killarney (Robert Church, in 1896); and at Deloraine, (W.R. David from 1896 to 1897, interrupted in late 1897 with a strike by his employees).

Three of the short-lived yards from this period, one at East Selkirk, one at Rapid City and a yard at Sidney have interesting stories that merit telling. At East Selkirk (operational from 1886 to 1888), the notable fact was the source of the brick clay. Yard owners William Henning and Robert Bulloch found a fine deposit on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, probably at Elk Island, and for several years had shipments brought down by schooner to the docks at Selkirk. At Rapid City, the interesting fact had to do with brick quality and pricing. Edmond Cecil Gosset-Jackson revived the 75-acre Whellems yard (see above) in 1891 and made quite a go of it for two seasons, until 1892 when he took on other business ventures. While the brick factory was operational however, Mr. Gosset-Jackson's output was so highly regarded that



Knox Presbyterian Church, Neepawa, 1892. (Courtesy Archives of Manitoba) Brick for this impressive structure, which was designed by Portage la Prairie architect James Allen MacDonald, may have come from the local yard of A.S. Walker.

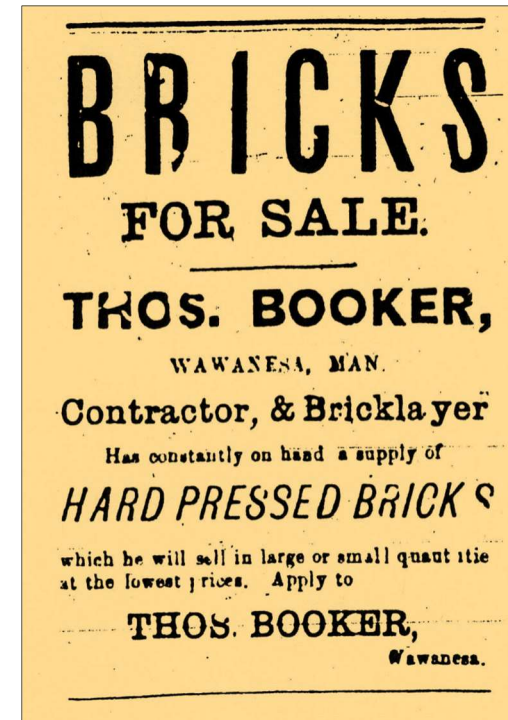


Beaubier Hotel in Brandon. (Courtesy Archives of Manitoba) Brick for this notable Brandon landmark came from the Rapid City yard of Edmond Gosset-Jackson.

Rourke & Cass, contractors working on the new Brandon Asylum (and who had their own Winnipeg brick yard), preferred the Rapid City product, as did Mr. Beaubier (for his new Brandon hotel), who paid a dollar more per thousand for the Gosset-Jackson brick. And finally, at Sidney, the interesting fact was ownership. There, the original yard was established in 1891 by Dougald McVicar, but his death in 1892 left the yard and its operation to his widow. She oversaw the burning of the 1892 kiln (with technical assistance from Elwin Davis, the yard's brick master), and by late August, the operation had produced a million bricks. These were being sold in April of 1893 and Mrs. McVicar appears to have also readied a kiln in 1893, but reports noted that her brick machine was laid up for repairs, and that she had shut down the yard for the season by mid-August, never reopening.

During this period, seven of the small-town brick yards were active for between four and seven years, a fairly good record of activity: two yards at East Selkirk (Isaac Thomas, from 1889-1892 and James Wilson, from 1890-1893); at Ninga (William Maloney, 1895-1899); once again near Sidney (Hiram Davis, from 1895 to 1900) and at Wawanesa (Charles Town and Robert Naismith, from 1896-c1900). By this date, the novelty of a local brick operation had worn off, and very little newspaper coverage was focused on many of the operations.

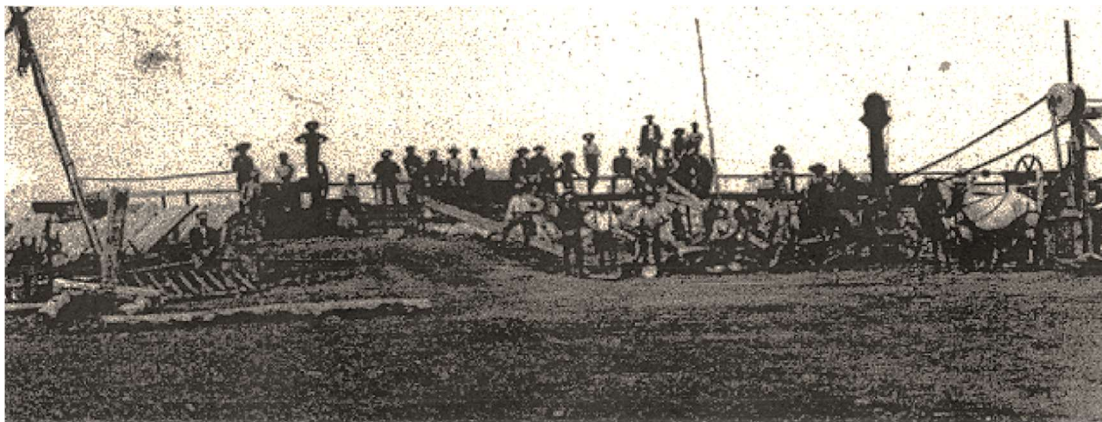
Two operations from this collection merited some small newspaper attentions, relevant here. At Virden, John Saul had scouted out the area in 1892 and returned by mid-April 1893 with a large gang of men who moved his machinery out to the brickyard, a mile east of town, next to the CPR tracks. By late May, Saul and his partner, William A. Irish (later a major Winnipeg contractor), were getting ready to burn their first kiln of 85,000 bricks. The operation was under the expert guidance of brick-maker Elwin Davis, last seen at Sidney's McVicar yard. The yard had a routine production, open for about a month and a half, from mid-June to early August. What is notable is that they were shipping out a good deal of their product on rail cars. The operation was taken over in 1898 by James Sheriff and Mr. Neden who appear to have kept it going only to 1899.



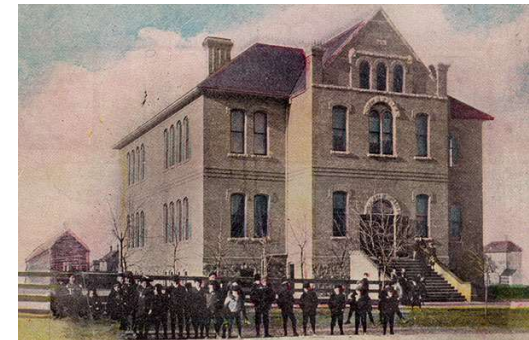
Contractor & Bricklayer Thomas Booker was advertising his wares and services in the *Wawanesa Enterprise* of 6 October 1893.

At Hartney, Harry Payne started his brick yard in 1895, operating until 1901. An interesting note concerned his 1896 season, when most of his brick yard crew left to work at the yard at Deloraine, necessitating Payne's replacement of the workers with fresh help from Souris.

Finally, compared to the ups and downs of the pioneer period, and of the few years attending the Winnipeg boom, it is notable that 12 of the rural and small-town brick operations of the late 1880s and early 1890s each endured for about a decade, with one going for nearly 20 years – at Sidney, near Carberry. Modest contemporary chronicles for five of these operations are sketchy, providing only modest and typical data on machinery and output: at Morden we find D. McGregor active for eleven seasons (1887-1897); at East Selkirk, Edward T. Hooker going on and off from 1889 to about 1900 (12 seasons); partners Alex Calleaux, Joseph Nannon and Joseph Gatin at Deleau operating from 1892-1899 (eight seasons); at Oak Lake Amable Marion productive for eight seasons (1893-1900); and finally at Asessippi we find John A. Gill, (a storekeeper) producing for 10 seasons (1893-1902).



View of the work crew at W.R. David's Deloraine operation, ca. 1896. (Courtesy *What Grandad Didn't Tell Me*) The image is slightly fuzzy, but it is still possible to make out at least 28 men.



Views of two impressive small-town schools that went up in this period (specifically 1898), likely constructed with locally-produced brick. Top of Oakwood School at Oak Lake (from the Marion yard); and below of Neepawa Central School (from the Currie yard). (Both Courtesy Archives of Manitoba)

Slightly more regular media attention attended seven of the longer-running brick factories, with a few extracts noted here for four of them, followed by longer extracts for three yards—at Neepawa, Cypress River and Sidney—where additional data provides more context.

At Portage la Prairie, W.P. Smith resumed operations after the Winnipeg real estate crash had upset the brick industry. From 1889 to 1906, with the yard said to be equipped with the most improved machinery of large capacity, his 30-man crew was producing stock pressed brick, as well as ornamental brick, red and white in colour. Brandon Brickworks, operated by J. and H. Sampson, from about 1895 to 1905, produced much of the brick that was used in new commercial buildings along that city's main thoroughfare, Rosser Avenue. In Souris, noted businessman William H. "Squire" Sowden likewise provided much of the brick used on many of Souris's commercial structures, with that yard open from 1893-1899. And in the town of Holland, the firm of Dagg & Mawhinney (active from 1895-1904) was commonly burning two million bricks a season.

William Currie's operation (1889-1897) was 11 miles north of Neepawa, in the Eden area. Typical data observations were occasionally provided about its production, with the interesting highlight being that when he delivered his first load to a customer in Neepawa on 2 July 1889 it was still warm. While Currie sold brick to the general community, he also was a builder – undertaking the construction of at least four brick houses in Neepawa that summer and autumn. His brick carried off a prize at the Carberry Fair that year. Through the 1890s Currie's yard was highly productive, with several kilns typically of 175,000 a burn. He provided white and pink brick for many Neepawa building projects, as well as for neighbouring communities. The operation closed upon Currie's death, in May of 1898.

James Ruston's Cypress River yard (1889-1904) was called Pioneer Brick, and was located a short distance south of town, near the river from which it drew its water. Ruston's first kiln of 165,000 bricks was marked for immediate delivery. Ruston



Views of two small-town main streets whose fine brick buildings likely were faced with locally-sourced brick. Top of Crescent Avenue in Souris (from the "Squire" Sowden yard); and below of the Brown Block in Neepawa (likely from the Currie yard near Eden). (Both Courtesy Archives of Manitoba)

occasionally advertised in local newspapers that a builder could erect a “nice house” with \$150 worth of brick. He also advised that the 18,000 bricks in a house would only cost \$144.00, with masonry charges bringing the total to \$310.80.

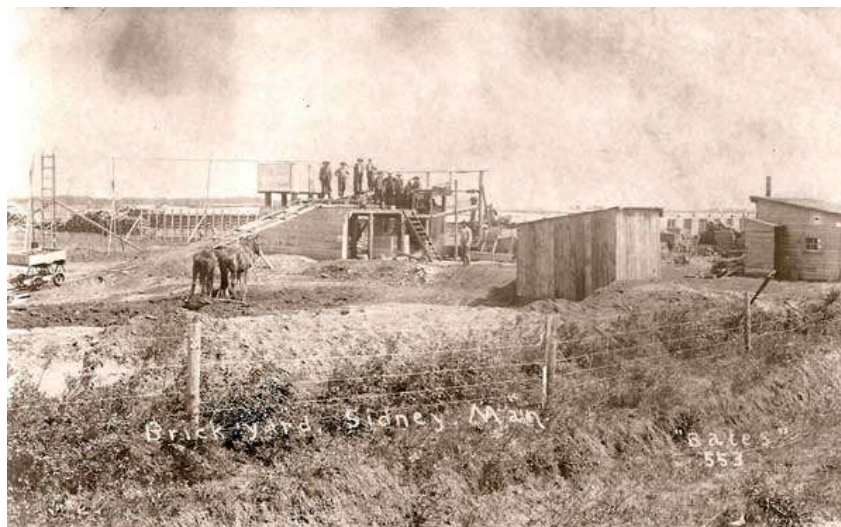
At Sidney, about 13 miles east of Carberry, Elwin Davis, late of the Virden and McVicar yards was at his farm near Sidney in the early 1890s, and back into the brick-making business. One of his first kilns, of 200,000 bricks, went into Carberry’s new Consolidated School, and 10 carloads were sent west to the community of Alexander. Elwin Davis’ operation kept growing in the new century, reaching major proportions for a farm-based yard. Late in 1902 it was estimated that the Davis operation was producing one million bricks per year. By 1903 the firm was known as Sidney Brick Works, advertising its wares as high grade building red brick, with base and octagon finishing brick a specialty. Davis’s ongoing successes led him to expand his operations, advising local newspapers that he had sample test bricks made at the Boyd Brick Press of Chicago, which were displayed in Winnipeg in mid-February of 1905. It is thought that Davis was looking to compete with the red, ornamental brick from St. Louis, Missouri which had been a mainstay in Winnipeg for 25 years. It is not clear how well these plans unfolded, but there were certainly numerous Winnipeg buildings known to have used Sidney brick. Davis was still shipping bricks in April 1910, although he seems to have left the business, and retired to Brandon by the winter of 1910.



Three buildings whose brick walls were presumed to have come from the Elwin Davis yard at Sidney. At top, Carberry Consolidated School; and below the Sidney Methodist Church and Manse. (Courtesy Archives of Manitoba)



Two views of the Sidney Brickworks, taken by photographer Edward Bates (date unknown). (Courtesy Rob McInnes /Manitoba Historical Society) The top view shows the production of tiles; the lower view shows the extent and nature of the yard.



Conclusion – The State of the Industry at 1896

The 15 years of activity from 1881 to 1896 saw Manitoba's brick-making activity gain new heights. With the arrival of the CPR main line in 1881, and its extension across the province by the end of 1883, followed by the explosion of growth in Winnipeg and throughout the southern stretches of the province, the requirement for brick was fevered, and the response from Manitoba brick-makers was up to the task.

The great real estate and building boom in Winnipeg, through 1881 and much of 1882, enticed many brick-makers to set up shop in the city and in nearby communities. During these two fevered years seven yards were operating in Winnipeg, 12 in St. Boniface and 25 in small urban and rural situations. Many of these were gone by 1884, including Dominion City Brick Company, the most spectacular failure of this period - gone by August of 1883, having wiped out the investment of \$150,000 by a consortium of Nova Scotia businessmen.

The real estate collapse of late 1882 certainly threw the province into a period of uncertainty and anxiety, and building starts suffered, with only modest activity for the next five or six years. But by the late 1880s, Winnipeg and the province were back to a more stable and sensible economic footing, and pent-up building construction requirements generated a great deal of activity in the brick-making fraternity. There were three operations in Winnipeg itself in the late 1880s and early 1890s—Rourke & Cass, Mr. Bowles and Kelly Bros.—with only the Kellys, at a yard in St. James (near present-day Stanford Street), able to sustain an operation for more than a year – in fact they were able to develop the 68-acre site for about nine years, until 1899, when they moved equipment and machinery to their established St. Boniface yard.

It was during this period that St. Boniface emerged as a major player in the fledgling industry. The concentration of several highly productive yards—notably A.N. McCutcheon, Cartier/Lamontagne (succeeded by Couture/Marion), J. & P. Lyons and the Kelly Brothers—west of the Seine River (south of its junction with the Red River),

along Mission and Archibald streets, and with proximity to the CPR mainline, proved the value of the fine clay beds here for many years to come.

In smaller urban and rural situations, brick-making activity was also devastated by the economic collapse of the early 1880s, and all of the 25 operations that were established throughout southern Manitoba during this period were gone by 1884. As was the case in Winnipeg and St. Boniface, however, brick-making picked up outside the city by the late 1880s, and while at least 15 of these yards only were productive for a year or two, seven of them lasted for several years. And 12 of these new yards would be able to supply local builders with brick for a decade or more. It was during this time that some of the most established yards were developed at major clay-bed sites, notably at Portage la Prairie (W.P. Smith) and Sidney (Elwin Davis). Others of these long-serving operations would have seen much of their output used to build up the fine brick buildings that were beginning to distinguish some of the larger communities – at Brandon (Sampsons), Neepawa (William Currie at nearby Eden) and Souris (“Squire” Sowden).

There does not seem to have been a major advance in processes, equipment or kiln technology during these 15 years of brick-making activity. We are hearing the same kinds of production numbers as before, with for example 20,000 per-day brick machine production, brick kilns with 200,000 capacity for one burn, and seasonal activity of a million bricks at many yards. It is presumed that clamp and scove kilns were still being used, with the more rudimentary clamps likely in remote or short-lived situations. It is notable that the Winnipeg yard of David Saul appears to have had five scove kilns lined up in a row, with concomitant production levels (at least for the few years it was in operation).

We are hearing of the same kind of personnel requirements noted in the pioneer era – often of 20-50 men and of course of many horses to power some of the machines and to move the many wagons of material and product. But it is also clear that the industry was getting more sophisticated in terms of labour attentions – with several

farm-site operations including boarding houses, ensuring on-site accommodation for a full season, typically from April to October. There are also minor hints of another aspect of labour activity during this period – at Harry Payne’s Hartney yard, in 1896, his employees decamped for work at the yard in Deloraine. It is not known whether wages or work conditions were the issue, but it is a notable detail.

The price lists that were established in the 1870s and early 1880s were sustained into the 1890s—\$10 per thousand for common brick and \$12 per thousand for veneer brick. And while there was no promotion of any brick operation’s value or profit, it is now possible with many longer-lasting operations to get a sense of the wealth that might be generated by a well-run yard over many years. The fairly common million-brick-per-year value, noted for several yards and over many years, could be tabulated as \$12,000 annually (assuming \$12 per thousand). And even with labour and operating costs subtracted, this kind of output might have netted a canny operator more than \$8,000 (2017 value of nearly \$200,000). Ten years of such output would have made an operator a wealthy man.

The output from Manitoba yards in the later years of this period was impressive – millions and millions of bricks. And the new availability of rail connections ensured that nearly all producers could get their product to nearly any place in the province, and even to points further west. But in fact there was not nearly enough Manitoba-made brick to satisfy the construction industry’s demand. And so the major import of brick from the United States, and the inherent competition that engendered, continued apace, with train-loads of brick coming north and then west through these years. Some Manitoba brickyards fought back, offering many new brick options: glazed, base, octagon, ornamental; and colours: yellow, buff, white, grey, red and pink.

It is worth noting that there was nearly no brick imported from eastern Canada – there were no clay deposits in northern Ontario; and the cost of importing brick from southern Ontario, where there was a major brick-making industry, would have been

prohibitive.

Media attention to the brick industry continued through this period, especially focused on small-urban and rural operations. Reports of activity and output were welcome content for newspapers of the day. And there were even occasionally photographs of operations that animated the coverage, providing readers a sense of the nature of the industry. An interesting aspect of brick marketing that appears more frequently at this time focused on awards for brick quality. To cite just two examples: in 1883 there is Creasy J. Whellems of Rapid City reported as sending samples of his deep red brick to an exhibition at Kingston, Ontario; and in 1889 we find bricks from William Currie's Neepawa yard winning first prize at the nearby Carberry Agricultural Fair. And there are common reports of brick-makers sending their bricks for "scientific" testing, and trumpeting the usually glowing results in the local press. For example, Elwin Davis at Sidney advised local newspapers that he had sample test bricks made at the Boyd Brick Press of Chicago, which were then displayed in Winnipeg in mid-February of 1905.



A postcard view of Portage la Prairie's main commercial thoroughfare, Saskatchewan Avenue. (Courtesy University of Alberta) The view suggests the wealth of brick buildings rising in nearly all Manitoba communities. Doubtless it would have been from W.P Smith's local yard that much of the brick seen here would have been pressed and burned.