

Images of the Prairie North at the Turn of the Century

By the beginning of the twentieth century, the federal government was becoming increasingly interested in the northern portions of the prairies as a potential source of development and homestead land. At the time, massive immigration into the west meant that the prairies were rapidly being settled, and in response the Ministry of the Interior began to look to the distant north as an extension of the settlement process. To that end, in 1908 and again in 1909, the ministry's Railway Lands Branch commissioned geographic explorations of northern Saskatchewan and Alberta to determine the feasibility of extending homesteading to that remote area. Under the leadership of Frank J. Crean, the New Northwest Exploration Expedition ranged from the Saskatchewan River valley to as far north as the Athabaska River in the west and Portage la Loche in the east, encompassing an area of about 40 million acres.

The following images represent a small sample of the photographs taken during the Crean explorations. Some of these photographs were included in the final reports submitted to the Ministry of the Interior and were meant to give visual reinforcement to Crean's conclusion that development was indeed feasible. Collectively, they represent a brief glimpse of the state of technology and life in Saskatchewan's "far north" just after the turn of the century.

F. Laurie Barron



Plate 1: "Frank J.P. Crean (foreground) and Other Members of the New Northwest Exploration Expedition in Northern Saskatchewan 1908-9." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 2: "Wagons of Freight for the New Northwest Exploration Expedition About to Cross the Bridge Over the North Saskatchewan River, Prince Albert, as they Leave for the North, 17 June 1909." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 3: "A family, Dogs and Carriages at the Hudson's Bay Company Post, Montreal Lake, 1908-9." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 4: "Probably a Sun-Dance Lodge in the Meadow Lake District, 1909." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 5: "Father Jules E. Teston, an Unidentified Family (possibly that of Edward Bextley, the HBC Agent), and a R.N.W.M.P. Constable at the Hudson's Bay Company Post, Green Lake, 1908-9." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 6: "Green Lake Settlement, 1908-9." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 7: "Haying at Green Lake, 1908-9." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 8: "The Hudson's Bay Company Post at Green Lake, 1908-9." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan]



Plate 9: "Two Men in a Winter Camp Near Canoe Lake, 1908." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 10: "Dog Teams Near Canoe Lake, One Pulling a Load of Cordwood, 1908-9." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 11: "A Wheat Field at Lac la Plonge Mission (Beauval)
September 1908-9." [F.J.P. Crean Album,
Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 12: "Sawmill at Roman Catholic Mission, Lac la Plonge (Beauval), 1908." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 13: "Roman Catholic Mission at Lac la Plonge (Beauval), 1908." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 14: "A Barge with Sail, Ile-à-la-Crosse Lake, 1908." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 15: " 'Blarney Castle,' a Log Cabin at Ile-à-la-Crosse, 1908." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 16: "The Hudson's Bay Company Post at Ile-à-la-Crosse, as seen from the water-front, 1908." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]

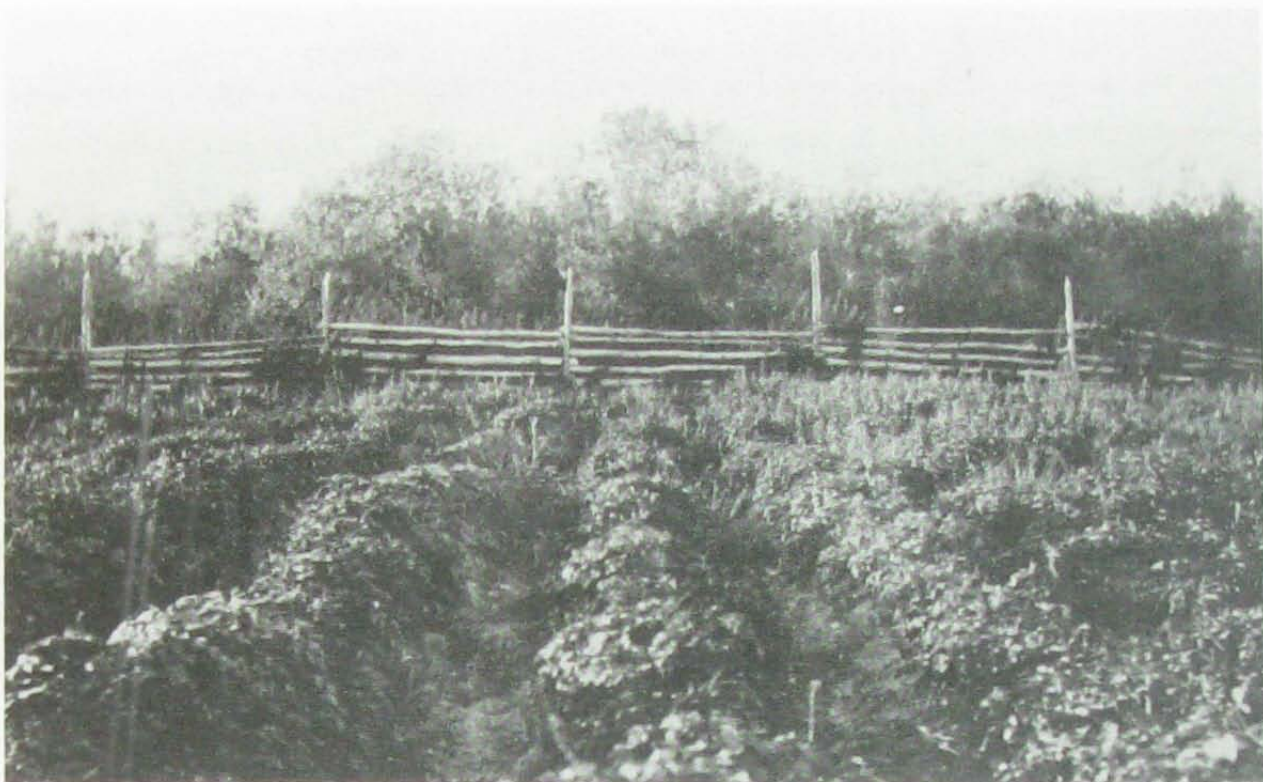


Plate 17: "Potatoes in a Garden at 'Buffalo River' (Dillon), 12 September 1908." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 18: "Chipewyan Village at the Mouth of 'Buffalo River' (Dillon), 1908." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 19: "Constable Thompson, R.N.W.M.P., in a Chipewyan Village at the mouth of the 'Buffalo River' (Dillon), 1908." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 20: "Portage la Loche, 1908-9." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 21: "A Saw Mill in Northwestern Saskatchewan, 1908-9." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 22: "Two Men Sawing Planks off a Log, North-Western Saskatchewan, 1908-9." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 23: "Drying Fish in an Indian Camp, North-Western Saskatchewan, 1908-9." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]



Plate 24: "A Métis Family in North-Western Saskatchewan, 1908-9." [F.J.P. Crean Album, Saskatchewan Archives Board]