

# Rossdale Historical Land Use Study

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## *Executive Summary*

The Rossdale Historical Land Use Study examines the many uses that have occurred, and continue to occur, within Edmonton's Rossdale neighbourhood, particularly within a designated 17.1-acre study area. The present study is one of several parallel initiatives being undertaken by the City of Edmonton that are intended to compile information about the area because of its historical and archaeological significance, to commemorate the former Fort Edmonton burial ground, and to relocate a portion of Rossdale Road that crosses the burial ground site.

## **The History of Rossdale**

The second chapter reviews essays on historiography, which is the study of the writing of history. This literature review enabled the authors to identify approaches and sources that helped them write the narrative history of Rossdale.

The narrative begins with the natural history of the Rossdale area. It presents an overview of the region's geological history, flood events, flora, and fauna to provide a better understanding of the context for Rossdale's long history of human use, occupation, and settlement. In prehistoric and early historic times the North Saskatchewan River was the principal transportation corridor through the region. It was these natural features, including the river and its valley, that made the future site of Edmonton attractive to early Aboriginal peoples and fur-traders alike, and which made the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Edmonton prominent not as a trading post and later also as a regional centre. The flats by the river were highly valued by their users and were seen as being the centre of that segment of the universe.

Things changed in the late nineteenth century with the arrival of the railway. Economic development focussed on the high land at either side of the river – first Strathcona to the south and later downtown Edmonton to the north. The river and the flats were no longer the focus of all activity. Indeed, the river began to be seen as a barrier and no longer as an artery. The flats gradually diminished in importance and became land with relatively little economic value. For several decades after Fort Edmonton closed its doors, the Hudson's Bay Company retained the idea of selling its land in the flats for a tidy profit, but over time found that the market showed little interest in it and it was barely sellable for low-cost housing.

As the ownership of much of the land was gradually transferred from the HBC to the City over the years, Rossdale became a place for utilities and transportation routes – the power plant, the water treatment plant, a gravel pit, roads, railway lines, bridges, and very nearly also a manure depot, an incinerator, and an expressway. In the 1920s the HBC grazed its horses here and unused land was cultivated for market gardens. An example of the attitude shown to the Rossdale flats by municipal authorities was the dismissal of a roadway traversing them as a 'cross-valley road,' with no reference to the land over which it passed.

Civic amenities developed here as well, again taking advantage of the low land values. The Edmonton Industrial Exhibition was held here from 1899 to 1909. A number of parks appeared, the Rossdale Recreation Ground and Renfrew Park attracted many Edmontonians, and a large-scale river-corridor park was planned. Recreational uses remain today, most noticeably at Telus Field.

All this time a community was settling in Rossdale. Development included residences and industries, with most private activity occurring east of 101 Street, outside the study area. The flood of 1915 had a bad impact on Rossdale, as many flooded industries were never re-established and the population declined. In the middle of the twentieth century the character of Rossdale was established as a small, lower-income neighbourhood with an ethnically-diverse population that had very little clout in civic decision-making.

## **The Fort Edmonton Burial Ground**

A key focus of interest in the present study is the former Fort Edmonton burial ground (or ‘graveyard’ or ‘cemetery’), which is situated within the study area.

The first burial recorded in ‘Rossdale flat’ was associated with the North West Company in 1801. This, however, was likely to have described a different place along the North Saskatchewan River from today’s Rossdale Flats. Deaths at Edmonton House IV (which was probably located at the north end of the present 105 Street Bridge) were recorded in the records of the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) from 1814 onwards, but initially had no reference to where the deceased were buried. The first recorded burial at what is now known as the Fort Edmonton burial ground was in 1823, and the graveyard was cited 27 times in the HBC post journals between 1824 and 1879.

Based on archaeological evidence, Lifeways of Canada Ltd. has concluded that the cemetery was used for burials of all ethnic groups represented at the post and during three distinct time periods, although the evidence does not enable providing dates for those periods.

Other cemeteries began to replace the Fort Edmonton burial ground after mid-century. Roman Catholics began to be buried at St. Albert from 1864 and Protestants at the Methodist Burial Ground from 1871. Edmonton Cemetery opened as a non-denominational burial ground in 1886. The extent to which the Fort Edmonton burial ground continued to be used in this period is uncertain.

The Aldous survey of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s Reserve Lands (1882) demarcates the ‘Burial Ground’ southwest of the intersection of 95 Avenue and 104 Street. This is the area at the western edge of the EPCOR power plant, now largely covered by Rossdale Road, where a number of burials have been exposed over the years. A survey done under the authority of City Engineer A.D. Haddow in 1919 confirms this location, although its demarcated area is slightly different.

The area around (and including) the burial ground was leased by the HBC for cultivation by market gardeners in the 1920s. The City of Edmonton purchased Block C, which includes the demarcated burial ground, from the HBC in 1930 and has owned it since that time.

The alignment of Rossdale Road has changed several times through the twentieth century. The eastern portion of the 105 Street rotary, constructed in 1958 and removed in the 1980s, was built over the demarcated burial ground. A portion of the present Rossdale Road covers the graveyard.

Archaeological investigations of the area have been conducted at several times since 1966, mostly in response to the accidental disinterment of human remains. The most recent and comprehensive of these, undertaken by Lifeways of Canada, was reported in January 2003. Burials have been located both within the boundaries shown in the Aldous and Haddow surveys and outside those boundaries.

Scattered documentary evidence also points to the possibility of there having been a second burial ground in Rossdale, an Aboriginal graveyard on the 'upper flat' west of 106 Street, east or northeast of Fort Edmonton V (just south of the Legislature). No burials or physical evidence have ever been recovered from this area and the likelihood of locating it with any accuracy is slim. Other documentary and archaeological evidence suggests that there may have been either a separate burial ground, or an extension of the principal one, to the east, on present EPCOR property. Geophysical investigations were undertaken with the intention of locating burials, but the results are inconclusive.

Neither documentary, archaeological, nor geophysical investigation done to date can indicate the exact limits of the area containing burials. The boundaries remain uncertain. The likelihood of finding human remains diminishes as the distance from the burial ground demarcated in the Aldous survey increases.

## **Recommendations**

The final chapter contains, in part, a long-term management plan for archaeological resources. The most important component of the strategy is to undertake effective consultation with respect to proposed activities that have the potential to disturb archaeological resources. Alberta Community Development is the regulator and must be consulted in the event of proposed substantial interventions. Other stakeholders may be identified through processes already well established by the City of Edmonton.

A primary management recommendation is the avoidance of any additional disturbances to the areas that have been considered as highly sensitive in the Lifeways of Canada report (2003). Pre-development assessments by a qualified archaeologist will be required as a response to proposed developments. Certain areas in the study area with relatively limited prior disturbance have been identified;

consideration may be given to undertaking archaeological investigations there on a proactive basis, in consultation with community stakeholders.

The Rossdale Historical Land Use Study concludes with 14 recommendations:

1. For all proposed activities that would have the potential to affect archaeological resources, undertake effective consultation with stakeholders at an early stage in planning. Alberta Community Development (ACD) is the regulator; stakeholders should be identified through processes already well established by the City of Edmonton. These processes should be inclusive and transparent and sufficient time must be allocated to ensure they are completed before plans are finalized.
2. Through planning, avoid any additional surface disturbance to the area believed to contain the traditional burial ground. No additional subsurface utilities or other forms of disturbance below current grades should be planned for this area.
3. Any proposed maintenance or repairs to existing utilities in archaeologically sensitive areas should be discussed with Alberta Community Development. A protocol should be developed with ACD to anticipate future interventions that will be required for maintenance and repairs.
4. Should industrial use of the EPCOR lands immediately east of the burial ground cease at some time in the future, a protocol for mitigation should be developed in consultation with ACD.
5. Where concerns are known to exist, issues emerge from the consultation process, or uncertainties with respect to the potential for conflicts are present, it is important to complete advance studies, including Historical Resources Impact Assessments, to clarify and resolve these issues. It is essential that sufficient lead time be allocated to allow the necessary investigations to take place, including contingencies for further delays in the event that potential conflicts are identified.
6. Adopt preservation (i.e. non-intervention) as the preferred course of action to mitigate potential conflicts where this is feasible.
7. In areas subject to previous residential or transportation infrastructure development, no prior assessment for archaeological resources is considered necessary, except where deep excavations are required for new developments.
8. Prior assessment for archaeological resources should be required for any proposed development in the Rossdale Historic Land Use Study Area that occurs within the areas shown as having highest archaeological sensitivity (coloured red) or areas shown to contain historic material (coloured orange)

on the Plan of Areas of Archaeological Sensitivity reproduced as Figure 44 of Nancy Saxberg et al., 'Fort Edmonton Burial Ground: An Archaeological and Historical Study' (January 2003).

9. Archaeological investigations may be undertaken on a proactive basis on areas that have been subject to very little prior development, most notably the parking areas north and east of Telus Field and, to a lesser extent, the small area north of 97 Avenue and south of the Ortona Armory, and the base of the 105 Street hill.
10. The terms of reference for any development / land sales contracts that may be issued and for any road or bridge construction should include clauses requiring contractors to cease operations and immediately contact Alberta Community Development if bones or artifacts are encountered during soil-stripping or in foundation or utility excavations.
11. Since previous geophysical investigations of the Fort Edmonton burial ground have been inconclusive, because of extensive site disturbance and insufficient testing within the known cemetery context, consideration should be given to undertaking further geophysical investigations extended outward in an attempt to establish the limits of the burials.
12. Efforts to commemorate the Fort Edmonton burial ground, currently underway, should be continued and encouraged with all the relevant stakeholders. Care should be taken to ensure that any structures or landscape work that are produced do not disturb the archaeological remains that they are intended to commemorate. Avoiding disturbance may require creative and innovative design.
13. Consideration should be given to defining the commemorative area through the community consultation process (similar to the process used in 2001), which in turn should be informed by historical and archaeological research. Research confirms that the focus of the commemorative area should be on the burial ground that is demarcated in the Aldous survey of 1882. The commemoration will mark both the physical remains and the traditional use of the site and adjacent lands for burial purposes.
14. Initiatives should be taken to commemorate and interpret all the significant history of Rossdale flats, including the many uses during the fur-trade era and the variety of other uses that have occurred before and after that era. Commemoration and interpretation should recognize the achievements of the many cultures who lived and worked here for millennia, and who collectively were instrumental in creating the City of Edmonton.



# METHODOLOGY

# 1

## Overview

This Rossdale Historical Land Use Study is one of several parallel initiatives being undertaken by the City of Edmonton in recognition of the historical and archaeological significance of the Rossdale Flats. The other projects are an archaeological investigation of the former Fort Edmonton burial ground, an aboriginal oral history project, the commemoration of the burial ground, and the relocation of Rossdale Road away from the burial ground.

The present report is a scholarly study that documents the historical evolution of the 17.1-hectare Rossdale Historical Land Use Study Area, which is a defined portion of West Rossdale. The study examines the many land uses that have occurred, and continue to occur, in the study area and its larger geographical context from the earliest period of human occupation to the present. One focus of the study is to help identify the location of burials associated with the former Fort Edmonton burial ground.

The investigation involved a review of the extensive secondary literature and considerable new research in primary sources held at nine archival repositories across Canada. Interim reports were submitted in July, October, and December 2003. This final report has been designed and edited for a general audience.

	1.1
BACKGROUND AND OBJECTIVES	
	1.2
METHODOLOGY	
	1.3
CONTENTS OF THIS REPORT	

## *1.1 Background and Objectives*

In a letter to Edmonton Mayor Bill Smith dated August 24, 2001, the Minister of Community Development, the Honourable Gene Zwozdesky, encouraged the City of Edmonton to undertake research on Edmonton's Rossdale area because of its historical and archaeological significance. (This letter is included as Appendix 1.) The City circulated a nation-wide request for consultants, and entered into a contract with Commonwealth Historic Resource Management Limited of Vancouver to prepare a Historical Land Use Study of a portion of the Rossdale neighbourhood. The boundaries of the area under investigation, referred to in this report as the Rossdale Historical Land Use Study Area (or simply the 'study area') are indicated on the map (Figure 1-1). The study area consists of approximately 7 city blocks, covering 17.1 hectares (42.3 acres).

The objectives of the land use study are:

- To document the historic evolution of West Rossdale, from the earliest period of human occupation to the present
- To develop a scholarly piece of work which will be used for research, interpretive, commemorative, and land management activities
- To help identify the location of burial remains and/or non-registered cemeteries within the West Rossdale area
- To assist in the eventual relocation of Rossdale Road
- To assist in the eventual sale of City-owned land

No archaeological excavation was to take place, although the analysis of previous archaeological and geophysical investigations comprises a part of the study.

This is one of several parallel initiatives being undertaken in Rossdale. An archaeological investigation of the former Fort Edmonton burial ground was completed by Lifeways of Canada for EPCOR Generation in January 2003.<sup>1</sup> The Rossdale Flats Aboriginal Oral History Project, sponsored by the Edmonton Aboriginal Urban Affairs Committee, will be completed early in 2004.<sup>2</sup> A study to determine the appropriate way to commemorate the burial ground began in the fall of 2003. A contract to summarize the current state of knowledge in preparation for the relocation of Rossdale Road away from the burial ground was let at that time as well.

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Saxberg, Claire Bourges, Scott Haddow, and Brian Reeves, 'Fort Edmonton Burial Ground: An Archaeological and Historical Study,' Report prepared for EPCOR Generation by Lifeways of Canada Limited (Calgary, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> An overview of the Rossdale Flats Aboriginal Oral Histories Project and the project findings were presented on 3 February 2004. The full report is expected in March 2004. The authors are Pamela M Cunningham (Project Manager), Dianne Stretch-Strang, Jacqueline Pelletier, and Melanie Poole.

Fig. 1-1

Map of Rosedale showing the Rosedale Historical Land Use Study Area (shaded).

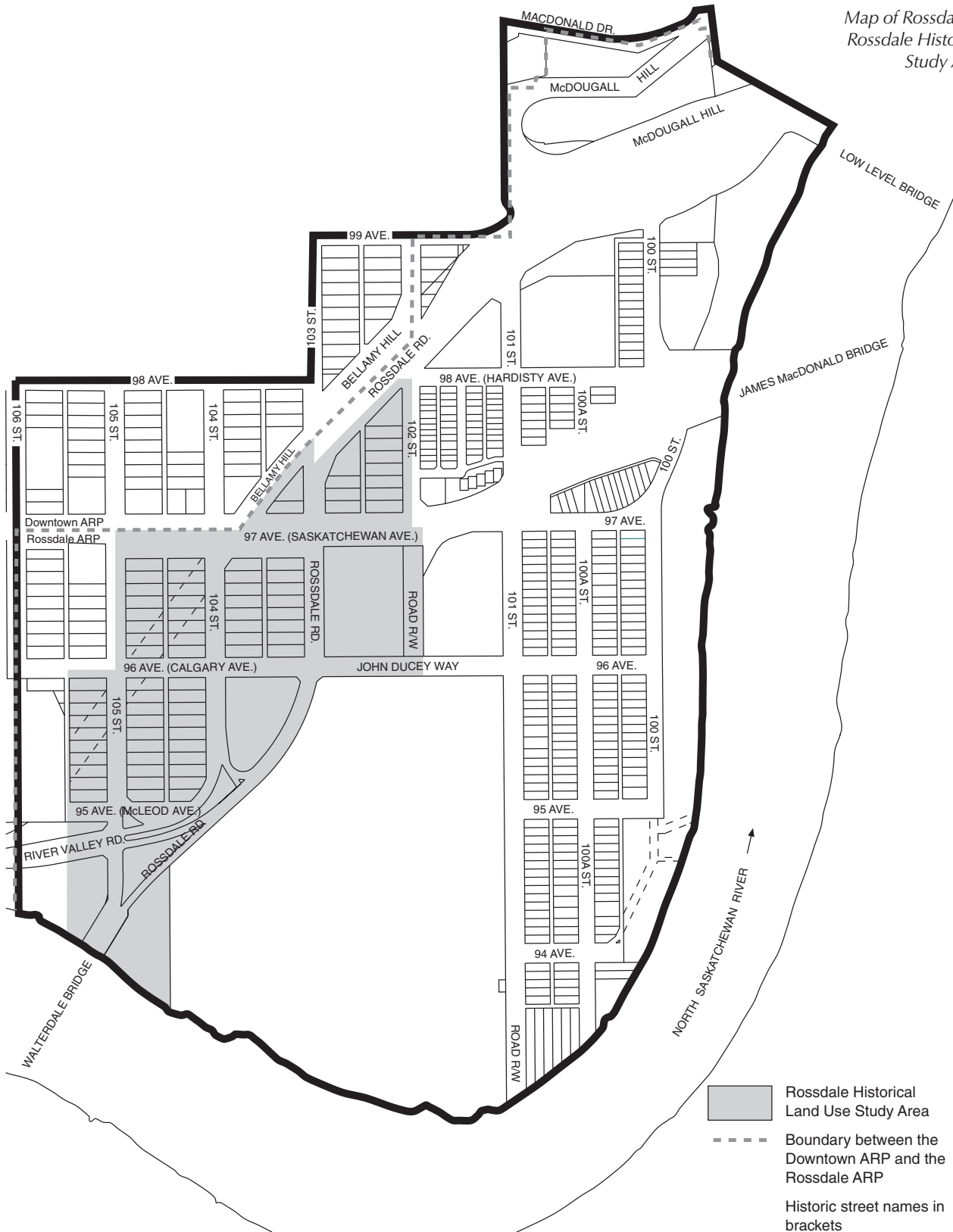


Fig 1-2

General view of the Rosedale area, 2003.

Courtesy City of Edmonton



The present study examines the many land uses that have occurred – and continue to occur – in the study area. It also looks at the larger context, the Rosedale neighbourhood and the North Saskatchewan River valley. One focus of the study is to identify the location of human burials associated with the former Fort Edmonton burial ground.<sup>3</sup> The burial ground is addressed in Chapters 5-9. An attempt is made to determine its location and the time periods in which it was used, consistent with the present report being a land use study. These discussions summarize the relevant material in the Lifeways report and supplement aspects of it with new documentary research. This study is not concerned with cemetery-related issues discussed in the Lifeways report that do not address land use, such as the number and ethnicity of the burials. All the key material on the burial ground and some additional observations are collected in Chapter 10.

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<sup>3</sup> This report uses the terms ‘burial ground’, ‘graveyard’, and ‘cemetery’ interchangeably. The word ‘cemetery’, which came into use only in the nineteenth century, is usually used to denote a burial ground that has been formally registered, which the one at Rosedale was not.

## *1.2 Methodology*

The project began with an inception meeting in Edmonton in November 2002, attended by three members of the client group. Two members of the Commonwealth team attended and two others were available by teleconference. The meeting was used to discuss the work plan, research strategies, and schedule. The client group briefed the consultants on known background work and current issues.

The first stage of investigation involved a review of the secondary literature and other previous work located in a variety of libraries and on the Internet. This included research on local, regional, and natural history. An interim report was prepared and submitted in March 2003, based on this work. Archaeological and geophysical reports were also reviewed in Stage 1, although much of the material relating to these was not submitted until later.

The second stage involved research in primary sources. A detailed research plan was prepared, providing a strategic approach that began with ‘essential’ documents and concluded with ‘supplementary’ ones that would be searched as time and budget allowed. Every effort was made not to duplicate the research of others, such as, for example, the extensive work done by Lifeways of Canada for EPCOR.

The following repositories were visited:

- Provincial Archives of Alberta (Edmonton)
- City of Edmonton Archives (Edmonton)
- Archaeological Survey, Alberta Community Development (Edmonton)
- Alberta Community Development Library (Edmonton)
- Glenbow Archives (Calgary)
- Hudson’s Bay Company Archives (Winnipeg)
- National Archives of Canada (Ottawa)
- Archives Deschâtelets (Ottawa)
- National Air Photo Library (Ottawa)

SECTION 1.2  
METHODOLOGY

Draft reports were submitted in July and October 2003. The final report, submitted in December 2003, incorporated comments that were received from the City of Edmonton and Alberta Community Development.

This version of the Rossdale Historical Land Use Study has been enhanced with illustrations and designed and edited for a more general audience.<sup>4</sup>

### *1.3 Contents of this Report*

This report is divided into an executive summary and ten chapters. Chapter 2 summarizes the relevant historiography, in order to set an intellectual context for the study. Chapters 3 to 6 discuss, respectively, the natural history, regional history, fur-trade history, and twentieth-century history of Rossdale. Chapters 7 to 9 report on archaeological issues: the first summarizes known data, the next addresses archaeological potential, and the last summarizes geophysical data. Chapter 10 provides conclusions and recommendations and offers a management plan for archaeological resources.

There are some redundancies among the chapters, since similar material has been addressed by two historians, and archaeologist, and a geophysical engineer. We have chosen to retain the repetitions, so that each perspective on the story may remain complete.

Seven maps have been drawn for this study. Four show the principal landmarks of Rossdale flats at different periods in history; two clarify land subdivision; and one indicates the principal features beyond the study area that are referred to in the study. The maps are included as Appendix 5.

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<sup>4</sup> The December 2003 report includes a report that describes the research that was undertaken and analyzes the outcomes. This will serve as a guide to future studies of the Rossdale area.

# HISTORIOGRAPHY

# 2

## Overview

This chapter forms the foundation for the report. Historiography is the study of the writing of history, and examining the changing interpretations of historians is as important as the ‘content’ of the history itself. The chapter begins with a discussion of writing about the fur trade, First Nations, and Métis history and the shifting relationships among these intertwined topics. It continues with a general discussion of the fields of environmental and urban history and concludes with an overview of previous reports that have examined Rossdale’s history.

2.1  
INTRODUCTION

2.2  
FUR TRADE, MÉTIS, AND  
FIRST NATIONS

2.3  
ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORY AND  
URBAN HISTORY

2.4  
ROSSDALE HISTORY

2.5  
CONCLUSION

## 2.1 Introduction

This chapter places the writing of Rosssdale's history into a larger context. This activity is called historiography, which is the study of history writing. The authors approached this task by first identifying two major topic areas relating to Rosssdale's history that were likely to provide insights useful to this project. They are:

- Fur Trade, Métis, and First Nations History
- Environmental and Urban History

For each area, historiographic essays are identified and reviewed. The reviews take the form of summaries of the essays, rather than new and original work. Reviewing this material identified approaches, sources, and, in some cases, information that helped to develop the research plan and the subsequent writing of a narrative history of Rosssdale.

## 2.2 Fur Trade, Métis, and First Nations

### Fur Trade

Michael Payne's recent essay, 'Fur Trade Historiography: Past Conditions, Present Circumstances and a Hint of Future Prospects,' provides a useful entry into the fur trade literature. Payne begins by describing the work of historians who focussed on the role of the trade in building Canada. Although now relatively old, some of these works remain standard reference works. They include Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada* (1930; revise ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1970), A.S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71* (London: 1939; revised ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), and E.E. Rich, *The Fur Trade and the North West to 1857* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967). It was not until the 1970s that a new generation of historians, including Jennifer Brown, Sylvia van Kirk, Frits Pannekoek, and John Foster, began to examine the fur trade as a 'socio-cultural complex in which Indians, mixed-bloods, and whites were intertwined.' The result was work that considered new subjects such as the role of women in the fur trade. These historians saw the fur trade as resulting in the establishment of a unique and distinct society in western Canada 'that recognized the importance of family and kin and in which native women had a vital contribution to make.'<sup>1</sup> The significance of family relationships, captured by Sylvia Van Kirk in the phrase 'many tender ties,' continues to inform historians interested in the relationships

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Payne, 'Fur Trade Historiography,' in Theodore Binnema, Gerhard Ens, and R.C. Macleod, eds., *From Rupert's Land to Canada* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001), p. 5.



between family, class, race, and the exercise of power.<sup>2</sup> The treatment of the dead at cemeteries, as at Rossdale, reflects family relationships and has the potential to reveal much about a society's power structure and how it changed over time.<sup>3</sup>

In recent years, writing on the fur trade has undergone another quite profound shift in which the fur trade is now 'treated as one of many influences on the history of the region which many not have changed as dramatically as earlier histories implied.'<sup>4</sup> This is especially true in the context of First Nations history. Arthur Ray led the way by examining the aboriginals' role in the fur trade in *Indians and the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974). Ray and others have pursued this question further, arguing that fur trade history is simply one aspect of First Nations history. This is quite different from the usual approach of seeing First Nations history as an aspect of fur trade history.

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At the same time as these broad trends have informed the study of fur trade history, a number of detailed studies of particular aspects of the fur trade have appeared. For example, Carol Judd and Philip Goldring have examined how fur trade employees adjusted socially to the circumstances of their employment.<sup>5</sup> There are also now more studies of individual fur-trade posts and a greater understanding of the differences between them. The tradition of publishing fur-trade-related records, including explorers' journals, which was established in the nineteenth century and furthered by the Champlain Society and the Hudson's Bay Records Society, has continued. New approaches to editing have resulted in more complex products. Some well-known published sources have been revisited and more carefully scrutinized, resulting in new interpretations and a better appreciation of the limits of the documentary record. For example, Payne notes that historians have found that Paul Kane's published descriptions of Edmonton bear little resemblance to what he wrote in his field notes.

SECTION 2.2  
FUR TRADE, MÉTIS,  
AND FIRST NATIONS

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Ann Laura Stoler, 'Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies,' *Journal of American History*, 88, 3 (2001), and Sylvia Van Kirk, 'Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670-1870,' (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980).

<sup>3</sup> Although there is only a small amount of literature that directly addresses questions associated with fur trade cemeteries, there is a literature relating to the treatment of 'lost' or 'forgotten' cemeteries as well as a larger literature relating to archaeology and human remains more generally. See for example: Ruth Swan and Edward A. Jerome, 'The History of the Pembina Métis Cemetery: Inter-Ethnic Perspectives on a Sacred Site,' *Plains Anthropologist*, 44, 170 (Memoir 31):81-94; Michele H. Bogart, 'Public Space and Public Memory in New York's City Hall Park,' *Journal of Urban History*, 25, 2 (January 1999):226-257; Cheryl J. La Roche and Michael A. Blakey, 'Seizing Intellectual Power: The Dialogue at the New York African Burial Ground,' *Historical Archaeology*, 31, 3 (1997): 84-106; David A. Poirier and Nicholas F. Bellantoni, *In Remembrance: Archaeology and Death* (Westport, Conn.: Bergin and Garvey, 1997); Kent C. Ryden, *Mapping the Invisible Landscape* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993).

<sup>4</sup> Payne, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Payne, p. 10.

Payne concludes his essay by describing the immensity of the Hudson's Bay Company Archive in Winnipeg (HBCA), reputed to be the largest private archive after the Vatican. The sheer size of the record means that most studies of the fur trade can only sample it. It also means that a vast number of topics and possible approaches to topics have yet to be tapped.

## Métis

Fur trade history and Métis history are closely intertwined and many works, such as Sylvia Van Kirk's, can be described as contributing to both. Frits Pannekoek, in his essay 'Métis Studies: The Development of a Field and New Directions,' notes that there has been 'a virtual explosion of interest' in Métis studies over the past twenty years. Pannekoek acknowledges the significance of older works, but focuses his attention on newer studies. He breaks these down by topic:

### *The origins of the Métis people*

The question of who is Métis is a complex one. For many years, in western Canada, it was assumed that to be Métis one had to trace one's ancestry to the Red River. This definition left out large numbers of people who identified as Métis, but did not have roots in Red River. It also ignored Métis communities outside of western Canada. Pannekoek cites recent work on the role of material culture, language, and government regulation in shaping Métis identity. He also cites John Foster's careful exploration of Métis identity.<sup>6</sup> Pannekoek paraphrases Foster's argument, writing that 'you are Métis if you say you are, and as important, you are Métis if others who identify themselves as Métis say you are.'<sup>7</sup>

### *The Métis of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries*

These studies tend to focus on the Métis of Red River and the reasons for their dispersal into the western interior. This category includes studies of the two rebellions and includes considerations of the similarities and differences between French-speaking / Catholic Métis families and English-speaking / Scots Métis.

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<sup>6</sup> John E. Foster, 'The Métis and the End of the Plains Buffalo in Alberta,' in John E. Foster, Dick Harrison, and I. S. MacLaren eds., *Buffalo* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1992), 63.

<sup>7</sup> Frits Pannekoek, 'Métis Studies: The Development of a Field and New Directions,' in Theodore Binnema, Gerhard Ens, and R.C. Macleod, eds., *From Rupert's Land to Canada* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001), p. 112. The Supreme Court of Canada's Pawley decision of September 2003 redefines Métis identity and eliminates the need for a link to the Red River.

### *The revival of Métis consciousness in the twentieth century*

Pannekoek contends that the ‘real future in Métis studies lies not in Red River, or in the early North West, rather it lies in determining the roots of the new Métis consciousness of today.’ These roots, he goes on to write ‘can be discerned in the mythology of 1869 and 1885, but more importantly in the 50 years of marginalisation following 1885.’<sup>8</sup>

### *Métis land claims*

The issue of land claims has been hotly debated. The major question that historians have examined is how the federal government addressed Métis land questions – whether they were treated as Indians or as British subjects – and what the reasons and consequences were. This debate is tied to contemporary land claims and questions of individual and national identity.

### *Métis women’s history*

Pannekoek notes a growing literature around the role of women, and gender more generally, in Métis history. The best known of this work has examined the role of native women in fur trade families in shaping the identity of the family, especially the children.

Pannekoek concludes by arguing that Métis studies, if current trends hold, are likely to generate essays that focus on questions of ‘identity, and the interplay or gender, race and class.’

## **First Nations**

The writing of First Nations history is a vigorous and expanding field. In fact, there has probably been more First Nations history published in the last ten years than in the previous fifty.<sup>9</sup> Carlson, Jetté, and Matsui, in their overview of the recent literature, assert, however, that while the volume is impressive, what is really important is that a grounding in First Nations history is now considered an essential part of understanding Canadian history generally. The most radical change in the writing of First Nations history is that much more attention has been given to aboriginal perspectives. An ongoing topic of interest has been Indian-white relations, which have been examined in the context of an expanding number of subject areas and time periods. The reviewers note that ‘more emphasis than

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<sup>8</sup> Pannekoek, p. 116.

<sup>9</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, Melinda Marie Jetté, and Kenichi Matsui, ‘An Annotated Bibliography of Writings in Aboriginal History, 1990-1999’, *Canadian Historical Review*, 82, 1 (March 1996), p. 123.

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*The most radical change in the writing of First Nations history is that much more attention has been given to aboriginal perspectives.*

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ever is being directed towards the products of those relations.’ In this regard, ‘middle ground studies have come to form a core element of the growing field of Native history.’<sup>10</sup> Historians have also begun to try to write about First Nations history without relying on the observations and/or documents created by non-native observers or administrators. This is being done by using a wider range of evidence, including oral history and art, and has made it possible to write about a wider range of topics.

The use of new types of sources demands that historians develop new skills in understanding and assessing information. It also often requires engagement with living communities, something that historians have not typically been trained to do. As a positive step in this direction, an oral history project for Rosssdale has been initiated by the City of Edmonton.

The reviewers point out that it is important to understand that much recent First Nations history has been written within the context of court cases relating to land claims and native rights. The work of historians has played an important part in these court cases. This context has politicized Canadian native history and has somewhat limited forthright debate on cherished notions of the Aboriginal past. Historians have tended to pursue new topics rather than closely examine the works of their colleagues. It is important to realize that even with this burgeoning interest, there are still great gaps in what has been studied.

## ***2.3 Environmental History and Urban History***

Two relatively new disciplines are environmental history and urban history. The material discussed here is broad in scope, and does not relate specifically to Edmonton or even to Alberta. Its usefulness has been in identifying methods and raising a series of general questions that have informed the researchers and writers of this report.

### ***Environmental History***

Environmental history has emerged in the last twenty years as a discrete sub-field within the historical discipline. It has been defined as the study of ‘the role and place of nature in human life.’ As with any field of history the literature it has generated can be further broken down by when it was written, the interpretive approach adopted, and the topics selected for study. A useful guide to the field is Mart A. Stewart’s ‘Environmental History: Profile of a Developing Field.’ Stewart defines environmental history as the study of ‘the role and place of nature in human life.’<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Carlson et al., p. 124.

<sup>11</sup> Mart A. Stewart, ‘Environmental History: Profile of a Developing Field,’ *The History Teacher*, 31 (May 1998), p. 351.

Early (pre-1980s) work in environmental history tended to focus on the political and intellectual history of questions related to the environment, such as conservation and wilderness preservation. Environmental history was also written by the biographers of people such as American landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, historical geographers, and historians of science and nature. Stewart argues that it is in the 1980s that the field of environmental history took off, expanding and becoming much more complicated and, of course, fractured and fractious. In general, environmental historians tend to emphasize the interdisciplinary character of what they do and many argue that it is impossible to do environmental history without a solid grounding in the sciences.

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*Environmental history has emerged in the last twenty years as a discrete sub-field within the historical discipline.*

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As an aid to understanding the field, Stewart has devised four broad categories of more recent environmental history:

- Studies that combine changes in historical ecology with changes in human culture. For example, Donald Worster, in *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), relied on information about drought cycles to help explain the great prairie drought of the early 1930s. Other historians have made use of pollen analysis, dendochronology (the study of climate changes and past events by comparing the annual growth rings of trees), and studies of fire cycles.
- Studies of how people have tried to make nature work for them. Stewart describes this as a kind of ‘historical materialism – that assumes that encounters with the material world are defining encounters for human society.’<sup>12</sup>
- Studies that focus on the cultural history of nature. These can be quite diverse, ranging from examinations of the values expressed in laws regulating resource extraction through to deconstructions of icons such as Grey Owl or Bambi.
- Studies that approach history by examining critically the process of mapping – what is mapped and how it is mapped and naming. Paul Carter, in *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), wrote about this in the Australian context. Carter argued that naming represented an important step in the process of colonization. A parallel question in the context of this study is how Rosedale got its current name (which is addressed below).

SECTION 2.3  
ENVIRONMENTAL AND  
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In Stewart’s opinion, the best environmental history incorporates aspects of all four categories.<sup>13</sup> The balance of Stewart’s review is dedicated to current issues

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<sup>12</sup> Stewart, p. 353.

<sup>13</sup> Stewart, p. 354.

and trends in environmental history. This material is quite stimulating. It would be useful to bear these questions in mind when considering how the history of Rosedale has been written and in framing new questions about Rosedale.

The questions Stewart identifies include:

#### **What is nature?**

This seemingly innocuous question is actually quite contentious. Historians have typically looked to science for models of nature. For many years science obliged with ecological models that stressed continuity and equilibrium. Since the 1970s, however, scientists have acknowledged that there is a great deal of uncertainty in nature. Rather than being a highly organized and predictable entity, nature, in Stewart's words, 'is little more than a fluctuating array of populations of individuals with no inherent ties that bind.'<sup>14</sup> The implications for historians are profound, essentially pulling the rug out from under studies of change over time by removing nature's constancy as a measuring stick against which change can be gauged.

Historians have not stopped looking to science for models of nature, but they have, like scientists, become more circumspect and more likely to consider carefully the cultural context in which these models are created. Much more attention has been paid to the historical and cultural factors that define our relationship with nature. Particular attention has been paid to the idea of nature as something somehow separate from humans. Some historians have simply pointed out that most cultures do not separate themselves from nature, while others have argued that in the modern world culture permeates nature by, for example, affecting the weather. Others have gone further, contending that 'nature and culture are not, in the first place, independent of one another ... the distinction between the artificial and the natural has been and continues to be false.' This is the point Donna Harraway is making when she argues that 'our best machines are made of sunshine ... nothing but signals, electromagnetic waves, a section of a spectrum.'<sup>15</sup> Taking this a step further, some writers argue that not only are culture and nature interdependent, they can be understood as aspects of a larger whole. Our separation of nature and culture is useful for understanding components of a much bigger system. Finally, there has been an increased consciousness of the limits of language to describe nature, and hence, the limits of knowledge.

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*The implications for historians are profound, removing nature's constancy as a measuring stick against which change can be gauged.*

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#### **What are Wilderness and the Wild?**

Many non-native North Americans maintain that before Columbus 'discovered' America, it was a great pristine wilderness. This perfect paradise was subsequently ruined by human manipulation and exploitation. Research on the pre-contact environment has demonstrated, however, that there was extensive human manipulation of the environment by First Nations. Recent examinations of the

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<sup>14</sup> Stewart, p. 355.

<sup>15</sup> Harraway, quoted in Stewart, p. 356.

idea of wilderness have tended to see it as a creation of the late nineteenth century, in which the presence and/or uses of places by First Nations was ignored.

### *Environmental History, Social Meaning, and Social Justice*

Environmental historians have begun to look at the connections between race, gender, class, ethnicity, and the history of the environment. This approach is particularly pertinent in urban areas, ‘where environmental change – or definitions of the environment – were often played out in terms of social justice and community values.’<sup>16</sup>

### *Green History and Green Politics*

Environmental history has been informed by green politics. In recent years, however, this connection has weakened somewhat as environmental history has produced results that environmentalists have found troubling. Examples of this include studies of wilderness as an ideological construct and work that has questioned the idea that First Nations were ‘first’ ecologists.

### *Regionalism and Bioregionalism*

Some environmental historians have argued that the region, in particular what is called the ‘bioregion,’ is the best unit of study for environmental history. Stewart quotes Dan Flores, one of the leading proponents of this approach: ‘the particularism of distinctive places fashioned by human culture’s peculiar and fascinating interpenetration with all the vagaries of topography, climate, and evolving ecology that define landscapes – and the continuing existence of such places despite the homogenizing forces of the modern world – ought to cause environmental historians to realize that one of their most crucial tasks is to write well what might be called bioregional histories.’<sup>17</sup>

This leads to several questions, which the remainder of the present study attempts to address:

- What is peculiar about Rosedale as a place?
- How have humans interacted with this place?
- How has Rosedale, the place, changed?

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<sup>16</sup> Stewart, p. 358.

<sup>17</sup> Stewart, p. 359

### *Global History and Global Discussions*

There is a recognition of the risks that strictly local studies can have limited meaning and may be parochial in outlook. Looking beyond regional boundaries or across cultures is difficult because it requires in-depth knowledge of multiple places and cultures, but it can make a work richer and more significant.

## **Urban History and Urban Environmental History**

Urban environmental history combines approaches found in urban history (a much older field) and environmental history (the new kid on the block). While the two fields have similarities, there are also some interesting differences, which reflect the changing interests of historians more generally. Urban history tends to focus on politics and economics. While urban environmental history does not ignore these areas, it takes more interest in culture and related issues.

Gilbert Stelter provides a useful overview of the writing of Canadian urban history in a course introduction he wrote in 1996.<sup>18</sup> Stelter identifies three types or themes in Canadian urban history: the process of urbanization, urban biographies, and thematic studies. In the Canadian context it is the first type, studies of the process of urbanization, that tended for many years to be seen as being of primary importance. The most often cited article on this topic is still J.M.S. Careless, 'Frontierism, Metropolitanism, and Canadian History,' *Canadian Historical Review*, 35 (1954), in which Careless, according to Paul Voisey, argues that Canada's urban system is one of 'metropolitanism.' This is defined as 'a hierarchical structure whereby some cities came to dominate not only their own hinterlands, but other cities and their hinterlands.'<sup>19</sup> More pertinent, in the context of this project, is work that looks at how the internal structures of cities have evolved. A useful article on this subject is Richard Harris and Robert Lewis, 'The Geography of North American Cities and Suburbs, 1900-1950: A New Synthesis'. Lewis and Harris argue that the typical model of urban development that portrays the centre as poor and the suburbs as wealthy is an oversimplification of a much more complex pattern in which 'differences between cities and suburbs as a whole were quite minor and were dwarfed by variations within the city and among suburbs.'<sup>20</sup>

The better urban biographies and thematic studies show readers how these and other issues have played out in the context of Edmonton. These biographies are discussed in some detail below, but at this point it is worth noting that theoretical, biographical, and thematic material, of varying depth and quality, is available about Edmonton and prairie urban development more generally.

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<sup>18</sup> Gilbert Stelter, 'An Introduction to the Study of Urban History,' <http://www.uoguelph.ca/history/urban/citybibVI18.html>, accessed 21 January 2003.

<sup>19</sup> Paul Voisey, 'Urban History,' *A Readers Guide to Canadian History: Confederation to the Present*, vol. 2, ed. Doug Owrn (Toronto : University of Toronto Press, 1994), p. 233.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Harris and Robert Lewis, 'The Geography of North American Cities and Suburbs, 1900-1950: A New Synthesis,' *Journal of Urban History*, 27, 3 (March 2001), p. 284.



Urban historians and urban environmental historians both take space and place seriously, although urban historians are less likely to tease out the details of human interactions with particular urban environments. A more complete understanding of the questions asked by urban environmental historians than that provided by Stewart in his overview of environmental history is offered by Christine Meisner Rosen and Joel Arthur Tarr in ‘The Importance of an Urban Perspective in Environmental History.’ Rosen and Tarr note that environmental historians have tended to focus on the rural environment and contend that the field should look at ‘nature’s role and place in the history of urban life.’<sup>21</sup>

To do this Rosen and Tarr identify four areas of study:

- The effects of cities on the natural environment over time. Cities place demands on their local environment for food, water, fuel, building materials, places for waste disposal. One understudied area identified by Tarr is the impact of automobiles, including the effect of road construction, paving, and automobile pollution. Fulfilling these demands affects the topography, climate, and biological systems of the City and its larger environment.
- The impact of the natural environment on cities. Rosen and Tarr argue that Cities happen where ‘nature is attractive,’ but they also acknowledge that most natural environments have negative attributes such as mosquitoes or a tendency to flood. No place is perfect!
- The responses to these impacts and efforts to alleviate related problems. People use various tools, including laws, stories, and ideologies, to organize and make sense of the natural environment. These tools, in turn, have an impact on the natural environment, speeding up or slowing down change.
- The built environment and its roles and place in human life as part of the physical context in which society evolves. Rosen and Tarr see the built environment as ‘part of the earth’s environmental history.’<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Christine Meisner Rosen and Joel Arthur Tarr, ‘The Importance of an Urban Perspective in Environmental History,’ *Journal of Urban History*, 20, 3 (May 1994) , p. 300.

<sup>22</sup> Rosen and Tarr, p. 300.

## 2.4 Rosedale History

Although there is no published history of Rosedale, a number of government reports provide an excellent overview of the neighbourhood's history. These include:

- Marie Dorsey, comp., 'Possible Heritage Sites in the North Saskatchewan River Valley,' Report prepared for Heritage Site Services, Alberta Culture Youth and Recreation, September 1974.
- EPEC Consulting Western Limited, 'North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System Biophysical Study,' report prepared for City of Edmonton Department of Parks and Recreation, January 1981.
- Lan Chan-Marples and Jane Gibson, 'North Saskatchewan River Communities: Historical Study: A Documentation of Historical Resources: Sites in Four Edmonton River Valley Communities;' report prepared for City of Edmonton Parks and Recreation Research and Planning Department, 1981, revised 1985.
- Rosedale Community League. *The Rosedale Living History Park, A Proposal* [1984].
- Another report, frequently cited in the above reports, is Aresco, 'Historical Resources Inventory of Capital City Recreation Park,' 2 volumes, 1977. This report has not been consulted.

These provide good contextual data as well as information about the following specific sites within the study area:

- 105th Street Bridge (Dorsey, p. 44, EPEC, p. 313)
- Edmonton, Yukon, and Pacific Railway (Dorsey, p. 60; Chan-Marples; p. R. 33; *Living History Park*, p. 19; EPEC, p. 311)
- Forts Edmonton/Augustus II and IV (Dorsey, p. 51; Chan-Marples, R. 37; Chan-Marples, p. R.25; EPEC, p. 283)
- HBC Graveyard / Indian Graveyard (Dorsey, p. 57; Chan-Marples, p. R. 41; *Living History Park*, p. 8; EPEC, p. 261.)
- John Walter's Upper Ferry (Dorsey, p. 34; EPEC, p. 308)

- Ortona Barracks/HMCS Nonsuch (Dorsey, p. 77; Chan-Marples, p. R. 54; *Living History Park*, p. 31)
- Winter Carnival (*Living History Park*, p. 42)
- Historic Indian Camp on Ross Flats on the occasion of the inauguration of streetcar service (EPEC, photograph, pp. 285, 286)

These are not brief overview histories of the sort often found in government reports. Rather, they are systematically researched community histories. The last includes a narrative history of the community as well as site-by-site histories and listings of sources. All are strongest on the twentieth century, although they also include descriptions of fur-trade era sites. Where these studies are weakest is in taking some of the themes identified above in Canadian urban and environmental history and tracing them through in a systematic way.

## 2.5 Conclusion

Studying historiography does not mean that the chronology of events is ignored. What it does mean is that more attention is paid to why certain events are listed in the chronology and why others are not, and what that might mean. At times it may seem that historians are preoccupied with questions that don't concern the public. This may be true in the short term, but in the longer term, the questions asked by historians often surface, albeit years later, on the public agenda. It is therefore useful for the managers responsible for historical resources to be aware of the questions being asked by historians and to think about what these questions might mean in terms of the value or significance assigned to the resources they manage.

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*It is useful for managers responsible for historical resources to be aware of the questions being asked by historians and to think about what these questions might mean.*

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# NATURAL HISTORY

# 3

## Overview

This chapter explores the natural history of the Rossdale area in an effort to provide a context for the human developments discussed in the remainder of the report. Drawing upon secondary sources, the text presents an overview of the region's geological history, paying particular attention to the evolution of soils and landforms that are still visible in Rossdale today. It also addresses topics such as flood events and native flora and fauna, with an eye to better understanding Rossdale's long history of human use, occupation, and settlement. The major conclusions of this chapter are that the Rossdale Flats presented an attractive occupation site to fur traders because of flooding, not in spite of it; and that even though Rossdale has few natural features that distinguish it from other sites along the North Saskatchewan River, it has most, if not all, of the features that made the valley attractive to early aboriginal peoples and fur-traders alike. This chapter and the next are based on a review of secondary or published literature and their purpose is to provide context for the more narrowly focused portions of the study.

3.1	INTRODUCTION
3.2	GEOLOGICAL HISTORY
3.3	STRATIGRAPHY, SOILS AND FLOODING
3.4	FLORA AND FAUNA

### ***3.1 Introduction***

This chapter and the next place the history of Edmonton's Rossdale neighbourhood into its larger natural and regional history context through a review of the secondary literature. An understanding of the area's natural history helps explain why Edmonton was attractive to First Nations and European people alike, what led them to occupy specific sites such as the Rossdale Flats, why these sites were conducive to certain kinds of activities and not others, and how both human and natural disturbances have modified the landscape.

In order to develop a fuller understanding of the timing, extent, and relative success of these activities, it is necessary to consider an area's regional history (Chapter 4). Regional history sheds a great deal of light on many aspects of Edmonton's past, including why it was settled when it was, why both the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) and the North West Company (NWC) chose to build their posts on the north bank of the North Saskatchewan River, why Edmonton flourished as a regional centre from the early 1820s to the 1850s, and why it subsequently declined in importance for most of the next half-century. For those studying a community's past, an understanding of regional history can also provide many valuable insights into potential historical sources, particularly records that were generated by regional representatives of large government agencies and companies.

The two chapters are organized on a chronological basis, beginning with a discussion of Edmonton's geology. After a discussion in this chapter of natural history topics, such as the formation of the North Saskatchewan River Valley and the creation of terraces and flood plains – including the one on which Rossdale is located – the next chapter considers the region's early human developments.

Both the natural and regional history chapters are linked by a common theme – the centrality and importance of the North Saskatchewan River. This serves to highlight the interconnections between culture and nature. In the case of Rossdale, these interconnections have resulted in a history that has been influenced by a combination of human and natural factors, and produced a landscape that is neither wholly natural nor cultural. Because the two chapters attempt to synthesize a wide range of secondary sources, they are presented in narrative form rather than as a series of discrete literature reviews. Readers are asked to consult the footnotes for references to sources and historiographical commentary.

### ***3.2 Geological History of Rossdale and the North Saskatchewan River Valley***

The geological history of the Edmonton area is relatively simple in comparison to that of the Rocky Mountains or regions further west. Basically the Great Plains region rests on a nearly-level-lying bed of Canadian Shield that was laid down between 2.5 and 3.5 billion years ago.<sup>1</sup> Over time, this 'Precambrian basement'

has been covered by layers of sedimentary rocks, such as limestone, shale, and sandstone, until today it lies beneath approximately 2 km of younger strata in the Edmonton area.<sup>2</sup> These younger layers are equally level-lying (they gently dip toward the west at a barely perceptible slope), with the youngest or uppermost of them, the Edmonton Formation, outcropping ‘in many localities along the valley of the North Saskatchewan River and its tributaries, in particular along Whitemud, Blackmud, and Mill Creeks.’<sup>3</sup> Deposited during Cretaceous Period (136 to 65 million years ago), when the Edmonton area was a swampy coastal plain covered by ‘everglade-type swamps,’ the Edmonton Formation is home to the coal seams that provided fuel for the city until well into the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Rossdale had a number of coal mines; these are cited in Chapter 6.

By the end of the Cretaceous Period the Rocky Mountains were forming and Edmonton’s basic bedrock structure was in place. Since then, forces of erosion and deposition have been in a rough balance and ‘little change in overall appearance has taken place.’<sup>5</sup> From the perspective of the Edmonton area’s first inhabitants, however, the Tertiary Period (65 to 1.6 million years ago) and the first part of the Quaternary Period (1.6 million years ago to the present) were crucial times. This is when preglacial rivers flowing in a northeasterly direction from the Rocky Mountains deposited quartzite, chert, and other materials throughout the region in alluvial formations commonly known as ‘Saskatchewan Sands and Gravels.’<sup>6</sup> On the plains these preglacial sands and gravels are usually buried beneath layers of soil and glacial till, but where they are exposed by running water, such as in the valleys of the North Saskatchewan River and Whitemud and Blackmud Creeks, they provided prehistoric people with a convenient supply of material suitable for making stone tools. Quartzite is the dominant material in the Saskatchewan Sands and Gravels<sup>7</sup> and it is probably no coincidence that in ‘the Edmonton region, approximately 71% of all stone tools found are made from quartzite.’<sup>8</sup>

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*Both the natural  
and regional history  
chapters are tied  
together by a common  
theme – the centrality  
and importance of the  
North Saskatchewan  
River.*

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SECTION 3.2  
GEOLOGICAL HISTORY

<sup>1</sup> Roger D. Morton, ‘Geology,’ in *Edmonton Beneath Our Feet: A Guide to the Geology of the Edmonton Region*, ed. John D. Godfrey (Edmonton: Edmonton Geological Society, 1993), p. 6.

<sup>2</sup> Morton, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> C. P. Kathol and R. A. McPherson, *Urban Geology of Edmonton*, Alberta Research Council, Bulletin 32, 1975, 17. The North Saskatchewan River flows from west to east, even though the bedrock slopes to the west, because 150 km west of Edmonton the bedrock is thrust upwards and deformed by the Rocky Mountains. See Morton, p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Morton, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Green and Arleigh H. Laycock, ‘Mountains and Plains,’ in *Alberta: A Natural History*, ed. W. G. Hardy (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1967), p. 69.

<sup>6</sup> Kathol and McPherson, p. 31.

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> H. W. Pyszczyk, *Archaeology Guide and Tour of Greater Edmonton Area* (Edmonton: The Provincial Museum of Alberta, 1996), p. 9-10.

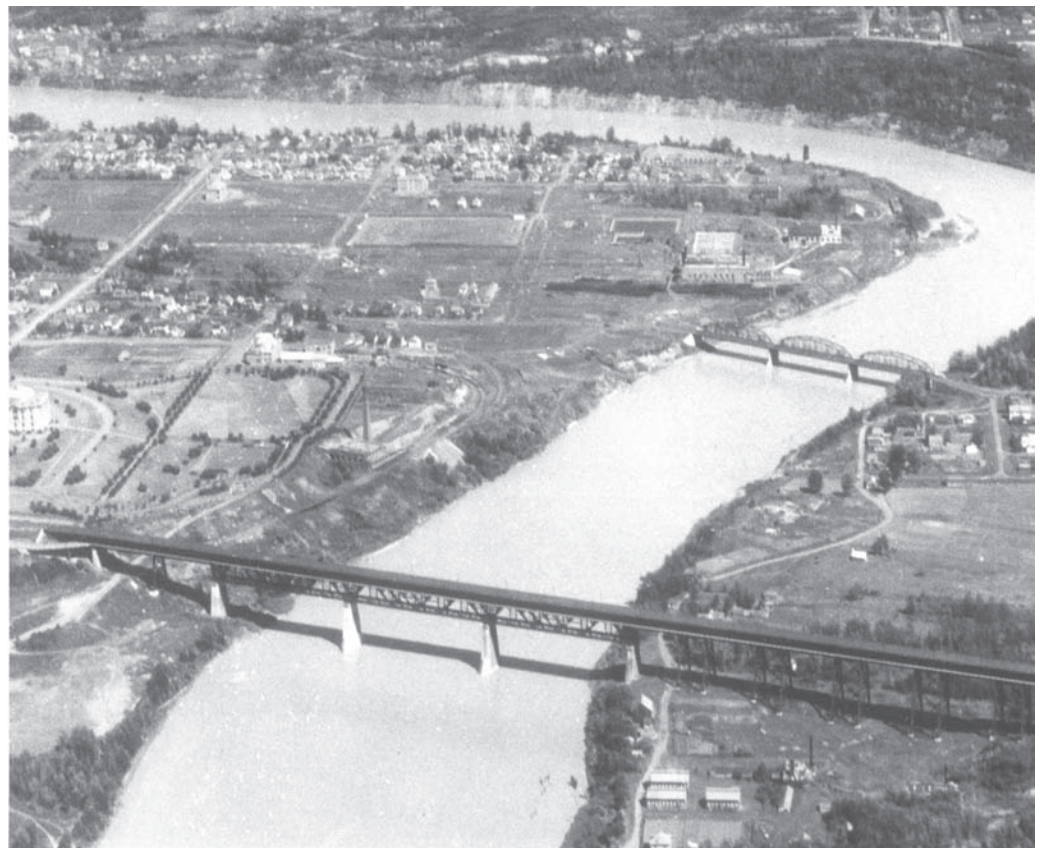
## Wisconsinan Ice Age

Even though there have been four major glacial advances, or ice ages, over the last million years or so, Alberta does not appear to have been covered by ice until the last advance, the Wisconsinan, which began about 21,000 years ago.<sup>9</sup> During the Wisconsinan ice age Edmonton was covered by a layer of ice up to 1.5 km thick. Slowly flowing from the north and northeast, this ice scoured the plains down to bedrock in places and covered other areas with a thick blanket of unstratified glacial till. In other places, especially pre-glacial stream and river valleys, the glaciers rode over the pre-glacial sediments. These were re-exposed by the North Saskatchewan River when it carved out its valley following the end of the Wisconsinan glacial advance.

Fig 3-1

*The Rosedale Flats were formed by, and continue to be defined by, the North Saskatchewan River. Photo June 1925.*

*National Air Photo Library  
CA 124-84*



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<sup>9</sup> Morton, p. 16-17.



When the ice sheet began to melt and recede past Edmonton approximately 12,000 years ago, it was followed by a short-lived glacial lake, Glacial Lake Edmonton, that left its own legacy in the form of a blanket of lake sediment that can easily be seen today as ‘the bedded, yellowish-beige, silty clay deposits at, or near, the top of the banks of the North Saskatchewan River.’<sup>10</sup>

During the Wisconsin glacial advance, animals were absent from most of Alberta. It was not until roughly 11,600 years ago that they returned to the Edmonton area.<sup>11</sup> Humans made their first appearance in the region several hundred years later<sup>12</sup> and they would have been in place to witness much of the last major event that shaped Edmonton’s modern geological landscape: the formation of the North Saskatchewan River valley. Geologists believe that the present valley of the North Saskatchewan River began to form less than 12,000 years ago and that most of the river’s down-cutting took place over the next 3–4,000 years.<sup>13</sup> By 8,000 years before the present (BP) the North Saskatchewan River had degraded its bed down to about the current level, which is approximately 60 m below the surrounding plain. This down-cutting did not occur in a smooth or uniform manner, but rather, in sudden spurts of erosion as the land rebounded from the weight of the receding ice sheet ‘in a series of relaxative jerks’ called ‘glacio-isostasy.’<sup>14</sup> Between each glacio-isostatic jerk and resulting period of rapid down-cutting, the river deposited alluvial material in the form of a level flood plain – flood plains that can be seen today as the flat terraces that line the sides of the North Saskatchewan River valley. Altogether there are four terrace levels along the North Saskatchewan River in the vicinity of Edmonton.<sup>15</sup> The highest or oldest terrace lies about 55 m<sup>16</sup> above the current river bed and over time it has played host to such notable structures as Fort Edmonton V (the last Hudson’s Bay Company post) and the lower grounds of the provincial Legislature. Rossdale is located on the lowest of the four terraces, which also constitutes the modern flood plain. Using carbon 14 analysis of bone and wood fragments located in sediment layers, geomorphologists have dated the modern flood plain back to at least 8,000 years BP; the oldest flood plain or terrace

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*Because of its central location and long history of agricultural, industrial, and residential occupation, the Rossdale Flats have very little undisturbed soil left.*

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SECTION 3.2  
GEOLOGICAL HISTORY

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<sup>10</sup> James A. Burns, ‘Ice-Age Fossils,’ in *Edmonton Beneath Our Feet*, p. 19.

<sup>11</sup> Burns, p. 19.

<sup>12</sup> Provincial archaeologist Heinz Pyszczuk states that there is ‘firm evidence of human occupation in Alberta’ by 11,000 years ago (Pyszczuk, *Archaeology Guide*, 5).

<sup>13</sup> John Shaw, ‘Geomorphology,’ in *Edmonton Beneath Our Feet*, p. 31.

<sup>14</sup> Morton, pp. 18-19.

<sup>15</sup> Bruce Rains and James Welch, ‘Out-of-phase Holocene Terraces in Part of the North Saskatchewan Rivers Basin, Alberta,’ *Canadian Journal of Earth Science* 25 (1988), pp. 455-456. Rains and Welch mention that at least ten studies discuss terraces in the Edmonton area and that some authors believe that there are as many as five terrace levels while others argue that there are only three. Most, however, believe that there are four including the current flood plain along the North Saskatchewan River through Edmonton.

<sup>16</sup> Shaw, p. 31. Rains and Welch present radiocarbon data suggesting that the lowest terrace may have begun forming as long ago as 10,000 BP. Regardless of the exact dating, there can be little doubt that the current flood plain has been in existence for ‘a large portion of Holocene time’ (Rains and Welch, p. 458, and p. 461).

was formed approximately 11,000 years BP.<sup>17</sup> Thus it appears that the Rosssdale Flats have been around for a long time, in human if not geological terms.

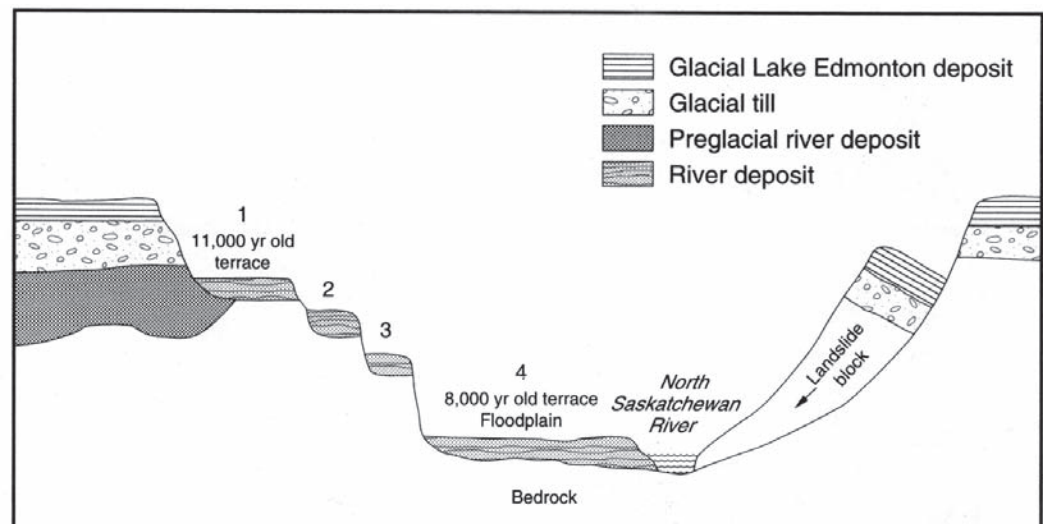
### 3.3 Stratigraphy, Soils, and Flooding

The geological history of Rosssdale and the North Saskatchewan River valley is reflected in the area's stratigraphy and soils. Most of the surficial deposits (sediments above bedrock) are composed of postglacial alluvium and soils are poorly developed because of frequent disturbances, most notably flooding and slumping. On the modern flood plain in areas such as Rosssdale, the Cretaceous bedrock is usually buried beneath about 10 m of river alluvium (silts, sands, and gravels).<sup>18</sup> Bedrock, with its thin seams of coal, is exposed in river cliffs, which occur on the outside of river bends, and it is along the base of these cliffs where most of Edmonton's early coal mines were located.<sup>19</sup> Deposits of preglacial sands and gravel, as well as unsorted glacial till and Glacial Lake Edmonton silts, can also be found in the valley, usually between the level of the surrounding plain and that of the highest terrace.<sup>20</sup> Below the level of the highest terrace, however,

Fig 3-2

A section of the river valley.

From the *Archaeology Guide and Tour of Greater Edmonton Area*, by Heinz Pyszczyk. Provincial Museum of Alberta and Strathcona Archaeology Society



<sup>17</sup> Shaw, p. 31.

<sup>18</sup> Kathol and McPherson, p. 30.

<sup>19</sup> John D. Campbell, 'Black Diamonds,' in *Edmonton Beneath Our Feet*, p. 59.

<sup>20</sup> Shaw, p. 31.

the river has cut into bedrock. Deposits of preglacial and glacial material are not normally encountered unless the valley bisects an ancient river or stream channel (it does so several kilometers downstream of Rosedale near Clover Bar<sup>21</sup>) or erosion has brought down material from near the top of the valley through landslides and slumping.

On the main meander cores (the land on the ‘inside’ of a bend in the river) such as Rosedale, where all or some of the four terraces have been preserved, each of the terrace levels has a slightly different stratigraphy. The short-lived flood plains now represented by the upper terraces, for example, have fewer alternating layers of river alluvium and buried soils (paleosols) than does the lowest terrace, which has served as a flood plain for over 8,000 years.<sup>22</sup> Soil scientists have identified some of these paleosols as orthic black chernozems,<sup>23</sup> which is not surprising given the fact that Edmonton lies just within the northwestern margin of the Black Chernozemic Soil Zone that stretches south through Alberta to just north of Medicine Hat.<sup>24</sup> What is surprising, however, is that black chernozems usually occur ‘in a cool subhumid climate under a vegetation of tall and mid-grass prairie,’<sup>25</sup> whereas the Edmonton region today is considered to be on the northern fringe of a semi-forested zone, the Aspen Parkland Ecoregion or Ecotone.<sup>26</sup> Paleoecologists now believe that a partial answer to this mystery may lie in climate change since the end of the Wisconsinan glaciation. Apparently, between 9,000 and 6,000 years BP, Alberta was significantly warmer and drier than it is today and this allowed grasslands to spread far north of their current limit.<sup>27</sup> The Edmonton area, in other words, was probably covered by rich grasslands for a significant portion of its postglacial history.

In contrast to the ancient, buried terrace soils that have been identified as chernozems, modern terrace soils are usually classified as either Orthic or Humic Regosols.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Kathol and McPherson, p. 21.

<sup>22</sup> For discussions and profiles of terrace stratigraphy, see Rains and Welch, 456-458 and John A. Westgate, ‘The Quaternary Geology of the Edmonton Area, Alberta,’ in S. Pawluk ed. *Pedology and Quaternary Research*, (Edmonton: University of Edmonton Press, 1969), pp. 146-50.

<sup>23</sup> Westgate, pp. 148-49.

<sup>24</sup> James A. Robertson, ‘The Soils of the Interior Plains of Western Canada,’ *Prairie Forum*, 9, no. 2 (1984): p. 222.

<sup>25</sup> Nyle C. Brady, *The Nature and Property of Soils*, 8<sup>th</sup> Ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1974), p. 598.

<sup>26</sup> Charles D. Bird and Ralph D. Bird, ‘The Aspen Parkland,’ in *Alberta: A Natural History*, ed. W. G. Hardy (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1967), p. 137.

<sup>27</sup> Alwynne B. Beaudoin, ‘What They Saw: The Climatic and Environmental Context for Euro-Canadian Settlement in Alberta,’ *Prairie Forum* 21, no. 1 (1999): pp. 16-20.

<sup>28</sup> Reid Crowther and Partners Ltd. in association with UMA Engineering Ltd., ‘The Rosedale Water Intake Relocation Project: Environmental Impact Assessment, Main Report,’ prepared for the City of Edmonton Public Works, 1993, section 3, p. 6 (3-6).

Regosols are poorly developed soils that lack ‘definite genetic horizons’ (distinct layers produced by soil-forming processes) and which typically develop ‘from or on deep, unconsolidated, soft mineral deposits such as sands, loess, or glacial drift.’<sup>29</sup> In the case of terraces along the North Saskatchewan River, these unconsolidated mineral deposits consist of fine- to-medium-textured river alluvium. Silt, sand, and gravel interspersed with the odd paleosol and topped by a thin layer of topsoil may not sound like an attractive soil to farm on, particularly in comparison to the deep, highly fertile black chernozems found on the plain, but the regosolic soils of the river flats were very popular with early settlers because they are light and easy to cultivate with limited implements, quick to warm up in the spring, and well drained.<sup>30</sup> Some of these features made the river flats equally attractive to recreational developments such as parks, race tracks, playing fields, and golf courses and today ‘significant portions of the river flats have been disturbed.’<sup>31</sup> Because of its central location and long history of agricultural, industrial, and residential occupation, the Rossdale Flats in particular must have very little undisturbed soil left.<sup>32</sup>

## Flooding in Rossdale

Periodic flooding and deposition of new sediments have clearly had a major effect on soil formation on river flats along the North Saskatchewan. A record of these floods is preserved in the fine-grained sediments of the flood plains themselves. There can be little doubt that flats such as Rossdale have experienced numerous flood events since the river began widening its valley some 8–10,000 years ago, following an initial period of rapid incision.<sup>33</sup>

Historical records of flooding along the North Saskatchewan reinforce the geological evidence. Flooding is known to have occurred in the Edmonton area on a number of occasions in the nineteenth century, most notably in 1825 and 1899. The 1825 flood made the plain about the fort ‘a Complete Sheet of water.’ It led to the Hudson’s Bay Company’s decision to move its fort in 1830 from its original location on Rossdale Flats (Edmonton House IV) to the higher terrace

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<sup>29</sup> Brady, p. 615.

<sup>30</sup> Elaine Bedford, ‘A Historical Geography of Settlement in the North Saskatchewan River Valley, Edmonton,’ M.A. thesis (history), University of Alberta, 1976, p. 31.

<sup>31</sup> Reid Crowther and Partners et. al., pp. 3-6 to 3-7.

<sup>32</sup> For some sample stratigraphic profiles showing what is probably a fairly typical level of disturbance on the Rossdale Flats, see Lifeways of Canada Limited, ‘Rossdale Unit 11 Historical Resources Impact Assessment 2000 Field Studies: Interim Final Report,’ prepared for EPCOR Generation, September, 2000, pp. 112, 113, 115, 117-19, and 123-24.

<sup>33</sup> Shaw, pp. 31-32.



Fig 3-3.

Walter's Mill and the south side of the river during the flood of 1915.

Glenbow Archives NC-6-1439

currently occupied by the lower grounds of the provincial legislature building (Fort Edmonton V).<sup>34</sup> The 1899 flood is far better documented, thanks largely to extensive coverage by the *Edmonton Bulletin*. This flood is known to have caused considerable damage on flats along the North Saskatchewan, including Rossdale, and it even forced engineers to raise the piers of the nearly-completed Low Level Bridge by eight feet in an effort to 'cope' with future floods.<sup>35</sup> 1900 was also a flood year, and although it predated the establishment of a river-level measuring

### SECTION 3.3 STRATIGRAPHY, SOILS, AND FLOODING

<sup>34</sup> Bedford p. 45. A similar argument regarding the 1830 flood (Pyszczuk dates the flood as 1829) and the HBC's decision to relocate Fort Edmonton to higher ground has been made by numerous other authors including: James G. MacGregor, *A History of Alberta* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1972), p. 59; Frank G. Roe, 'Edmonton a Century Ago,' *Alberta Historical Review* 12, no. 1 (1964): 11; and Pyszczuk, *Archaeology Guide*, p. 13. Oddly enough, none of these authors provide a period source for this event. When a group of hydrological engineers conducted a study on the history of floods in the North Saskatchewan Basin in the early 1980s, the earliest reference that they could find to a 'legendary' 1830 flood having caused the relocation of Fort Edmonton was in an 1899 article in the *Edmonton Bulletin*. They did try to consult the Hudson Bay Company Archive's Edmonton House journals for this period, but were disappointed to discover that the 'journals for a three year period around 1829 to 1832 are missing' (A. M. Mustapha, S. Figliuzzi, H. Rickert, and G. Coles, *History of Floods in the North Saskatchewan River Basin* [Edmonton: Alberta Environment, 1981], p. 21).

<sup>35</sup> G. W. Samide and S. Lowe, *Flood Plain Study of the North Saskatchewan River through Edmonton* (Edmonton: Alberta Environment, 1974), p. 6. For more on the 1899 flood, see Bedford, pp. 94-95, and Mustapha et. al., pp. 19-21.

gauge in Edmonton in 1911, it is thought to have been a ‘comparable’ flow to the flood of 1899.<sup>36</sup> Another flood is thought to have occurred in 1862.<sup>37</sup>

The largest and most destructive inundation ever recorded on the North Saskatchewan River through Edmonton since regular flow measurements began was that of June 1915.<sup>38</sup> Like the two floods at the turn of the century and subsequent floods such as that of 1952, the 1915 over-bank event appears to have been caused by ‘heavy rainfall in the basin area’ rather than by snow melt.<sup>39,40</sup> More specifically, it was caused by heavy rainfall in the foothills and Rocky Mountains, from which the North Saskatchewan River draws most of its water. The 1915 event, which left much of Rossdale and neighbouring flood plains awash, is thought to approximate a ‘one-hundred year flood,’ or a flood that has ‘a one-in-a-hundred chance of occurring each year.’<sup>41</sup>

### *3.4 Flora and Fauna of the Rossdale Area*

As mentioned above, Edmonton is generally considered to lie near the northern limit of the Aspen Parkland Ecotone.<sup>42</sup> An ‘ecotone’ is a biological term for a transitional zone which, in the case of the aspen parklands, represents a transition between prairie grassland zones to the south and mixed wood and boreal forests to the north. Stretching in a broad arc from the foothills of the Rockies through central Alberta and into southern Manitoba, the aspen parklands barely extend into the United States and, as such, they can be considered a unique ‘phenomenon

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<sup>36</sup> David Cruden and Stanley Thomson, ‘Engineering Geology,’ in *Edmonton Beneath Our Feet*, p. 90. <sup>37</sup> Bedford, p. 50; Beatrice A. Ockley, ‘A History of Early Edmonton,’ M.A. Thesis (History), University of Alberta, 1932, p. 79. Bedford does not cite a specific reference for information on this flood; Ockley draws her information from a published account of one overlander party’s trip to British Columbia (Margaret McNaughton, *Overland to the Cariboo*, Toronto, 1896).

<sup>38</sup> Samide and Lowe, 6.

<sup>39</sup> For a more detailed, period account of the 1915 flood, see Mustapha et. al., pp. 21-24.

<sup>40</sup> Samide and Lowe, p. 13. While spring-early summer rainfall appears to be the main cause of floods on the North Saskatchewan, the 1830 inundation that resulted in the relocation of Fort Edmonton is said to have been caused by an ice jam (Mustapha et. al., 21).

<sup>41</sup> Cruden and Thomson, p. 90. The Bighorn hydroelectric dam upriver from Edmonton may have a slight effect on flood control. See G.W. Samide and S. Lowe, *Flood Plain Study of the North Saskatchewan River through Edmonton* (Edmonton: Alberta Environment, 1974), pp. 14-19.

<sup>42</sup> A few authorities believe that Edmonton properly belongs in the Mixedwood Forest Zone which lies between the aspen parklands to the south and the boreal or Subarctic Forest Zone to the north. Mixedwood forests are generally distinguished from aspen parklands by ‘the appearance of white spruce, jack pine, black spruce, and tamarack’ (J. Stan Rowe and Robert T. Coupland, ‘Vegetation of the Canadian Plains,’ *Prairie Forum* 9, no. 2 (1984), pp. 237-239). It is important to remember, however, that zone boundaries are far from distinct and hence, largely arbitrary, that parklands and mixedwood forest share many of the same species, and that trees such as white spruce are common on east or north facing valley slopes throughout the parklands and well into the true prairie.

<sup>43</sup> Bird and Bird, p. 135.

of Canada's prairie provinces.<sup>43</sup> They also hold a unique position in Canadian history as the lands deemed most suitable for homesteading during the initial settlement of the Prairies in the late 1800s.

The historical significance of the aspen parklands is further enhanced by their traditional importance to First Nations peoples. Both woodland and plains tribes regularly moved to the parklands during the winter, the latter in search of shelter and fuel and both in search of buffalo.<sup>44</sup> Buffalo congregated in the parklands during the winter to escape from the biting prairie winds and, as a recent study suggests, to capitalize on the superior winter forage available on the fescue grasslands that share the ecotone with aspen groves and woodland.<sup>45</sup> Rough fescue, the dominant grass in the parkland belt, is very productive, it cures well on the stalk, and it remains both palatable and nutritious throughout the winter, unlike the dominant grass species on the open prairie.<sup>46</sup>

The presence of both grassland and woodland within the parkland belt reveals that it is not a single, uniform plant community. Rather, it is divided into four main plant communities that reflect different soil moisture regimes.<sup>47</sup> Drier areas typically support 'fescue or bunchgrass prairie,' which, as mentioned above, is dominated by rough fescue but also includes a number of other perennial bunchgrasses, sedges, and a wide range of shrubs, forbs, and flowers, most of which occur elsewhere in the province.<sup>48</sup> Slightly wetter, less well-drained sites tend to be dominated by groves of trembling aspen. Spreading asexually through root-suckering, aspens can form dense groves with up to four trees per square meter.<sup>49</sup> As these groves age, however, stand density declines and other species move in to share the woodlands with the aspen. Typical associates with aspen in the parkland woodlands include small trees such as chokecherry, pincherry, and beaked hazelnut; shrubs such as saskatoon, prickly rose, and wolf willow; and a wide variety of understory grasses, broadleaf plants, and mosses.<sup>50</sup> The final two plant communities within the aspen parkland are associated with riparian ecosystems (stream and river valleys) and wetlands (lake shores, marshes, and wet meadows). The former community is the one found in the valley of the North

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<sup>44</sup> The importance of the parkland belt to the traditional seasonal cycle of peoples such as the Cree and Assiniboine was first brought to the widespread attention of scholars by historical geographer Arthur Ray in his book, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660 - 1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), pp. 27-50.

<sup>45</sup> Theodore Binnema, 'The Common and Contested Ground: A History of the Northwestern Plains from A. D. 200 to 1806,' Ph.D. Thesis (History), University of Alberta, 1998, p. 50.

<sup>46</sup> Binnema, pp. 56-57.

<sup>47</sup> Bird and Bird, p. 139.

<sup>48</sup> Bird and Bird, pp. 139-40.

<sup>49</sup> Bird and Bird, p. 142.

<sup>50</sup> Rowe and Coupland, p. 239.

Saskatchewan River through Edmonton. Before describing the valley's vegetation in detail, however, it is instructive to note that undisturbed parkland today appears to have a higher tree density and lower incidence of fescue prairie than it did in the past on account of the suppression of prairie fires and the extirpation of the buffalo and other large ungulates, both of which traditionally served to check the growth of aspens and other woodland associates.<sup>51</sup>

River and stream valleys, such as that of the North Saskatchewan, have been described as 'invading fingers of woodland' reaching 'far into the parkland.'<sup>52</sup> This is a good way to describe the North Saskatchewan River valley through Edmonton, particularly the sides of the valley facing north or east.<sup>53</sup> An early-1980s vegetation survey of the valley (part of the *North Saskatchewan River Valley and Ravine System Biophysical Study* conducted by EPEC Consulting Western Ltd., 1981) shows that while many of the terraces and flats have become home to lawns, golf courses, and other types of 'manicured' vegetation, remnants of the original plant community can still be found.<sup>54</sup> Portions of both north- and south-facing flats, for example, continue to be covered by balsam poplar,<sup>55</sup> a moisture-loving tree species that tends to dominate stream margins in the northern parkland.<sup>56</sup> The wood of the balsam poplar is too weak and soft to be of much use for lumber,<sup>57</sup> but it and the closely related black cottonwood and narrow-leaved cottonwood, which are more prevalent in valleys further south in Alberta, provided a vital source of firewood for First Nations people, fur traders, and early settlers.

In the Edmonton area, balsam poplar rarely grows in pure stands. Rather, it is normally associated with other trees and shrubs, such as a various species of willow, river alder, red-osier dogwood, and white spruce.<sup>58</sup> White spruce with its 'resilient, straight-grained' wood has long been one of the most important lumber and pulpwood species in Canada.<sup>59</sup> Today it is still fairly common in the North

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*Balsam poplar provided a vital source of firewood for First Nations people, fur traders, and early settlers.*

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<sup>51</sup> Rowe and Coupland, p. 233; Beaudoin, p. 36; Bird and Bird, p. 142.

<sup>52</sup> Bird and Bird, p. 145.

<sup>53</sup> Vegetation in the North Saskatchewan River Valley is strongly effected by microclimates. North- and east-facing slopes, for example, tend to have moister soils and lower temperatures than the surrounding plain and, as a result, they can support forest species that are more typically found in regions further north. Conversely, south- and west-facing slopes are often covered by parkland prairie with a scattering of shrubs and aspen because they are warmer and drier than the surrounding plain. See Bedford, p. 32, for more on the effect of microclimates on vegetation in the North Saskatchewan Valley through Edmonton.

<sup>54</sup> Reid Crowther and Partners et al., pp. 3-9 to 3-10 and figure 3.4.

<sup>55</sup> Crowther and Partners, figure 3.4.

<sup>56</sup> Bird and Bird, p. 146.

<sup>57</sup> R. C. Hosie, *Native Trees of Canada*, 8<sup>th</sup> Ed. (Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1979), p. 124.

<sup>58</sup> Bird and Bird.

<sup>59</sup> Hosie, p. 64.



Saskatchewan River valley, particularly on steep north-facing slopes such as below the University of Alberta, on the south side of the valley just opposite Rossdale at Lavigne, and in deep, narrow tributary valleys, such as the Groat, Ramsay, MacKinnon, and McKenzie Ravines, which lie a couple of miles upstream of Rossdale.<sup>60</sup> Trembling aspen and white birch are the other dominant tree species in the valley today. The former tends to occupy drier, warmer sites, such as parts of Walterdale and the west-facing slope above Fort Edmonton Park, while the latter favours cooler, moister locations, most notably the east-facing river flat at Buena Vista Park.<sup>61</sup> Like white spruce, white birch has a long history of use in Canada. Its wood is hard and strong and suitable for furniture-making, it burns longer and with far more heat than softer species such as aspen and balsam poplar and, as its other common names – paper or canoe birch<sup>62</sup> – suggest, it provided the outer sheathing for the famous birchbark canoe.

The various species of trees that dominate different sites along the North Saskatchewan River are associated with a large number of shrubs, grasses, and understory plants, most of which also occur in the regular parkland. On a per area basis, however, there is a greater diversity of plants within the valley because of a greater diversity of habitats. The Rossdale Flats were probably covered by balsam poplar in conjunction with other tree and shrub species, while the valley sides would most likely have been vegetated by grasses and shrubs.

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*Forty-nine species of mammals are known or thought to be native to the Edmonton area*

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### *Wildlife*

Historically, this diversity of plants would have been reflected in the animal population of the valley. Forty-nine species of mammals are known or thought to be native to the Edmonton area<sup>63</sup> and all or most of them could have been found in the river valley before habitats were destroyed and entry routes blocked by extensive urban development. Large ungulates, such as moose, deer, elk, and probably buffalo, would have sheltered in the valley during the winter and early spring, and even today the North Saskatchewan River valley in close proximity to Edmonton is considered ‘provincially significant winter habitat for white-tailed and mule deer.’<sup>64</sup> The presence of ungulates would have attracted predators such as bears, wolves, coyotes, and lynx. All four are known to have frequented river valleys in the parkland belt.<sup>65</sup> Predators such as these were also attracted by the presence of beaver, muskrats, and waterfowl, none of which would have been

SECTION 3.4  
FLORA AND FAUNA

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<sup>60</sup> Bedford, p. 33; Reid Crowther and Partners et al., fig. 3.4.

<sup>61</sup> Reid Crowther and Partners et. al., fig. 3.4.

<sup>62</sup> Hosie, p. 160.

<sup>63</sup> Hugh C. Smith, *Mammals of the Edmonton Area*, Provincial Museum of Alberta, Natural History Occasional Paper No. 2, 1979, p. iii.

<sup>64</sup> Reid Crowther and Partners et al., pp. 3-25.

<sup>65</sup> Bird and Bird, p. 146.

common on the surrounding plain. Finally, the valley would have been attractive to more specialized predators, such as river otters and mink, because of the presence of fish. Recent fisheries investigations on the North Saskatchewan River near Edmonton have revealed the presence of 21 species, 15 of which are considered 'common.'<sup>66</sup> These include popular sportfish such as goldeye, mountain whitefish, walleye, and northern pike and coarsefish such as longnose and white suckers. The environment supported a rich diversity of wildlife.

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<sup>66</sup> Reid Crowther and Partners et al., pp. 4-23 to 4-24. These fisheries investigations were carried out after 1978.

# REGIONAL HISTORY

# 4

## Overview

This chapter is linked to the previous one by a common theme: the centrality and importance to Rossdale of the North Saskatchewan River. The chapter opens with a brief discussion of human activities in the North Saskatchewan River valley before the arrival of Europeans. The river provided a rough dividing line between the tribal territories of the Cree and Blackfoot and their allies at the time of contact (c. 1750). The text then discusses the situation surrounding the founding of Fort Edmonton, its rise to prominence as a regional centre, and its late-nineteenth-century decline with the waning of the fur trade, the disappearance of the buffalo, and the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway through Calgary. The chapter highlights the regional significance of Rossdale, which acted as both the site and the 'front door' to Fort Edmonton, as an important crossroads for several different First Nations cultures, and as a staging and transshipment point conveniently located between the true prairie to the south and various forested zones to the north.

4.1
PREHISTORY: A BRIEF OVERVIEW TO 1750
4.2
REGIONAL HISTORY: 1750-1900
4.3
CONCLUSION

## 4.1 Prehistory: A Brief Overview to 1750

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*The North Saskatchewan River valley offered shelter, fuel, game, diverse plant resources, and fish, and materials for making tools.*

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Natural and societal history may be two different subjects, but they come together in prehistory, which focuses on human use of, and interaction with, natural resources. Indeed, as the new discipline of environmental history reveals, they were inextricably linked until little more than two centuries ago; they have remained linked since, but in more subtle ways. Humans have been an integral part of the natural landscape for more than 10,000 years. This section introduces the early peoples who made Edmonton their home – whether as a stop in the seasonal rounds or in a more permanent manner. It looks briefly at the prehistoric period, then treats in greater detail the period after 1750, for which a written record remains.

Early peoples would have been attracted to the North Saskatchewan River valley for much the same reasons as animals: it offered shelter, fuel, and game in the winter; diverse plant resources in the spring, summer, and fall; and water and fish throughout most of the year. The valley's geological history further enhanced its attractiveness by providing flat, well-drained sites for camping and a ready supply of quartzite for making stone tools. There are some indications that the stretch of valley through Edmonton was particularly popular with the region's first inhabitants, although this may just reflect a higher incidence of sampling in

Fig 4-1

*This photograph, likely carefully staged, was taken on the banks of the North Saskatchewan River.*

National Archives of Canada  
C6295



the Greater Edmonton area than elsewhere along the North Saskatchewan.<sup>1</sup> When one looks at the size and incidence of archaeological sites within the Edmonton area, however, there can be little doubt that early peoples preferred living ‘near the North Saskatchewan River, or along the edges of major creeks (e.g., Whitemud and Blackmud Creeks) than in those areas away from these waterways.’<sup>2</sup> This pattern of land use appears to have persisted for thousands of years,<sup>3</sup> which forces one to question the traditional, Eurocentric portrayal of places like Edmonton as a ‘wilderness’ prior to European settlement.

The specific ethnic identities of the nomadic prehistoric peoples who made the Edmonton area a seasonal stop will probably always remain shrouded in mystery, for the simple reason that different groups (e.g., early historic period plains tribes such as the Blackfoot, Assiniboine, and Plains Cree) left very similar archaeological remains. At present, archaeologists are inclined to believe that the Edmonton region lay within Blackfoot territory during the Late Prehistoric Period (circa 1700).<sup>4</sup> By the 1750s, however, when Europeans such as Anthony Henday of the Hudson’s Bay Company first began visiting the region, Cree and Assiniboine bands had begun moving into the area, although they still seem to have recognized it as Blackfoot territory. Many anthropologists and historians have interpreted historical evidence such as this to mean that the Cree and Assiniboine were aggressively expanding their territory westward during the eighteenth century because of their greater access to European goods in their traditional homelands east of the Prairies.<sup>5</sup> Others have pointed out that the historical record is very vague regarding tribal territories and that ‘the earliest first-hand account [Henday, 1754–55] shows scattered Cree groups along the Saskatchewan as far as the Edmonton area with no hint that this was a recent occupation.’<sup>6</sup>

While the precontact history of tribal distributions in the Edmonton region remains hotly contested, little debate surrounds the traditional observation that

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<sup>1</sup> Heinz W. Pyszczuk, Ross W. Wein, and Elizabeth Noble, ‘Aboriginal Land Use of the Greater Edmonton Area,’ unpublished paper, 30 January 2002, 3-4, used with the authors’ permission. Pyszczuk is an archaeologist with the Heritage Resource Management Branch, Alberta Community Development; Wein and Noble are faculty at the University of Alberta. The Cree name for Edmonton was Amiskwachie, meaning Beaver Hills House. The Blackfoot name was Makowis, meaning Big House. Communicated in correspondence from Heinz Pyszczuk to Duncan Fraser, 20 January 2004. See also Eric J. Holmgren and Patricia M. Holmgren, *Over 2000 Place Names of Alberta (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1976) p. 87.*

<sup>2</sup> Pyszczuk, et al., p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Pyszczuk, et al., p. 6.

<sup>4</sup> Pyszczuk, et al., p. 7; Martin Magne, *Archaeology in Alberta*, 1986, Archaeological Survey of Alberta, Occasional Paper No. 31, 1987, pp. 224-25.

<sup>5</sup> For example, see Arthur Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660 - 1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), pp. 27-50.; John S. Milloy, *The Plains Cree: Trade, Diplomacy and War, 1790-1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988), pp. 6-20; and David G. Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree: An Ethnographic, Historical, and Comparative Study* (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1979), pp. 45-46.

<sup>6</sup> Dale R. Russell, *Eighteenth-Century Western Cree and their Neighbours*, Canadian Museum of Civilization, Archaeological Survey of Canada, Mercury Series Paper 143, 1991, p. 152.

when confronted with conflicting archaeological and historical evidence, perhaps the best thing to do is to ignore the history of pre-contact tribal distributions and fall back on the observation that when the first Edmonton House was founded near present-day Fort Saskatchewan in 1795, the Edmonton area was on ‘the western fringe of Cree lands.’<sup>7</sup> The Edmonton region, in other words, lay in an ethnic or cultural transitional zone between the Cree and Blackfoot (the Blackfoot proper, Blood, and Peigan) and their respective allies. It was also a transitional zone between the woodland cultures to the north and the plains tribes to the south, much in the same way that the Aspen Parkland Ecotone is considered to be a transitional zone between the open grasslands and the forest. Drawing the analogy even further, ecological zones tend to lack sharp, well-defined boundaries just as tribal territories are well known to have ‘overlapped with those of neighbouring groups.’<sup>8</sup> In the case of the Cree and the Blackfoot tribes, the area between the North Saskatchewan and Battle Rivers represented just such an area of overlap and it continued to be utilized by both groups until at least the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>9</sup>

The North Saskatchewan River itself probably held little interest for the Blackfoot, as they are well known to have been plains dwellers with little knowledge of river travel and a strong prejudice against eating fish.<sup>10</sup> The Cree, however, were experts at constructing and utilizing birchbark canoes, fish made up an important part of their diet, and by the mid-1750s they had clearly come to value the North Saskatchewan River in the vicinity of Edmonton for the resources it had to offer. Anthony Henday, for example, reported that a small Cree band with whom he was traveling spent the winter hunting buffalo in the parkland before moving to an important ‘canoe building site’ in the North Saskatchewan River valley just downstream of Edmonton.<sup>11</sup> Henday spent most of March and part of April, 1755, camped on the banks of the North Saskatchewan observing the Cree gathering bark from stands of birch, building canoes, socializing with a steady stream of newcomers, and going on short hunting trips.<sup>12</sup> By the time his party was ready to depart on the long canoe voyage down the North Saskatchewan to York Factory on Hudson Bay, the canoe-building site had grown into a large camp, which may well suggest ‘that the Greater Edmonton area, at least late in its history was an important gathering and staging place for Aboriginal groups such as the Cree at certain times of the year.’<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> James G. MacGregor, *A History of Alberta* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1972), p. 40.

<sup>8</sup> Magne, p. 221.

<sup>9</sup> Magne, pp. 228-31.

<sup>10</sup> Hugh A. Dempsey, “The Blackfoot Indians,” in *Native Peoples: The Canadian Experience*, 2d ed., eds. R. Bruce Morrison and C. Roderick Wilson (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1995), p. 382.

<sup>11</sup> Russell, p. 145.

<sup>12</sup> Pyszczyk et al., p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> Pyszczyk et al., pp. 6-7.

## 4.2 Regional History: 1750 to 1900

Anthony Henday was the first European to leave an account of a visit to the Edmonton region, in 1754. He was dispatched by the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) from its main base at York Factory in an attempt to lure trade away from the French, who had established posts below the confluence of the North and South Saskatchewan. The conquest of New France by the British (1759–60) soon removed the French threat to the profitability of the HBC, but within a few years the old French trade via the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes system had resumed under British and American (colonial) ownership. The story of the heated competition between the London-based HBC and its Montreal competitors, such as the North West Company (NWC), is so well known that it need not be repeated. What is worth noting, however, is that until about 1815, the main focus of this rivalry was the North Saskatchewan River.<sup>14</sup> Further north in the fur-rich Athabasca region, the HBC's main competitor, the NWC, enjoyed a virtual monopoly until shortly before the period of intense competition in the fur trade ended with the merger of the two companies in 1821.

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*Anthony Henday was the first European to leave an account of a visit to the Edmonton region.*

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The HBC built its first inland post, Cumberland House, on the Saskatchewan River in 1774. By the early 1790s both it and its Montreal competitors had established a string of trading posts up the North Saskatchewan as far as modern-day Elk Point, Alberta.<sup>15</sup> Carrying the rivalry further upstream, the HBC and NWC constructed Edmonton House and Fort Augustus respectively in 1795 near present-day Fort Saskatchewan. The area was said to be rich in furs and there was good access to buffalo in the parkland to the south, but it was also a troubled region on the margin of Blackfoot territory.

In 1794 the Atsina (traditionally known as the Gros Ventre), a close confederate of the Blackfoot tribes, had destroyed an HBC post on the South Saskatchewan.<sup>16</sup> Tensions were also mounting between the Blackfoot and the Cree / Assiniboine, tensions that would soon shatter a long-standing trade alliance between the two tribal groupings. Because European traders had been closely associated with the latter ever since the western fur trade began in the late 1600s and because the plains tribes were less dependent on European goods than their woodland counterparts, HBC and NWC employees were increasingly becoming the targets of what they saw as Blackfoot 'insolence' and 'aggression'. The Blackfoot tribes would continue to trade at the companies' posts even after open warfare broke out between them and the Cree / Assiniboine in 1806, 'but there was little trust between Blackfoot and Atsina bands and the fur traders.'<sup>17</sup> This climate of rising tension and aggression

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REGIONAL HISTORY: 1750-1900

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<sup>14</sup> MacGregor, p. 42.

<sup>15</sup> R. Cole Harris and Geoffrey J. Matthews, eds., *Historical Atlas of Canada*, vol. 1, *From the Beginning to 1800* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), plate 62.

<sup>16</sup> Binnema, pp. 288-89. This uses Anglicized names for First Nations groups for consistency, because most of the sources used are earlier Euro-Canadian writers who identified the groups in this manner.

<sup>17</sup> Binnema, pp. 324, 360-61.

is reflected in the HBC's decision to locate Edmonton House (Edmonton House I) and subsequent establishments of the same name on the north side of the North Saskatchewan River.<sup>18</sup> The river offered some protection from Blackfoot aggression and, at least in the minds of the fur traders, it subsequently served as a symbolic boundary between the territory of the friendly Cree and Assiniboine and that of the potentially-hostile Blackfoot.

## Locations of Edmonton House and Fort Augustus

The several relocations of the HBC's Edmonton House and the NWC's Fort Augustus between their founding in 1795 and their permanent establishment at Edmonton in 1813 are discussed in Chapter 5 of this report. From a regional perspective, these movements reflect the local depletion of fur-bearing animals<sup>19</sup> and the growing importance of Edmonton House and Fort Augustus as distribution and provisioning centres, rather than as more narrowly focused fur trade posts. Their location near the northern limits of the aspen parkland belt meant that they were able to acquire enough buffalo meat, either fresh or in the form of pemmican, to supply both themselves and posts further north in the forest zones, where fur-bearing animals were more abundant but food resources were limited. Timber for the construction of York boats, the Hudson's Bay Company's main cargo-hauler after 1797,<sup>20</sup> was also readily available in the area. When nearby supplies were exhausted, it was a relatively simple matter to tap stands of white spruce and other species further upstream on the North Saskatchewan and raft the logs down to Edmonton for processing.<sup>21</sup>

The flats at Rosedale provided a level (if occasionally inundated) site for the erection of posts. So too did the higher terrace, where the fifth and last Edmonton House (also known as Fort Edmonton) was built around 1830. Local supplies of balsam poplar and aspen provided a ready source of fuel,<sup>22</sup> an important consideration given the considerable quantity of firewood consumed by the posts, and the flood plain at Rosedale offered a level, easily tilled site for the posts' limited but important agricultural operations.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Howard Palmer with Tamara Palmer, *Alberta, a New History* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1990), pp. 13-14.

<sup>19</sup> For a discussion of the effects of the local depletion of both buffalo and beaver on Edmonton House / Fort Augustus I, see Robert S. Kidd, *Archaeological Excavations at the Probable Site of the First Fort Edmonton or Fort Augustus, 1795 to Early 1800s*, Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism, Historical Resources Division, Human History Occasional Paper No. 3, 1987, p. 14.

<sup>20</sup> Eric W. Morse, *Fur Trade Routes of Canada, Then and Now* (Ottawa: Ministry of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1969), p. 36.

<sup>21</sup> Beatrice A. Ockley, 'A History of Early Edmonton,' M.A. Thesis (History), University of Alberta, 1932, p. 36.

<sup>22</sup> Ockley, p. 36.

<sup>23</sup> Edmonton House had the largest agricultural operation of any of the posts outside the Red River and HBC fields on the Rosedale Flats produced significant quantities of potatoes, vegetables, barley, and oats from the early 1820s to around 1870. The amount of land under cultivation at any one time, however, was



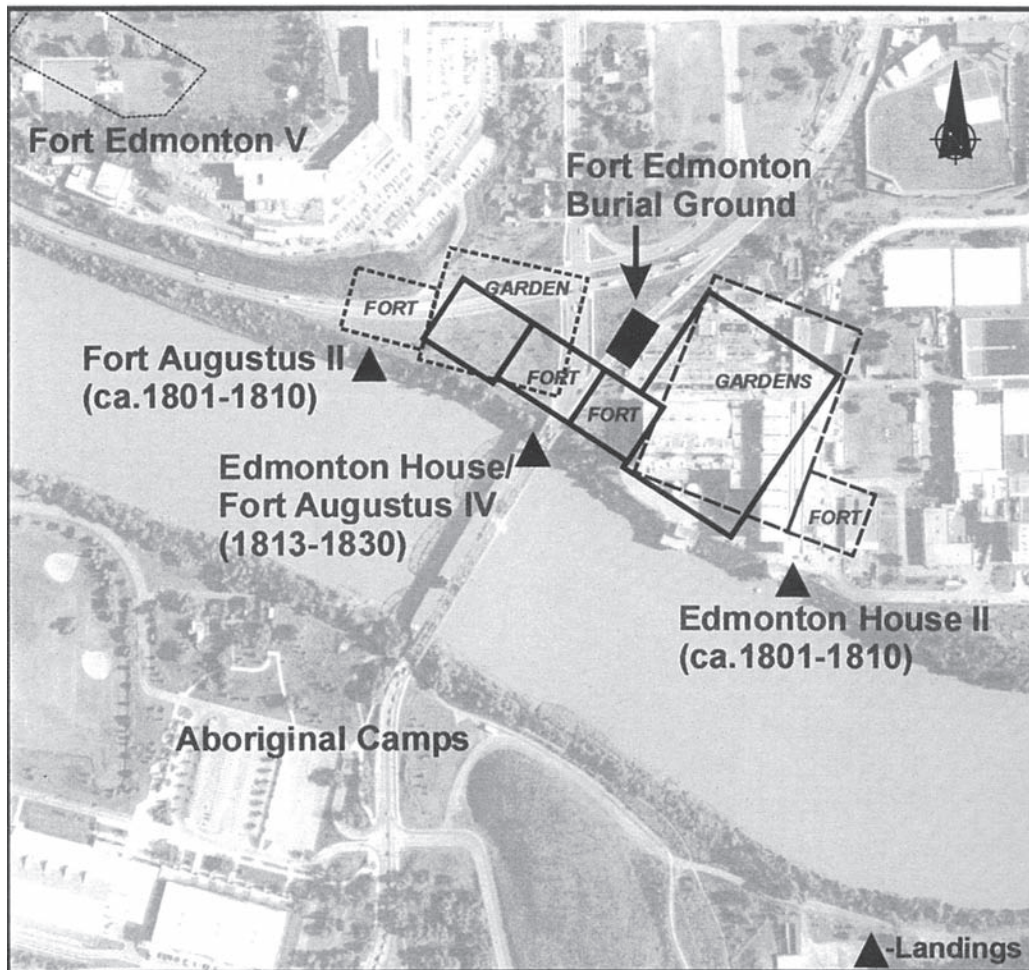


Figure 4-2

Probable sites of the various Forts. Saxberg, 2003.

Used with permission, Lifeways of Canada.

The presence of suitable flood plains for construction and farming was not unique to the Edmonton portion of the North Saskatchewan valley, nor was the presence of a ford (near the current location of the 105 Street Bridge).<sup>24</sup> Edmonton did not even represent the head of navigation on the North Saskatchewan River, as that distinction was borne by Rocky Mountain House.<sup>25</sup> What Edmonton did have, however, was a central location within trading distance of numerous tribes who occupied and exploited a wide range of ecological zones. Edmonton may also have been a ‘key rendezvous point and staging area in the annual travel patterns

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quite limited – no more than 30 acres – and this distinction says more about the limited scale of farming and gardening in Rupert’s Land than it does about the success of agriculture at Edmonton (Ockley, p. 66; MacGregor, pp. 57, 85).

<sup>24</sup> Frank G. Roe, ‘Edmonton a Century Ago,’ *Alberta Historical Review* 12, no. 1 (1964). p. 15.

<sup>25</sup> For a detailed description of the history of Rocky Mountain House and its relationship with Edmonton, see Eugene Y. Arima, *Blackfeet and Palefaces: The Pikani and Rocky Mountain House* (Ottawa: Golden Dog Press, 1995). There is no equivalent of Arima’s scholarly history of Rocky Mountain House for Fort Edmonton despite the far greater significance of the latter.

of aboriginal groups by the 1750s,' and perhaps, 'for thousands of years.'<sup>26</sup> The pre-contact history of Edmonton, in other words, may have had as much to do with 'the selection and then permanency of Edmonton' as the more conventional reasons presented from a 'purely Euro-Canadian perspective.'<sup>27</sup>

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*By 1820, Edmonton House and Fort Augustus had become the headquarters of all fur trade activity in the western prairies.*

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By the end of the second decade of the nineteenth century, Edmonton House and Fort Augustus had become the 'headquarters of all fur trade activity in the western prairies.'<sup>28</sup> This position was enhanced after the Hudson's Bay Company merged with the North West Company in 1821 by the construction of a trail to Fort Assiniboine on the upper reaches of the Athabasca River. Constructed over the winter of 1824–25, this trail provided access to the former NWC's territory in present-day British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon via Athabasca Pass and the Columbia River. Over the next twenty years Edmonton served as the main storage and transshipment depot on the HBC's transcontinental route to the Pacific Coast.<sup>29</sup>

In 1825 Edmonton House's growing importance was formally recognized by HBC Governor George Simpson, when he made it headquarters for a new district, the Saskatchewan District, under Chief Factor John Rowand.<sup>30</sup> The Saskatchewan District embraced all of modern-day Alberta south of Lesser Slave Lake and a sizeable portion of Saskatchewan as well. Chief Factor Rowand was responsible for supervising trade in the entire region and overseeing the operations of numerous posts, including Rocky Mountain House, Jasper House, Fort Assiniboine, and Fort Pitt.

## The Métis

For the next twenty years or so Edmonton remained the vital but isolated centre of the upper North Saskatchewan River region. During this time it witnessed ongoing hostility between the Blackfoot and Cree and the development of a sizeable Métis population in the area. As noted in Chapter 2, the Métis have traditionally been associated more with the Red River settlement in southern Manitoba.<sup>31</sup> The upper Saskatchewan region, however, was also home to a distinct Métis population that had 'originated from the servants of the fur companies, Canadien, British (mostly Orkneymen), and Eastern Indians (Iroquois and Ojibwa), who contracted

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<sup>26</sup> Pyszczuk et al., p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Pyszczuk et al., p. 9.

<sup>28</sup> MacGregor, p. 47.

<sup>29</sup> MacGregor, p. 55.

<sup>30</sup> MacGregor, p. 57.

<sup>31</sup> For a good description of the origins of the Métis of the Red River settlement, see Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Métis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), pp. 9-19.



Figure 4-3

Fort Edmonton V was located  
high above the river.

National Archives of Canada  
PA 178202

as hunters, trappers and canoeists and their country wives (mostly Cree).<sup>32</sup> Some of these men decided to remain in the west with their families once their contractual obligations to the companies were over. Known as ‘free men,’ they and their families became important suppliers of casual and seasonal labour, fish, furs, buffalo robes, and pemmican to the fur trading posts.<sup>33</sup> Their ranks were swelled by massive staff reductions following the 1821 merger of the HBC and NWC and by ‘the second quarter of the nineteenth century the generational succession of these people created the Plains Métis.’<sup>34</sup>

Because of their continuing ties to the fur trade, the western Métis tended to settle in the vicinity of trading posts.<sup>35</sup> Others chose to lead a nomadic existence, either as small groups or as part of local Cree bands. In the Edmonton area, for example, ‘most’ of the local Papaschase (often spelled Passpasschase) Band, including the chief after whom the band was named, ‘were of mixed white and Indian blood’ at the time

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<sup>32</sup> John E. Foster, ‘The Métis and the End of the Plains Buffalo in Alberta,’ in John E. Foster, Dick Harrison, and I. S. MacLaren eds., *Buffalo* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1992), p. 63.

<sup>33</sup> Marcel Giraud, *The Métis in the Canadian West*, vol. 2 (Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1986), pp. 304-311.

<sup>34</sup> Foster, p. 64.

<sup>35</sup> Giraud, p. 311.

of their adhesion to Treaty 6 in 1877.<sup>36</sup> A third group of Métis, many of whom were recruited in the Red River, continued to live in fur trade posts as part of the HBC's regular staff. For example, Edmonton House supported no less than 117 Métis men, women, and children in 1833 and roughly 80 in 1845–46.<sup>37</sup> The reduction in the number of Métis dependents at Fort Edmonton between the 1830s and mid-1840s partly reflects the creation of yet a fourth lifestyle option for the Métis: settlement near a Catholic or Protestant Mission. Missionaries first began working in central Alberta in the 1840s. By the early 1860s predominantly Métis communities had been established at Catholic missions such as Lac St. Anne, St. Albert, and Lac La Biche, and Methodist missions at Victoria and Whitefish Lake. By 1870 some of these communities boasted populations that were as large as — and in the case of St. Albert several times larger than — the population of Edmonton House itself.<sup>38</sup> Many residents of these Métis communities spent their summers and falls on the plains hunting and processing buffalo for the provision trade. From the early 1850s onwards a growing number remained on the margins of the plains throughout the winter in order to participate in the burgeoning buffalo hide trade.<sup>39</sup>

## The Decline of Edmonton House

The writings and activities of these Catholic and Protestant missionaries helped to increase outside awareness of the region. Before long, travellers and explorers such as Paul Kane (1846–47) and the members of the Palliser Expedition (1857–59) were visiting the Upper Saskatchewan country. At the same time as outside knowledge of the region was increasing, the importance of Edmonton House as a regional centre was beginning to wane, due to growing American competition from posts on the Missouri, the development of a direct supply route between London and the Pacific Coast via Cape Horn in the wake of the company's loss of the Columbia District in 1846 (by the Oregon Boundary Treaty),<sup>40</sup> and a general decline in the fur trade. The centrality of the North Saskatchewan River to the region was also beginning to wane. Beginning in the early 1860s, for example, a steadily increasing volume of trade goods was carried overland in Red River carts from Fort Garry to Edmonton House by way of the Carlton trail. Overland transportation became more attractive to the HBC when Fort Garry replaced York Factory as the main gateway to the fur trade, following the establishment of a direct steamboat connection between Fort Garry and St. Paul, Minnesota, in 1859.<sup>41</sup> The overland route was also popular with independent Métis traders from the Red River, who had begun to challenge the HBC monopoly in the Saskatchewan District by the early 1860s.

<sup>36</sup> Kenneth J. Tyler, 'A Tax-Eating Proposition: The History of the Passpasschase Indian Reserve,' M.A. Thesis (History), University of Alberta, 1979, pp. 29-33.

<sup>37</sup> Edward J. Hart, 'The History of the French-Speaking Community of Edmonton, 1795-1935,' M.A. Thesis (History), University of Alberta, 1971, pp. 9-10.

<sup>38</sup> R. Louis Gentilcore, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada*, vol. 2, *The Land Transformed, 1800-1901* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), plate 35.

<sup>39</sup> Gentilcore; Foster, pp. 68-69.

<sup>40</sup> Bedford, p. 49.

The strategic value of both Edmonton and the North Saskatchewan River to the region eroded even further during the 1870s and 1880s. These decades witnessed the destruction of the plains buffalo on Canadian soil and, as a result, the end of the provisioning trade. Of course it also meant the end of prosperity for plains tribes such as the Blackfoot, Assiniboine, and Plains Cree, who were soon isolated on reserves and consigned to a life of poverty. In 1888 the band nearest to Edmonton, the Passpasschase, even suffered the ignominy of having to surrender its reserve, in part because of local agitation to have the land opened up for settlement.<sup>42</sup> The Métis in communities such as Lac St. Anne and St. Albert were equally devastated by the loss of the buffalo. Many turned to traditional occupations such as freighting, others sought new employment opportunities such as cowboying, while ‘most’ simply turned northward where they continued to hunt and eventually joined ‘the surge in commercial activity associated with the major upswing in the fancy fur trade in the Athabaska and Peace River countries in the last quarter of the nineteenth century.’<sup>43</sup>

The Hudson’s Bay Company lost most of its former power with the sale of Rupert’s Land – the territory over which it had held a trade monopoly – to Canada in 1869. (The transfer was formalized in 1870.) By the 1890s the majority of the company’s holdings in the immediate vicinity of Edmonton had been subdivided and sold to prospective settlers.

Edmonton House was by now little more than a large retail outlet, much as The Bay stores are today. A small settlement of two to three hundred people sprang up adjacent to the 3,000-acre HBC Reserve in the 1870s, but it grew very little over the next decade and a half. This was largely the result of the Canadian Pacific Railway’s decision in the early 1880s to route its transcontinental rail line through the southern prairies, rather than along the North Saskatchewan River, as originally planned. Calgary boomed with the completion of the Alberta portion of the transcontinental railway in 1883, while Edmonton had to wait until 1891 before it was connected to the system, and even then the line only extended as far as the new community of Strathcona on the south side of the river. A new steam-powered mode of ground transportation had completed what the Red River carts had begun. As a consequence, the North Saskatchewan River ceased to be the vital transportation corridor it had once been.

The fortunes of Edmonton, a community whose history had been inexorably tied to the river that ran through it, suffered in consequence. The railway shifted the ‘focus of population and economic activity southward’ and it would be many years before Edmonton regained its former position as the commercial hub of central Alberta.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Giraud, p. 283.

<sup>42</sup> Tyler, p. iv.

<sup>43</sup> Foster, p. 74.

<sup>44</sup> Palmer and Palmer, p. 51.

### *4.3 Conclusion*

The most obvious conclusion to be reached is that the natural and regional history of Edmonton are inextricably linked, particularly until the late nineteenth century. More specifically, the regional history of Edmonton is deeply connected to the natural history of the North Saskatchewan River valley. The valley was a focal point for human activity in the region for thousands of years and the arrival of Europeans did little to change this orientation. Edmonton House undoubtedly enhanced the regional importance or centrality of a specific stretch of the river valley, but its founding does not represent an abrupt break with the past as traditional historiography would have us believe. Rather, the truly dramatic break with the past occurred in the 1800s, when river travel was superseded by the railway. The coming of the railway ended the river's centrality to the region and profoundly altered the community's relationship to the landscape and the environment.

A number of tentative conclusions can be drawn from this discussion:

- The North Saskatchewan River valley is the dominant natural feature of central Alberta. As such, it should come as no surprise that it has been a focus of human activity in the region for thousands of years.
- The portion of the valley in the vicinity of Rossdale has few natural features that truly distinguish it from elsewhere along the North Saskatchewan River. Conversely, unlike many parts of the valley, it appears to have had most if not all of the natural features that made the valley attractive to early peoples and fur traders alike.
- Flooding has long been a natural occurrence in the North Saskatchewan River valley through Edmonton. Without it, the Rossdale Flats would not have formed nor would it have been an attractive occupation site. Occupation of the flats, in other words, occurred because of flooding, not in spite of it.
- When the Rossdale area's natural and human history are considered together, a strong case can be made for regarding the Rossdale flats and nearby terraces as a regionally significant, if not nationally significant, place.
- Edmonton's importance as a central place during the fur trade era owes much to the fact that it lies in a transitional ecological zone between the true prairie to the south and forest zones to the north.
- The regional importance of Edmonton during the fur trade era also reflects the fact that it lay within trading range of several different First Nations people whose cultures had been adapted to exploit these different ecological zones.

# Rossdale and the Fur Trade

# 5

## Overview

This chapter reviews in more detail than Chapter 4 the human uses of the Rossdale Historical Land Use Study Area for the 1750s to the 1880s, and relates them to the story of Fort Edmonton and the fur trade. It provides information about the fur trade forts in Rossdale, describes how the flats were used for agriculture, and shows why this was important to the fur trade and how it was expanded in the 1860s. Other important uses of the flats were for camping and as the site of the Fort's burial ground. A number of important questions about the burial ground are addressed, including its location and period of use. A lack of consistent and convincing evidence precludes definitive conclusions, but just as it is important to provide answers where possible, it is also important to admit doubt or confusion and to guide decision-making. The research paid special attention to evidence created in the 1870s and 1880s, as Edmonton made the transition from a fur trade fort to a non-native settlement. This is an especially interesting process to document, since decisions made then, such as the definitions of the eastern boundary of the fur trade reserve and the inclusion of the burial ground within the reserve, continue to resonate today.

5.1

THE TRADING POSTS OF THE  
EDMONTON AREA

5.2

THE HBC RESERVE AFTER 1870

5.3

USES OF ROSSDALE FLATS

## 5.1 The Trading Posts of the Edmonton Area

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*Rossdale was the site of Fort Augustus / Edmonton House II, c. 1799-1810, and Fort Augustus / Edmonton House IV, 1813-1830.*

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The fur trade has long been of interest to Edmonton's historians, most of whom see the establishment of a trading post as the first step in the inevitable progress towards the present urban Edmonton. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the first traveller associated with the fur trade who visited the area was Anthony Henday, in 1754, but it was not until 40 years later that a fur trade post was established. This post, built by the North West Company (NWC) in 1795, was located at a site near present-day Fort Saskatchewan, about 20 km northeast of Edmonton. It was called Fort Augustus. The NWC traders were soon joined by their rivals from the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), who built Edmonton House across the river in the same year.

The traders of both companies subsequently abandoned these sites for one further upriver, at what is now Rossdale. Plans for the move, according to historian John Gilpin, were initiated in 1799 and completed by 1802. Historian James MacGregor follows a similar chronology.<sup>1</sup> The posts are referred to as Fort Augustus II and Edmonton House II. Both companies remained at this site until 1810, when they again shifted their operations, this time to a third site at White Earth Creek, about 80 km northeast of Edmonton. According to MacGregor, the Indians burned the forts at Rossdale following this move. Published sources, including MacGregor, also make passing references to two other fur-trading outfits—the XY and Ogilvie Companies—and their activities in the Edmonton area between 1798 and 1804.<sup>2</sup>

The move downstream to White Earth Creek was relatively brief. The two companies once again relocated to Rossdale in the winter of 1812–13, building what are known as Edmonton House IV and Fort Augustus IV (see Figure 4-2).<sup>3</sup> This was the final 'big' move. With it the site of present-day Edmonton was fixed as one of the principal fur trade settlements in the district. James Bird, who was in charge of Edmonton House IV in 1815, conveyed this in his 'Edmonton Report, 1815,' pointing out that 'all [illegible] methods for improving the trade that could be suggested have already been tried, outposts have been made in all favourable situations, and even the principal Settlements abandoned and new ones built, but to no other purpose than to convince us that Edmonton and Point River are the

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<sup>1</sup> See Gilpin, p. 17 and MacGregor, p. 23. Since neither Gilpin nor MacGregor use footnotes it is not clear what their source of information is. Alice Johnson, in her introduction to *Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence, Edmonton House, 1795-1800, and Chesterfield House, 1800-1802* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1967), p. lxxvii notes that, 'The exact date of the closing of the Edmonton House with which these journals are concerned cannot be determined because the post journals for the seasons 1800-01 to 1804-06 are missing.' What Johnson is certain of is that 'by September 1806 the post then called Edmonton House was on the site of the present City of Edmonton.' Other more recent work also gives the 1802 date, whether this is based on new research or is simply a case of information being repeated until it appears to be true, is not clear. See Saxberg, 2000, pp. 52-54 for a discussion of the problems of evidence related to establishing a firm chronology for this period.

<sup>2</sup> MacGregor, p. 22. There is a small amount of literature about these forts and their location.

<sup>3</sup> Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA), B.60/e/1, James Bird, Edmonton Report, 1815. Bird describes Fort Augustus as being built in the winter of 1812–13.



most advantageous situations we can possibly occupy.<sup>4</sup> Bird goes on to describe the location of Edmonton House as being ‘about twenty miles westward of the junction of the red Willow Creek with the Saskatchewan River on the north bank of the last named River.’ Bird enclosed with his report a sketch plan showing the location of Fort Augustus / Edmonton House IV and a ‘Ground Plan of Edmonton Houses’ that shows in some detail their layout around 1815.<sup>5</sup> These are the earliest known plans of the Fort and its site. The sketch plan shows the two trading posts located at a bend in the Saskatchewan River on a flat, which James Bird, who drew the plan, described as a ‘flat point’ and ‘woody plain.’ The point is surrounded by a ‘high bank.’ Alexander Ross later described the Fort built in 1812–13 as ‘a large compact establishment, with good buildings, palisades, and bastions, pleasantly situated in a deep valley.’<sup>6</sup>

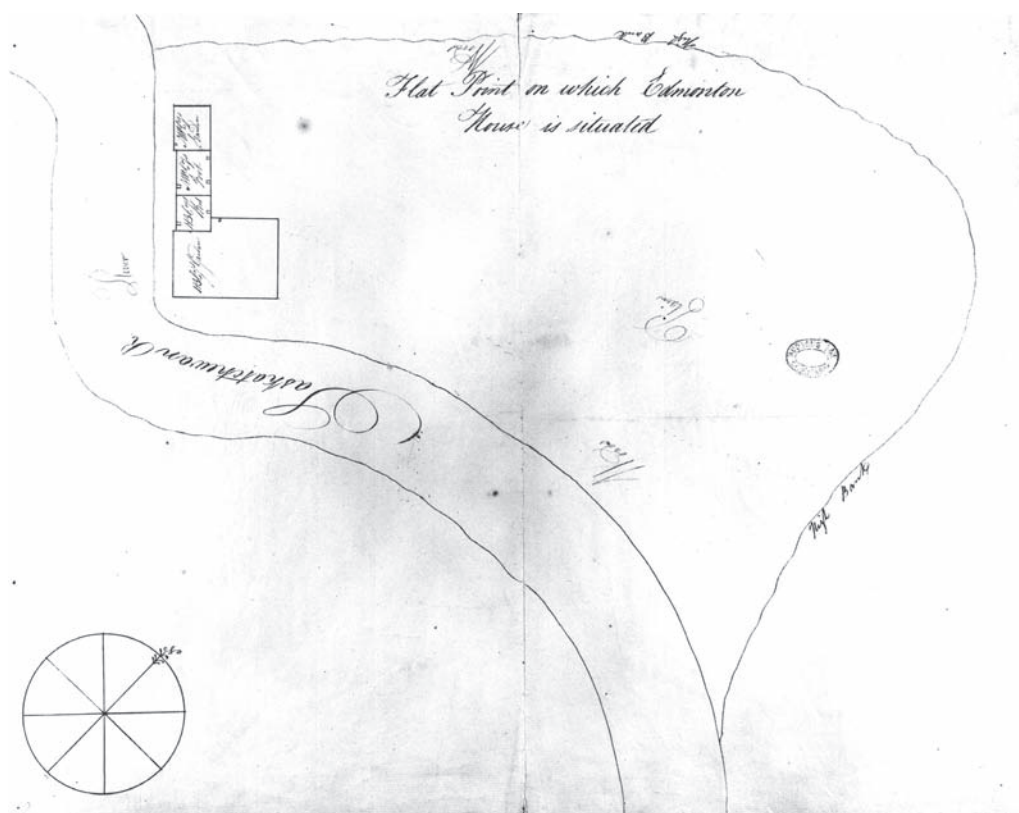


Figure 5-1

James Bird's Sketch Plan of the location of Edmonton House and Garden, 1815.

HBCA G1/98 Hudson's Bay Company Archives/Archives of Manitoba

SECTION 5.1  
THE TRADING POSTS OF THE  
EDMONTON AREA

<sup>4</sup> HBCA, B.60/e/1, James Bird, Edmonton Report, 1815.

<sup>5</sup> The earliest maps of Edmonton listed in the map catalogue at the HBCA are c.1815. These are 1) HBCA G1/98, Sketch Plan of Edmonton House and Garden, J. Bird, [c.1815] and 2) HBCA, G1/99, Ground Plan of Edmonton House, J. Bird? [c.1815]. In his report (HBCA/B.60/e/1) Bird describes these plans as being prepared ‘at the scale desired.’

<sup>6</sup> Alexander Ross quoted in Frank Gilbert Roe, ‘Edmonton: A Century Ago,’ Alberta Historical Review, 12, no. 1 (Winter 1964), p. 11, 14.

Based on archaeological and documentary evidence, Nancy Saxberg and her colleagues, in the report produced by Lifeways of Canada in 2003, have proposed a location for this complex of forts straddling the present Rossdale Road. This places portions of the forts within the Rossdale Historical Land Use Study Area.<sup>7</sup> The authors of this report recognize that there are inherent difficulties in referring to a site that had many names – and multiple locations – throughout history. Although the HBC post was called both Edmonton House and Fort Edmonton by HBC employees and the wider community, when referring to the combined locations of Fort Augustus and Edmonton House, the present report uses the generic term ‘Fort’ for clarity. Where a distinction is necessary, we use specific name of either Fort Augustus or Edmonton House and the roman numeral indicating its incarnation.

The HBC and NWC amalgamated in 1821, under the name Hudson’s Bay Company. The Fort was moved one more time after this, in 1830, to what is called Fort Edmonton V. This last site, on the bluffs above the river, where the gardens of the present-day Legislature buildings are located, was chosen to order to safeguard the Fort from the periodic flooding of the North Saskatchewan River.<sup>8</sup>

John Foster, in his biographical work on the HBC’s James Bird, notes that ‘little scholarship has been directed at the nature of the society that emerged in Edmonton during the foundation years.’<sup>9</sup> A general idea of the situation can be gleaned from Bird’s 1815 report. Although he does not list his own HBC staff, he does provide information about the NWC’s staff, which amounted to about 31 men. The NWC also had sixteen freemen (Canadians and Iroquois) ‘partly sworn in their service.’ Not counted by Bird, but almost certainly present, were the wives (many of them, including Bird’s, First Nations people) and children of both the engaged servants and the freemen. The fur trade economy depended on this. In Bird’s opinion, his District could support ‘almost any number of men ... with the assistance of wives ... large quantities of meat and fish can be procured.’ The Fort had a rigid social hierarchy in which people were aware of both their rights and obligations as well as the privileges associated with their position.<sup>10</sup>

Among the companies’ servants were French-Canadians, first recruited in Québec to paddle the North West Company’s canoes used to transport goods and furs. These ‘voyageurs’ were part of a tradition of trade and travel in the West by

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<sup>7</sup> Saxberg et al., figure 39, p. 340. The introduction to the report states that, ‘with the possible addition of an X-Y Company post ... the total number of fur-trading establishments on the Rossdale Flats may be high as five’ (Saxberg et al., p. 2) No maps from the time period have been located that would show the precise location of this fort on the flat. The post journals for 1829-30, when the fort was moved and which might therefore shed some light on the previous location, are not extant.

<sup>8</sup> See *Archaeology Guide and Tour of Greater Edmonton Area* (Edmonton: Provincial Museum of Alberta/Strathcona Archaeology Society, 1996), pp. 13-20.

<sup>9</sup> John E. Foster, ‘The Métis and the End of the Plains Buffalo in Alberta,’ in John E. Foster, Dick Harrison, and I. S. MacLaren eds., *Buffalo* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1992), p. 18.

<sup>10</sup> Foster, p. 37.

French-speaking people that dated back to the early eighteenth century. One of Edmonton's more famous French-speaking residents was Marie-Anne Lagimodière (née Gaboury) who, with her husband Jean-Baptiste, arrived early in the 1800s.<sup>11</sup> She was the first non-native woman to live at the Fort. In addition to their associations with Edmonton, the Lagimodières had been the first family to settle at St. Boniface (1817), on the Red River, and Marie-Anne was the great-grandmother of Louis Riel. At Fort Edmonton, French was the language of day-to-day life for many employees until the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> Cree was also important and English was the language of correspondence and record-keeping. Thomas Woolsey, a Methodist missionary who arrived at Fort Edmonton in 1855, found the mix of languages trying. In addition to French, he noted that there were also numerous Scots, who 'can scarcely understand any English.'<sup>13</sup>

Also at the Fort, were First Nations people who came to trade. The most intense period of trading occurred from November to March. Trading groups included Cree, freemen, Stoney, Sarcee, Peigan, and Blackfoot.<sup>14</sup>

The population of Fort Edmonton varied over time and through the seasons. Dr. James Hector, who worked with Captain John Palliser on his survey of the West in 1857–59, found that the Fort had 50 employees in 1858 and a total population of about 150.<sup>15</sup> The residents' diet consisted primarily of buffalo meat and potatoes.<sup>16</sup> Palliser, when he stopped in Edmonton in September 1858, found about 40 men, 30 women, and 80 children.<sup>17</sup> The population of the Fort expanded considerably each May, when boats arrived from the outlying posts and preparations were made to take the furs out to Hudson Bay. It was at its lowest during the summer months. The return of the boats in the fall resulted in an upswing in population.

The Fort's population was diverse, including French and English Canadians, Orkney Islanders, English, French and Scot Métis, First Nations, Norwegians, and others. Employment arrangements varied. Some employees spent long periods of time away from the Fort hunting for meat, fishing, or cutting and hauling firewood. The Fort and its environs were also home to cattle, horses, and a profusion of dogs.<sup>18</sup> The Company's attitude to its servants can be described as practical and

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<sup>11</sup> MacGregor, p. 31.

<sup>12</sup> Donald Smith, 'Les Francophones de L'Alberta Aperçu Historique,' *Bulletin du Centre d'études Franco-Canadiennes de L'Ouest*, 18, October 1984, pp. 4-5.

<sup>13</sup> Hugh A. Dempsey, *Heaven is Near the Rocky Mountains: The Journals and Letters of Thomas Woolsey, 1855-1869*. Calgary: Glenbow Museum, p. 29.

<sup>14</sup> O'Riordan, p. 11.

<sup>15</sup> Spry, p. 201.

<sup>16</sup> Spry, p. 201.

<sup>17</sup> Spry, p. 339.

<sup>18</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the links, both familial and spatial, among the residents of the Fort and the larger region, see Section 4.2, above.

thrifty. Chief Factor William Christie wrote in his 1862 report that ‘the number of engaged servants wintering here [Fort Edmonton] ... who have large families are a heavy drag upon the Trade, and from want of efficient men to replace them, it is difficult to get rid of them, though it is often tried, and carried out as far as possible.’<sup>19</sup>

Figure 5-2

*Two men relax outside Fort  
Edmonton.*

*National Archives of Canada  
C7534*



MacGregor’s description of life at the Fort makes it clear that it was an important provisioning centre for the fur trade. Some resources, such as pemmican, were purchased, while others, such as potatoes, were farmed. These resources kept the local fort going and supplied other forts.<sup>20</sup> Terence O’Riordan provides an excellent and detailed description of the annual round of activity at Fort Edmonton in the 1850s:

<sup>19</sup> HBCA, B60/e/9, Edmonton Report, 1862.

<sup>20</sup> MacGregor provides further insight into life at Fort Edmonton under Chief Factors John Rowand (1823-1840, 1842-1846, 1848-1853) and Richard Hardisty (1872-1882, 1885-1888) in the biographies he wrote of these two men.

In autumn the Company would harvest its crops, gather and stack hay, begin to trade, and establish its fall fishery. With the advent of winter the buffalo hunt would commence, with Company hunters leaving for the plains and Company clerks preparing for the arrival of native traders. Then in January, men would leave for the pine hammock to cut the timber that the boat builders and carpenters would need for the next summer. As spring arrived the Company's hunting would cease, as the men would start preparing to transport goods to Norway House. They would also plough the fields, plant potatoes, and sow grain ... They would also rebuild fences that the Natives had removed. The summer work of rafting timber down from the pine hammock would commence after the boat brigades departed. The women and those men that remained for the summer would tend the gardens, gather berries, and generally reset the fort for the next year.<sup>21</sup>

Beginning in the 1840s, Catholic and Protestant missionaries were active in the Fort Edmonton area. The number of travellers not associated with the Company began to increase in the 1850s. The following decade brought miners travelling to the Cariboo gold fields. In a few cases they stopped at Fort Edmonton and worked the sandbars of the North Saskatchewan River. In spite of its status as a major provisioning centre, Fort Edmonton did not always have enough food on hand to feed its residents and there are numerous references in the published material to lean times.

One of the more important activities at Fort Edmonton was boat-building. This is well documented in the post journals, which contain references to 'boatbuilders building boats.'<sup>22</sup> An indication of the volume of work done each year is available in various documents, including the Minutes of the Councils of Northern Department of Rupert's Land. For example, the minutes for 1836 instruct Chief Factor Rowand to 'provide 12 new boats of not less than 28 feet keel for general distribution at Norway House.'<sup>23</sup> In 1862 Chief Factor Christie reported in the Post journals that 'twelve boats are annually built at this Post and sent out to Norway House for general service.'<sup>24</sup> The records reviewed did not indicate where the boats were built, but missionary Thomas Woolsey's description of the fort in

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<sup>21</sup> Terence O'Riordan, 'Straddling the Great Transformation: The Hudson's Bay Company in Edmonton during the Transition from the Commons to Private Property, 1854-1882,' *Prairie Forum*, 28, no. 1 (Spring 2003), p. 12. O'Riordan kindly provided a copy of this paper prior to its publication.

<sup>22</sup> See for example HBCA, B.60/a/38, 30 November 1871. There are also repeated references in the early 1870s to boatbuilders 'teasing oakum,' which was used to seal the gaps between pieces of wood.

<sup>23</sup> Minutes of Council, 1836, in *The Canadian North West: Its Early Development and Legislative Records*, E.H. Oliver ed., Publications of the Canadian Archives, No. 9 (Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1915), p. 730.

<sup>24</sup> HBCA/B.60/e/9, Edmonton Report, 1862.

1855 includes a ‘boat building establishment.’<sup>25</sup> A painting of Fort Edmonton V of about 1876 by Father Émile Petitot<sup>26</sup> (Figure 5-11) shows two paths leading up from the river within or adjacent to the study area, suggesting that this was an area that boats were landed and perhaps also built, repaired, and stored.

Figure 5-3

*A York boat and a Red River cart – the principal means of transportation – on the shore below Fort Edmonton V. Note the fences.*

National Archives of Canada  
PA9148.



The arrival of missionaries is particularly interesting because it led to the establishment of services, such as schools and churches, by organizations other than the HBC. From the very beginning there was competition for followers between Catholic and Protestant missionaries. Eventually this competition, and the separateness it required, was expressed through the establishment of separate churches, schools, and burial grounds. This separateness, although not always perfectly achieved, was a common pattern in Canada and Western nations more generally. At first, however, all had to share space within the Fort and the common burial ground outside (discussed below).

<sup>25</sup> Woolsey, *Heaven is Near the Rocky Mountains*, p. 28.

<sup>26</sup> The date of the Petitot painting is conjectural. It is believed that Petitot may have painted it in 1876 on his way back to a mission assignment at Fort Good Hope after being away in Europe since 1874. Others have dated the painting to 1867, but Petitot was probably in the north at this time. Personal communications from Dr. Juliette Champagne, Fort des Prairies Associates, 8 April 2003 and Dr. Murielle Nagy, Quebec, Quebec. Nagy is completing a book on Petitot. See also Robert Choquette, *The Oblate Assault on Canada's Northwest* (Ottawa: Ottawa University Press, 1995), pp. 59-66.

The first missionaries at Fort Edmonton were Fathers François Blanchet and Modeste Demers. The two Roman Catholic priests stopped at Fort Edmonton in 1838 en route to the Oregon Territory and noted the importance of establishing a mission at the Fort.<sup>27</sup> While at Fort Edmonton, they erected a large cross, where the Legislature stands today.<sup>28</sup> Robert Rundle of the Wesleyan Society arrived at Fort Edmonton in 1840 and stayed until 1848. In 1842 Father Thibeault was sent from Red River to survey the situation; he returned a year later and established a mission at Lac St. Anne. Historian Donald Smith argues that the arrival of the Catholic missionaries was important because it re-acquainted the Métis with their French and Catholic heritage.<sup>29</sup>

The official relationship between the HBC and the Catholic missionaries was cool at best. The Company preferred to promote the work of Protestant missionaries. Regardless of denominational affiliation, the missionaries were highly dependent on the good will of the Company for everything from accommodation at the Fort to facilitating transportation. Inside the Fort, Methodist Robert Rundle succeeded in establishing a small rectory. It was later also used by Catholic missionaries for services, as were other buildings in the complex. Finally, in 1857, Chief Factor Christie initiated the construction of a Catholic chapel (St. Joachim), which was completed in 1859.<sup>30</sup>

One service offered by the missionaries was education. Rundle's successor, Thomas Woolsey, had twenty students under instruction in 1858 at his 'ragged school.'<sup>31</sup> A longer-lasting school, located inside the Fort, was organized by the Catholics in 1862.<sup>32</sup>

## 5.2 *The HBC Reserve after 1870*

With the transfer of Rupert's Land (most of western and northern Canada) from the HBC to Canada in 1870, the HBC took formal ownership of a 'reserve' at Edmonton. This was the land that the company would continue to administer. It

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<sup>27</sup> Donat Levasseur, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'Ouest et le Nord du Canada, 1845-1967*, (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press et Western Canadian Publishers, 1995), p. 12.

<sup>28</sup> R.P. Jules Le Chevalier, 'La Paroisse Saint-Joachim d'Edmonton,' *Fête des pionniers, Paroisse Saint-Joachim, 1905-1948* (Edmonton: n.p., 1948), p. 9. Saxberg et al. provide additional information about the cross on p. 34.

<sup>29</sup> Smith, p. 5.

<sup>30</sup> Dempsey, p. ix. See also: France Levasseur-Ouimet, *Saint-Joachim, la première paroisse catholique d'Edmonton* (Edmonton: [Paroisse de Saint Joachim], 1999), pp. 32-34.

<sup>31</sup> Dempsey, p. 67.

<sup>32</sup> Levasseur-Ouimet, p. 34.

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*All of the study area  
is contained within  
the 3,000-acre HBC  
reserve.*

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did the same at most of its other fur trade posts as well. In addition to the reserves, the HBC also received one-twentieth of the land in the fertile belt, which includes Edmonton. The latter represented approximately two sections per township. The balance of the land was transferred to the Crown for it to administer. The results of this process are still inscribed in the landscape in the form of Indian reserves, river lots, townships, and Hudson's Bay Company reserves. The reserve at Edmonton, which included the site of Fort Edmonton, amounted to 3,000 acres north of the Saskatchewan River, in what is now the city centre. All of the study area is contained within the 3,000-acre HBC reserve.

The division of land between groups, and between individuals as well as sub-sets of larger groups, caused consternation among whites, Métis, and First Nations people, all of whom had concerns, albeit sometimes divergent or conflicting, about the transfer and the processes employed. One example of First Nations' concerns involved the chief factor at Fort Edmonton. In April 1871, W.J. Christie dispatched to the federal government a petition he received at Carlton, in which the Cree Chiefs wrote: 'We heard our lands were sold and we did not like it; we don't want to sell our lands; it is our property, and no one has the right to sell them.'<sup>33</sup> In Christie's opinion the federal government needed to make a 'Treaty with the Indians of that country or at least an assurance during the coming year that a Treaty will shortly be made, is essential to the peace, if not the actual retention of the country.'<sup>34</sup>

Some sense of who was living at Fort Edmonton and in the wider area at the time of the transfer can be gleaned from a census taken by the HBC and from comments in official reports. A census of the Company's posts of 'Whites, Halfbreeds, and Indians' taken in January 1872 shows that there were 20 'English Halfbreeds' and 18 'Whites' living at Fort Edmonton in that month. The population of nearby St. Albert was much larger, at 1,402, including Stoney, Cree, and, in the majority, 'French Halfbreeds.'<sup>35</sup> Two years later a census of 'Edmonton and Neighbourhood' lists 6 'Indians' (5 of whom were camped at Long Lake), 50 'Whites' (mostly men), and about 136 'Halfbreeds' (including children) for a total population of roughly 192.<sup>36</sup> Indian Commissioner Wemyss M. Simpson commented on the situation in 1871, writing that 'In the neighbourhood of Fort Edmonton, on the Saskatchewan, there is a rapidly increasing population of miners and other white people.'<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Report of the Indian Branch of the Department of the Secretary of State for the Provinces [1871], Messages from the Cree Chiefs of the Plains, Saskatchewan, to His Excellency Governor Archibald ... relayed by Wm. Christie, 13 April 1871, p. 33. See [http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/indian affairs](http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/indian%20affairs). Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1864-1990. Accessed 07/04/03.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

<sup>35</sup> Glenbow Archives (GA), Richard C. Hardisty Fonds, Series 10, M477/149, Census of Whites, Halfbreeds, and Indians ... January 1872.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, Census of Edmonton and Neighbourhood, April 1874.

<sup>37</sup> Report of the Indian Branch of the Department of the Secretary of State for the Provinces [1871], pp. 31-32. See [http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/indian affairs](http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/indian%20affairs). Indian Affairs Annual Reports, 1864-1990. Accessed 07/04/03.



The first land survey that had a direct effect on the Rosssdale study area was a survey of the boundaries of the HBC reserve, carried out in 1873. It placed the study area inside the HBC's Edmonton reserve, very close to its eastern boundary. The survey was undertaken at the request of the HBC under the terms of the deed of surrender; the actual work was done by surveyor W.S. Gore of the federal government.<sup>38</sup>

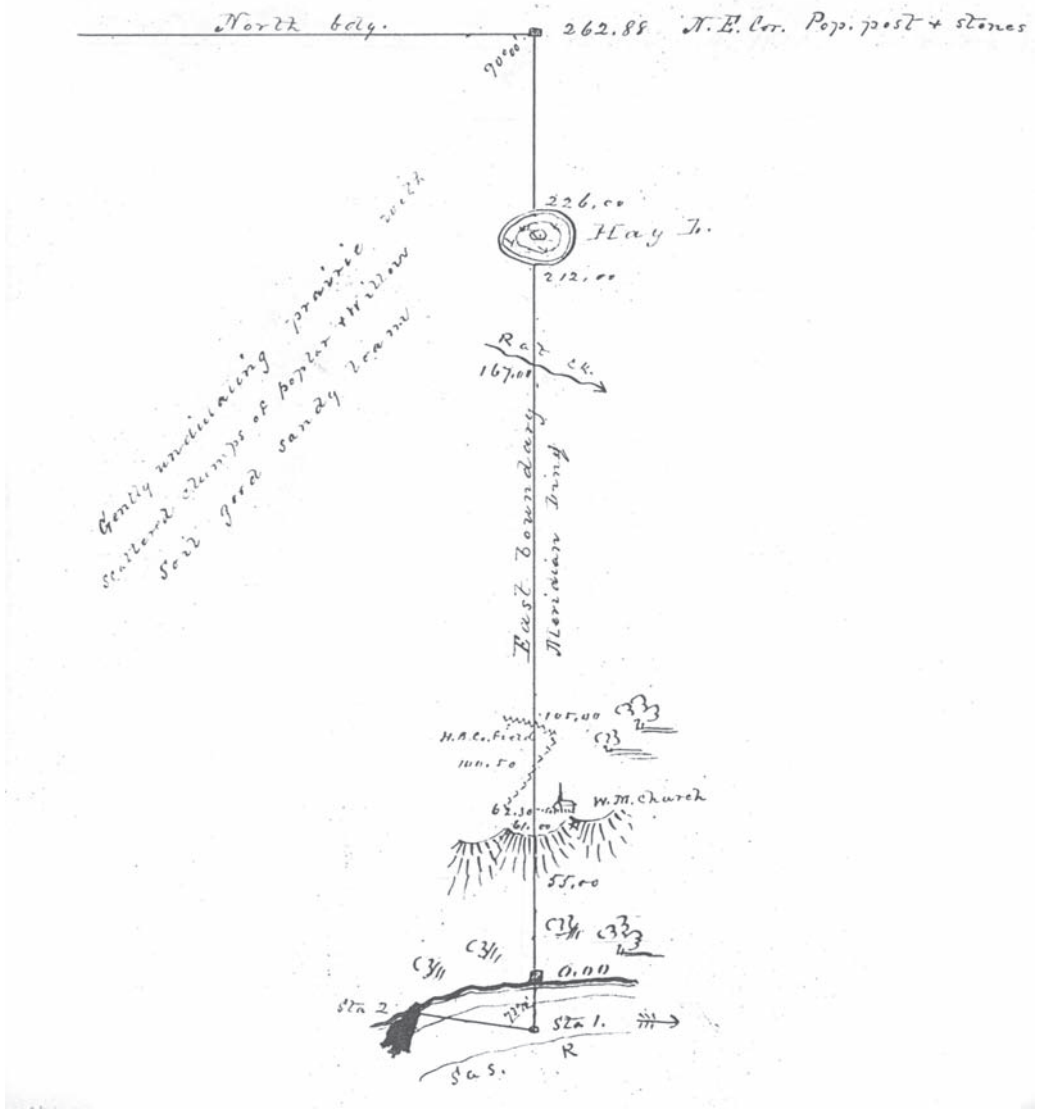


Figure 5-4

A sketch from surveyor W.S. Gore's fieldbook, showing the eastern boundary of the HBC reserve. Rosssdale is at the bottom.

HBCA A/72/7

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<sup>38</sup> Report on western surveys by J.S. Dennis, Surveyor General, 1 March 1873. Published as 'Appendix C' in *Report of the Secretary of State, for year ending June 1872*, (Ottawa: I.B. Taylor, 1872), p. 18.

Gore's survey produced only an outline of the reserve. Within the reserve it went no further than locating the footprint of the Fort. Gore's terms of reference were to simply 'regulate the boundaries on the ground in each case to include the Post, in such manner as to meet the views of the officer in Charge.'<sup>39</sup> At Fort Edmonton, the officer in charge of the Company's interests was Richard Hardisty, Chief Factor of the Saskatchewan District. Hardisty was instructed to see that the 'survey be carried out with the greatest advantage to the interests of the company.'<sup>40</sup> If Hardisty could not direct the surveyor personally, he was to see to it that a competent officer did. He was also to make sure that Gore did not carry out any other survey work while he was engaged in this assignment.

Gore undertook his work between March 13 and 17, 1873. In his notes he described the reserve at Fort Edmonton:

3000 acres fronts on the north bank of the Saskatchewan its surface is almost level being prairie with the occasional clumps of Poplar and willow, the soil is a good sandy loam and good crops of Wheat, Barley, Oats and Potatoes etc. can be raised here although wheat is not a sure crop frequently being injured by summer frost. A valuable piece of land!<sup>41</sup>

The only features on the flats shown in the survey are clumps of trees or bushes. Just above the high bank (above the flats) a HBC field is indicated abutting the eastern boundary. Outside the boundary, to the east, there is the 'W.M. [Wesleyan Methodist] Church.' Gore described the Fort, the 'little Methodist chapel,' and the location of the company farm, which 'as at most other places the ground cultivated is the low flat near the River.' Gore thought the Company would do well to farm higher up. He also noticed the company's large powder magazine 'made of brick burnt here,' the presence of miners working the river gravel for gold, and the existence of coal seams. No mention is made of a burial ground, but then Gore's brief was narrow, and he seems to have stuck to it.

Terence O'Riordan describes how the HBC adjusted to the commodification of land. It asserted its property rights by building fences and roads, and by clearing land and expanding its farm.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> GA, Richard Hardisty Fonds, 11-2, M477/263, Letter from G. Dennis, Dominion Lands Office, Ottawa to W.S. Gore, [Iowa,] 30 May 1872.

<sup>40</sup> GA, Richard Hardisty Fonds, 11-1, M477/166, Letter from W.J. Christie, Carlton House to Richard Hardisty, Chief Factor, Saskatchewan District, 6 September 1872.

<sup>41</sup> HBCA, A72/7, Deputy Surveyor W.S. Gore's Field Notes Diary and Reports of Survey of Hudson's Bay Company Reserves in the North West Territories in 1872 and 1873, pp. 17-18, 48.

<sup>42</sup> O'Riordan, pp. 14, 19. On this subject he cites the *Edmonton Bulletin*, 3 January 1881, the HBC's Edmonton Post Journals for various dates from 1877 to 1885, and the Lifeways Report on Rossdale Unit 11.

According to historian John Day, Donald Ross, for whom Rosssdale is named, arrived in Edmonton from the British Columbia gold fields in 1872. In the fall of 1874, Ross took on a three-year contract to operate the HBC's Edmonton farm, part of which was located on the flat.<sup>43</sup> Day states that after a year, Ross believed he owned the land the farm lay on in return for waiving his operating fee, but he also states that this assertion caused considerable controversy — meaning, presumably, that others did not agree with him.<sup>44</sup> Ross' own version of events was that he bought his land from Mr. Leslie Wood in 1874. Wood 'had acquired the rights of the previous settlers.' Ross also names the 'original' settlers who 'held the land previous to the transfer.'<sup>45</sup> In another statement of claim, Ross wrote that he 'entered into possession of this place in 1874, at which time and since, I have [quieted] by purchase seven different titles.'<sup>46</sup> Ross' story is interesting for a number of reasons. His property lay outside, but directly abutted, the study area and so changes in its use and ownership over time helps us to understand the use of the land within the study area. The details of how Ross acquired the land is illustrative of the issues faced by early settlers in Edmonton, and suggests that some kind of formal or informal land tenure system was in place among HBC employees at the time.



Figure 5-5

Donald Ross, c 1885.

CEA 10-1632

The next federal surveyor to appear in the area after Gore was W.F. King. His job was to establish the location of the major settlements prior to more detailed survey. King carried out his work during 1877–78, establishing an astronomical station west of the Fort, traversing the settlement, and beginning to take evidence regarding land claims at St. Albert.<sup>47</sup> Surveyor Montague Aldous continued this work in 1879. When Aldous submitted his report from Edmonton House late in the fall of 1879, he drew attention to 'the urgent necessity which exists for the immediate settlement and sub-division survey in the neighbourhood of Edmonton and Big Lake. Every year's delay will result in an endless amount of difficulty

<sup>43</sup> Gilpin, p. 34, states that Ross bought River Lot 4 from Leslie Wood.

<sup>44</sup> Day uses newspaper accounts and a published account by Archibald Oswald MacRae. MacRae's version of events is that Ross 'took a lease for three years on the Hudson's Bay Company's farm, but after one year the inspecting chief factor came to Edmonton and agreed to cancel his lease on account of an indebtedness of thirty-nine hundred dollars, bought from him his implements and stock at the prices paid, and the crop at market price. In three weeks Mr. Ross had all his debts paid and eight hundred dollars cash to his credit with the Hudson's Bay Company, besides a part of the crop.' McRae, *History of the Province of Alberta* (Edmonton: Western Canada History Co. 1912), p. 542.

<sup>45</sup> NAC RG 15 D-II-1, volume 251 F. 31140. Letter from Donald Ross to Lindsay Russell, Deputy Minister, Department of the Interior, March 1882. The names of the original settlers are difficult to read. There is Isaac Daniel, Moses Leamy, [Wash Doe], and [Rabisca]. Evidently, Wood had not paid Leamy and Ross had to pay Leamy in 1876.

<sup>46</sup> NAC RG 15 D-II-1, volume 251 F.31140. Letter from Donald Ross to Lindsay Russell, DM, Department of the Interior, March 1883.

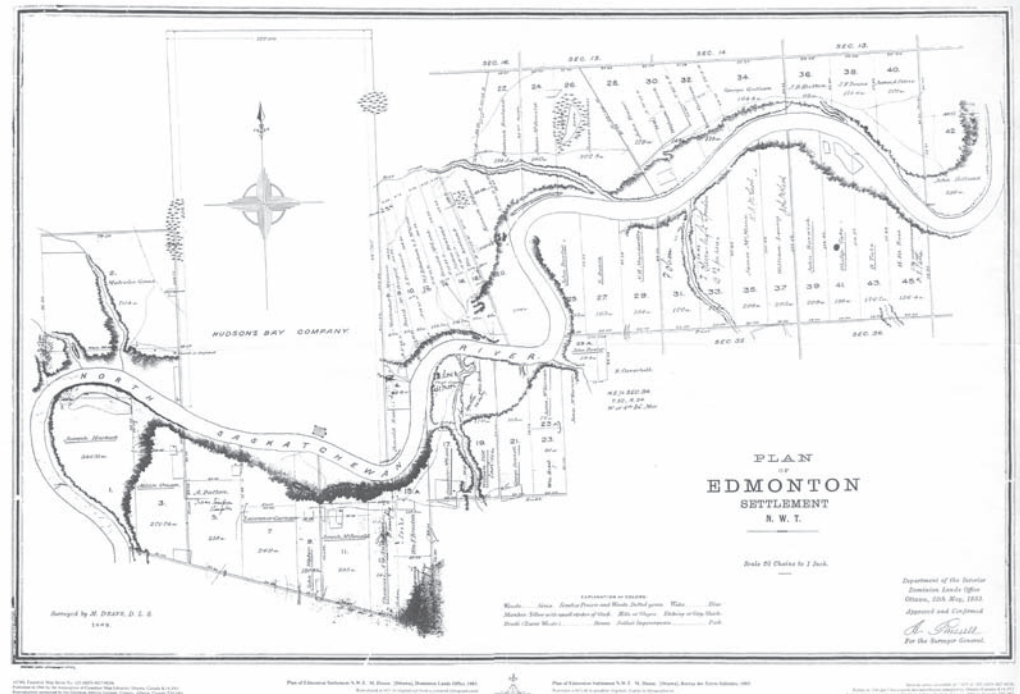
<sup>47</sup> W.F. King, 'Report of W. F. King, Esq., DLS, Special Survey,' Report of the Surveyor General of Dominion Lands, Part II, Annual Report of the Department of the Interior, 43 Victoria, For Year Ended June 1878, Ottawa: Maclean Roger and Co, 1879, pp. 15-20. King's notebook is held at the PAA. See PAA 83.376, Box 1, item 1. This is the notebook containing the astronomical observations taken in October-November 1877. The notebook containing the traverse was not reviewed and may be filed under Big Lake or St. Albert.

amongst those who are now taking up land in the country.<sup>48</sup> Finally, in 1881, the actual survey of the settlement began under Samuel Lucas.<sup>49</sup> Michael Deane carried on Lucas' survey of Edmonton Settlement in 1882 and an approved version of the survey was issued in May 1883.

Fig 5-6

Sketch of the Edmonton Settlement by Michael Deane, 1883.

CEA Plan of Edmonton Settlement



Deane's notebook and report provide information about the boundary line between the HBC reserve and the settlement and the land immediately east of it (and just east of the study area). His notes state that 'on the East boundary of the Hudson Bay Property the company has dedicated to the public 40 feet as a half road, I have laid off 26 feet more, making the road allowance west of Lots No. 4 and 6 sixty-

<sup>48</sup> Montague Aldous, 'Report of Montague Aldous, Esq., D.T.S. Standard Outline Survey,' Report of the Surveyor General of Dominion Lands, Part II, Annual Report of the Department of the Interior, 43 Victoria, For year ended June 1879, Ottawa: Maclean Roger and Co, 1880, p. 41. Aldous's field book and correspondence is held at the PAA. See PAA 83.376, Box 1, item 5 and PAA 85.34/2, Surveyor General's Correspondence, Letters from Montague Aldous, HBC, to Lindsay Russell, DM, Department of the Interior, 1882. The latter relates primarily to Aldous' return of equipment to the Surveyor General and wage claims. In June he informs Russell that is happily settled in his job with the HBC.

<sup>49</sup> Schedule Showing Dominion Land Surveyors Employed During Year Ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 1881,' in Annual Report of the Department of the Interior For Year Ended 30th June 1881. Ottawa: Maclean, Roger and Co, 1882, p. 25. The schedule lists Sam Lucas as being employed in surveying the Edmonton Settlement. His notebooks were not found at the PAA when the finding aid was searched by place name. His report was not published in the Department of the Interior's Annual Report for 1881 or 1882. Curiously Deane, on p. 5 of his report (see citation below), states that Malcolm Groat's claim (Lot 2) 'was surveyed some years ago.' Deane might be referring to work done by King or it is possible that Groat had a private survey done which was later confirmed by Deane.

six feet wide, thus encroaching as little as possible on Donald Ross' Hotel and the Methodist burying ground.' Deane's sketch shows the area of land cultivated by Ross overlapping the road allowance he described.<sup>50</sup> Neither the sketch nor the plan shows any details inside the reserve, apart from the location of the fort and overlapping natural features. River Lot 4 lies directly east of the HBC reserve and north of the river. It is labeled with Donald Ross's name and shows his hotel and the land he had under cultivation, in the northern part of the lot.

An additional twist to the story of survey is that in the autumn of 1881 the settlers of river claims 6-20 hired the HBC's surveyor, R. Bourne, to carry out a private survey of their lots.<sup>51</sup> Presumably they were tired of waiting for the federal government. At the same time as the federal government was surveying land for settlement it was also surveying Indian reserves. For example, across the river, in 1880 surveyors were defining the boundaries of the Papaschase reserve. In 1879-80, the population of Papaschase was 'made up of Indians, half-breeds, and a lot of 'absentees,' old women living at Fort Edmonton, who declared they will not move across the river to the reservation'<sup>52</sup>

Also at this time, the HBC organized a subdivision survey of its reserve at Edmonton in order to prepare for the sale of lands. Conducted in 1881, the plan was published by Montague Aldous in 1882. It is the only HBC plan to show the burial grounds on the flats. The story of this important survey is discussed in Chapter 6 below.<sup>53</sup>

### 5.3 Uses of Rossdale Flats

The sections above describe the general context of Fort Edmonton, sketching the character of its social and economic life. They also outline the initial process by which, after 1870, the HBC lands were defined and surveyed. This section provides a closer examination of how the Rossdale Flats (or Ross Flats), and the study area more specifically, were used during the fur trade period and during the early years of the establishment of the Edmonton settlement.

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<sup>50</sup> PAA, 83.376, Dominion Land Surveyors Notebooks, Box 3, item 3, Michael Deane, Edmonton Settlement, 1882. Deane is listed in the schedule published in the Annual Report of the Department of the Interior for as working on the survey in 1882. Lucas is not listed. No report was published of Deane's survey in 1883-85. See also City of Edmonton Archives, Plan of Edmonton Settlement. Survey by Michael Deane, 1882. Approved and confirmed Department of Interior Dominion Lands Office, 25<sup>th</sup> May 1883. EAM 53.

<sup>51</sup> NAC, RG 15, D-II-1, vol. 251, F. 31140, Plan Shewing River Claims 6-20, Edmonton. Signed A.W.K. Note: this is not a copy of Bourne's Plan, rather it is a comparison of Bourne's and Deane's Plans.

<sup>52</sup> Department of Indian Affairs Annual Report for Year Ended December 1880, Report of the Progress Made in the Survey of Indian Reserves in Treaty No. 6, Northwest Territories, George Simpson, Indian Reserve Survey, 1880, pp. 108-09.

<sup>53</sup> O'Riordan, pp. 14, 19. On this subject he cites the *Edmonton Bulletin*, 3 January 1881, the HBC's Edmonton Post Journals for various dates from 1877-85, and the Lifeways Report on Rossdale Unit 11.

In addition to being the sites of Fort Augustus / Edmonton House II and IV, the flats were also used for agriculture, camping, and the Fort's burial ground. Trails crossed the flats. By the 1870s, permanent residences stood on the east side of the flats, as well as above them, outside the Fort walls (and the study area). The intensity of each of these uses varies over time, as the needs of the Fort and the fur trade changed, as First Nations interests and alliances shifted, and as the entire society adapted to non-native settlement.

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*Readers should be aware that references to the 'flats' are not automatically a reference to the Rosdale Flats area.*

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These activities are described in numerous sources and depicted on maps and drawings. Care must be taken with each description, as most are imprecise about location. Readers should be aware that references to the 'flats' are not automatically a reference to the Rosdale Flats area. There were also flats to the southwest of Edmonton House V (Victoria Park Flats), which seem to have been used as well for agriculture and camping.<sup>54</sup> Fields were also established north of the Fort. Some sources describe activity as taking place 'above' or 'below' the fort and quotations from the post records refer to activity in the 'lower field(s).'<sup>55</sup>

## Agriculture and Camping

The earliest documented reference to agriculture at Rosdale Flats is associated with Edmonton House II. The traders planted barley, likely here, and returned to harvest it in 1810 from Fort Augustus / Edmonton House III, downriver at White Earth Creek.<sup>56</sup> A description of agriculture at Fort Augustus / Edmonton House IV, which was located on Rosdale Flats, is provided by James Bird in his report of 1815. He described the soil in the vicinity of Edmonton House as being 'a rich black mould of from one foot to eighteen inches in depth below which it becomes [river sand] at a depth of about three feet, nearly [illegible] sand is found.' He goes on:

The Garden at Edmonton House was made in the Spring of 1814 its produce last Fall was two hundred Bushels of Potatoes, fifty bushels of turnips, eighty bushels of barley, and two thousand three hundred cabbages. The increase of barley and potatoes about twenty fold. The fence around the garden was considerably enlarged last spring but all the new ground cannot be sown this season. Perhaps four times the extent of this garden might by degrees be brought into

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<sup>54</sup> See Marie Dorsey, comp., 'Possible Heritage Sites in the North Saskatchewan River Valley,' Report prepared for Heritage Site Services, Alberta Culture, Youth, and Recreation (September, 1974), p. 17 cited below. See also Frank Oliver's description of agriculture south and west of the fort.

<sup>55</sup> Saxberg et al. discuss this on pp. 5, 32-33.

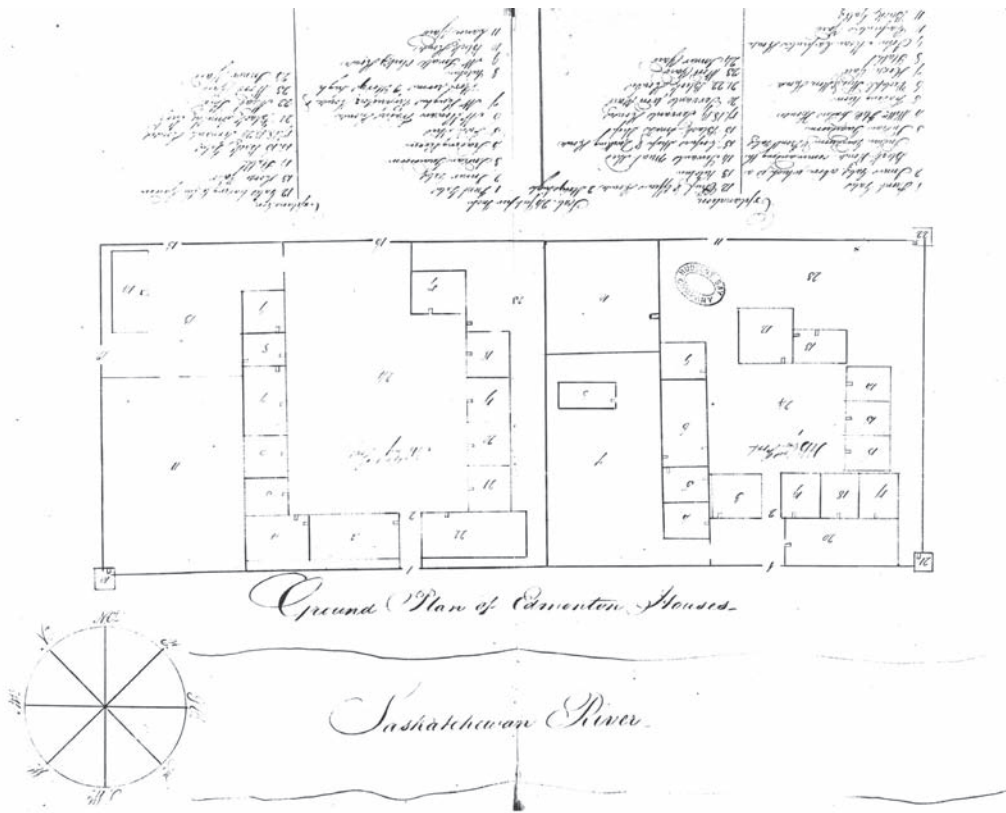
<sup>56</sup> MacGregor, p. 30.

cultivation without additional expence but the produce of a greater extent of ground ... would interfere with the necessary duties of the Men in the Autumn.<sup>57</sup>

Figure 5-7

Ground Pland of Edmonton House IV, by James Bird, 1815.

HBCA G.1/99



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Bird describes the moose and red deer that were ‘tolerably numerous’ in the Edmonton area and the use of ‘cellars fill’d with ice’ in the summer to keep the meat. The plan Bird attached to his report shows gardens directly adjacent to both forts. The Edmonton House Garden is considerably larger than the Fort Augustus garden. Alexander Ross later described the land surrounding the Fort built in 1812–13 as having ‘two large parks [fields].’ He added that ‘adjoining the cultivated fields is a very fine level race ground, of two miles or more in length.’<sup>58</sup>

<sup>57</sup> HBCA, B.60/e/1, James Bird, Edmonton Report, 1815. By 1818-20 there were ‘no more than 5 acres under cultivation at Edmonton.’ See B.60/e/3. Edmonton, Reports on Districts, 1818-20.

<sup>58</sup> Alexander Ross quoted in Frank Gilbert Roe, ‘Edmonton: A Century Ago,’ *Alberta Historical Review*, 12, no. 1 (Winter 1964), pp 11, 14.

Paul Kane painted Fort Edmonton V in 1846. Two of his works, a watercolour and an oil painting, are quite similar and show the study area in some detail. The watercolour shows teepees on the flat, just above a wide trail that parallels the river bank and leads up to the Fort, as well as immediately below the west wall of the fort. Demers and Blanchet's cross is shown just northeast of the fort wall, behind a fence. The oil painting is essentially the same, although the perspective is slightly different and a number of people occupy the image. The differences between the two are a clear reminder that while paintings are useful for general information, the artist can and will amend the composition to create the image he wants. Lieutenant Mervin Vavosour's plan of the Fort (1846) improves our understanding of where the Company was farming at the time, showing fields immediately east, west, and north of the Fort, above the flats.<sup>59</sup> An 1841 description of the farm at Fort Edmonton by Sir George Simpson tells us it had a large dairy herd and fields cropped with barley. There was also a garden for various root vegetables.<sup>60</sup>

Fig 5.8

*Watercolour view of Fort Edmonton, by Paul Kane, 1846.*

*Courtesy of the Starck Museum, Orange, Texas*



<sup>59</sup> HBCA G.1/192.

<sup>60</sup> Beatrice A. Ockley, 'A History of Early Edmonton,' M.A. Thesis (History), University of Alberta, 1932, p. 33.





Fig 5-9

*Engraving of Fort Edmonton by  
Walter Cheadle, 1862-63.*

*Glenbow Archives  
NA-789-107*

Dr. James Hector, a member of the Palliser Expedition, described the site and the state of the Fort's farm in 1858. The farm he saw then was smaller than it had been in the past. He suggests that the farm Vavosour drew in 1846 was also smaller than its earlier incarnation. Noting that 'along and below this point are large flats of rich land,' Hector went on to say that 'both were at one time under cultivation to a considerable extent; but now the farm attached to the establishment though the only one in the Saskatchewan is of small size not exceeding thirty acres. On the hill behind the fort stands a windmill.'<sup>61</sup> The extent and success of the agricultural operation is also described by Captain John Palliser. He relates, based on observations made in the fall of 1858, that 'little agriculture is carried on about Fort Edmonton, owing partially to want of acquaintance with even the leading principles of agriculture.'<sup>62</sup> A year later, Hector discussed with Chief Factor W.J. Christie the Company's plans to expand agricultural operations. He writes in the spring of 1859 that 'farming operations are now well advanced around the fort, and it was with much interest that I heard Mr. Christie's Plans for improving this post, and establishing agriculture on such a scale as to make the Company more independent of their half-breed employees.'<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Ockley, p. 59.

<sup>62</sup> Spry, ed. p. 339.

<sup>63</sup> Spry, *The Papers of the Palliser Expedition*, p. 391.

Hector also described the use of the lands surrounding the Fort for camping. He writes about the scene at Fort Edmonton in the spring of 1859, as the boats prepared to leave for the annual trip to Hudson Bay: ‘Outside the fort, however, the large motley encampments of Indians, voyageurs, and Lac St. Anne half breeds, with all their women and children, dogs and horses.’ According to Hector, ‘the crews of their boats bring their families to loiter round the fort and to see them off.’<sup>64</sup> He is not specific about the location of the camps. Dr. Walter Cheadle, in his account of travels in the northwest in 1862 and 1863, provides an engraving of Fort Edmonton in which tents, fields, and two outbuildings are visible on the slope east of the Fort.<sup>65</sup> Several tents are also shown pitched to the west. Cheadle had ‘found some amusement in visiting the tents of the Indians and half-breeds who were encamped near the Fort.’ Thomas Woolsey, in his account of his arrival at Edmonton in 1855, provides a sense of the size of these camps in describing his approach to ‘the Cree Indians who literally lined the beach, there being not less than 400 encamped near the Fort.’<sup>66</sup> Woolsey, who arrived on the 20th of September, noted that the Cree left at the end of the month.<sup>67</sup>

Terrance O’Riordan’s paper, ‘Straddling the Great Transition,’ provides an excellent overview of land use in the immediate vicinity of the Fort. He traces through the post journals the expansion of the farming operation in the 1860s and 1870s. O’Riordan states that the Company ‘developed additional fields near the fort on the top of the riverbank, in addition to extending their existing fields on the flats below.’<sup>68</sup> He describes a variety of agricultural pursuits in the vicinity of the Fort and makes frequent reference to fencing and other devices for defining property. He also refers to Indians camping on lands adjacent to the Fort and on the effect that had on the HBC’s farming activities. For example, one day in 1864, the post’s journal-keeper noted ‘a great many tents of Indians and Freeman coming in and pitching down here along side of our gardens, such a collection I am afraid will not add to the value of our potato field.’<sup>69</sup> O’Riordan argues that over time, as food became more scarce and less value was placed on First Nations people as trading partners and more on the trade of non-native settlers and on land as real estate, the Company became less tolerant of the damage that these residents did to its farm.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Spry, p. 392.

<sup>65</sup> Cheadle, p. 191. Engraving is opposite p. 183. A copy of the engraving is held by the NAC. The papers of Cheadle’s co-author, the Viscount Milton (William Fitzwilliam) are held at the Sheffield Archives, UK. There is no detailed online description of these papers.

<sup>66</sup> Dempsey, ed., *Heaven is Near the Rocky Mountains*, p. ix.

<sup>67</sup> Dempsey, ed., p. 26.

<sup>68</sup> O’Riordan, citing the Edmonton Post Journals, 1864–80, p. 14.

<sup>69</sup> O’Riordan, p. 13, quoting from Fort Edmonton Journal for 25 August 1864.

<sup>70</sup> O’Riordan, p. 14.

George M. Grant, who accompanied Sir Sanford Fleming on his early transcontinental railway surveys, described Fort Edmonton in 1872. His account addresses the agricultural achievements of the Company. He writes:

The Company works a large farm at Edmonton, and with a success that is encouraging ... they have raised wheat for thirty years, and it has failed only two or three times; barley and potatoes and turnips are sure crops ... a thousand bushels of wheat are usually stored from a sowing of a hundred; and last year, two hundred and fifty kegs of potatoes (eight gallon kegs used instead of bushels) were planted, and about five thousand were dug. The same land has been used for the farm for thirty years, without any manure worth speaking of being put on it. Part is intervale and part upland.<sup>71</sup> Grant also observed that ‘the usual difficulties from Indians camping near the fort has been experienced. A band of strange Indians come along, and, without the slightest idea that they doing anything objectionable, use the fences for tent poles or fuel; and their horse then getting into the fields destroy much of the crop.’

By this time the company had at least 50 acres in cultivation.<sup>72</sup>

Nancy Saxburg and her colleagues trace the locations of camps in the vicinity of the Fort. Saxberg asserts that ‘during the early history of Fort Edmonton V (1830s-1860s), the westernmost edge of the Rossdale Flats served as a camping area for local Aboriginal people trading at the Fort.’<sup>73</sup> Saxberg attempts to construct a chronology of camping activity on the flats in the 1860s-80s, arguing that in the 1870s this use was shifted to an area behind the fort, but is frustrated by lack of precision in the sources consulted.<sup>74</sup> This assertion is also undermined by the Petitot painting of Fort Edmonton which shows tents on the flats east of the Fort around 1876, and by at least one reference in the post journal to Indians camped ‘below the hill’ in 1873.<sup>75</sup> There is also a description of a thirst dance held on the flats below the fort in 1882.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> George M. Grant, *Ocean to Ocean, Sandford Fleming’s Expedition through Canada in 1872*. Enlarged and Revised edition. Reprinted by Charles E. Tuttle Co/MJ Hurtig, Tokyo, Japan, 1967, p. 183.

<sup>72</sup> HBCA, B60/b/3, Edmonton Correspondence Book, Folio 25. Letter from Richard Hardistry to Grahame, 30 October 1879.

<sup>73</sup> Saxberg et al., p. 7.

<sup>74</sup> Saxberg states that ‘by the late 1860s, the traditional Aboriginal campground had moved to a place behind the Fort on the high ground.’ This statement is not documented, although subsequent statements regarding the location of an encampment behind the Fort is documented as is information about aboriginals camping on the flats in the 1880s and Frank Oliver’s assertion that there had always been tents in the ‘valley around the fort.’ See Saxberg et al., p. 7.

<sup>75</sup> HBCA/B60/a/38, 30 October 1873

<sup>76</sup> Saxberg et al., p. 7 cites the *Edmonton Bulletin*, 8 July 1882.

## The Burial Ground

A third documented use of the flats during this period was as the burial ground used by the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Edmonton (previously Edmonton House) and likely also by the North West Company's Fort Augustus.<sup>77</sup> The Fort Edmonton burial ground, as it is commonly called, was located in Rosssdale, much of it within the boundaries of the Rosssdale Historical Land Use Study Area.

Figure 5-10

Members of the Edmonton community have placed wooden crosses on the site of the Fort Edmonton burial ground.

Photo 2002, H. Kalman



As stated in Section 1.1 above, one focus of the present study is to determine the location of the burial ground and the time periods in which it was used, consistent with the present report being a land use study. The findings of previous studies are cited and extended with the results of our own research and interpretation. It is important to note that there is not, at present, a larger literature on HBC cemeteries and burial practices to provide context for this discussion.<sup>78</sup>

Two recent archaeological and historical reports document this use. Both were prepared by Lifeways of Canada Limited, with Nancy Saxberg as the principal author. The first was prepared in 2000; the second was completed early in 2003 and is the more far-reaching of the two.<sup>79</sup> Saxberg and her colleagues consulted a range of sources, including the HBC Edmonton post journals and the Oblate order's burial records. The 2003 report 'consists of an overview of previously reported information on the cemetery, a discussion of recently uncovered archival documentation regarding the use of that plot of land as a graveyard, a preliminary historical outline of the different periods of use and discoveries in the twentieth century, and a list of the people thought

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*The Fort's burial ground was located in Rosssdale, much of it inside the study area boundaries.*

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<sup>77</sup> Components of the HBC records have been examined extensively by the present project team and by previous researchers and authors. NWC accounts that are accessible on line were searched, but further research in the NWC records was not conducted. As noted in Chapter 1, this study uses 'burial ground', 'cemetery', and 'graveyard' interchangeably.

<sup>78</sup> Personal Communication, Peter Francis, Archaeologist, Cultural Resources Services, Parks Canada, Calgary, Alberta, October 2003. Francis with John E.P. Porter presented a paper at the Canadian Archaeological Association's Annual Conference in May 2003 entitled 'Research and Management Issues Concerning Burial Grounds at Fur Trade National Historic Sites: The Case of Rocky Mountain House.'

<sup>79</sup> Nancy Saxberg, et al., 'Rosssdale Unit 11: Historical Resources Impact Assessment, 2000 Field Studies, Interim Final Report,' Report prepared for EPCOR Generation by Lifeways of Canada Limited (Calgary, 2000); Nancy Saxberg, Claire Bourges, Scott Haddow, and Brian Reeves, 'Fort Edmonton Burial Ground: An Archaeological and Historical Study.' Report prepared for EPCOR Generation by Lifeways of Canada Limited (Calgary, 2003). Future references in this chapter are to the 2003 report unless otherwise stated.

to be buried there.<sup>80</sup> The study explores in considerable detail the location of the graveyard, the likely periods of use, and the probable number and demographics (ethnicity) of the burials. The first two areas of investigation are very relevant to the present land use study; the last two are not.

Another significant research initiative into the burial ground has been undertaken by Philip Coutu of the Métis Nation of Alberta. Coutu has generously shared with the City of Edmonton and with the authors of the present study Appendix A of this unpublished and copyrighted report, 'Fort Edmonton Cemetery and Native Burial Ground: Burial Records.'<sup>81</sup> Coutu's appendix focuses primarily on the identification and enumeration of the burials. Since the ethnicity and number of burials are not addressed in the present land use study, Coutu's extensive research is not considered here.

The present study did not attempt to replicate the research undertaken by Saxburg and her colleagues nor by Coutu, but rather focussed on building on these initiatives by reviewing other sets of records.

The first clearly documented burial at the Fort Edmonton burial ground (presumed, but not certain, to be the graveyard demarcated in the Aldous survey of 1882; see Chapter 6) occurred in 1823. The first recorded death that may or may not have resulted in a burial here was in 1814. A NWC burial that occurred in 1801 is believed to have occurred elsewhere along the North Saskatchewan River.<sup>82</sup> It can be concluded that the first burial here could conceivably have occurred as early as 1799-1801, when the HBC and NWC established their posts in Rossdale Flats, but the first certain use of a burial ground was in 1823.

Both the documentary and the archaeological evidence point to the use of a single graveyard in the Edmonton area until 1864 (when a burial occurred in St. Albert) for all burials, regardless of race or creed, with Métis people dominating the list of documented burials, followed by Aboriginal people and Caucasians. It is important to appreciate that there are significant gaps in the record that preclude the creation of a comprehensive list of the people buried at Fort Edmonton. The records of the North West Company are scattered and while the HBC records are much more comprehensive, there are still gaps. For example, the post records for Edmonton have gaps that extend over many years (e.g. 1834-54).<sup>83</sup> Moreover, they do not list

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*The first clearly documented burial at the Fort Edmonton burial ground occurred in 1823.*

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<sup>80</sup> Saxberg et al., p. 3. Saxberg indicates in the report's introduction that all extant HBC Edmonton post journals for 1806-85 were consulted.

<sup>81</sup> Philip Coutu, 'Fort Edmonton Cemetery and Native Burial Ground: Burial Records,' Appendix A of an unpublished report, 2003; copyright 2003 by Philip Coutu and the Métis Nation of Alberta.

<sup>82</sup> Saxberg et al., pp. 4, 244.

<sup>83</sup> Saxberg et al, p. 47, list the missing journals.

all deaths and burials.<sup>84</sup> HBC burial registers do exist for other posts, but no burial register for Edmonton has yet been found in the records.<sup>85</sup>

There is also a scarcity of records related to the various missions established at Edmonton. The Oblates maintained burial registers that have survived,<sup>86</sup> but Rundle's and Woolsey's registers, if they ever existed, have not been located.<sup>87</sup> Likewise, the early records of the Methodist and Anglican churches in Edmonton, which begin in 1874, do not include burial registers.<sup>88</sup> In the absence of registers, researchers have consulted the journals and diaries of various missionaries. These do contain references to burials, but because most missionaries came and went from Edmonton in the course of their duties, it seems unlikely that these represent a comprehensive record.

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*The location of the burial ground is poorly defined in the HBC records. The only two maps to show it are the Aldous survey of 1882 and the Haddow map of 1919.*

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The issues here are not whether there was a burial ground in Rossdale, since the documentary and archaeological evidence clearly demonstrate that there was. The outstanding questions relate to when it was established, when it ceased to be used, whether it was moved over time, and whether there may have been more than one burial ground at any one time. Most importantly, there is the issue of boundaries and whether those marked on the early plans (introduced below) represent the full extent of the burials. Other questions of interest, but not in the context of the present study, are whether, at some point, the users of the burial ground changed and if the space within it was separated by race and/or creed.

The location of the burial ground is poorly defined in the HBC records. The earliest reference to its placement that has been found was written in 1824, when it was described in the post journal as being 'the burying place close to this Fort [Edmonton House IV].'<sup>89</sup> Since the fort was located at the time on the Rossdale flats, along the bank of the North Saskatchewan River, this description indicates that the burial ground was nearby. Later references in the post journals describe its site in relationship to the fields below the fort (Fort Edmonton V), confirming the notion that the burial ground was on the flats.<sup>90</sup> The painting by Father Émile Petitot, created around 1876 and cited above, also shows the burial ground on the flats. The first map to indicate the burial ground was the Montague Aldous survey,

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<sup>84</sup> Saxberg et al., p. 44.

<sup>85</sup> For example, in the course of reviewing HBCA B60/z/1 (catalogued as miscellaneous items for Edmonton), burial registers were located for Eastmain, Quebec, on the shores of James Bay.

<sup>86</sup> Saxberg et al., pp. 43-44

<sup>87</sup> Dempsey, p. viii.

<sup>88</sup> *A Guide to the Archives of the United Church of Canada, Alberta and Northwest Conference*, Lorraine Mychajlunow and Keith Stotyn comp, (Edmonton : United Church of Canada, Alberta and Northwest Conference, 1991.) The unpublished finding aid for the Anglican Church Records for the Diocese of Edmonton (PAA) begin indicates that burial registers for All Saints Church begin in 1894.

<sup>89</sup> Saxberg et al., p. 50.

<sup>90</sup> Saxberg et al., p. 5.

drawn in 1881 and published in 1882, and discussed below in Chapter 6. It shows a single burial ground on the flats, near the location of Edmonton House IV and within the study area. A second – and the only other – map to indicate the location of the burial ground was drawn by City Engineer A.D. Haddow in 1919 and is known from a redrafting of 1934 in the City records; this, too, is discussed in Chapter 6. Haddow's location is similar to Aldous's, although Haddow delineates a trapezoid rather than a rectangle.



Figure 5-11

*Painting of Fort Edmonton and Rosedale Flats by Father Émile Petitot, created around 1876.*

*Courtesy of the Alberta Legislature Library*

Related to the question of location is that of the period of use. It is not clear when the burial ground shown in the Petitot painting and on the 1882 survey was established (see above). Likewise, it is not clear precisely when it was abandoned. Saxberg et al. maintain that Roman Catholics were buried at St. Albert from 1864, and that after 1871 most Protestants were buried at the Methodist mission up the hill.<sup>91</sup> They were able to trace the removal of one burial, that of Colin Fraser, from the HBC burial ground to the Methodist mission and thence to the Edmonton Cemetery, which opened in 1886. They did not locate records relating to any other removals and, in fact, found that removals previously assumed to have been from the HBC graveyard to the Edmonton Cemetery were in fact removals from the Methodist Cemetery.

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<sup>91</sup> Saxberg et al. provide a good discussion of the development of Edmonton's cemeteries. See pp. 5, 13-17, 39-41.

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*Saxberg et al. discern three separate periods of use, but the evidence does not indicate the specific dates.*

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Archaeological evidence relating to the period(s) of use is equivocal. No date could be provided for the disarticulated skeleton recovered by archaeologist Sheila Minni in the 1980s, during her monitoring studies in the area considered to be the principal burial ground.<sup>92</sup> The ages of the five skeletons recovered by the University of Alberta in 1967 could only be assigned relative ages, based on the condition of the bone, during the analysis completed Nancy Lovell and Aaron Dublenko.<sup>93</sup> The archaeological studies conducted by Saxberg et al. attempted to base an estimate of the date of the interments on variations in burial practices, particularly their orientation.<sup>94</sup> They provisionally identified an early phase of burial during which interments were oriented north-south in relatively shallow excavations, suggesting an aboriginal pattern prior to the establishment of a perimeter fence. During a possible middle phase, interments were oriented more along the orientation of the northeast-southwest fence. During a final phase, when the cemetery became quite crowded, interments frequently overlapped with or intersected earlier burials. None of these identified periods of use was assigned a specific time period nor associated with any of the iterations of forts in the Rossdale area.<sup>95</sup>

The contention that the Fort Edmonton burial ground was essentially abandoned after 1864, or surely after 1871, is reinforced by documentation related to burials at the Methodist mission and to the establishment of new cemeteries in the 1880s in response to a perceived urgent need for a 'public cemetery' and complaints that there was no 'suitable place' to bury the dead apart from 'the Methodist Grave Yard.'<sup>96</sup> An article in the *Edmonton Bulletin* of 1882 states that 'the only burying ground here, in use at present, is that of the Methodist Mission ... the fact of its denominational character is a bar to its general use.'<sup>97</sup> This last points suggests that the Fort Edmonton burial ground was no longer in use and raises the question of where those without a denominational affiliation — in particular

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<sup>92</sup> 'Osteological Analysis of Human Remains from the Old Fort Edmonton Cemetery (FjPi 63),' in S.J. Minni, 'Final Report, FjPi 63, Archaeological Monitoring (Permit 81-044),' 1981, Appendix 1, on file in Archaeological Survey, Edmonton.

<sup>93</sup> Nancy C. Lovell and Aaron A. Dublenko, 'Further Aspects of Fur Trade Life Depicted in the Skeleton,' *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology*, 9, pp. 248-56.

<sup>94</sup> Saxberg et al, pp. 221-2.

<sup>95</sup> It should be noted that assignment of the specific age of an interment based on archaeological evidence is particularly difficult. Radiocarbon dating provides too coarse a scale to permit assignment of accurate calendar dates and is technically problematic for the historic period. Bone condition depends on the specific characteristics of the surrounding soil both in terms of its chemistry and the periodicity of moisture levels. Perhaps the best way of determining age is through analysis of associated material remains that may be included in a grave. However, few grave goods have been recovered in certain association with interments in the Fort Edmonton burial ground. Consequently, the age of the interments would be considered speculative, based on the archaeological evidence.

<sup>96</sup> Application to incorporate the Edmonton Cemetery Company, 1886, NAC RG95, Vol. 2468, File 302-1, cited by Saxberg et al., p. 6.

<sup>97</sup> Saxberg et al., pp. 6-7, including quote from the *Edmonton Bulletin*, 6 May 1882.



non-Christians — were being buried.<sup>98</sup> This is an important question given the importance attached by the non-native community in the late nineteenth century to race and religion. In the European tradition, burial grounds are associated with denominations and an in-ground burial consecrated by the Church to which the deceased belonged was considered essential to the well-being of the deceased soul. Obviously, this practice became possible in Edmonton only with the emergence of distinct denominational burial grounds and the availability of clergy.

In the early nineteenth century in Edmonton, people who died were buried without any clergy present. After 1838 the presence of clergy was possible, but sporadic, as missionaries came and went. The burial records reviewed by Saxberg et al. make it clear that some people associated with Fort Edmonton who died on the prairie were brought back to the Fort for burial, but it is not clear whether this was done systematically. The documentary record consistently refers to the burial of corpses and often cites the construction of coffins.

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*HBC records are  
curiously silent on the  
subject of the burial  
ground.*

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Despite the evidence for the abandonment of the Fort Edmonton burial ground in the 1860s or 1870s, the information about where burials took and the state of the HBC burial ground at this time is still somewhat contradictory and inconclusive. We may cite some examples. The diary of the Reverend Arthur Whiteside contains an entry dated 6 November 1876, in which he states he ‘performed the burial service over the remains of the late Mrs. Annie Tayler Bennett ... over her grave in the Church of England Burying ground.’<sup>99</sup> No location is cited in Whiteside’s diary, but this clearly suggests that the Methodist burying ground was not the only one.<sup>100</sup> Petitot’s painting of around 1876 shows the graveyard on Rossdale flats neatly fenced and clearly not in ruin, suggesting that the abandoned state of the cemetery described by trader John A. McDougall and cited by Saxberg et al. occurred later than this.<sup>101</sup>

Other evidence suggests that during this period of transition, during which many issues of land use and ownership remained unsettled, the burial ground on the flats continued to be used sporadically, especially for First Nations people. This is supported by its having later been remembered as the ‘Indian Burial Ground’ (see

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<sup>98</sup> Saxberg et al. p. 248. There are a small number of deaths between 1872-1884 listed in the post journals that Saxberg could not trace to a burial place. Three of these are of Indians and two are simply references to coffins. The Indians may or may not have been Christian.

<sup>99</sup> British Columbia Archives, Reverend Arthur Whiteside fonds, 1865-1923, Diary, 1876.

<sup>100</sup> William Newton, *Twenty Years on the Saskatchewan, N.W. Canada*, (London: E. Stock, 1897), p. 63. According to Newton he first applied to the HBC to buy land for a ‘church and burial ground’ within the Reserve, but was turned down.

<sup>101</sup> Saxberg et al., p. 6.

below). Most First Nations people in the West did not convert to Christianity until after 1885 so whether they would have been buried at any of the Christian burial grounds (e.g. Roman Catholic or Methodist) is questionable.<sup>102</sup>

In order to build on, rather than repeat, the work undertaken by others, the primary research done for the present project paid particular attention to the HBC's land and survey records relating to Edmonton in the post-1870 period. The expectation was that as the HBC put its affairs in order following the sale of Rupert's Land, the burial ground would be discussed. Unfortunately, no such discussions were found in the records reviewed; indeed, the documents are curiously silent on the subject. (This is discussed further below in relationship to land development and the sale of the burial ground property.) The personal papers of a number of HBC personnel, including Chief Factor Richard Hardisty, were also reviewed and shed no further light on the burial ground.

What is clear in the published and unpublished record is that the establishment of community facilities outside the Fort, such as churches, occurred gradually and sporadically and was constrained by the absence of a survey of the settlement and by a shortage of cash. For example, the Methodist mission, established in 1871, had no minister in 1881, and in the 1880s the mission's site was the subject of competing land claims.<sup>103</sup> All this time, the *Edmonton Bulletin* reported, 'the little graveyard was receiving occupants.'<sup>104</sup> Likewise, the Anglicans made plans to build a church west of the Fort in 1875, but Canon William Newton describes in some detail the problems he had securing a site and raising money. Although the church was built, it was eventually abandoned.<sup>105</sup> It was also during this period of transition, in 1875, that the Roman Catholic Church was asked by the HBC to relocate St. Joachim Chapel to a site off Company lands, which was done.<sup>106</sup> While relocation of this kind was part of a pattern of institutional establishment outside the fort in the 1870s (Methodist Mission, Anglican Church, St. Joachim), the issue of removing the Chapel had been raised as early as 1864 by Chief Factor Christie.<sup>107</sup> In the context of the burial ground, it is worth noting that the first

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<sup>102</sup> Sarah Carter, *Aboriginal People and Colonizers of Western Canada to 1900* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 78-82.

<sup>103</sup> NAC, RG 15, D-II-1, volume 251, f 31140. McDougall Claim to Methodist Church property at Edmonton, 1883-1885.

<sup>104</sup> 'The Church Property,' *Edmonton Bulletin*, 4 March 1882.

<sup>105</sup> Newton, pp. 61-67.

<sup>106</sup> France Levasseur-Ouimet, *Les Oblats de Marie Immaculée dans l'ouest et le nord du Canada, 1845-1967* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1995) pp. 38-39.

<sup>107</sup> Archives Deschâtelets, Ottawa, HE 2221.T122/131. Copy of letter from Archives de l'archevêché de St. Boniface (1503). Letter from Father Albert Lacombe to Mgr. Taché, St. Albert, 10 March 1864. Lacombe wrote 'Il y a quelques jours, Mr. Christie m'a proposé de nous bâtir un autre église (à notre goût) hors de fort, et de lui céder celle de St. Joachim, pour en faire un magasin.' A subsequent letter, the same collection, from Constantine Scollen, who taught at the school, to Mgr. Taché states that 'the final decision of removing our Church out of the fort, will be put into execution in the course of the next month.' See item He 2221. T122/208. Letter dated 29th December 1864.

documented attempt, in 1882, to establish the Edmonton Cemetery failed. At that time (and again in 1886, when the cemetery was at last established) Richard Hardisty, the Chief Factor at Edmonton in 1872-82 and 1885-88, took an active role in community efforts to establish it.<sup>108</sup> One piece of evidence that does surface, in the annual reports of the Department of Indian Affairs, is that by 1882 the HBC had withdrawn from the provision of coffins for First Nations people. The Indian Agent at Edmonton wrote in his 1883 report that ‘the Hudson Bay Company formerly supplied them [Indians] with coffins; they now look to the Government to do the same, which in absence of authority I have been unable to do. This has caused much bitter feeling and complaints against me, as they cannot understand that I have no power to procure such things for them.’<sup>109</sup>

Figure 5-12

First Nations people at  
Rossdale.

Provincial Archives of Alberta  
B6649



SECTION 5.3  
USES OF ROSSDALE FLATS

<sup>108</sup> Richard Hardisty was one of the ‘provisional directors’ of the Edmonton Cemetery Company appointed in 1886. See NAC RG 95 vol 2468, f. 301-1, Edmonton Cemetery Company. See also John Prociuk, ‘A Walk Through Time, Edmonton Municipal Cemeteries: Their History and Value’ (np: c. 1980s), p. 3. Hardisty was also one of the four people to sign an application submitted to the federal government in 1882 to establish a cemetery at Livingstone Creek. A catholic cemetery, St. Joachim’s, was established in 1888 on the Groat estate, west of Fort Edmonton.(105 Avenue at 117 Street). Saxberg et al. discuss the evolution of Edmonton’s cemeteries on pp. 13-16.

<sup>109</sup> W. Anderson, Indian Agent, Edmonton, Treaty No. 6, N.W.T., 20 July 1883; *Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports* for Year Ended 31 December 1883, p. 78. <http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/indianaffairs>, accessed June 2003.

Was the burial ground forgotten? Saxburg et al. cite photos that may show First Nations groups camping in the grove of trees associated with the burial ground after 1900. The authors suggest that since First Nations people would not knowingly camp on a burial ground, they were there because they did not know about the area's previous use. This seems unlikely, given the oral history evidence and the enduring memory of the cemetery within the community. A review of the photographs reveals that while it is certain that a grove of trees is associated with the burial ground, its not so clear that the images of people camping on the flats show them among the very same trees.<sup>110</sup> Maps and photographs of the study area show that several treed areas existed as late as 1912. The encampments therefore do not necessarily indicate that the burial ground had been forgotten, and the oral history suggests that it was not.

## Other Possible Burial Grounds

More problematic is the scattered evidence that may point to there having been a second burial ground. Whether the two were physically separate or merely distinct areas within a common burial ground is as unclear as the chronology. That there may have been separate areas is certainly plausible, especially in the later nineteenth century, given that racial boundaries hardened considerably at that time.<sup>111</sup> The archaeological evidence compiled by Saxberg et al. certainly shows, however, that at some periods the different ethnic groups were not separated within the burial ground. Colin Fraser's removal from the Fort Edmonton burial ground in 1871, cited above, is intriguing and suggests some kind of racial and/or religious 'sorting' was underway, perhaps mirroring the sorting of property rights and access to resources that was occurring during this period of transition (see above, Section 5.1).

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*Violet Wilson and others  
report an Aboriginal  
burial ground on the  
'upper flat.'*

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One previously undiscussed source appears to be clear in describing a second burial ground. This is an oral history by Violet Wilson, who was born in 1890 and grew up in Edmonton near Rossdale Flats, leaving the city to go to school at some time after 1900. Interviewed by Naomi Radford in 1970, she was asked about the 'first graveyard.' In response to Radford's question, Wilson described the site of the graveyard. The following is a transcription of her response:

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<sup>110</sup> Images showing trees at the site of the cemetery: 1. Emile Petitot, c. 1876, 2. PAA B5103 (Plate 21 in Saxburg et al), 3. PAA B5585 (Plate 22 in Saxburg et al.), 4. PAA B5140 (Plate 80 in Saxburg et al.), 5. PAA B5149 (Plate 81 in Saxburg et al). Images showing people camping on the flats near or in trees: 1. PAA B882 (Plate 3 in Saxburg et al). PAA B6648 (Plate 4 in Saxburg et al. this is the only image that could be of people camping among the trees associated with the cemetery, however the river is not visible in this picture and a comparison of this photograph with PAA B5133 (Plate 79) suggests that the camp is higher up the flat and further west.

<sup>111</sup> For a general discussion of this, and its impact on the fur trade community, see Carter, pp78-82, where she discusses the impact of these hardening boundaries on the social status of the native or Métis wives of white fur traders and their children in the context of Red River.

Yes, exactly. You know there were two flats. In fact, first, the big white house, always known as the Big House, the Hudson Bay House [Naomi Radford interjects: the Hardisty House on top of the hill]. Well, it was never known at the Hardisty House, the Hardisty House, really as I've always known it was on 104<sup>th</sup>, 103<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> Street. But, it was always called the Big House, it was the Hudson Bay House, really, a big white house. Later of course they had slides and it was a club and various things. But, anyway, below that was the flat, and then down to the lower flat there was a gravel pit, on this way to the lower flat, where later the race course was, and then, much later, the powerhouse. But, the Indian Graveyard, was just above where the gravel pit was, on the flat. As if, you came up here, it was about half way between the rise of the hill for the Big House, and the gravel pit. And that was all absolutely bare flat. Everywhere there. There were no trees or anything, except this one little group of trees and the trail wound past that to get down to the old Hudson Bay fort.<sup>112</sup>

Further on in the interview, Wilson describes mushroom-picking on 'the upper flat, around where the little cemetery was, and below the big house.'

In some aspects Wilson's description conforms to others, especially the reference to the trees, but in other ways, it does not. For example, the description of the site as being on the 'upper flat' and 'above the gravel pit' does not conform with the location of the burial ground that appears on Aldous's 1882 survey. Certainly, if Wilson's gravel pit refers to the known location of the City's gravel pit, which was situated in 1903 between 106 and 107 Streets, then her description would suggest that this 'Indian Graveyard' was near or just west of 107 Street. And if Wilson's description is interpreted as placing the graveyard on an upper flat, a look at the escarpments drawn on the Aldous map clearly shows an upper plateau from 106 (Sixth) Street west to Fort Edmonton V, extending both east and north of the fort, with (what is now known as) the Hardisty House higher on the hill, just to the north. The location of the burial ground on the upper flat would have been about half way between the Legislature and the Terrace Building of today (see Map 7, Appendix 5).

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<sup>112</sup> PAA 70.170. Violet Wilson interviewed by Naomi Radford, in Victoria, British Columbia, 1970. (Note: at the PAA the interview is filed under Violet's father's name, Dr. Charles Wilson. It does not appear under her name in the card file.) The long quotation was at tape stop 244. The discussion regarding who was buried in the graveyard goes on from tape stop 244-55. The mushroom-picking is described at tape stop 505. Wilson is quite articulate. On occasion, during the interview, she politely, but very firmly, disagrees with assertions made by Radford. Radford's interest in the topic of the Indian graveyard surfaces in other interviews she conducted. Time did not permit a systematic review of all of her interviews. Researchers should be aware that the PAA holds more than one copy of this interview and that if the first one provided proves unintelligible, as it did in our case, they should ask for the other.

Wilson indicates that she walked through this graveyard on her way from her home to the fort, where she went to pick up supplies for her mother. Earlier in the interview she indicates that her family lived on 106 Street from 1889 onward.<sup>112a</sup> It seems logical that her trip ‘down to the fort’ would take her west from 106 Street, rather than east to 105 Street (towards the burial ground shown in the Aldous survey). Further work on the location of trails and gravel pits might provide clarification.

Wilson does assert that although the graveyard ‘wasn’t being used,’

there were still two or three, well, corpses up in the trees, and on the ground, were coffins, or they’d been bound, I don’t know exactly which, but the bones of the Indians were still there, lying on the ground. And as children we thought the place was haunted, we always took each other hands and ran, didn’t look at them, terrified. It was there actually and it was there until I was a big girl. I would say it there until I’d almost gone to school.

Wilson observations of corpses in the trees is consistent with the burial practices of some plains First Nations, including both the Cree and Blackfoot,<sup>113</sup> who were the most likely Aboriginal contributors to the Fort Edmonton burial ground. Wilson’s is the only known description of these practices being carried on at Fort Edmonton. Radford and Wilson also discussed who was buried in the graveyard. Wilson states that she ‘didn’t know that any white people had ever been buried there,’ but when Radford informs her that Lillian Hardisty says they were, she concedes that Hardisty would know. However, she also reiterates that ‘we always called it the Indian Burial’ and that there were no headstones.<sup>114</sup>

Wilson’s assertions are important for two reasons: they suggest that there might have been more than one burial ground, and they describe in some detail the use of traditional burial practices at Fort Edmonton.

It must be remembered that this information is contained in an oral history that was recorded long after the experience. The quality of oral history depends on both the interviewer and the rigour of her/his questioning strategy, as well as the interviewee’s memory. Oral history interviews are, at a certain level, staged events, in which both parties have expectations, both social and informational, that can

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<sup>112a</sup> The Wilson family lived at 295 6th (106) Street, just below Hardisty (98) Avenue (CEA, City Directories).

<sup>113</sup> See, for example, David G. Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree: An Ethnographic, Historical and Comparative Study*, Canadian Plains Studies, 9 (University of Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1979), pp. 151-52; Kenneth E. Kidd, *Blackfoot Ethnography*, Archaeological Survey of Alberta, Manuscript Series No. 8 (Edmonton: Alberta Culture, Historical Resources Division, 1986), pp. 58-63.

<sup>114</sup> Radford’s comments suggest that she interviewed Lillian Hardisty and discussed the cemetery with her. A cursory search under ‘Hardisty’ did not produce this interview, but it may be under another name.

influence the end result. (This is not restricted to oral history; most records are in some way staged and controlled.) Caveats aside, Violet Wilson's reminiscences provide potentially credible information about a second burial ground on higher ground at Rosedale Flats.

Some other sources also point to what might be interpreted as a second burial ground on higher ground. A watercolour sketch by Paul Kane (Figure 5-8), painted in 1846, shows a large cross, which appears to be surrounded by a fence, north of the fort.<sup>115</sup> This has been interpreted by some people as indicating the presence of a burial ground. However, Saxberg et al. maintain that the cross was likely that erected by Fathers Norbert Blanchet and Modeste Demers in 1840, in the French Canadian tradition of placing crosses on a hill, and was not related to a burial ground.<sup>116</sup>

This is contradicted in Jean Murray Cole, *Exile in the Wilderness*, where the author states that the three young sons of Jane McDonald and Chief Factor Archibald McDonald, who died at Fort Edmonton in 1845, were buried beneath the great cross erected by Blanchet and Demers.<sup>117</sup> This would support the possibility of a second burial ground on the higher land near the Fort. The letters of Archibald McDonald, edited in a second book by Cole, relay the news of the children's deaths and their burial at Fort Edmonton, but there is no reference to the cross.<sup>118</sup> While alluring, Cole's statement in *Exile in the Wilderness* is not documented.

Yet another ambiguous source is an interview with a Mr. R.W.P. Jones carried in the *Edmonton Journal* of 1958, which described the site of an 'Indian burial ground' separate from a 'white burial ground,' and extending 'west beyond 105 St., to the approximate site where the city is stripping black soil adjacent to the grade of the old Edmonton, Dunvegan and British Columbia Railway'<sup>119</sup> While imprecise, the railway grade was on higher land and so this report is not inconsistent with the idea of an Aboriginal burial ground on the 'upper flat.' Another piece of evidence that may support this was an 'old timer' recalling in 1943 that the earliest cemetery in the area was on 'what is now called Capitol Hill.'<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> J. Russell Harper, ed., *Paul Kane's Frontier* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), Plate XXV; cited in Saxberg et al., p. 33.

<sup>116</sup> Saxberg et al., p. 34. See above, Section 6.1.

<sup>117</sup> Jean Murray Cole, *Exile in the Wilderness, The Biography of Chief Factor Archibald McDonald, 1790-1853*, (Burns and MacEachern, n.d.): plates between pp. 108-109.

<sup>118</sup> Jean Murray Cole, ed., *This Blessed Wilderness: Archibald McDonalds Letters from the Columbia, 1822-44* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001), p. 253. The references to the two books by Cole were kindly provided by Catherine C. Cole.

<sup>119</sup> Ted Bowell, 'Pioneer Find Timbers from Fort, Reveals Site of Indian Cemetery,' *Edmonton Journal*, 13 May 1958, kindly provided by Duncan Fraser; also referred to and dismissed in Saxberg et al., p. 35.

<sup>120</sup> *Edmonton Bulletin*, 11 May 1943; the 'old timer' was Ella Walker, author of *Fortress North*. See also the further discussion of the burial ground in Chapter 6.

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*While it is possible that there may have been two or more graveyards in Rosssdale, the evidence is scanty, sometimes unreliable, and generally inconclusive.*

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All this must, however, remain speculative. Aside from Violet Wilson's reminiscence, which can be interpreted in various ways, there is no historical documentation or archaeological evidence for a second cemetery on the raised ground northwest of the demarcated burial ground. In four years of archaeological field school working in this area, no human remains have been encountered.<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, much of this ground has been very much disturbed for construction of the Legislature Buildings and subsequent government structures, and so it is unlikely that a definitive answer can be attained.

There is also archaeological evidence of yet additional burials that may be extensions to, if not within, the demarcated Fort Edmonton burial ground. Human burials occurred east of the former perimeter fence of the burial ground, although the remains found to date appear to occur relatively near the fence.<sup>122</sup> There are also unconfirmed indications that human remains may occur in undisturbed condition within the EPCOR transformer switchyard.<sup>123</sup> Further, Saxberg et al. recovered disturbed human skeletal material in fill in an excavation approximately 130 m east of the cemetery perimeter fence in 2001.<sup>124</sup> Together this evidence suggests that, while the perimeter fence may define the greatest concentration of burials, it is likely that burials took place east of this area and that the original burial ground was larger than the demarcated area indicates. Past disturbances that resulted in displacement of human remains have extended the likelihood of scattered bone occurring over an undefined area within the EPCOR power plant.

Oral history interviews with Christina McKnight and Kenneth Kinnaird, discussed in Chapter 6 below, support this notion of the burial ground extending east of the demarcated burial ground on EPCOR property.

There was certainly a burial ground in and around the area indicated on the Aldous survey, beneath Rosssdale Road. Further information on its likely location is contained in the chapters that follow. While it is possible that there may have been two or more graveyards in Rosssdale, the evidence is scanty, sometimes unreliable, and generally inconclusive; and the opportunities to pursue it further are slight.

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<sup>121</sup> Heinz Pyszczyk to Brian Ronaghan in conversation, 30 September 2003.

<sup>122</sup> Saxberg et al., figure 43.

<sup>123</sup> Saxberg et al., table 1, p. 242.

<sup>124</sup> Saxberg et al., pp. 93-95 and figure 20.



# LOCAL HISTORY

# 6

## Overview

This chapter focuses on the history of the study area and, to a lesser extent, the larger Rossdale flats since the late nineteenth century. The focus is on how the study area has been used and how these uses evolved over time. Two major threads are identified: the use of the study area for community-wide purposes, such as cross-valley transportation and the baseball field; and the development of the local neighbourhood and its facilities, such as the Rossdale Recreation Ground. How these two threads have intersected, overlapped, and come into conflict is also addressed. Some other uses, such as agriculture and camping, endured from earlier eras.

The HBC's land development policies towards Rossdale up to 1930 are examined. The decisions made by the HBC had a profound and lasting impact on the study area. The gradual transfer of ownership of land from the HBC to the City and into private hands sheds light on how both the HBC and the City saw the flats. Over time the HBC moved from regarding it as valuable real estate that could become an industrial estate, to land that was barely saleable for low-cost housing, and finally as parkland. The City in turn was interested in the land for park and transportation infrastructure and for the development and expansion of its power utility.

A chronology of ownership and use of the property containing the demarcated burial ground is constructed. Most of it was likely farmed in the early twentieth century under lease from the HBC. The land was sold to the City of Edmonton in 1930 and Rossdale Road was constructed shortly after. In 1954 the property east of Rossdale Road was transferred to the power utility. The text also addresses the manner in which Edmontonians in general, and the City more specifically, have alternately remembered and forgotten the Fort Edmonton burial ground.

6.1  
LAND SURVEY AND  
TRANSPORTATION

6.2  
INSTITUTIONS, UTILITIES,  
ROADS, AND AMENITIES

6.3  
THE ROSSDALE NEIGHBOURHOOD

## *6.1 Land Survey and Transportation*

Beginning in the late nineteenth century, a mixed pattern of land use emerged in Rossdale. This reflected, in part, the modest social status of its residents, the ambitions of its landowners, and visions of what the river valley might best be used for.

While Rossdale was a defined place, it also formed part of larger Edmonton (incorporated as a town in 1892 and a city in 1904) and was used to serve that larger community. An electrical generating station was built here in 1902 and a water treatment plant was added in 1903. Roads, a railway line, and bridges all served to link it to the larger urban fabric. Just as Edmonton, at the regional level, was an important supply and distribution centre along a transportation route, Rossdale, at the local level, played an integral role in Edmonton's history.

The pattern of property ownership in the Rossdale Historic Land Study Area is of interest for a number of reasons. First, it provides an access point to information about land use. Secondly, correspondence regarding sales or proposed uses of property provides information about how landowners — including the City of Edmonton — saw Rossdale fitting into the urban fabric of Edmonton. Thirdly, it provides a useful chronology that helps us order our understanding of Rossdale's history. The focus of this discussion is on the land that falls within the study area. It is useful to note that the boundaries of the study area are a direct product of the history of property acquisition.

Adjacent developments also had an impact on the study area. It might be argued that the study area is made up of the lands that were left over after these other adjacent uses had been developed — a hole in the middle of a doughnut. Of particular interest is the disposition by the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) of the property that lies between the North Saskatchewan River and 98 (formerly Hardisty) Avenue and between 104 Street and 101 Street (the eastern boundary of the HBC Reserve as surveyed by W.S. Gore in 1873).<sup>1</sup> Part lies within the study area and the rest is adjacent; much is taken up by the City's water treatment plant and the EPCOR power plant. Also of interest is the land to the west, south of 97 Avenue and east of the former Fort Edmonton V; this land now forms part of the grounds of the Alberta Legislature.

### **Survey**

The HBC did its best to profit from disposing of its reserve lands. Although the boundaries had been surveyed by Gore in 1873 (Figure 5-4), it was not until 1881 that the work of subdividing it for sale began. The subdivision survey was initiated

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<sup>1</sup> Gore's 1873 survey of the fur trade reserve and the survey work carried on outside the reserve in Edmonton settlement by dominion surveyors are described in Chapter 5.

by Charles John Brydges, who was in charge of the HBC's land department. The decision regarding what to survey for subdivision and sale and what land to retain for the 'trade' was made by Brydges in consultation with Richard Hardisty, the Chief Factor.<sup>2</sup>

The actual survey work began in June 1881 with the issuance of instructions to R. Bourne, DLS (Dominion Land Surveyor), by J.S. Dennis Jr., DTS (Dominion Topographical Surveyor), Winnipeg, regarding 'laying out a town-plot' at Fort Edmonton. Bourne was expected to take about three months to complete the work, including travel to and from Winnipeg.<sup>3</sup> The memorandum accompanying this letter provides more detailed instructions, telling Bourne to 'lay off tiers of blocks' and instructing him to leave 'sufficient reservation on each side of the Fort, as may be required by Mr. Hardisty.' Each block was to contain twenty lots of '150 ft depth by 50 feet in width, divided by a lane 20 feet wide' and streets were to be 80 feet wide. Bourne was instructed to lay out no more than 600 lots.<sup>4</sup>

Bourne achieved this in 1881, surveying 400 lots that 'were sold out in 2 days.'<sup>5</sup> The HBC's Land Commissioner was optimistic that if more could be surveyed in 1882 then more could be sold. In December 1881 Richard Hardisty wrote to Chief Commissioner James Grahame in Winnipeg, informing him that Bourne had just left, and that he had purchased lots on 'main street which runs east and west from the back of the Methodist Church to Dr. Newton's church' for a store.

Montague Aldous, who joined the HBC's survey office in 1882 after a stint working on contract for the federal government, was charged with continuing the survey work begun by Bourne.<sup>6</sup> By the end of 1882 he was able to report to Brydges

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<sup>2</sup> Letter from Charles Brydges, Winnipeg, 17 August 1883, to William Armit, Secretary, HBC, London. Brydges wrote: 'Mr. Hardisty, who was in charge at Edmonton agreed as to where the reserve for the fur trade should be placed, and when the plan was made, a reservation was made in accordance with his request.' Bowsfield, Hartwell. Gen. Ed., *The Letters of Charles John Brydges, 1883-1889, Hudson's Bay Company Land Commissioner* (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1981), p. 65. The Hardisty papers at the Glenbow Archives and HBC records were reviewed in search of written instructions issued by Richard Hardisty relating to the land to be reserved for the trade. None were found in the records searched.

<sup>3</sup> HBCA, RG 1, Series 5/1, Outward Letterbook, HBC Survey Office, 1880-1884, p. 133-34. Letter from J.S. Dennis Jr., DTS, Winnipeg, to R. Bourne, DLS, Winnipeg, 3 June 1881. The records reviewed at the HBCA regrettably did not contain the surveyors diaries or field notes for any of the surveys described here.

<sup>4</sup> HBCA, RG 1, Series 5/1, Outward Letterbook, HBC Survey Office, 1880-1884, p. 135-36. Memorandum from J.S. Dennis Jr., DTS, Winnipeg, to R. Bourne, DLS, Winnipeg, 3 June 1881.

<sup>5</sup> Letters of Charles John Brydges, 1879-1882, p. 221(Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1977). Letter from C.J. Brydges to William Armit, Winnipeg, 10 December 1881.

<sup>6</sup> PAA 85.34/2, Dominion Land Surveyors Correspondence, Aldous Correspondence 1882, Letter from Montague Aldous, HBC Survey Office, Winnipeg, to Lindsey [Russell], Dominion Surveyor, June 1882. Aldous's correspondence is mostly related to tidying up loose ends from his time with the Dominion Survey. He closes this letter writing 'I like my present position very much, it just suits nice.'

that an additional 1,186 lots had been staked.<sup>7</sup> Work on completing the survey was undertaken in 1883; this likely involved surveying the 1,090 lots Aldous had identified as remaining in his 1882 report. This time the work was done by A.W. Kippen, under instructions from Montague Aldous.<sup>8</sup>

In February 1882 Aldous produced a plan of the southern portion of the Hudson's Bay Company's Reserve at Edmonton, from Jasper Avenue to the North Saskatchewan river, based on the survey work that he and Bourne had done.<sup>9</sup> The north-south streets had numbers, from First to Twenty-first, (now 101 to 121), and the east-west avenues had names (now numbers). Part of the study area was subdivided for future sale, while the most southerly portion (south of McLeod [95] Avenue and west of 104 Street) was retained for the 'trade.' Features marked in this area include a 'warehouse' on the river and the 'burial ground'.

The land sales records of the HBC indicate that much of the subdivided land within the study area was sold on 12 April 1882 to two firms: Walker Stuart and Co. and the Scottish Ontario and Manitoba Land Co. Limited.<sup>10</sup> At the time, speculation that the CPR would locate in Edmonton was fuelling intense interest in land acquisition. When it became evident that the railway would terminate in Strathcona, south of the river, the speculators promptly lost interest and allowed their purchases to lapse. As a consequence, most of the subdivided property that had been sold within the study area reverted to the HBC's ownership.

An important thread in Hardisty's thinking about Edmonton's development was the role of the river. In his opinion, 'the lots near the River will eventually be the most valuable, and as I have reserved sufficient for the Company's use, I need not be anxious to select any particular spot until some day later on.'<sup>11</sup> To facilitate access to the river, Hardisty ordered the construction of a new warehouse on the flats in 1881-82. He wrote: 'as there is scarcely room for a good warehouse at the spot the Steamer lands, at present, I will build it on the flats below the Fort which

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<sup>7</sup> HBCA, RG 1, Series 5/1, Outward Letterbook, HBC Survey Office, 1880-1884. Letter from M. Aldous, Winnipeg, to C.J. Brydges, Winnipeg, 16 January 1883, pp. 495-99. Aldous states in this letter that he took over the Survey Office 'a year ago.'

<sup>8</sup> HBCA, RG 1, Series 5/1, Outward Letterbook, HBC Survey Office, 1880-1884. Letter from M. Aldous, HBC Lands Office, Winnipeg, to A.W. Kippen, DLS, Winnipeg, 12 April 1883. pp. 564-68.

<sup>9</sup> Plan B, Edmonton, North West Territory, Being Subdivision of Part of the Hudson's Bay Company Reserve, Montague Aldous, February 13th 1882. CEA, EAM 227. See also HBCA RG1/87/7/3f/I, ii, Montague Aldous, 13th February 1882, certified correct 1910 (same as 1882 plan). The published version of Aldous' plan has been located, but the field notes and/or diaries of Kippen, Bourne, and Aldous were searched for, and not located, at the HBCA.

<sup>10</sup> HBCA, RG 1, Series 39/2, HBC Land Sales Registers, 1872-1910. Register 2. Sales Nos. 128-447 and Sales 510-634, 12 April 1882.

<sup>11</sup> HBCA, D. 20/21/folio 319-320. Letter from Richard Hardisty, Edmonton, to James A. Grahame, Chief Commissioner, Fort Garry, 4 December 1881.

Replace this page with landscape, foldout Aldous Plan

SECTION 6.1  
LAND SURVEY AND  
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will be more convenient for discharging cargo. I will have it ready for next season's use.<sup>12</sup> This is most likely the warehouse that appears near the river on Aldous' 1882 plan. Located inside the study area, the eastern portion of its site now lies beneath 105 Street / Rossdale Road, as it exits the 105 Street Bridge. (See below for a discussion of the establishment of the right-of-way for Rossdale Road.)

Hardisty's new warehouse was likely the last major construction undertaken by the HBC at the Fort site. An assessment of the buildings and a peceptive observation on their future situation, carried out by the HBC in 1889, concluded that:

the buildings answer the purposes of the present trade; the warehouses are of no value, except to store Freight when the Steamboats are running. In view of the prospect of a Railway to the town, on the completion of which the whole trade would be changed, no expenditure beyond that needed to keep up the necessary buildings is recommended.<sup>13</sup>

Most of the fifteen buildings listed in the report were being used by the Company. Some were rented out to other parties, including the North West Mounted Police, who occupied two of them.

The Hudson's Bay Company began to build a new retail store in the centre of the townsite, at the corner of 103 Street and Jasper Avenue, in 1892. This marked the beginning of its withdrawal from the Fort Edmonton site and an inkling of the diminishing economic value of Rossdale. Initially the Company continued to operate a store and trade furs at the fort while also operating its new downtown store. It did not, however, endeavour to maintain the buildings at the Fort.

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<sup>12</sup> HBCA, D. 20/21/folio 319-320. Letter from Richard Hardisty, Edmonton, to James A. Grahame, Chief Commissioner, Fort Garry, 4 December 1881.

<sup>13</sup> HBCA, B/60/e/16, Post Reports—Edmonton, 1889.

## The North Saskatchewan River: A Transportation Corridor or a Barrier?



Figure 6-2

View of Fort Edmonton from  
across the river, c. 1884.

Glenbow Archives NA-936-1

When Hardisty built the new warehouse, the North Saskatchewan River was still the central and essential feature of life in Edmonton. Steamboats had plied the river since 1875, bringing goods and people up from Winnipeg by way of Grand Rapids, in central Manitoba.<sup>14</sup> The steamboats were flat-bottomed with shallow drafts, well adapted to conditions on the North Saskatchewan. They did not require formal docking facilities and used numerous stopping places in Edmonton. It seems likely that one was in front of the HBC warehouse. Violet Wilson describes a steamboat moored at Rosedale in an account from her youth:

The old *Northwest* was about the last of the river boats. And she was moored just below where the powerhouse is now and we used

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<sup>14</sup> James G. MacGregor, *A History of Alberta* (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1972) p. 83.



to go down and play there my sister and I. Take our dolls carriages and our dolls down. It was a lovely place, fascinating, and one day, I left all my things there, dolls, the carriage, thinking we were going down tomorrow. And, tomorrow morning when I looked out everything was gone. Flash flood and the boat went down the river. Broken to pieces. A tragedy of my youth.<sup>15</sup>

Long-distance hauling on the river declined after the arrival of the Calgary and Edmonton Railway (a CPR subsidiary) at Strathcona, south of the river, in 1891. The river continued to be used for transporting logs, short-distance hauling, and recreational excursions. The HBC's faith in the significance of the river endured well past 1891, with references to the 'old steamship landing' appearing in correspondence as late as 1899.

Travel on the river is one theme in Edmonton's history, crossing it is another. Travellers' accounts from the fur trade era often include a description of arriving on the south side of the river and crossing by boat to the Fort.<sup>16</sup> These accounts also tend to emphasize the defensive positioning of Fort Edmonton V, high on the terrace above the river, and characterize the south side of the river as a place where First Nations conflicts took place. The traditional location for fording the river was just below the present High Level Bridge.

Although the exact chronology is unclear, at some time between 1876 and 1882 John Walter established the first ferry service in Edmonton. Initially, it ran from 'near his first house across the river to the road leading to the fort.'<sup>17</sup> Later, around 1880, Walter installed a cable for the ferry. J.R. McPhaden, who worked as a ferryman for John Walter from 1884 to 1898, described the route of the ferry (to Ella Walker, in 1944–45) as running 'between the gully just west of the north approach of the 105 Street bridge to the landing at Walter's place on the south bank.'<sup>18</sup> Photographic evidence, as well as the terms of Walter's license, suggest that more than one spot along the river was used for landing. Petitot's painting of about 1876 clearly shows a ferry and two roads on the flats leading down

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<sup>15</sup> PAA 70.170, Violet Wilson interview, tape stop 606. See the discussion of this interview – and the periodic floods – below.

<sup>16</sup> See for example Dempsey, Hugh A. *Heaven is Near the Rocky Mountains: The Journals and Letters of Thomas Woolsey, 1855-1869*. (Calgary: Glenbow Museum) p. 25. Dempsey quotes missionary Thomas Woolsey's description: 'Immediately on arriving opposite the fort travellers notify their approach by a volley of musketry which is returned in special cases by the cannon of the fort. A boat is then despatched across for the cavalcade; the persons and baggage thus disposed of, the horses swim over.'

<sup>17</sup> Lan Chan-Marples, R-72; EPEC Consulting Western Limited, p. 308; MacGregor, p. 92; Rosedale Community League, 'The Rosedale Living Heritage Park Proposal', 1982.

<sup>18</sup> CEA, MS 52/12. Ella Walker Collection. Ella Walker's Interviews with J.R. McPhaden, Fall 1944 and Fall 1945.

to the river. Other images show landings at the base of 105 and 106 Streets.<sup>19</sup> Walter's license gave him the exclusive right to provide ferry services 'between the westerly boundary of the Town of Edmonton, produced southerly, and the Easterly Boundary of the Hudson's Bay Company's Reserve, produced Southerly.'<sup>20</sup> Walter's landing spot is often described as the 'upper ferry site.' Another landing, lower down the river is described as 'lower ferry site' and was located near the future location of the Low Level Bridge.

The importance of the river in everyday life is brought home in the records. One example is Charles Becher's diary. Becher ran the HBC store in Edmonton from 1887 to 1894 and lived at the Fort. His diary for 1889 makes frequent reference to loading and unloading freight at the 'landing' and to river levels for the ferry. During the spring thaw and fall freeze, he records the state of the river two or three times per week and comments on its implications for traffic.<sup>21</sup> Fall was an especially tense time for ferryman McPhaden, who remembered that it was always a question as to which trip should be the last one of the season, 'Mr. Walter, my boss, would be uncertain himself as to when to refuse to take the ferry across the river, when ice pans were getting thicker and thicker – Keep out of Sight – lose yourself, he would say to me then, until the river's solid.'<sup>22</sup> In winter, of course, when the ice was solid, a road (or ice bridge) crossed the river. One source describes this winter road as being at the foot of 104 Street.<sup>23</sup>

With the arrival of the Calgary and Edmonton Railway at Strathcona in 1891, the construction of a bridge became a pressing issue for the Town of Edmonton. In 1892 Edmonton's Council petitioned the federal government to bridge the North Saskatchewan. The petition described the existing ferry services as 'inconvenient and sometimes dangerous, run only in daytime, are expensive to operate and are frequently compelled to suspend crossing owing to running ice, very high water, drift wood, and other special occurrences.'<sup>24</sup> The federal government was eventually convinced of the need for a bridge and in 1895 it passed an Order-in-Council authorizing construction at the 'lower ferry site.'<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Saxberg et al., 2002, p. 348 (Petitot), 405 (PAA, B.5149). See also National Air Photo Library CA-124-86 24 June 1925 and CEA, A92-100, Box 6, Commissioners Report No. 267, 1913. This map shows a road, west of the 105 Street Bridge coming up from the River.

<sup>20</sup> CEA, RG8.3/1/27. License, 30 April 1895.

<sup>21</sup> Glenbow Archives, Charles D.T. Becher Fonds, M71, F. 2, Diary 1889.

<sup>22</sup> CEA, MS 52/12. Ella Walker's interview with J.R. McPhaden.

<sup>23</sup> Tony Cashman, *The Edmonton Exhibition Association* (Edmonton: Edmonton Exhibition Association, c. 1979), p. 34. 'Fourth Street, the street which is graded to a winter crossing of the river.'

<sup>24</sup> NAC, RG 11, Edmonton, Bridges, construction, maintenance, and repairs, vol. 3735, pt. 1. Petition and Resolution of Edmonton Town Council, November 1892.' Evidently, a survey of the best location had already been made by Government Engineer Gouin with the choice location being between River Lots 8 and 17, near the present site of the low level bridge.

<sup>25</sup> NAC, RG 11, Edmonton, Bridges, OCPC 512, 23 February 1895.

Selection of an alignment for the bridge was a contentious issue because it had a direct bearing on property values. The HBC saw an opportunity and offered to contribute \$5,000 towards the construction of a bridge just downriver from the ‘upper ferry’ site, opposite Fourth [104] Street and within the study area, where the ‘road from the beach to Saskatchewan [97] Avenue is quite level, as it is also along Saskatchewan Avenue to about Sixth [106] Street.’ The Company summarized the politics of the situation: ‘The advocates of the lower site pay less taxes and have more votes than the Company. The upper site is the best, but votes have considerable weight with the Government in deciding such questions, and the situation therefore is decidedly interesting to say the least.’<sup>26</sup> In the end, the votes won out and the lower site was selected. The Low Level Bridge opened for traffic in 1900.

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*Selection of an alignment for the bridge was a contentious issue because it had a direct bearing on property values.*

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The construction of the Low Level Bridge did not signal the end of cross-river traffic at the upper ferry site. The service continued to be used until the completion of the High Level (1913) and 105 Street (1915) bridges.

## The Edmonton Yukon and Pacific Railway

A key factor driving the Town’s interest in a bridge was that it could be used to bring a railway across the river to the townsite. Thus, when the Edmonton District Railway Company (EDR) proposed in 1895 that the bridge should be a combined rail and traffic crossing, the municipality was quick to endorse its proposal, sending a telegram to Ottawa to that effect.<sup>27</sup> The following year the EDRC received a charter ‘for the purposes of constructing a railway connecting the towns of North and South Edmonton.’ The proposed route of the railway

departed from the C&E [Calgary and Edmonton] in South Edmonton [Strathcona] at or near the ‘Y’, then down the western slope of a ravine to the bottom lands; curving to the left and crossing the river at the lower ford ... then on about a straight line to Ross’ house and along the side hill to the Hudson Bay Co.’s flat (near their powder magazine), then behind the old ‘residence’ and northward (to the east of the Catholic Church) to the junction point beyond Jasper Avenue.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> HBCA, A. 12/FT 224/1, fos. 2. Letter to William Ware, Secretary from Chipman, 8 October 1894, re: Edmonton Bridge.

<sup>27</sup> NAC, RG 11, Edmonton, Bridges, item 4a. Telegram from H.C. Wilson, Mayor, Edmonton to Hon. J.A. Ouimet, Minister, Department of Public Works, 14 November 1895.

<sup>28</sup> NAC, RG 12, vol 1993, file 3556-81, pt. 3, Letter from W.T. Jennings, Consulting Engineer, Toronto, to L.K. Jones, Secretary, Railways and Canals, Ottawa, 5 October 1898.

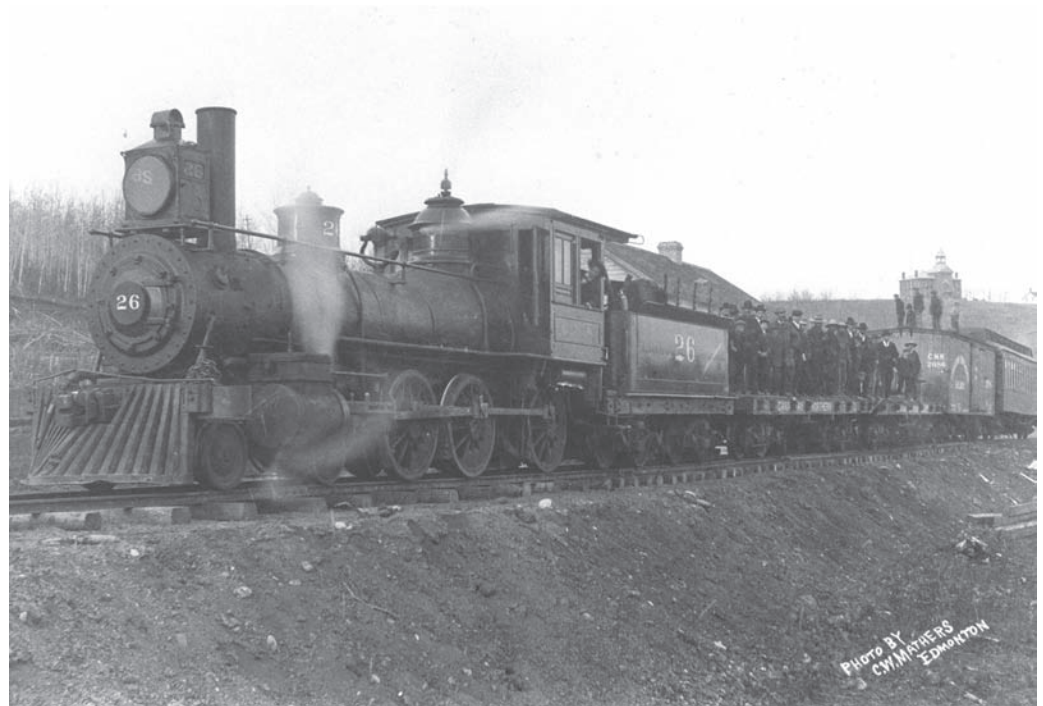
In addition to needing land for its right-of-way, the railway proposed locating a temporary station and freight shed on the flats. The station grounds, as proposed, occupied six blocks of property bounded by 107 Street in the west, 104 Street on the east, Saskatchewan (97) Avenue on the north, and running down to the river between 107 Street and 105 Street. A good portion of this land lies within the study area.<sup>29</sup>

The HBC's attitude to the proposal was positive, but conservative. It wanted to see the railway built and was especially keen to see the permanent station grounds established within the reserve. However, it preferred not to grant all the railway's requests. The HBC's response reveals that as late as 1899 it continued to value the riverfront and old fort grounds as commercial properties. Land Commissioner C.C. Chipman suggested to the HBC Board that the Company might be able to negotiate a spur from the temporary station grounds to the warehouses at the old fort and recommended retaining for itself 'some desirable water frontage, including the site of the old Steamboat Landing.' The Board concurred with most of Chipman's suggested negotiating strategy, but it was adamant that he should 'limit the water frontage to be granted to the smallest quantity possible' because of its 'probable great value in the future.'<sup>30</sup>

Figure 6-3

*A Canadian Northern train on the EYP track in 1902.*

CEA 10-1284



<sup>29</sup> HBCA, A.12/L 109/2/4, folio 2. Map accompanying Letter from HBC Land Commissioner Chipman to William Ware, Secretary, London re: Edmonton District Railway, 20 January 1899.

<sup>30</sup> HBCA, A 12/L 109/1/6, folio 48, Copy of London Letter No. 5,444 from Secretary to Commissioner, dated 18 February 1899, re: Edmonton District Railway.

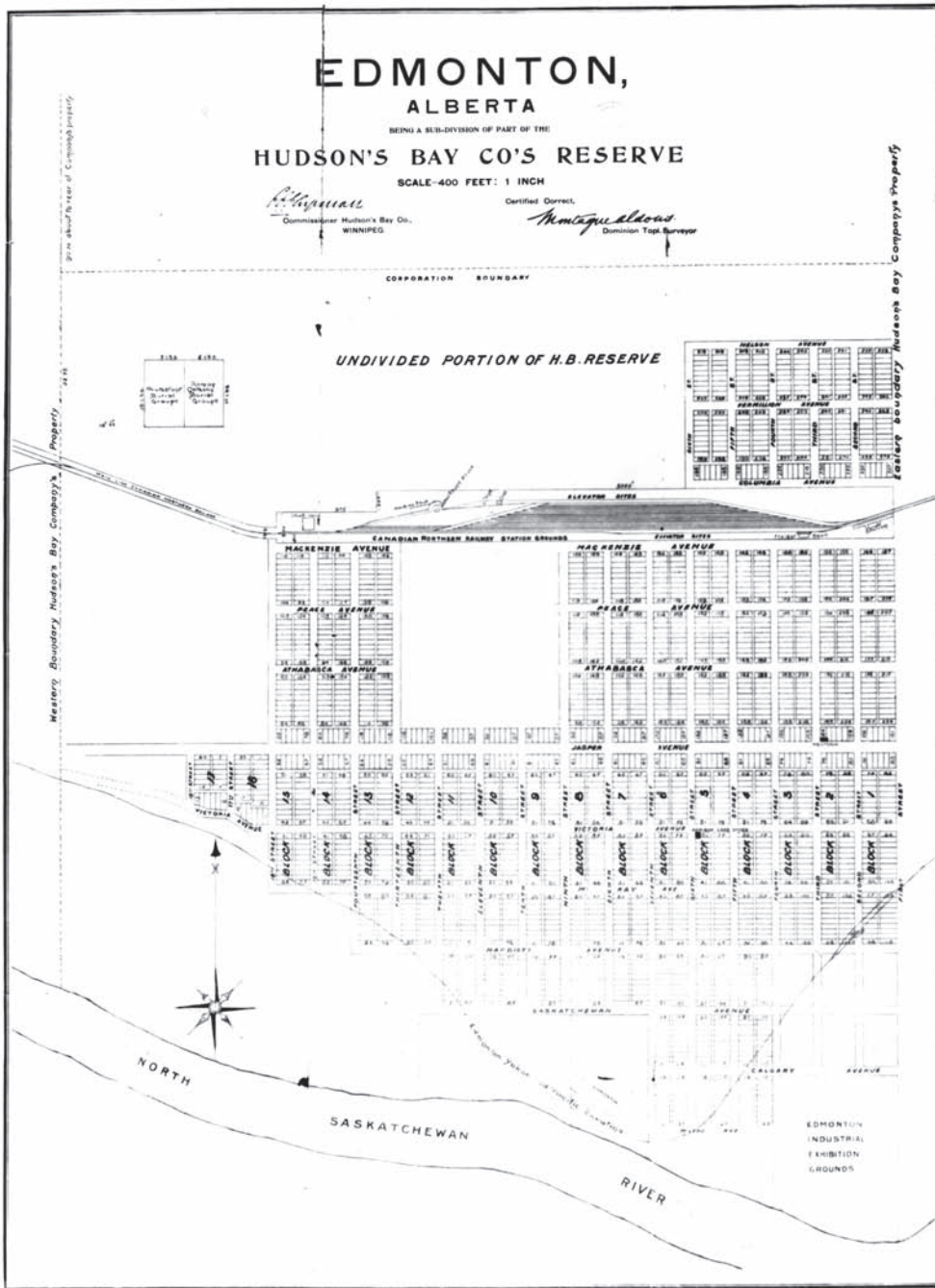


Figure 6-4

The route of the EYP, c. 1905

Montague Aldous, HBCA A. 12/  
L 109/2/2 fo.4

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The Edmonton District Railway was renamed the Edmonton Yukon and Pacific Railway (EYP) in 1899 and the Canadian Northern Railway, Canada's second transcontinental line, acquired the charter in 1901.<sup>31</sup> Work on laying track finally began in 1901, with the first stretch being completed in 1902, connecting Rossdale and Strathcona via the Low Level Bridge.

The arrival of the railway in Edmonton was a significant event. At long last the town was connected to the national rail network. The Mayor decided everyone should have a chance to celebrate this momentous event and declared a half-day holiday.<sup>32</sup>

A temporary station was built in Rossdale, just north of Hardisty (98) Avenue and 102 Street; the station was sited on the right-of-way for 102 Street and on Block 2, Lots 109/110 (see Map 2, Appendix 5).<sup>33</sup> The line itself extended some 200 feet south of Hardisty Avenue, on Block 2, Lots 44, 45, and 13.<sup>34</sup> An inspection report filed in 1902 describes a 'siding in Edmonton on the south side of the track 705 feet long, and a spur track on the north side 925 feet in length.' The station building is described as being '40 feet by 24 feet with a front platform 101 feet long by 12 wide; one end platform 24 x 30 feet and the other end platform 24 x 12? [sic]. The east half contains an office and waiting room. The west half is intended for baggage and freight.'<sup>35</sup> The southern ends of the tracks and the station grounds extended into the study area, but the station itself was just north of the study area boundary.

By the end of 1905, the EYP tracks had been laid at a diagonal across the flats and then up the river bank in front of Fort Edmonton, extending north to the Canadian Northern (later Canadian National) yards on 104 Avenue. The tracks cut across the area originally set aside for the station grounds – bounded by 106 Street in the west, 104 Street on the east, Saskatchewan (97) Avenue on the north, and McLeod (95) Avenue on the south – dropping slightly south of McLeod at 106 and then turning north and west, running directly below the site of Fort Edmonton V. Canada's *Railway Act* made it possible for the EYP to 'acquire lands for Right-of-Way and Station purposes after the Plans are approved by the Railway Commission, and filed in the proper registry office, without the assent of the owners of the lands.'<sup>36</sup> Much to the chagrin of the HBC's Board, this is precisely

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<sup>31</sup> <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/privlaw/78970/3278.html> Table of Private Acts Edmonton, Yukon and Pacific Railway Company. Accessed 23/09/03. The EYP has been designated a national historic site by the Canadian Society for Civil Engineering. See <http://collections.ic.gc.ca/civileng/eng/details.asp?id=25>

<sup>32</sup> Alan Vanterpool, *Railways of the Edmonton Area, 1891-1955*, p. 22.

<sup>33</sup> HBCA, A.12/L 109/2/2, folio 4, Map showing Hudson's Bay Co's Reserve, Edmonton, c. 1905-1908.

<sup>34</sup> HBCA A. 12/L109/1/5, folio 158. Map showing subdivision of part of blocks 1, 2, and 3 of Hudson's Bay Reserves, situated south of Hardisty Avenue and West of First Street, 1913.

<sup>35</sup> NAC, RG 12, volume 1993, file 3556-81, pt. 4, Inspection Report submitted to Department of Railways and Canals, on the Edmonton, Yukon and Pacific Railway, December 1902.

<sup>36</sup> HBCA, A12/L 109/1/6, folio 5. Letter to William Ware, HBC Secretary, London from Land Commissioner Chipman, 13 June 1907.

what happened in the case of the EYP: Canadian Northern took the lands but did not initiate discussions regarding payment for them until 1906, when the HBC became concerned about property damage caused by a gravel pit the railway had established ‘directly southeast of the old Hudson’s Bay Fort.’<sup>37</sup>

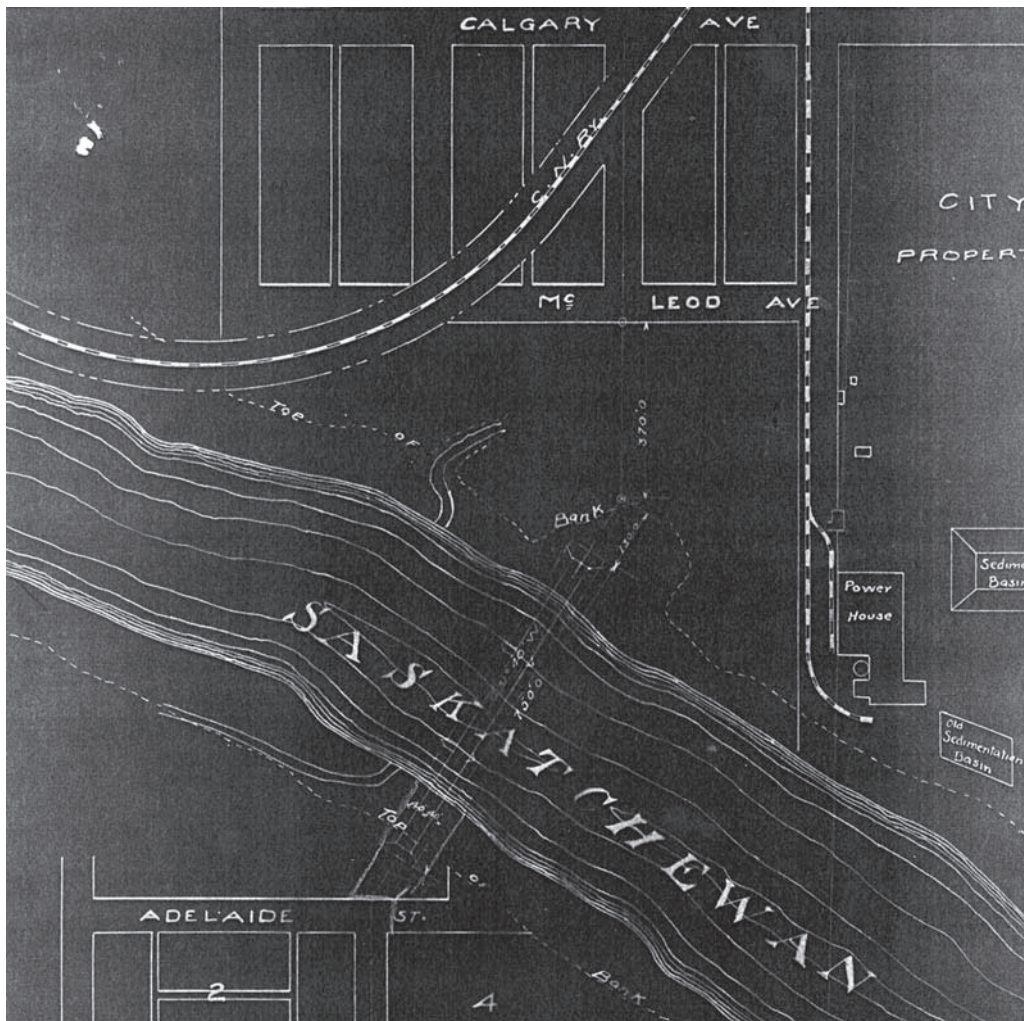


Figure 6-5

Map of EYP line and spur line to powerhouse.

CEA A92-100, Box 6,  
File Commissioner Report 267,  
1913

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<sup>37</sup> HBCA A.12/L 109/1/6, folio 17-18. Letter from HBC Land Commissioner C.C. Chipman to Messrs. Munson, Allan, Laird and Davis, Barristers, Winnipeg, 19 September 1906. See also HBCA, RG 1, Series 40/1 Townsite Sales Registers, Sale No. 2599, 23 November 1911. The actual sale of the right-of-way did not happen until 1911 and, as a result of haggling over the legal description of the right-of-way, it took until 1929 for the title deed to be issued.

The line opened officially in 1908; in the same year, the station in Rosedale was removed.<sup>38</sup> Also in 1908 plans for the construction of a spur line from the south of 97 Avenue and 104 Street, down 104 Street to the powerhouse, were approved by the Board of Railway Commissioners (see also the discussion below on the powerhouse).<sup>39</sup>

Figure 6-6

*View from the north of coal being delivered to powerhouse along the spur line.*

CEA-29-60



The decision to build the spur line was made by Edmonton City Council in May 1908 when, after considerable discussion, it decided to use the '30-foot, 60-pound rails purchased for the Edmonton Street Railway' for the track. The immediate reason for building the spur was that heavy new equipment was scheduled to be installed at the powerhouse later in the summer and a rail connection was needed

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<sup>38</sup> Vanterpool, p. 24.

<sup>39</sup> CEA RG8/20/23, Letter from Edmonton's Secretary Treasurer to Board of Railway Commissioners acknowledging receipt of Order No. 5111, 20 July 1908.



to get the equipment to the powerhouse. In the longer term it was anticipated that there would be considerable savings in the cost of transporting coal to the powerhouse.<sup>40</sup> Canadian Northern provided planning assistance and inspected the grade prior to construction,<sup>41</sup> but it was the City that awarded the contract to build the spur track. This was done in mid-June, after grading was completed,<sup>42</sup> and by early July the track was ‘within a hundred yards of the power house.’<sup>43</sup> Its completion was announced on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July.<sup>44</sup>

The expectation that savings would accrue as a result of the construction of the spur was realized almost immediately. In late July the newspapers reported that the City expected to save between \$5,000 and \$12,000 a year on the cost of coal as a result of the reduced transportation charges. Partially as a result, Edmontonians saw their electrical bills drop by almost one-third.<sup>45</sup>

Other components of the rail network at Rosedale included a spur running east to the river from just west of the corner of 98 Avenue and 102 Street and a section house at the northwest corner of 98 Avenue and 102 Street.<sup>46</sup> Passenger service continued until 1929.<sup>47</sup>

The construction of the Low Level Bridge and the Edmonton Yukon and Pacific Railway affected the study area directly. The railway overlay a diagonal line across the grid pattern of the HBC’s 1881 survey. The bridge and the railway continued the perception of Rosedale as a transportation link, facilitating travel

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<sup>40</sup> ‘To Call for Tenders for New Powerhouse,’ *Edmonton Bulletin*, 5 May 1908 and ‘City goes into Railway Building,’ *Edmonton Journal*, 5 May 1908, p. 1.

<sup>41</sup> ‘Spur Power Station,’ *Edmonton Bulletin*, 14 May, 1908, p. 10. City staff worked with the CNR’s Engineer, Mr. Lucas on the spur line project. Lucas was also consulted regarding the route of a spur to be built to Walter’s Mill. One proposal was to simply extend the powerhouse spur, but this was rejected as impractical. The second option, to build down 101st met considerable resistance from residents. Walter eventually decided not to build in 1908 because he had suffered considerable losses in floods that year. See ‘No Spur Line this Year,’ *Edmonton Bulletin*, 9 July 1908, p. 8,

<sup>42</sup> ‘Plans for Spur Line,’ *Edmonton Bulletin*, 2 June 1908, p. 8 and ‘C.N.R. Manager Here,’ *Edmonton Bulletin*, 5 June 1908; ‘Tenders for Spur Track,’ *Edmonton Journal*, 12 June 1908, p. 1; ‘What they did in Committee,’ *Edmonton Journal*, 16 June 1908, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Work on the Powerhouse,’ *Edmonton Bulletin*, 9 July 1908, p. 8.

<sup>44</sup> ‘Power House Progressing,’ *Edmonton Journal*, 20 July 1908, p.8. Discussions of the construction of the spur line and the powerhouse tend to appear in the same articles during this period. No mention was found in the *Edmonton Bulletin* or *Edmonton Journal*, May-July 1908, of the burial ground or of the disruption of burials as a result of construction.

<sup>45</sup> ‘On its Coal Supply the City Saves \$5,000,’ *Edmonton Journal* 29 July 1908, ‘Lighting Rates are Reduced by a Third,’ *Edmonton Journal*, 29 July 1908, and ‘City Council Meeting,’ *Edmonton Journal*, 29 July 1908, p. 3. The City must have been especially pleased with this news as parallel to the story of construction of the spur line and powerhouse there are also numerous stories about the firing of City Commissioners for failing to adequately supervise construction works and criticism of the quality of gravel used in the construction of the powerhouse. These stories run in both the *Bulletin* and the *Journal* through May and June 1908.

<sup>46</sup> CEA, Fire Insurance Plan, c. 1925.

<sup>47</sup> Vanterpool, p. 23.

between the 'real' settlements on the high ground. The railway also altered the character of development in Rosedale by attracting a number of industries, such as the Dowling Grist Mill and the Edmonton Brewing and Malting Company.<sup>48</sup> All this development took place east of the study area boundary and outside the HBC Reserve. HBC documents relating to the sale of the EYP right-of-way show that the Company was primarily interested in preserving the value of the Fort property and in obtaining a good price, overall, for the right-of-way. That part of the right-of-way on the flats was assessed as being 'low lying but fairly level good property, valuable some day for industrial purposes.'<sup>49</sup> Interestingly, no mention is made in the HBC's internal correspondence of the question of river access, which had so preoccupied the Board only a decade earlier.

The HBC's role in the development of the study area was mostly reactive, responding to local initiatives and trying to maximize the Company's return within the context of opportunities created by others. The only instance where it tried to play an active role – by offering to subsidize the construction of a bridge at the foot of Fourth Street – was unsuccessful. The record also suggests that the Company either chose not to, or failed to, take advantage of the location of the EYP on the flats.

The EYP continued to operate until 1954, when the tracks were removed.<sup>50</sup> This coincided with the 'completion of the new C.N.R. connection from the Camrose subdivision to South Edmonton.' The City supported the CNR's decision to abandon the EYP, including the spur line to the powerhouse, although it did struggle with the idea initially because it was 'still in the process of adding to its Power Plant, and it still bringing in coal and lime to the Plant by rail.' The lime was for the water treatment plant.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> *Rosedale Living Heritage*, p. 22, p. 24.

<sup>49</sup> HBCA, A12/L 109/1/6, folio 24. Memo from Commissioner Re: E.Y.P. Right-of-Way Edmonton signed by Montague Aldous, 23rd July 1907.

<sup>50</sup> According to a newspaper article on the EYP a small stretch of track on the south side continued to operate until 1980s. See Christopher Spence, 'The Little Train with the Grandiose Name,' *Edmonton Journal*, 20 October 2002, D7.

<sup>51</sup> CEA, RG 11/88/20, Letter from D.B. Menzies, Commissioner, to Mr. G.R. Graham, General Superintendent, CNR, Edmonton, Alberta, 26 March 1953. The letter notes that in 1952 the spur was used to transport 322 cars of coal, 99 cars of lime, and 65 other cars with unspecified cargos.

## 6.2 Institutions, Utilities, Roads, and Amenities

### Edmonton Industrial Exhibition Association

The HBC's sale to the Edmonton's Industrial Exhibition Association of 55 acres of land in the spring of 1899 marked the first major and enduring transfer of property ownership by the HBC within or adjacent to the study area.<sup>52</sup> The plot was 'bounded on the North by Calgary [96] Avenue, South by the River, East by First Street and West by Fourth Street' and sold for \$4,569.<sup>53</sup> The Company's Land Commissioner, C.C. Chipman, acknowledged the changing value of the Rosssdale properties. He explained to his superiors that 'the land is all in the "Flats" of the river, and undesirable for residential purposes. The water front has no special value at present, there being no steamboats now running on this river.'<sup>54</sup> This sale included a portion of the study area south and east of the corner of Calgary (96) Avenue and 104 Street; this is now the triangular area bounded by Rosssdale Road, 104 Street, and 96 Avenue.



Figure 6-7

View of the Exhibition Grounds  
from the Strathcona side of the  
river, 1904.

Provincial Archives of Alberta  
B9985

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<sup>52</sup> Cashman, *The Edmonton Exhibition Association*, p. 34. Cashman seems to be quoting from the *Edmonton Bulletin*. Prior to this, the Exhibition was held 'around 102 and 103 Avenues' where Edmonton's first circular racetrack was located. The HBC had owned this property and was busy selling it off. Cashman, p. 47.

<sup>53</sup> HBCA RG1, Series 39, Book 4, Sale No. 1322, 3 July 1899. The association paid for the property in six installments between 1899 and 1904.

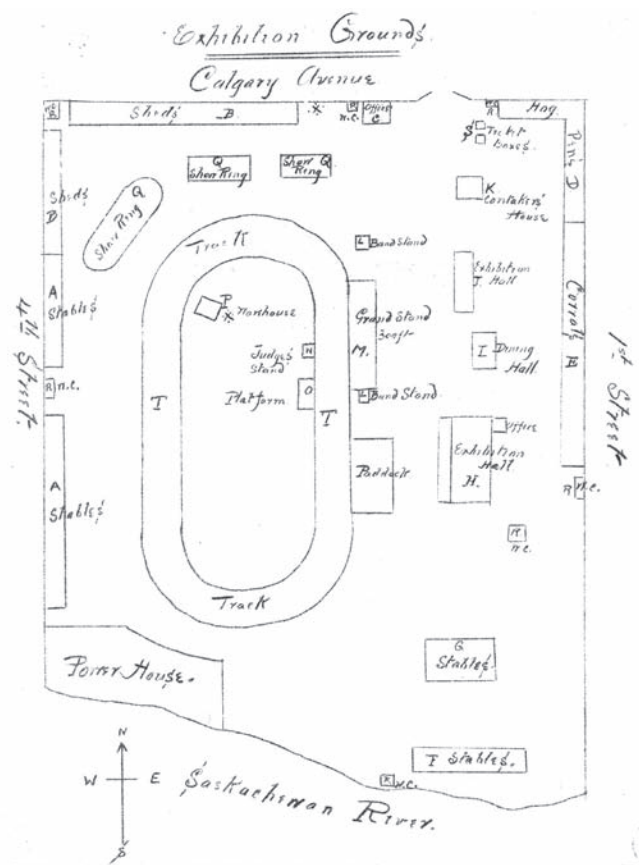
<sup>54</sup> HBCA, A.12/L, 109/1, Miscellaneous [Edmonton] A-C, 1899-1911. Letter from Land Commissioner Chipman, Winnipeg to H.M. Ware, HBC Secretary, London, 19 May 1899.

That same spring, the HBC obtained the consent of the municipality to convert all the land east of Fourth Street, north of the River, west of First Street, and south of Hardisty (98) Avenue to acreage property, effectively removing it from the portfolio of land for sale. The rationale for doing this was that ‘the lots are not at present, and are not likely to be for some time to come, required for building purposes.’<sup>55</sup> Acreage properties were assessed taxes at a lower rate than subdivided lots.

Figure 6-8

Map of the Exhibition Grounds, 1907.

CEA A92-100, Box 1,  
Commissioners Report 154



<sup>55</sup> HBCA, A 12/L 109/5, fos. 34. Letter from Chipman, Land Commissioner, Winnipeg, to Wm. Ware, Secretary, 9 June 1899. A much larger section of land west of the old fort site was also converted to acreage status at the same time. It is interesting to note that Donald Ross promptly appealed his assessment claiming that he had permanently withdrawn from sale and made in cultivated plots five acres of land in River Lot 4. See CEA 8.3/1/14. Letter from Donald Ross to the Town of Edmonton, 13th May 1901.

The Edmonton Exhibition, first held in 1879, was held on the Rosssdale flats from 1899 until 1909. A lengthy description published in the *Edmonton Bulletin* in 1901 describes the site:

It occupies a large square on the river flat below the Hudson's Bay Fort and above the bridge. It is overlooked by both Strathcona and Edmonton from a height of about one hundred and fifty feet. The Saskatchewan forms the south boundary of the grounds and on the opposite side the high bank, is upon which Strathcona stands, steep and broken and covered with spruce, birch and poplar. Behind the grounds and at a distance the north bank of the valley slopes up smoothly, partially covered with poplar and crowned by the buildings of the town of Edmonton. The westerly half of the ground within the enclosure is clean and smooth as a lawn having been a cultivated field of the Hudson's Bay Company for nearly a hundred years, and only recently being allowed to grow up in grass. On this part the half mile oval track, fifty feet in width, is laid out according to the most approved plans, and fenced on the outside. In the centre of the track circle is a space prepared for games and sports. The easterly part of the grounds is occupied by a beautiful grove of poplar, part of which is being cleaned out for drive ways and the placing of booths.<sup>56</sup>

The wet condition of the land at and near the Exhibition Grounds was a constant cause for concern. In 1904 the Exhibition Association arranged for the Town to build a sidewalk from the station to the grounds so that fair-goers would no longer have to tramp through mud. The Town helped out in other ways, lending assistance in levelling the racetrack, installing 315 feet of tile drains, making a water connection, exempting the fair from taxation, and providing an annual grant.<sup>57</sup> An extensive complex of exhibition buildings and other built features, including the racetrack and fencing, was constructed. A plan of the grounds, drawn in 1907, shows these structures. Some of them – likely three show rings, part of the race track, two sheds, a stable, and an outhouse (one of seven on the site) – lay within the study area, just southeast of the corner of 104 Street and 96 Avenue.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> *Edmonton Bulletin*, 17 June 1901.

<sup>57</sup> CEA, RG8/10/3. Correspondence from the City's Engineer's Office to the Mayor and Council, April-September 1904.

<sup>58</sup> CEA, A92-100, Box 1, Commissioners Report No. 154. Plan of Exhibition Grounds and Inventory of Buildings and Structures, 1907.

Figure 6-9

*Inauguration parade at the Exhibition Grounds, 1905.*

CEA 10-798



The annual exhibition was an important event, usually held in late June or early July. People poured into the Town from the surrounding area to enjoy ‘Old Timer’s Day,’ ‘Children’s Day,’ or ‘Farmer’s Day.’ In 1901 the planned attractions included ‘balloon ascensions, tight-rope walking, acrobatics, and contortionists.’<sup>59</sup> First Nations people participated in events at the fair and camped either on the flats or nearby. For example, in 1901, the newspaper reported that there were plans for a ‘canvas village of Crees and Stoneys’ on the grounds. Later that year, the paper reported that the Indians had left their camp ‘near the park gates.’<sup>60</sup> In 1909 Groat’s flats was used for camping by the 300 Indians who marched in the fair’s ‘Big Parade.’<sup>61</sup>

In 1906 the City leased the grounds from the Exhibition Association for one year for \$3,000 with an option to purchase. The option was exercised in 1907, with the City paying the Association \$60,000. It appears that the Association continued to run the fair, but the City took responsibility for managing the property. Thus, for example, in 1907 the five insurance policies held by the Association on the property were transferred to the City, which also took on the responsibility of paying the salary of the resident caretaker, Joseph Grisenthwaite.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Cashman, p. 42.

<sup>60</sup> Cashman, p. 46.

<sup>61</sup> Cashman, p. 68.

<sup>62</sup> Cashman, p. 60, 63. See also CEA, A92-100, Box 1. Commissioners Report No. 14, 26 January 1907 re: Exhibition Grounds. The property transfer was completed in January 1907.

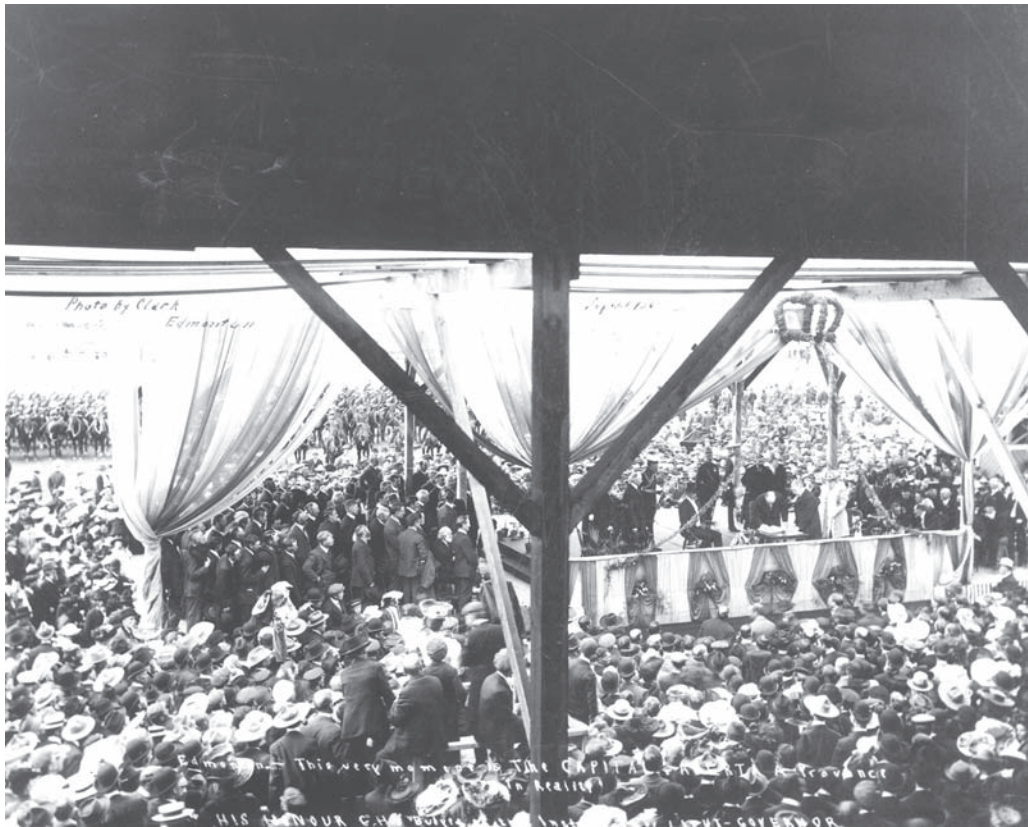


Figure 6-10

*The birth of the Province of Alberta, 1905. The caption reads: This very moment is the capital.*

*National Archives of Canada  
PA29060*

The fair grounds were also used for other important functions and events. For example, in May 1904 the large group of colonists en route to Lloydminster, at the Saskatchewan border, stayed there.<sup>63</sup> The most significant event to occur at the fair grounds was the official inauguration of Alberta as a province, and Edmonton as its capital, on 1 September 1905. Some 12,000 people attended the ceremony and celebrations. Among the dignitaries were the Prime Minister, Sir Wilfred Laurier, and the Governor General, the Earl Grey.<sup>64</sup> This event makes Rossdale significant from the perspective of national and provincial political history as the symbolic ‘birthplace’ of the province.

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<sup>63</sup> RG 8/10/17, Letter from F. Fraser Tims to the Mayor, 16 April 1904.

<sup>64</sup> MacGregor, pp. 134-135.

## Power and Water Treatment Plants



Figure 6-11

The EPCOR power plant, 2003.

Photo courtesy City of  
Edmonton

In 1903 the Edmonton Industrial Exhibition Association sold 1.94 acres at the southwest corner of its property to the Town for \$1,000, for use as its power and water treatment plants.<sup>65</sup> This purchase followed closely, but not exactly, the recommendations of Willis Chipman, a Toronto-based ‘civil and sanitary engineer,’ who had suggested in 1901 that Edmonton combine the operation of its power and water plants on land ‘west of the Fair Grounds, east of Fifth Street and south of the first street north of the river.’ Chipman’s rationale for choosing this site was that it required the least amount of piping to the ‘centre of the distribution system.’ His argument for combining the power and water stations was that ‘Water works and Electric Light may be operated more economically if combined in this way, as during the day the boilers supply steam for pumping, and at night for lighting.’<sup>66</sup> City records indicate that construction of the powerhouse began on 9 July 1902. A water intake and sedimentation basin were built on the site and Edmonton’s first water mains and sewers were constructed. One water main, a 12-inch pipe, went straight up 104 Street from the powerhouse, through the study

<sup>65</sup> City of Edmonton. Corporate Records Centre. 91 LK 156 Box 6 ‘Power Plant History, 1903-1964.’ Location 04-12-03. The Certificate of Title for this sale is number 31-Y-1 and dated 29 January 1903. This title was later consolidated with 151-L-172. See also Cashman, p. 49.

<sup>66</sup> City of Edmonton Archives, RG 50/13/1, Willis Chipman, ‘Report on Proposed System of Waterworks and Sewerage, Edmonton, 1901.’ No record was found of the City approaching the HBC regarding purchase of the exact property recommended by Chipman in 1901-02.



area, to Victoria (100) Avenue.<sup>67</sup> Over time, more water mains were built through the study area and water and sewage services extended to parts of the flats.<sup>68</sup> The powerhouse, pumphouse, and sedimentation basin seem to have been built quickly and subsequently had to be significantly reconstructed. As early as June 1904 the leaking sedimentation basin was repaired. In the process ‘decayed timbers of two old building foundations or cellars’ – possibly part of Edmonton House II – were found. These were ‘excavated and filled up with clay well puddled.’<sup>69</sup> Further problems with the sedimentation basin were identified in 1910.<sup>70</sup>

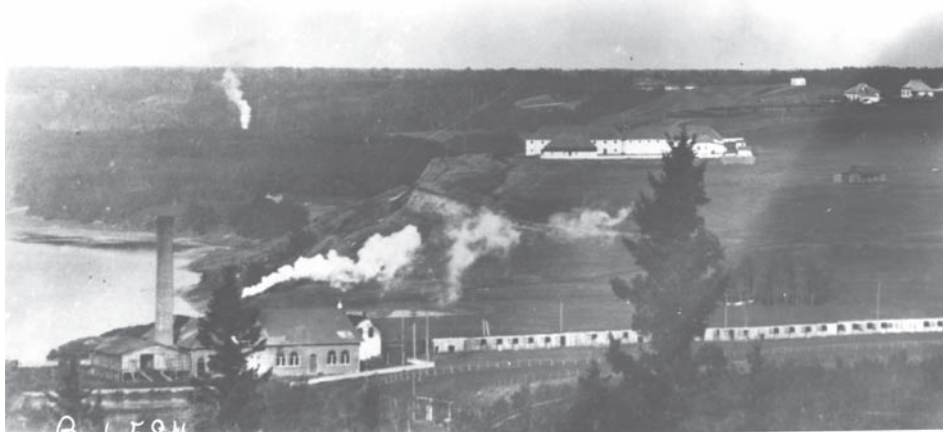


Figure 6-12

Power plant, with Fort  
Edmonton V in the background.

Provincial Archives of Alberta  
B6584

<sup>67</sup> CEA, RG 8.3/1/17, ‘Progress on Waterworks and Sewer Construction during 1902,’ 18 November 1902. The construction of sewers seems to have been restricted to the ‘downtown’ area. Where sewers were constructed they were combined in a single trench with the water mains. It appears that the City planned to begin connecting homes to the water supply in 1903.

<sup>68</sup> A quick overview of the water and sewer infrastructure in Rosedale is provided in City of Edmonton, Planning and Building Department, ‘Neighbourhood Profile Report,’ Rosedale Area Redevelopment Plan, June 1986, pp. 47-51. This report states that water and sewer lines are a mix of cast iron, concrete, steel and poly-vinyl; local distribution lines in North and South Rosedale are 4-inch and 6-inch cast iron; West Rosedale has 12-inch cast iron line; a number of large steel and concrete distribution mains originate at the water treatment plant; the sewer system is ‘combined’ and was constructed between 1910 and 1930; the system is built of brick and clay tile and concrete pipe; some separation of sanitary and storm sewage occurs. For a picture of the situation in 1918 see CEA RG 8.10/79/, Western Canada Underwriters Fire Association, Report on the City of Edmonton Alberta, October 1918.

<sup>69</sup> CEA, RG8/10/3. City Engineer to Mayor and Council, 6 June 1904. Other public works initiatives also had an impact on the study area. For example, when water accumulated at a property on 97 Avenue (Saskatchewan) near 104 Street, the Town’s Engineer diverted it into an existing ditch along 97 Avenue to 104 Street and then ‘along Fourth Street and through 18” tile culvert under the Canadian Northern Embankment and to the River.’ He estimated that he would need to excavate about ‘150 feet ... on Westside of Fourth Street, near Power House where ploughing was done last year.’

<sup>70</sup> CEA, A92-100, Box 3. Commissioners Report No. 170 on Conditions at Power Plant, 22 October 1910. This report itemizes additions to the powerhouse in 1910, including an addition to the powerhouse, the construction of a coal conveyer belt, and numerous problems with the pumphouse which necessitated its virtual demolition and reconstruction.

The construction of the powerhouse was a significant moment in the history of the flats, establishing the utilitarian role of Rosedale in Edmonton's development. The impact of this development was not restricted to the powerhouse, but crept outwards to affect the surrounding area. In the immediate aftermath of construction, the Town dealt with two relatively minor but related issues. First, in 1903, it built a home for the engineer in charge of the powerhouse, Mr. McNaughton. Two sites were considered for the house: one on lots 125 and 126 of Block 4 and the other in the right-of-way of 104 Street. It appears that the Town's preference was to buy the lots from the HBC, but negotiations failed, and the Town decided to close 104 Street instead, clearly giving priority to the power plant and its needs.<sup>71</sup> When the HBC objected to this 'as it is considered that the interests of the Company would be prejudicially affected,'<sup>72</sup> the Town backed off. Photographic evidence suggests that the house, as built, was sited just north of the power plant and east of 104 Street.<sup>73</sup> A fairly substantial home, it cost \$1,500 to build. In 1908 it was moved 100 feet north to make way for the new gas-producer plant. At its new site, the house had a 4-foot-deep foundation and a cellar (10'x14'x5').<sup>74</sup> The second development was the construction of a fence around the powerhouse property in 1903. This was done in part to protect it from marauding fair-goers, but its significance goes beyond that as it delineated a clear boundary between the open space of the flats and the formal space of the powerhouse.<sup>75</sup>

At the same time as the fence was delineating boundaries, new corridors were being established through the study area to provide access to the powerhouse. Of particular interest is the construction, in 1908, of a railway spur line from the EYP, south of 97 Avenue at 104 Street, along the west side of 104 Street, and down to the powerhouse.<sup>76</sup> The spur line was built in the short term to transport machinery and materials for the expansion of the powerhouse, and in the longer term to transport coal to it.<sup>77</sup> Over time, a small complex of trackage evolved at the foot of 104 Street and by 1925 a spur extended east, along the top of the river bank, to the water works pumphouse.

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<sup>71</sup> CEA RG8/5/4 Town Engineer's Report, 24 June 1903; RG8/5/13 Memo for Solicitor, 21 July 1903; RG8/5/27 Notice of Intent to Close portion of Fourth South of Calgary (96) Avenue, 29 July 1903; RG8/5/2 Memo for Town Engineer 10 June 1903, Memo for Town Engineer 8 May 1903, Memo for Town Engineer 27 July 1903.

<sup>72</sup> CEA. RG 8/5/28 Letter from C.C. Chipman, Commissioner, HBC to George J. Kinnaird, Secretary-Treasurer, Edmonton, 3 August 1903.

<sup>73</sup> PAA Negative B5140 reproduced in Saxberg, 2003, p. 404.

<sup>74</sup> CEA, A92-100, Box 1, Report of Commissioners No. 30, 28 August 1908.

<sup>75</sup> CEA, RG8/10/3 Letter to Mayor and Council from Engineer, 25 April 1904. See also CEA, A92-100, Box 3, Commissioners Report No. 195, 30 November 1910. A new fence was built in 1910 to 'enable businesslike control of the organization.'

<sup>76</sup> See map attached to HBCA, A12/L 109/4/1, folio 19. See also, for detail of spur configuration at powerhouse A92 100 Box 6 No. 267, 1913.

<sup>77</sup> CEA, A92-100, Box 2, Report of Commissioners No. 42, 9 June 1908 and RG 8/20/23, Letter to Board of Railway Commissioners from Secretary Treasurer, Town of Edmonton, acknowledging receipt of Railway Board Order No. 53, 20 July 1908.

This work disturbed human remains in, or adjacent to, the HBC burial ground. Mrs. Christina McKnight (née McQueen), who was interviewed in 1976, remembered that at the time bodies were moved if there was a living relative who remembered them. One person who did so was an aboriginal woman who collected the bones of a baby in a box obtained from Mrs. McKnight's mother in order to rebury the child on her reserve.<sup>78</sup> As mentioned above, the railway spur ran down 104 Street, east of the demarcated burial ground. The recovery of human remains from this area therefore suggests that the burial ground extended east, beyond the boundaries shown on the Aldous survey of 1882.

Kenneth Kinnaird, who was interviewed in 1970 by Naomi Radford, also associated construction of the powerhouse site with the disturbance of burials. Less specific than McKnight, he responded to Radford's questions about the 'Indian graveyard' by saying that:

Well, my guess is, around the grounds, just east of the grounds of the parliament buildings [*Radford: the present grounds*]. Because the exhibition grounds used to be down there and it was right close there. I am not sure as when they built the powerhouse they started digging up bones. They started, some excavation down there for building, brought up a lot of bones.<sup>79</sup>

The cost of hauling coal to the powerhouse had been a thorny issue for the municipality ever since the decision had been made to build it on the flats. The Town had commissioned a study in 1904 to look at the pros and cons of moving the powerhouse to the coal mines, six miles downstream on the North Saskatchewan. H.W. Weller, the engineer employed to study the question, concluded that 'my opinion is that it will be very many years before the power required would warrant the removal of the Electric plant away from its present site, and if any additional expenditure be contemplated it should rather be in the direction of reducing the cost of hauling and handling the coal from the mines to your present boiler room.'<sup>80</sup> Attached to Weller's report is an estimate prepared in 1904 for building the spur line from the EYP to the powerhouse.

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<sup>78</sup> CEA Burial File, Notes from an Interview/Conversation with Mrs. Christina McKnight, 17 November 1976. The notes state that 'when building railroad to take coal — an Indian woman watched them dig up and took the bones of a baby in her apron.' It should be noted that this information was collected in a relatively casual manner.

<sup>79</sup> PAA, 70.177, Interview of Kenneth Kinnaird by Naomi Radford, 1970. Kinnaird was born in 1891. His father, Jock Kinnaird, served as Town Clerk.

<sup>80</sup> CEA, RG8/10/2, Private Report to Town of Edmonton re: Moving the City Electric Lights Plant, 12 April 1904.

The more general question was the need for additional land to accommodate the expansion of the power plant. The City's Commissioners took on this question in 1910, informing Council:

Some time ago, looking over arrangements of our Power Plant and considering plans for the future, we concluded that it would be advisable to obtain the land fronting upon 4<sup>th</sup> Street, directly across from the Plant. We had in mind a strip 150 ft. in depth, and lying between McLeod [95] Avenue and the River. We would propose to use this land for the storage of coal and other plant material.<sup>81</sup>

The property in which the Commissioners were interested was owned by the HBC, part of the land reserved for the trade, and the City therefore contacted the Company to open negotiations. The HBC's Commissioner responded to the City's inquiry positively. Although he cautiously prefaced his advice to his Governors on the matter that 'the lands might ultimately come into demand for industrial purposes, or if subdivided the Lots could perhaps be sold for a cheap class of workmen's residences,' overall he thought the request and the price offered for the roughly 2.5 acres to be reasonable.<sup>82</sup> The sale went through in 1912.<sup>83</sup> In 1914 the City acted to close '4<sup>th</sup> Street, between McLeod Avenue and the River.' Council was informed that 'the City owns the property on both sides of that portion of the street referred to.'<sup>84</sup> A small portion of this property (north of Rossdale Road and south of 95 Avenue) is in the study area, while the western edge of this property forms part of the eastern boundary of the study area. The eastern edge of the burial ground shown on Aldous's 1882 plan of the HBC reserve abuts this property, with the property line grazing or cutting through the northeast tip of the delineated area. There is no mention of the burial ground in the correspondence between the City and the HBC, nor in the Commissioners' reports recommending purchase of the property, which were reviewed as a part of the present research initiative.

The power plant complex was expanded over time. Building campaigns occurred between 1907 and 1913 and again in the 1920s. In 1930 City Council approved a five-year plan of expansion for the Rossdale Power Plant that involved the removal of part of the old plant and the construction of a new one, including a coal conveyor that extended west.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> CEA, A92-100, Box 3. Commissioners' Report No. 204, 27 November 1910.

<sup>82</sup> HBCA, A12/L 109/3/2, folio 26-27. Letter from Commissioner Chipman to Wm. Ware, HBC Secretary, London, 23 May 1911. See map accompanying this letter.

<sup>83</sup> Province of Alberta, Certificate of Title, 140V22, 19 November 1912.

<sup>84</sup> CEA RG 8.10/1/29. Commissioners' Report No. 626, 19 June 1914.

<sup>85</sup> David Whiting, 'Historic Resource Impact Assessment, Rossdale Power Plant'. Prepared for Edmonton Power Generation Inc., 25 August 1999, pp. 47-48. This report contains useful photographs and plans of the power station.

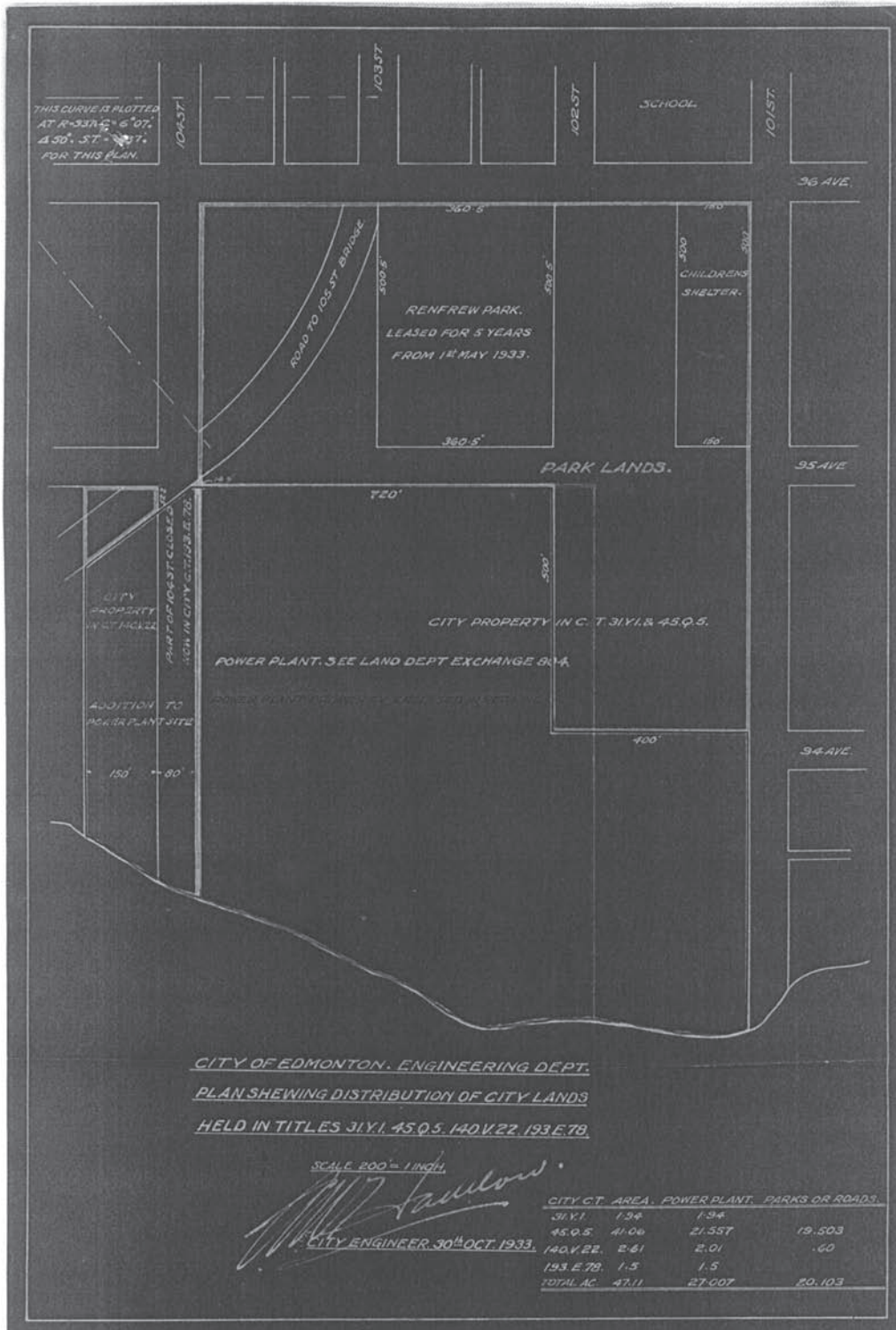


Figure 6-13

Plan of City lands in Rosedale, drawn by A.D. Haddow, 1933.

CEA RG 11, Class 241 File 13.

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The work undertaken in the early 1930s clearly indicated that the City Commissioners saw the power plant as being ‘permanently established in its present location.’ As a result, land at Laurier and South Side Parks, which had been the ‘property’ of the Power Department, was transferred to the City, and 22.069 acres of land at the Rossdale site were transferred to the power plant for ‘future possible requirements of the Department.’<sup>86</sup> A plan drawn by the City’s Engineer, A.D. Haddow, in 1933, shows the 2.61 acres west of 104 Street and south of Rossdale Road that the City had purchased from the HBC in 1912 as being divided between a 2.01-acre ‘addition to the power plant site’ and, at the northern tip (and within the study area), as being for ‘roads or parks.’ That same year a bylaw was passed to close 104 Street south of 95 Avenue.<sup>87</sup> The bylaw declares that ‘the City of Edmonton deem it in the interests of the public to close the said portion of said street and hold the same a parcel of land for use in connection with said Power House.’<sup>88</sup> The 2.01 acres were likely part of the 22.069-acre transfer, as were the 1.5 acres involved in the closure of 104 Street. At the end of the day, or at least in October 1933, the power plant was assigned a total of about 27 acres and ‘roads or parks’ were assigned about 20 acres in the area south of 95 Avenue, west of 101 Street, and east of the lane between 104 Street and 105 Street – a significantly large parcel of land.<sup>89</sup>

Further construction occurred on the west side of the power plant in 1938 and again in 1954. The latter is of interest because it coincided with the transfer to the power plant of 1.5 of the 2.84 acres that the City had purchased as ‘Parcel C’ in 1930 from the HBC (see Parks and Recreation, below).<sup>90</sup> The study area includes all of these 2.84 acres. This final purchase represents the most westerly extension of the powerhouse property. It likely divided the burial ground between the properties of the City and power plant – now owned and operated by EPCOR Generation, a City-owned corporation.

## The Legislature Buildings

The other major development that defines the boundaries of the Rossdale Historical Land Use Study Area was the construction of the Alberta Legislature. The main buildings are located at a distance from the study area, north of the site of Fort Edmonton V, but the grounds and ancillary buildings directly abut the western edge of the study area.

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<sup>86</sup> CEA, RG 11/241/13. Commissioners’ Report No. 32, 14 August 1933 re: Power Department Lands.

<sup>87</sup> City of Edmonton, By-Law No. 1, 1933. This suggests that the closure discussed by the Commissioners in 1914 did not proceed.

<sup>88</sup> City of Edmonton, By-Law No. 1, 1933.

<sup>89</sup> CEA, RG11/241/13. ‘City of Edmonton Engineering Department. Plan Shewing Distribution of City Lands Held in Titles ... 30 October 1933.’

<sup>90</sup> City of Edmonton. Records. ‘Power Plant History, 1903-1964’ 91 LK 156 Box 6 Loc. 04-12-03.

The HBC's retreat from the site of its last fort was gradual, beginning in the late 1880s and continuing until the property was finally sold to the Province in 1908. An assessment of the buildings at Fort Edmonton was carried out by the HBC in 1889. The inspector concluded that 'the buildings answer the purposes of the present trade; the warehouses are of no value, except to store Freight when the Steam-boats are running. In view of the prospect of a Railway to the town, on the completion of which the whole trade would be changed, no expenditure beyond that needed to keep up the necessary buildings is recommended.'<sup>91</sup> This and similar later reports make no mention of the warehouse built in 1882, although they do mention some structures outside of the Fort's fences, including a powder magazine located 500 feet east of the eastern fence. There is no mention of a cemetery and the only reference to a garden is in the context of the 'Big House' (see next paragraph) located 520 feet north of the north fence. Most of the fifteen buildings listed in the report were being used by the Company, but some were rented out to other parties, including the North West Mounted Police, which occupied two buildings on the site.



Figure 6-14

The new HBC store on Jasper Avenue, 1912.

Glenbow Archives NC6-217.

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<sup>91</sup> HBCA, B/60/e/16, Post Reports – Edmonton, 1889; B/60/e/24, Post Reports – Edmonton, 1895-1897; For a plan of the fort in 1898 see G7/1 and 2/ fo. 32, A and B. HBC Fur Trade Districts Plans of Posts, 1898.

In 1892 the Company built a new store at the corner of 103 Street and Jasper Avenue, effectively separating the ‘town’ from the fur trade. Later, in 1896, the former home of HBC Chief Factor Richard Hardisty, known as the ‘Big House,’ which was located north of the Fort’s fence, was rented to the newly established Edmonton Golf and Country Club. The club’s links were, according to the *Edmonton Bulletin* ‘on the flat below the big house.’<sup>92</sup> A more detailed, albeit much later, description of the golf course is provided by Ella Walker, who quotes from engineer R. Cautley: ‘it extended to the high knoll immediately west of the high level bridge, encompassed the old fort buildings and ran down the hill slope eastward to the old Indian graveyard.’<sup>93</sup> Both this later description and the contemporary, but brief, description in the *Edmonton Bulletin* suggest that the golf course extended into the study area. The Big House burned down in 1906 after being used as an isolation hospital for smallpox victims.<sup>94</sup>

Discussions regarding purchase of the property from the HBC began in 1905, in anticipation of the naming of Edmonton as the capital of the new province. The provincial government expressed an interest in purchasing about 15 acres. HBC Land Commissioner C.C. Chipman described the the boundaries that: ‘extend Westward from the Easterly boundary of the Fort Reservation, and is bounded on the north by the Saskatchewan Avenue, and on the south by the Saskatchewan River.’ According to Chipman, ‘the land selected included nearly all the site at present occupied by the Fort, but in this respect it may be stated that the buildings, chiefly old log structures, are of comparatively little value.’ Chipman expressed the opinion that the construction of the government buildings at this site would likely increase the value of surrounding property.<sup>95</sup> In a subsequent letter to Chipman, Premier A.L. Rutherford explained that the site was considered ‘the best location in or around Edmonton’ because of its historical significance and scenic setting.<sup>96</sup>

The negotiations that followed concluded in 1908. The Province purchased 23.89 acres at \$4,000 per acre, with the HBC extracting a promise that ‘the lands are to be used in perpetuity for Government purposes only.’<sup>97</sup> The eastern edge of the property was defined by 107 Street, from the river to Saskatchewan (97) Avenue.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *Edmonton Bulletin*, 30 April 1896.

<sup>93</sup> Cautley cited in Saxberg, p. 8. Saxberg is quoting from Ella Walker, *Fortress North* (Toronto: Thomas Allen, 1947), p. 416. This may refer to the graveyard on the ‘upper flats’; see above, Section 5.3.

<sup>94</sup> Cashman, *More Edmonton Stories*, p. 183.

<sup>95</sup> HBCA, A.12/L 109/2/2,, fol. 2-3. Letter from Land Commissioner C.C. Chipman, HBC Winnipeg, to William Ware, Secretary, HBC, London, 27th November 1905.

<sup>96</sup> PAA, 92.361, Box 1, FS0001-1, Volume 1, Letter to C.C. Chipman, HBC, Winnipeg from A.L. Rutherford, Ex. Co., Alberta, 5 January 1906.

<sup>97</sup> HBCA, A12/L 109/2/2, folio 50. Memorandum between Province of Alberta and Hudson’s Bay Company, 27th March 1908.

<sup>98</sup> PAA 65.124, Charles E. Goad, Fire Insurance Plan of Edmonton, (Montreal and London: Charles E. Goad, 1907), sheet 54. The 1907 FIP shows the Province’s Parliament Building and Legislative Hall occupying a site at the corner of Calgary Avenue and 106. PAA would not allow copies to be made of this plan.



The old fort buildings were used for storage and workshops<sup>99</sup> until 1915, when they were torn down with the promise that ‘they will be rebuilt and renovated without interfering with their historic characteristics and adapted to museum purposes.’<sup>100</sup> The importance of the buildings, and the significance of their removal, was not lost on Edmontonians at the time. In 1912 the landscape architects retained by the City had recommended that ‘it will also be very advisable to protect the old Hudson Bay Fort, located on the banks of the Saskatchewan River south of the house of parliament, and restore its original appearance as near as possible so as to preserve the character of this first landmark in Alberta’s history.’<sup>101</sup>

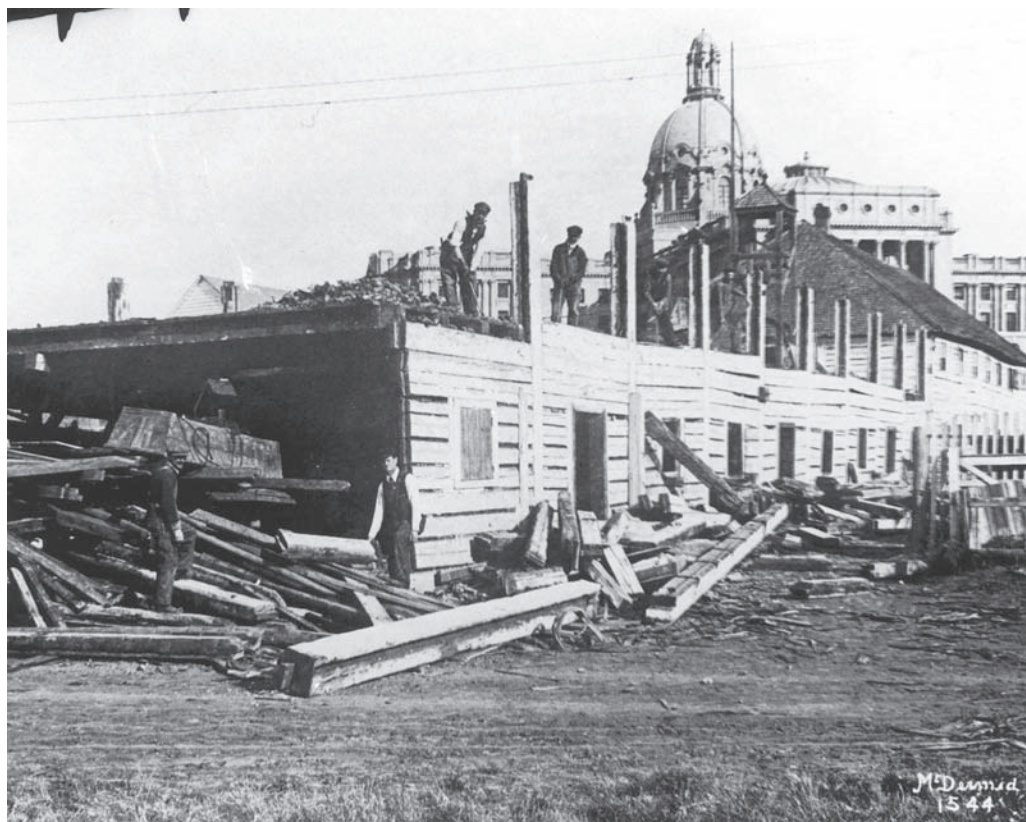


Figure 6-15

The removal of the Fort, 1915.

CEA-10-79

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<sup>99</sup> PAA. 65.124. Fire Insurance Plan of Edmonton, 1907. Sheet 54. See also PAA 92.361, S001-1, P No. 1 ‘Sketch of Proposed Ballast Pit on H.B. Co’s Reserve Edmonton, 11 July 1908.

<sup>100</sup> MacGregor quoting from the *Edmonton Journal*, 13 October 1915, pp. 216-17. They were eventually reconstructed at Fort Edmonton Park.

<sup>101</sup> CEA, A92-100, Box 5, Morell and Nichols, *A Report on City Planning for the City of Edmonton*, 1912.

At the same time that the Province was dealing with the HBC to purchase the grounds for the Legislature, it was negotiating with the City regarding land to the east of 107 Street, in Block 6 of the HBC Reserve. In 1906 the City agreed to convey the block bounded by Calgary (96) Avenue, 107 Street, 106 Street, and McLeod (95) Avenue to the Crown; it subsequently agreed to close the affected streets.<sup>102</sup> The Province also bought from individual property owners, between about 1909 and 1920, the rest of the lots in Block 6, south of Saskatchewan (97) Avenue.<sup>103</sup>

Figure 6-16

West side of Rossdale, 1906.

PAA 5149



The City's ownership of this property appears to be related to its operation of a gravel pit that extended from 107 Street east to at least 106 Street, between Calgary (96) Avenue and McLeod (95) Avenue. This operation can be traced back to 1903,<sup>104</sup> when it was described as being located at the 'Golf Links', and may extend back as far as 1894.<sup>105</sup> Gravel extraction continued after the land

<sup>102</sup> CEA, RG 8.10, Box 1, F. 33, Safety and Health Commissioner's Report No. 394, 5 October 1914. See map with report.

<sup>103</sup> PAA, 92.361, Box 1, V0001-1, P.1/P2. Government Centre, Vendor Files, Edmonton.

<sup>104</sup> CEA, RG 8/5/4. Letter from Town Engineer, John Armstrong, to Mayor and Council, Town of Edmonton re: Gravel Supply, 13 May 1903. See Also RG 8/10/61. The area is described in a written note appended to a copy of By-Law 251 at being in Block 6, Lots 1-10 and 117-126 in the HBR. The By-law proposed borrowing money to buy the lots, but the ratepayers defeated it in a vote.

<sup>105</sup> CEA, RG8/1/548. Outgoing Correspondence, 1892-94. Letter from Town Secretary to P. Heiminck and Co., 5 July 1894. In this letter, the Town acknowledged that the City had taken gravel from HBC property and offered to buy the lots concerned, but it did not identify the location.

was transferred to the Province, with the Province and City sharing its use, and occasionally squabbling over it. The City's use of this gravel source likely ended some time in the 1910s.<sup>106</sup> The gravel operation is of interest because it signals a significant disruption of the land adjacent to the study area, and because it appears as a key reference point in an oral history description of the site of a burial ground (see discussion below). The gravel operation appears in one of the images reproduced in the Lifeways report of 2003.<sup>107</sup>

Just as the power plant 'crept' west over time, the provincial government 'crept' east, acquiring, in the early 1960s, more properties along the western edge of Rosedale. At the same time, 106 Street was closed between 95 Avenue and 96 Avenue.<sup>108</sup> During the construction of the Terrace Building, a large government office building, an access road was built across the study area from northwest of the 105 Street rotary (traffic circle), and immediately south of Block 6, HBC Reserve, and 106 Street.<sup>109</sup>

At the same time as the Terrace Building was being erected, the City was looking at building a road west from the 105 Street Bridge along the river to the Groat Bridge, following the former Edmonton Yukon and Pacific Railway right-of-way. Evidently the Province had, over the years, encroached on the right-of-way.<sup>110</sup>

## The 105 Street Bridge and Bridge Approaches

A good deal of ink has been spilt on the subject of park development in the North Saskatchewan River valley (see below). Less attention seems to have been paid to transportation planning and the impact of the automobile more generally. Closely related to the debate about parks were earlier discussions about the extent to which Edmontonians wanted to use the valley for transportation.

Originally a node along the vital east-west river transportation corridor, Rosedale has been a node in a new north-south transportation route since the arrival of the

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<sup>106</sup> PAA, 92.361, Box 1, F. S0001-1, Vol.1. Exchange of letters between John Stock, Deputy Minister, Department of Public Works, and City of Edmonton's Superintendent of Street and Scavenging Department, May 1913. In his last letter Stock asks the City to stop using the pit and suggests it shift its operations over to 106 Street where there was material that would 'answer the purpose.'

<sup>107</sup> Saxberg et al., p. 405. PAA B5149.

<sup>108</sup> PAA 92.361, Box 14, F. S0001-1, Volume 5. List of Property Purchased to Consolidate Site for Terrace Building. Sent to C.W. Lester, Director of Surveys, Department of Highways from E.E. Wilson, Appraiser, Department of Public Works, 4 May 1961. The Province acquired properties in Block 5, including lots 1-10, which directly abut the study area boundary.

<sup>109</sup> PAA 92.361, Box 14, F. S0001-1, Volume 5. Letter to City Engineer from E.E. Wilson, Appraiser, Department of Public Works, 22 March 1961.

<sup>110</sup> PAA 92.361, Box 14, F. S0001-1, Volume 5. Letter from City of Edmonton, J.D.A. Macdonald, City Engineer, to Mr. A. Arnold, DM, Public Works, 19 March 1958. This file also contains documents relating to property acquisition for the Terrace Building.

railway in the late nineteenth century, with travelers from the south crossing the flats and climbing the bluffs, usually via McDougall Hill, to the centre of the city. Before the Low Level and High Level bridges were completed, in 1900 and 1913 respectively, a ferry moved people across the river (see above, Section 6.1). In the winter, 103 Street was kept open to provide access to an ice bridge. The focus of this section is on transportation infrastructure development, although readers should realize that there is overlap with the section on parks and recreation that follows.

When Edmonton annexed Strathcona in 1912, it agreed to build the 105 Street Bridge, also known as the Walterdale Bridge. Initially the City hoped to meet this obligation by moving the existing Low Level Bridge to the 105 Street Bridge site and building a new and bigger bridge at the Low Level site. However, the federal government, which had part ownership of the Low Level Bridge, did not want to build a new crossing in Edmonton, so the City had to construct a new bridge at 105 Street.<sup>111</sup> Tenders were called in August 1912. Dominion Bridge won the contract and by the spring of the following year the superstructure was in place.<sup>112</sup>

Figure 6-17

*The 105 Street (Walterdale) Bridge under construction, showing the water main, 1912.*

PA-202803.



<sup>111</sup> NAC, RG 11, vol. 3735, pt. 2. Letter from G.S. Armstrong, Mayor of Edmonton to F.D. Monk, Minister, DPW, Ottawa, 10 April 1913; NAC, RG 11, vol. 3735, pt. 3, Letter from DPW to City of Edmonton, 17 June 1912.

<sup>112</sup> PAA 69.141/1a H.F. Christie papers, Highway Bridge over Saskatchewan River at 5th Street, Edmonton. Canadian Bridge Co.

Construction of the bridge was completed in 1915. It took two more years for the City to purchase the land required for the north approaches, which were in the Rosedale flats. A plan drawn in 1913 shows the land required.<sup>113</sup> By 1915 the 1.13-acre property still had not been purchased and the City's Commissioners were anxiously informing Council that 'it is absolutely necessary that this right-of-way be provided to comply with the requirements of the Department of Public Works for the Dominion of Canada, and to prevent the Department from possible action toward closing up this bridge.'<sup>114</sup> The HBC was patient with the City, which begged off paying because it was short of funds, since 'the necessity for the bridge in the public interest was readily admitted as also was the advantage to the Company's property.' When it came time to collect, however, the HBC played hardball, insisting on interest plus back taxes on land the city had effectively expropriated four years earlier.<sup>115</sup> The land in question consisted of a road right-of-way that extended due south at a width of 80 feet from the foot of 105 Street at McLeod (95) Avenue for 313.2 feet and then turned southwest, at a width of 104 feet, for a distance of 140 feet, where it met the river.<sup>116</sup> This left in the HBC's possession the small parcel of unsubdivided land east of 105 Street, south of McLeod (95) Avenue, and west of the powerhouse property – the parcel that contained the burial ground. The road came close to, but did not cross, the burial ground shown on the 1882 Aldous plan. Neither the City nor the HBC records regarding the north approaches to the 105 Street Bridge that were reviewed for this study makes any mention of the burial ground.

Once the bridge was completed, and before it was open to the public, it was immediately put to practical use by the City's Engineering Department, which ran a 12-inch water main across it. The City's two 20-inch mains 'in the river bed' had already broken a number of times and the Engineer was eager to get the pipe laid across the bridge, so that there would be 'no question about the South Side being supplied with filtered water during the period of the year when the water of the river is turbid.'<sup>117</sup> In 1923 the bridge was used by Northwestern Utilities to carry the first natural gas pipeline from Viking across the river and into the City. The celebratory flare was lit by the Mayor at the north end of the 105 Street Bridge.<sup>118</sup>

The bridge carried vehicular traffic and also provided an important pedestrian link between the two sides of the river. An aerial photograph of 1925 shows what

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<sup>113</sup> CEA, A92-100, Box 6, No. 267, 1913

<sup>114</sup> CEA. A92-100. Commissioner's Report No. 274. Re: North Approach – Fifth Street Bridge.

<sup>115</sup> HBCA, A12/L 109/3/2, folio 91-92. Letter from Land Commissioner [name not legible, no longer Chipman though] to Governor and Committee, HBC, London, 13 January 1917.

<sup>116</sup> HBCA, plan in A12/L109/3/2 fo. 93

<sup>117</sup> CEA. RG 8.10/1/31. Commissioners Report No. 512, 16 April 1914. Re: Pipe Line Across Fifth Street Bridge.

<sup>118</sup> MacGregor, p. 232.

appears to be a formal sidewalk adjacent to 105 Street, leading to the bridge. There is also a pathway or rough road cutting across the HBC property northwest of the bridge and connecting with the foot of 106 Street.<sup>119</sup> Pedestrian traffic continued to be important for many years. In 1950, the City's Safety Department wrote to Engineering, urging it not to re-open the bridge after repair work until the sidewalks were completed, 'in view of the considerable pedestrian traffic over this span, particularly during the summer months when both the Southside Park and Pool and the Renfrew Ball Park are going strong.'<sup>120</sup>

In the mid to late 1920s, the vexing question of cross-river traffic volumes and the inadequacy of the three bridges and their approaches began to occupy the attention of Edmonton's planners and its engineer, A.W. Haddow. The City's Town Planning Commission prepared a major street plan in 1930. It identified the major access routes from south of the river to downtown and describes a 'new, admirably planned and more direct thoroughfare crossing the river over the 105<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge.'<sup>121</sup> The map accompanying the 1930 study shows Rossdale Road and 97 Avenue as major thoroughfares. More information is available in civic correspondence. In 1930 Haddow wrote a letter to City Commissioner D. Mitchell in response to the latter's inquiry about improving the south approach to the High Level Bridge. Haddow explained that the bridge 'problem' required a comprehensive approach, writing that 'The High Level Bridge carries by far the greatest volume of traffic, but 105 Street Bridge and the Low Level Bridge carry much less traffic than they would if the approach conditions were improved. Therefore the High Level Bridge question should be studied in conjunction with these other routes.'<sup>122</sup> The letter goes on to state that before any work proceeded on the High Level Bridge, the approaches to the '105<sup>th</sup> Street and 100 Street Low Level Bridges' should be improved. It notes that the Engineering Department was planning to construct additional south approaches for the 105 Street Bridge, and on the north side it intended 'to locate an approach adjoining or paralleling the E.Y.& P from 105 Street to 101<sup>st</sup> Street to join up with the proposed paving on McDougall Hill.'

Haddow identified what he considered the ideal route for this new road. It would lead from 'from 105 Street and 95 Avenue in a north-easterly direction across Blocks 3, 2, and 1, to the intersection of 101<sup>st</sup> Street, thence along 101<sup>st</sup> Street to a

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<sup>119</sup> National Air Photo Library CA 124.88, 24 June 1925.

<sup>120</sup> CEA, RG 11/12/21. Memorandum from Hugh D. Davidson, Safety Department to City Engineer, J.D.A. Macdonald, 1 June 1950.

<sup>121</sup> John F. Tanqueray, 'Interim Report on A Major Street Plan for the City of Edmonton, Alberta.' Report Prepared for City of Edmonton Town Planning Commission, 1930. One possible source of information on this topic is David van Leenen, 'Paving the Way: Edmonton and the Impact of the Automobile, 1919-1930,' unpublished MS, This is cited in Voisey, *Edmonton: The Life of a City*,

<sup>122</sup> CEA. RG 11/12/2. Letter from A.D. Haddow, City Engineer, to D. Mitchell, City Commissioners, Edmonton, 11 February 1930.

junction with the proposed paving on McDougall Hill.<sup>123</sup> The problem with this route was that it crossed property owned by the HBC, which would have to be paid for, so Haddow proposed an alternative route using existing public streets. A third option ‘which will doubtless be utilized later on’ was to take the traffic straight up 105 Street. ‘Having this in mind, the 105<sup>th</sup> Street grade was improved in 1912.’ Haddow did not see this option as practical until ‘the Street Railway Traffic is eliminated from 97<sup>th</sup> Avenue, because crossing of a heavy traffic artery and street railway at this location would not be satisfactory.’

There followed an exchange of letters between the Commissioners and Haddow regarding the possible options. The Commissioners did not think that the timing was right to buy the property required and expressed a preference for the route that used public streets. Haddow came back with another option. This involved:

... running from 105 Street Bridge over City property to the intersection of 104 Street and 95 Avenue, thence diagonally across the City property to the intersection of 96<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 103<sup>rd</sup> Street, thence either along 103<sup>rd</sup> Street to the E.Y.& P. to 101<sup>st</sup> Street, or alternatively by 97<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 101<sup>st</sup> Street.<sup>124</sup>

Haddow preferred this route to the one on existing streets because it cut out two blind corners and would be the first section of the diagonal road he hoped to eventually build.

Fortunately – since Haddow had already let the contract for the work<sup>125</sup> – the Commissioners were receptive to his idea, writing that ‘subject to satisfactory arrangement with Mr. Cunningham as to crossing the power house land, your recommendation is approved and the roadway may be proceeded with as proposed.’<sup>126</sup>

Haddow’s scheme cut directly across the Fort Edmonton burial ground. The City was in the process of acquiring from the HBC ‘Block C,’ the land containing the demarcated burial ground (as shown on the Aldous 1882 survey), as part of a larger land acquisition process intended to extend Victoria Park east to the powerhouse property line. This plan is not discussed in the records reviewed relating to the road project, but it does appear in the records relating to the acquisition of the

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<sup>123</sup> CEA, RG 11/12/3. Letter from Haddow to City Commissioners, 3 March 1930. A map is appended to this correspondence.

<sup>124</sup> CEA, RG 11/12/3 Letter from Haddow to City Commissioners, 29 April 1930.

<sup>125</sup> CEA, RG 11/12/3 Letter from Haddow to City Commissioners, 29 April 1930.

<sup>126</sup> CEA, RG 11/12/3 Memorandum to Haddow from City Commissioners, 1 May 1930.

property. (See the discussion of parks and recreation, below, for a more detailed exploration of this, and for the City's purchase of the block in 1930.)

Depression and war interrupted further progress on the transportation scheme. Shortly after the war, the City commissioned a report on its bridges and on cross-river traffic more generally. The author, Dr. Pratley, saw the 105 Street Bridge as underused, carrying primarily local traffic between Walterdale and Rosssdale and not serving the larger city. Pratley's report concurred with the solutions advocated by Engineer A.W. Haddow, namely the revision of the southern approaches by lowering the southern span six feet and paving the bridge approaches. This work was carried out between 1946 and 1950. An important element of the plan, the improvement of road connections across the Rosssdale Flats, was addressed with a proposal to 'extend 103<sup>rd</sup> Street north of 97<sup>th</sup> Avenue across the existing crossing at the E.Y.& P tracks' to 102 Street. The road would then go up 102 Street to 'just south of MacDonald Drive' at 101 Street.<sup>127</sup> Work on the road began in 1951.<sup>128</sup> The reports, and the correspondence related to this road, described it not as crossing Rosssdale flats, but simply as a 'cross-valley' road. This suggests that the engineers and planners saw the valley (and the flats) as a barrier akin to the river, something to be got over and through on the way to the real community above. This attitude emerges continually. It reveals that Rosssdale was perceived as a utilitarian place with the needs of the larger community given priority.

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By 1955, questions for Council members caused by mounting traffic volumes and consequent delays caused the Engineering Department to review Dr. Pratley's report. The engineers identified three options for the 105 Street crossing, all of which involved new bridge construction and a freeway-type environment on Rosssdale flats. The report contains one idea of particular interest, namely a proposal from the Town Planning Department that a 'traffic rotary be constructed at the intersection of 103 and 97 Avenue, which would facilitate the flow of traffic in all directions when crossing the flats area.'<sup>129</sup> Talk about replacing the 105 Street Bridge would go on for years (see below) – and continues today – but a rotary at the north approach to the bridge became reality relatively quickly. The construction of the rotary in 1958 coincided with that of River Valley Road in 1957-58, and the construction of a new road on the old EYP roadbed connecting Bellamy Hill Road with 104 Street at 97 Avenue. Newspaper reports suggest that there was considerable disturbance of the ground during construction. For example, the

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<sup>127</sup> CEA, RG 50/1/6/28, Letter from J.D.A. Macdonald, Acting City Engineer to H.L. Roblin, District Engineer, CNR, Edmonton, 19th August 1949.

<sup>128</sup> CEA, Clipping Files, Engineering Roadways, Rosssdale Road, 'Start Construction of New Hill Road,' *Edmonton Journal*, 26 July 1952.

<sup>129</sup> CEA, RG 11/12/27, Report re: Cross River Traffic addressed to City Commissioners from J.D.A. Macdonald, 20 June 1955, p.5. According to this report, the cross-river traffic count at the 105 Street Bridge had increased from 6,951 to 18,785 between 1950 and 1954. See p. 2. See also the dissenting report,



waterworks department laid a 42-inch feeder main pipe from the ‘water treatment plant to about 150 ft west of 105<sup>th</sup> Street.’ On River Valley Road, west of 105 Street and below the Legislature, the roadbed was excavated to ‘near river level’ and the road grade built up with boulders, concrete, and gravel. Concrete slabs were used to protect the bank. The impact of this and other construction work on the burial ground is discussed below.<sup>130</sup>

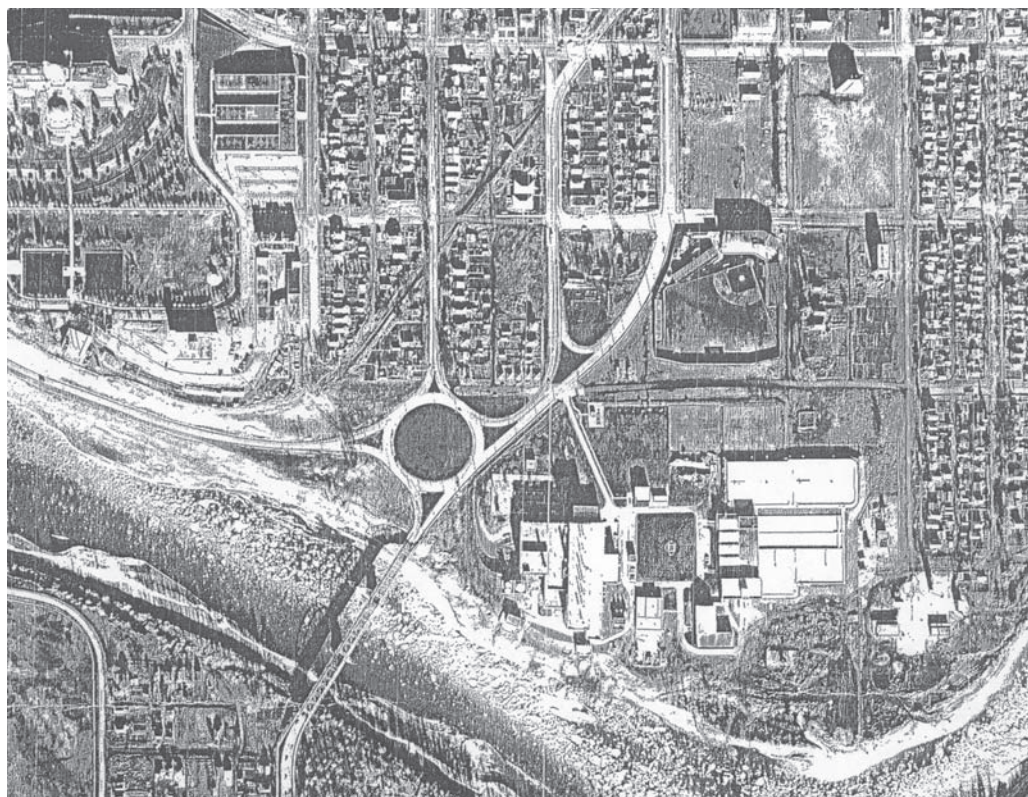


Figure 6-18

Aerial photo showing the traffic circle, 1959.

City of Edmonton Archives

The subsequent Metropolitan Edmonton Transportation Study, completed in 1963, had a profound impact on Rosedale.<sup>131</sup> It recommended the construction of a network of freeways and bridges in the river valley. One component, the Jasper Freeway, was halted after strong community opposition. A portion of the network that was constructed was the James MacDonald Bridge (opened 1971) and its approaches in Rosedale. To provide access to the bridge, 97 Avenue was widened

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proposing various other options, prepared by Noel Dent, Town Planner, and William Brown, Assistant Town Planner in Engineering, 26 July 1955.

<sup>130</sup> CEA, Clipping Files, Engineering, Roadway, River Valley Road, ‘River Road Nearly Ready Through Park,’ *Edmonton Journal*, 8 August 1957; ‘Work on River Road to Star this Month,’ *Edmonton Journal*, 12 June 1958; ‘Bridge Frames River Road,’ *Edmonton Journal*, 24 October 1958; ‘Road Work Progresses,’ *Edmonton Journal*, 3 September 1958; ‘Road alters River,’ *Edmonton Journal*, 15 September 1958.

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*In Rossdale roadway construction and neighbourhood demolition proceeded. This may well have been because Rossdale was a poor community and could not mount effective opposition.*

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and Rossdale Road became a three-lane roadway. The work nearly destroyed the neighbourhood. It required the demolition of 80 homes and effectively broke the neighbourhood into three sub-areas: North, South, and West Rossdale. The debate over roads *vs.* parks stalled freeway development elsewhere in the valley, but in Rossdale roadway construction and residential demolition proceeded. This may well have been because Rossdale was a poor community and could not mount effective opposition. Ironically, the most profound potential impacts of the Metropolitan Edmonton Transportation Study in Rossdale were moderated by a number of unforeseen engineering difficulties, which meant that proposals to replace the 105 Street Bridge, on the books from 1963 until well into the 1970s, were eventually abandoned. These plans would have seen most of the study area given over to cloverleaves and elevated bridge approaches.<sup>132</sup> An important and enduring side-effect was that the City became the primary landowner in the area, since land acquisition for the north approaches proceeded in the late 1960s.<sup>133</sup>

Figure 6-19

Traffic in Rossdale in 1957.

CEA-275-237




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<sup>131</sup> Edmonton District Planning Commission and Member Communities in Co-operation with the Government of the Province of Alberta, 'Metropolitan Edmonton Transportation Study,' Vol. 2, Plan and Program, December 1963.

<sup>132</sup> CEA, RG 11/12/40, Memorandum from G. Hodge, City Engineer, to Mr. J.R. Warner, Supt., Land Department, Re: 105th Street Bridge and Approaches. Plans showing the proposed approaches and property to be acquired accompany the memorandum.

<sup>133</sup> CEA, RG 11/12/40, Memorandum from Hodge to Warner.

Another transportation project that disrupted Rosssdale was Project UNI (c. 1979-92), which created the one-way system that linked the two sides of the river. It, too, required further demolitions, as well as the removal of the traffic circle constructed in 1958. Aerial photographs indicate that the rotary was removed between 1980 and 1984.<sup>134</sup>

## Parks and Recreation Grounds

A recurrent theme of this study is how the City's planning, or lack of it, has affected the development of Rosssdale. A balanced analysis of the see-saw progress of Edmonton's policies towards parks in the river valley is available in the Historical Resource Impact Assessment that was prepared for the proposed Space Sciences Centre in 1981.<sup>135</sup> The discussion followed two distinct threads. The first related to parks that serve that entire city, such as Renfrew Park, and the connected system of valley drives and trails. The second addressed the development of recreational facilities intended for use by residents of the Rosssdale neighbourhood.

The removal of the exhibition grounds to a new site left the City with the task of deciding what to do with its property in Rosssdale. The first important decision it made, in 1910, was not to sell the three most northerly blocks of the exhibition grounds. The Commissioners informed Council that:

It is open to question whether the City should at any time dispose of any of this property which is so close to what must be in time a very congested part of the City but in any case your Commissioners are of the opinion that it would not be advisable to sell any of this property at the present time.<sup>136</sup>

A few months later, the City decided to demolish most of the buildings on the site and to sell the materials.<sup>137</sup> A proposal from Edmonton Concrete Co. Ltd. in February 1911 to purchase the grounds was rejected on the basis that no 'definite policy dealing with this property has been laid down by the Council' and that 'this particular block of land asked for by this company may be required for park use.'<sup>138</sup> In June the Commissioners recommended to Council that 'such portions of the old Exhibitions grounds as are not in use and are not to be required in the near future for Power Plant purposes, be cleared of debris, levelled off and rolled where necessary and placed at the disposal of the public.'<sup>139</sup> The lack of a

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<sup>134</sup> CEA, Aerial Photographs, 1984/ NW49684 and Aerial Photographs, 1980/FF B016-138 L15E .

<sup>135</sup> Jane Plosz and Lan W. Chan, 'Space Sciences Centre: Historical Resources Impact Assessment: Final Report,' Report prepared for Edmonton Parks and Recreation Planning and Development Branch, Historical Planning Unit, March, 1981, pp. 62-66.

<sup>136</sup> CEA, A92-100, Commissioners Report No. 12, 14 January 1910.

<sup>137</sup> CEA, A92-100, Letter from City Engineer, Building Inspector, and Superintendent of the Stores Department to the City of Edmonton, 22 August 1910.

<sup>138</sup> CEA, A92-100, Report of Industrial Committee, 7 February 1911.

<sup>139</sup> CEA, A92-100, Commissioners Report No. 66, 24 June 1911.

comprehensive plan for park and playground development seems to have stalled things at this point, since the Parks Committee responded to the Commissioners' recommendations by stating that no action should be taken until a regular Parks Commission had been established.<sup>140</sup>

Figure 6-20

The east side of Rossdale,  
October 1923.

National Air Photo Library  
CA-42-20



Parkland acquisition in the valley began as early as the 1890s. Three different planning reports filed between 1907 and 1915 endorsed recreational use and discouraged industrial development, City Council's response was ambivalent. It approved the reports in principle, agreeing that recreational use should be the long-range direction. It did acquire valley lands for parks as opportunities arose, but it did not realize the reports' recommendations quickly and continued to allow industrial and residential development.<sup>141</sup> An example of action the City took toward park development is the repeated efforts to purchase from the HBC the property west of 113 Street known as Victoria Park, or the Golf Links.<sup>142</sup> The City finally succeeded in 1912, paying \$291,854 for 145.927 acres.<sup>143</sup> This acquisition was an important

<sup>140</sup> CEA, RG 8..10/7, Report of Parks Committee, 11 July 1911.

<sup>141</sup> Plosz and Chan, pp. 62-66.

<sup>142</sup> CEA, A92-100, Commissioners Report No. 57, 9 June 1911. Correspondence from HBC is attached to the report.

<sup>143</sup> HBCA, RG1, Series 40/4, Sales Nos. 3901-4353. Sale No. 4102, 7 May 1912.

step. Although it is located well west of the study area, its purchase, combined with the overall policy of attempting to acquire river frontage, affected decisions made about the study area – a portion of which fronts on the river. For example, in 1913, when the HBC decided to re-subdivide a portion of the acreage it had removed from its bank of subdivided land for sale in Rosedale, it noted with respect to the ‘remaining unsubdivided portions of the Reserve ... the City Commissioners expressed the view that these plots should be acquired by the City for extension and linking up of their park scheme.’<sup>144</sup> These lands extended west from the powerhouse boundary to roughly the eastern boundary of the Golf Links.<sup>145</sup>

The City and the HBC were destined to negotiate over this land for some time yet. In the meantime, the City moved ahead with developing recreational facilities between 95 and 96 Avenues, and between 102 and 103 Streets. This block had been part of the former Exhibition Grounds. In April 1913 a 285-foot fence was erected and 190 square yards were sodded and graded at the ‘Ross Flats Athletic Field.’<sup>146</sup> Basic maintenance was done that summer, with the cutting and removing of grass.<sup>147</sup> A few years later the children’s shelter pastured its cows on the old Exhibition Grounds, between 102 and 104 Streets.<sup>148</sup> According to Lan-Chan Marples, this field south of 96 Avenue was officially opened as the Renfrew soccer-football field in 1923, and was used by the Edmonton District Football Association.<sup>149</sup> The 1925 Fire Insurance Plan shows it as the ‘municipal football field.’<sup>150</sup> In 1933 it was redeveloped as the Renfrew Baseball Park.

The development for recreation of the block bounded by 96 and 97 Avenues between 103 and 102 Streets began in 1919 with the establishment of an Amusement Association by the employees of the HBC’s retail store. In 1920, the organization expanded its scope of activities beyond dances and card games to include outdoor sports and obtained permission from the Company’s Land Commissioner to develop a recreation ground on this block. The Company also furnished a \$1,000 grant, which the association used to ‘to fence the ground, lay out a baseball diamond, football pitch, basketball ground and two cinder tennis courts, besides buying equipment for various games.’<sup>151</sup> In the winter there was a hockey rink, where

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<sup>144</sup> HBCA, A.12/L 109/1/5, Letter from Land Commissioner, Winnipeg, to F.C. Ingram, Secretary, London, 21 June 1913. The Commissioners promised to send Ingram the full plan as soon as it was ready. This plan was not reviewed.

<sup>145</sup> See map attached to HBCA, A.12/L 109/1/5, folio 159.

<sup>146</sup> A92-100, Commissioners Report No. 147, 27th May 1913.

<sup>147</sup> CEA, A92-100, Commissioners Report No. 209, 16th July 1913.

<sup>148</sup> CEA, A92-100, Commissioners Report No. 88, 24th June 1918.

<sup>149</sup> Lan Chan-Marples, p. R-59. This use is evident on the aerial photographs. See National Air Photo Library CA 42-20, 1923.

<sup>150</sup> CEA, author unknown, Fire Insurance Plan, c. 1925, sheet 812.

<sup>151</sup> ‘The Amusement and Athletic Association, and Its Achievements to Date,’ *The Beaver* (March 1921), p. 21-22. Many large companies established athletic and other types of organizations for their employees in the early twentieth century.

the girls' hockey team took on teams from the Morris School of Physical Culture, the West End Community League team, and the 'famous' Monarchs.<sup>152</sup> The HBC grounds are shown as having a tennis court and bleachers in the 1925 Fire Insurance Plan and are labelled 'Athletic Ground' and 'Hudsons Bay Co.'<sup>153</sup>

Figure 6-21

View south across Rosssdale flats, c. 1952. Diamond Park is in the foreground, and the EYP track is clearly shown on the right.

CEA-160-1354.



It appears that in the 1930s and 1940s the City began to take an active role in developing the facilities at the HBC recreation ground. Whether there was a formal arrangement between the City and the Company is not clear, but the field begins to appear in civic reports relating to parks. For example, in 1933 the Company's site was included by Engineer Haddow in a list of parks on which the City might undertake work.<sup>154</sup> A list of Edmonton's skating rinks in the winter of 1943-44 includes a 200-by-110-foot rink, with lights and a full time supervisor, at Rosssdale.<sup>155</sup> In the 1930s and 1940s this rink was the site of Rosssdale's annual

<sup>152</sup> H.B.C. Girls' Hockey Team, *Beaver*, March 1924, p. 229. Women's competitive sports, amateur and professional, were especially popular in the 1920s.

<sup>153</sup> CEA, author unknown, Fire Insurance Plan, c. 1925, sheet 812. See also aerial photographs, in particular, National Air Photo Library, CA 42-20, 1923.

<sup>154</sup> CEA, RG50/1/6/1, Letter to Town Planning Commission from Haddow, 13th May 1933. Haddow specifically distinguishes between the 'Hudson's Bay Athletic Park' at 103 Street and 97 Avenue and 'Renfrew Park' at 103 Street and 96 Avenue in this letter.

<sup>155</sup> CEA, A92-100, Commissioners Reports, 24 June 1944.

winter carnival.<sup>156</sup> The tennis courts were red shale. By 1954, this site appeared on the Fire Insurance Plan as the Rossdale Recreation Park, with a dressing room at the northeast corner and a garage located just south of the change rooms.<sup>157</sup> Title to this land was acquired by the City of Edmonton in 1954.<sup>158</sup> It is now used for overflow parking for the Telus Field.

The question of the riverfront land the HBC had identified in 1913 as being of interest to the City for park purposes was revisited by the City in 1928, when Commissioner Mitchell and City Engineer A.W. Haddow began discussing the extension of Victoria Park east from 112 Street to 104 Street, south of the EYP. (At the time, the Engineering Department was responsible for the City's parks.) The property, as described by Haddow to Commissioner Mitchell, consisted of three discrete parcels:

Block A	11.06 acres directly abutting Victoria Park
Block B	7.05 acres below the Legislature and extending east to the 105 Street Bridge
Block C	2.84 acres between 105 Street and the lane powerhouse property line <sup>159</sup> (This includes most of the burial ground demarcated on the 1882 and 1919 maps.)

Haddow thought that 'at some future time this area would come in very useful for connecting up 105<sup>th</sup> Street with the present Victoria Park, thus making a link in a very delightful river drive.' Haddow did not think that it was important to acquire Block C, but the City's Acting Superintendent of Lands, J. Paterson, disagreed. He thought that 'it would be desirable to include this portion if possible, on account of it being adjacent to the present Power House site.'<sup>160</sup> The Commissioners opened negotiations over Block C with the HBC in February 1929. An agreement in principle was arrived at in November 1929. The City proposed paying for the property by transferring title to other land to the HBC and it took some time for the two parties to define a mutually agreeable exchange. This was finally done in January 1930 and the exchange was finalized in June.<sup>161</sup> The city thereby became the owner of the Fort Edmonton burial ground.

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<sup>156</sup> *Rossdale Living Heritage*, p. 42.

<sup>157</sup> CEA, Canadian Underwriters Association, 1953-54, Sheet 812, April 1954.

<sup>158</sup> The legal description for the property is Plan 6417 AS, Blk X. The legal title was acquired by the City of Edmonton in October 1954. Information provided by the City of Edmonton.

<sup>159</sup> CEA, RG11/59/1. Letter from A.W. Haddow to City Commissioner D. Mitchell, 8 August 1928.

<sup>160</sup> CEA, RG11/59/1. Letter from [J. Paterson,] Acting Superintendent, Land Department, to City Commissioners, 20 December 1928.

<sup>161</sup> CEA, RG 11/59/f. 1-2. Letters between HBC and City of Edmonton, from February 1929 to June 1930.

At the same time as Council approved the terms of the exchange it asked about the 'old cemetery site.' The Council minutes for 10 February 1930 record that 'Alderman Bellamy drew attention to the old cemetery site in this area which the Historical Society suggests be preserved and properly marked.' Alderman Farmilo moved and Council approved a motion stating 'that we recommend that the Commissioners be instructed to take up this matter.'<sup>162</sup> The Commissioners consulted Haddow, who replied:

I went into this matter some years ago with the late Mr. McDonald who pointed out to me to the best of his recollection, the boundaries of the old cemetery near the Power House. I marked this site on a Sectional Plan, copy of which is enclosed. I understood from Mr. McDonald that the bodies had been exhumed and moved to the West End Cemetery Site.

The accompanying sketch plan notes that Haddow had made his inquiries in May 1919.<sup>163</sup> This is confirmed in various civic records. Minutes from meetings of the City Commissioners for 1919 show that on 15 May the Acting City Engineer (Haddow) provided a blueprint 'showing location of old Hudson's Bay cemetery near the power house' to Commissioner Ormsby and Mayor Clark.<sup>164</sup> Later that summer, in a Council meeting, Alderman Grant 'asked that steps be taken to locate the old cemetery site near the Power House at the north side of the 105<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge.'<sup>165</sup> The issue came up again at another Commissioners' meeting in October 1919. A communication was tabled 'from City Engineer dated 13<sup>th</sup> May regarding the location of the old H.B. Co's cemetery was again read and referred back to the Engineer to advise if any of the property or surrounding property has since been resubdivided, and also advise as to ownership.'<sup>166</sup> The minutes of

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<sup>162</sup> CEA, RG 11, Council Minutes, 10 February 1930. See also RG11/59/2, Report on Council Meeting 10 February 1930. This is the only mention of the cemetery in the two files relating to the acquisition of parcels A, B, and C.

<sup>163</sup> Reproduced in Nancy Saxberg, et al., Rossdale Unit 11 Historical Resources Impact Assessment 2000 Field Studies: Final Report, 2001 on file Archaeological Survey, Heritage Resources Management Branch, supplementary figures, figure G. The source of this is CEA, Burial File (Clippings). The plan is reproduced in Saxberg 2000, figure H. The source of this is CEA, EAM 237. The first item was pulled from A73-52, Records of the City Commissioners. This is a partially organized collection. The plan likely came from the Plan Checkers files. The plan is dated December 1934. It is not known why the plan was printed in 1934, but it may be associated with work being done at the power plant. See Whiting, 'Historic Resource Impact Assessment Rossdale Power Plant,' p. 47. Saxberg suggests that McDonald may have been the son-in-law of Colin Fraser. This infers that McDonald was referring to the exhumation of Fraser in 1871, but it does not eliminate the possibility that there were other later exhumations. See McKnight.

<sup>164</sup> CEA, A92-100. Executive Services Commission Board Minutes. Box 1 of 2. City Clerk, Commissioners Minutes. Commissioners Meeting No. 24 15 May 1919. The minutes of the meeting were reviewed, the supporting reports were searched for, but not located.

<sup>165</sup> CEA, A93-78. Council Minutes, 14 July 1919, p. 199.

<sup>166</sup> CEA, A92-100. Executive Services Commission Board Minutes. Box 1 of 2. City Clerk, Commissioners Minutes. Commissioners Meeting No. 74, 25 October 1919.



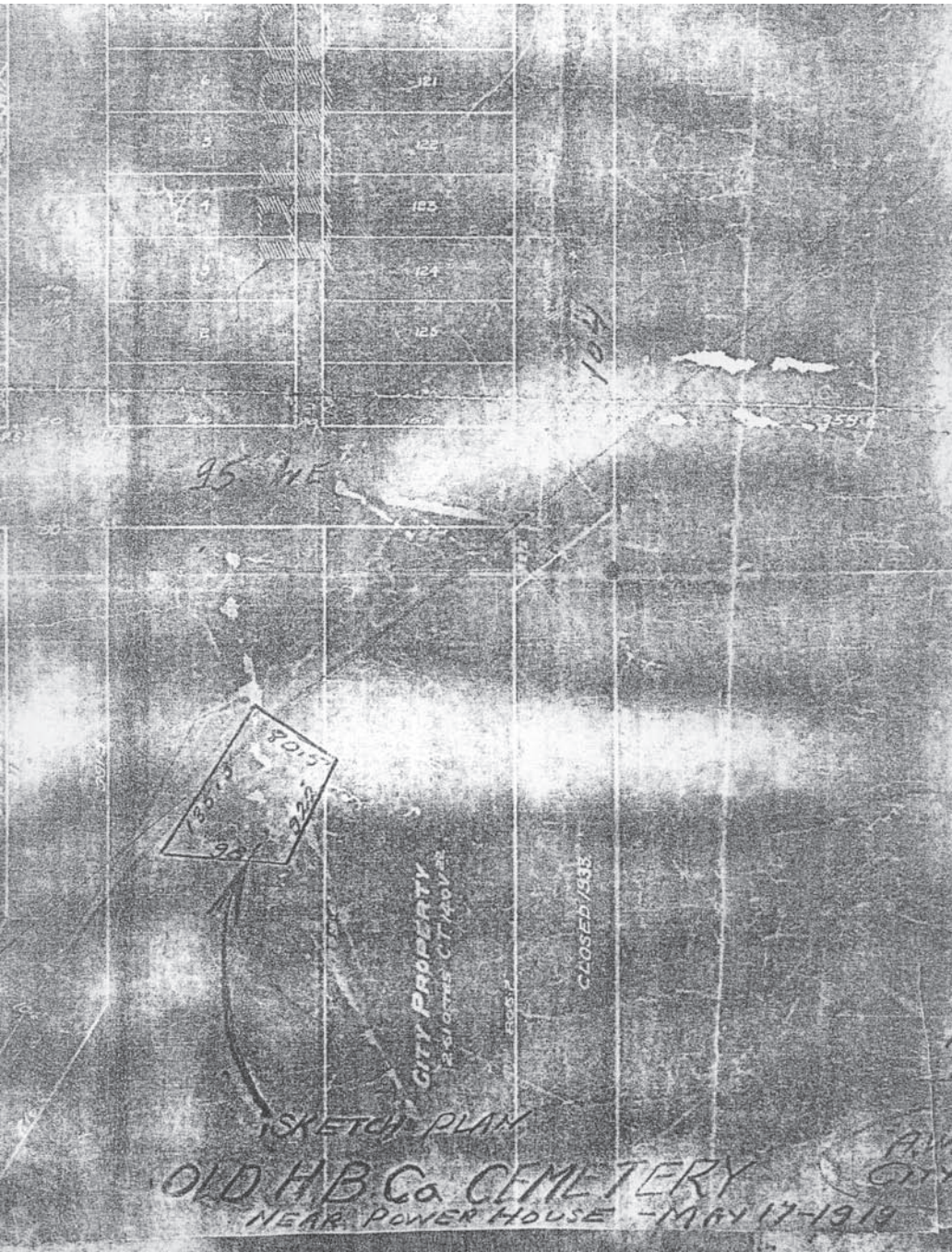


Figure 6-22  
 A.D. Haddow's sketch of 1919  
 showing the burial ground,  
 published in 1934.

CEA map 237

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the Commissioners' meetings were searched to October 1920, but no record was found of the report requested the previous October. It was also not apparent from the records reviewed why Council and the Commissioners were interested in this question in 1919. No indication was found in the records consulted that the City took any steps to mark or commemorate the cemetery.<sup>167</sup>

The correspondence between the City and the HBC from 1928 to 1930 indicates that much of the property in Blocks A, B, and C was under cultivation. This appears to have continued after the City purchased the property, with park development held in abeyance. (See the next section for a discussion of the cultivation of this land.)

A 1949 report, the Bland-Spence-Sales Report, has been cited as the first concrete step towards systematic park development in the river valley; however, what the report actually recommended was a 'comprehensive system of parkways.'<sup>168</sup> While this has been interpreted as an endorsement of park development, it may also have reflected just as strong an interest in using the valley as a transportation corridor, albeit one with attractive tree-lined roadways in a park setting. Planning for the river valley parks accelerated in the 1970s and 1980s. The Capital City Parks Project suggested that the idea that the entire valley should be park land. In 1970 Council set the 2,200-foot contour line as the limit for building construction along the valley's edge. Further studies undertaken in the 1970s reinforced the idea of the river valley as space to be valued for its 'natural' attributes.

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<sup>167</sup> A thorough search was made of RG 8.10 for 1915-1920 and that part of A92-100 that falls between 1919-20. Haddow's report was not located in either.

<sup>168</sup> Cited in Lovatt Planing Consultants Inc., 'North Saskatchewan River Valley Land Use Policies: Historic Review, Implications on the Proposed Expansion of the Rosedale Power Plant,' Report prepared for Gavin S. Fitch-Rooney Prentice Barristers for Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues and Central Area Council of Community Leagues, October, 2000, p. 4.

## 6.3 The Rossdale Neighbourhood

### Living and Working in Rossdale

Rossdale was a living community with a significant resident population. A census taken by the Town of Edmonton in 1899 lists a total of 135 people living at ‘Coal Mines and Ross’ Flat.’ Most were living with their families, where there were also a few boarders, one bachelor, and one widow. The majority were Protestant. The census also lists, separately, 27 people living at the Hudson’s Bay Company Fort and 19 people living in four tents on Ross Flats. All the tent-dwellers were Catholic and had French names (Dumont, L’Hirondelle, Delorme) and everyone living at the Fort was Catholic.<sup>169</sup>

Despite the growing community, the records reviewed indicate that from at least the first decade of the twentieth century, the official municipal view of Ross Flats, or Rossdale as it came to be known, was that the interests of its residents – most of whom were relatively poor – were peripheral to the interests of the larger community. Planning reports tend to treat Rossdale as a ‘problem’ that needed to be ‘solved’ or as a place to be used for utilities, such as the powerhouse. The place itself was viewed as not quite being a part of the real city. This is made abundantly clear on the stationery of the Board of Trade, which in 1909 described Edmonton as ‘beautifully situated 150 feet above the Saskatchewan River, and is a Healthy and Ideal City to live in.’<sup>170</sup> The neighbourhood’s residents disagreed with this assessment of their community. On a number of occasions they banded together to protest civic initiatives.

Most private development occurred east of 101 Street (the boundary of the Hudson’s Bay Reserve), while west of this line there were more public works. The Fire Insurance Plan for 1907 includes a sheet showing the area bounded by Saskatchewan (97) Avenue, 106 Street, Calgary (96) Avenue, and 104 Street. Within this area was scattered residential development, with the most intense occurring on the east side of 106 Street. Within the Rossdale Historic Land Use Study Area, there were five buildings were located on lots 15-20 in block 4 (east side of 105 Street, near the corner with Saskatchewan [97] Avenue), while on 104 Street there were tents in the bush. One building stood at the northwest corner of 104 Street and Calgary (96) Avenue and a house up at Saskatchewan Avenue and 104 Street on the west side.<sup>171</sup>

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*Planning reports tend to treat Rossdale as a ‘problem’ that needed to be ‘solved’ or as a place to be used for utilities.*

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<sup>169</sup> CEA, RG8/4/2. Town of Edmonton, Census, 1899.

<sup>170</sup> CEA, A92-100, Commissioner Report No. 132, 19th November 1909.

<sup>171</sup> PAA 65.124/1067. Charles Goad and Company, Fire Insurance Plan of Edmonton, 1907. The PAA will not copy the plan. Three sheets in this Fire Insurance Plan relate to the study area: sheet 13 (waterworks and power plant), sheet 54 (legislative grounds showing Fort Edmonton), and sheet 2 (area described above).

Figure 6-23

*Rosscdale and the Legislature.*  
 Note the tents on the flats  
 and the Terrace Building.  
 c. 1913.

CEA-24-9



The Fire Insurance Plan dated 1913, but likely representing the situation after 1914, shows some change.<sup>172</sup> Thirteen detached houses now stood on the block bounded by 105 and 104 Streets and 96 and 97 Avenues, with most lining the east side of 105 Street. Bush filled most of the west side of 104 Street. The only other buildings shown within the study area boundaries are the HBC Stables on 102 Street (1914; see below) and two shacks at the northwest corner of 97 Street and 103 Avenue. Generally the houses and properties within the study area were larger than those east of 101 Avenue. On the western edge of the area, at 106 Street and 96 Avenue, the provincial government constructed the first Terrace Building, part of the legislative complex, in 1906.<sup>173</sup>

<sup>172</sup> CEA, Charles Goad and Company, Fire Insurance Plan of Edmonton (London and Montreal: 1913-1914), sheets 2, 3, 6, 91, and 93. This plan was first created in 1913. It seems that the sheets consulted were updated sometime after 1914, when the HBC built its stables on the flats.

<sup>173</sup> Elaine Bedford, 'A Historical Geography of Settlement in the North Saskatchewan River Valley, Edmonton,' Master's thesis, University of Alberta, 1976, p. 87.



Figure 6-24

*Aerial view of Rosedale from the south in 1924.*

*National Air Photo Library  
CA-124-86*

One constraint to residential development was the HBC's decision in 1899 to convert subdivided property to acreage in response to poor land sales. This decision was revisited in 1913 and the lots in the blocks bounded by 104 Street, 101 Street, Calgary (96) Avenue Avenue and Hardisty (98) Avenue were once again made available for sale.<sup>174</sup> The Company's rationale was that 'it is not thought that the low lying area on the flats will be used for trackage, warehouse, or industrial purposes, owing to the very much better facilities which obtain in the sections adjoining the railways above the steep banks of the Saskatchewan River.'<sup>175</sup> In the same letter, the HBC Land Commissioner described the adjoining residential area, east of 101 Street, as 'being built up with a very inferior class of buildings. The people are mainly labourers, mill hands and artisans, who have located there because the property was central and prices relatively low.'<sup>176</sup> It seems that the

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<sup>174</sup> See HBCA, A12/L109/1/5.

<sup>175</sup> HBCA, A.12/L 109/1/5. Letter to F.C. Ingram, HBC Secretary, London from HBC Land Commissioner, Winnipeg, 21 June 1913.

<sup>176</sup> HBCA, A.12/L 109/1/5. Letter to F.C. Ingram, HBC Secretary, London from HBC Land Commissioner, Winnipeg, 21 June 1913.

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*By the mid-1920s most of the blocks in the study area had some development on them.*

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HBC hoped that, given the land boom going on in Edmonton at the time, there might be ‘a fair demand for lots for building purposes’ in a neighbourhood that might not otherwise attract investors. It had evidently given up its earlier hope that the Ross Flats property would eventually become a valuable industrial site, given its proximity to the river and the EYP – the economic generators of the nineteenth century. In fact, the same letter predicted the EYP would be abandoned with the completion of the CPR’s High Level Bridge.

The HBC’s property sales registers show that its strategy was successful. Sales of lots in the subdivided portion of the study area began in 1913 and continued through 1914.<sup>177</sup> Sale of a property did not depend on its being fully serviced. Those along 95 Avenue from 101 Street to 105 Street, and along 104 and 105 Streets from 95 Avenue to roughly 96 Avenue, were not connected to the sewer system until 1923.<sup>178</sup>

By the mid-1920s most blocks in the study area had some development, although numerous vacant lots remained and the block east of 104 Street between 96 and 97 Avenues was relatively heavily treed.<sup>179</sup> Trees also lined part of the EYP tracks, particularly along 104 Street. Most of the first-generation structures built in the subdivided part of the study area appear to have been single-family dwellings, some with a number of outbuildings. An exception was the corner lot at 95 Avenue and 104 Street, where five ‘cottages’ had been built, facing 95 Avenue, on a single lot.

In addition to influencing the pattern and chronology of residential development in the study area, the HBC also had an effect on institutional development. In 1913 it made two decisions that resulted in significant buildings that endure to this day. First, it sold to the Edmonton Public School Board the block bounded by 101 Street, 102 Street, Calgary (95) Avenue, and Saskatchewan (96) Avenue, adjacent to the Hudson’s Bay Athletic Park and just east of the study area. The HBC’s rationale for selling again reflected a recognition of the low market value of its Rosssdale lands: ‘The property is on the flats and near the bank of the Saskatchewan River and is not likely to become valuable either for residential site or for manufacture.’<sup>180</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> HBCA, RG 1, Series 40/4, Townsite Sales Registers, Sales Nos. 3901-4353. See sales 4132

<sup>178</sup> CEA, A92-100, City of Edmonton, Tender for Sewer Construction, Commissioners Report, No. 49, 1922.

<sup>179</sup> See CEA, Fire Insurance Plan, c. 1925, sheets 803,804, 805, 806, 807, 808, 811, 812, 813, 814, 815; *Edmonton City Directory*, 1929; National Air Photo Library, CA 124.86 24 June 1925 and CA 124.84 24 June 1924 (enlargements).

<sup>180</sup> HBCA, A12/L 109/4/1, folio 18. Letter to F.C. Ingram, HBC Secretary, London from HBC Land Commissioner, Winnipeg, 7 June 1912. The land was sold at full market value for \$33,000.



Figure 6-25

*Houses on the west side of 105 Street, 2002.*

*H. Kalman*

The second decision was to build stables on part of the property it had retained when it re-subdivided in 1913. The HBC's policy was to sell seventy-five per cent of the lots on each block, keeping for itself one corner lot and one adjoining lot. The stables, built in 1914 at the southeast corner of 102 Street and Hardisty (98) Avenue, served the HBC retail operation's horse-drawn delivery vehicles until 1924. The Company used the field to the south to pasture its horses.<sup>181</sup> Evan Petley-Jones, who grew up in Rosedale at the corner of 104 Street and 97 Avenue between 1920 and 1940, remembers watching

the fine turnout of the Hudson's Bay Company's Horses and wagons, which passed our house on their way from their stables on 102<sup>nd</sup> Street to the uptown store on Jasper Avenue. The horses were all light-coloured palominos, with well groomed manes and tails. Their wagons were green with gold trim and lettering, all kept in beautiful condition. In winter sleighs were used, and the sound of harness bells added to the delight of the elegant show.<sup>182</sup>

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The HBC's conversion of its retail delivery fleet to motorized trucks ended this memorable spectacle.<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>181</sup> *Rosedale Living Heritage*, p. 31.

<sup>182</sup> Evan Petley-Jones, 'Memories of Rosedale,' *Alberta History*, 29, 3 (Fall, 1981), p. 35.

<sup>183</sup> *Rosedale Living Heritage*, p. 31.

Figure 6-26

*The Pure Butter building,  
originally the HBC stables and  
later the Ortona Armouries.*

Glenbow Archives ND-3-3173



In 1924 the HBC leased the stables to the Edmonton Pure Butter Company. By 1929 it was vacant.<sup>184</sup> The federal government used the former stable in 1938-39 as a boys' industrial training school. It purchased the building in 1939 for use by the naval reserve, which established the appropriately named *HMCS Nonsuch* at the site. This took in five city lots, with groomed lawns and a shooting range. A drill hall was added in 1942. The Canadian Navy used the site for training through World War II and until 1965, when the *HMCS Nonsuch* was decommissioned as a unit. The building then fell under the control of the Loyal Edmonton Regiment. Renamed the Ortona Armouries, it continued to be used by the military until 1977. Since then various community groups have used the venerable building – the former HBC stable – which is now owned by the City of Edmonton.<sup>185</sup>

<sup>184</sup> *City Directory*, 1929.

<sup>185</sup> *Rossdale Living Heritage*, pp. 31-32. The city acquired title to the block in 1983. Information provided by the City of Edmonton. Readers should be aware that when the HBC re-subdivided Blocks 2 and 3 in 1913 it renumbered the lots. See plan accompanying HBCA A12/L109/1/5.





PRESENTATION OF CORONATION AND LONG SERVICE MEDALS TO MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE - EDMONTON, ALBERTA, DECEMBER 14, 1953

Figure 6-27

*Presentation of medals to members of the RCMP at the HMCS Nonsuch, now the Ortona Armouries, 1953.*

CEA 10-2671.

In addition to the school and the armoury, Rossdale was chosen as the site for a number of other services, including the Edmonton's Childrens' Shelter, a mission sponsored by the Anglican Church; and the dog pound. The neighbourhood had a Catholic church and a Catholic school. None of these, with the possible exception of the Anglican mission, was located within the study area.

The HBC field<sup>186</sup> was also used as a short-term campground in the summer by Aboriginal people, who came to Edmonton to collect their treaty money. This continued a long tradition of First Nations' use of the flats for camping. Evan Petley-Jones described 'Indians coming past our house to the Hudson's Bay field, which was between 102 and 103 Avenue on 97 Avenue. For several days each summer this field became an Indian village of many teepees. The Indians assembled for their treaty money which was administered by the Indian Agent, Mr. Cooper.'<sup>187</sup> The records reviewed did not shed light on the specifics of this event, but it seems likely that further work in the Department of Indian Affairs records and oral history should explain this, perhaps providing the dates, the names of the people involved and their affiliations, and the reasons they came to Edmonton (and the HBC field specifically) to collect treaty money.<sup>188</sup> Certainly, this use of the flats for camping by First Nations was not an isolated event. Until at least 1909, Aboriginal people also camped on the flats during the Exhibiton. (See the discussion of the Edmonton Industrial Exhibition, above.)

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<sup>186</sup> It is not entirely clear if the campground was north of 97 Avenue, adjacent to the HBC stables, or south of 97 Avenue, on the HBC's Athletic field.

<sup>187</sup> Petley-Jones, p. 35.

<sup>188</sup> The Department of Indian Affairs Annual Reports do not shed light on this. The records of the Edmonton Agency in RG 10 most likely should contain the answers, as should oral history work. A search of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs' database of portions of the NAC's finding aids for RG 10 under Edmonton-Annuity and Edmonton Report as a subject heading yields a number of files that might shed some light on this. See: <http://www.ubcic.bc.ca/rg10a.htm>.



Figure 6-28

*An encampment in Rosedale.*

CEA-160-165

Violet Wilson also remembered First Nations people coming to Edmonton to work, sell goods, or trade at Fort Edmonton. Her mother hired Aboriginal women to wash blankets. Wilson later recalled:

And, they would go down to the old race course, that was down below, and that was a favourite camping ground for the Indians and very soon you'd see all their bonfires down there and they'd have a powwow and on the quiet night air mainly smoke blown up the hill to, we were just above it, you'd hear this powwow going on all night long. Of course we often heard powwows down there, but that was our powwow. The drums, and ohhh. But that was a favourite place for them, of course, it was a big open place you know.<sup>189</sup>

Dolly Ross, the daughter of Donald Ross, who was born in 1881, also remembered First Nations people camping 'down there ... where the electric plant is.'<sup>190</sup>

<sup>189</sup> PAA 70.170. Violet Wilson interviewed by Naomi Radford. Tape Counter 353. Note: at the PAA the interview is filed under her father's name, Dr. Charles Wilson. It does not appear under her name in the card file.

<sup>190</sup> PAA 70.50. Dolly Ross, TC 280. Ross was born in 1881.

Another aspect of the flats that Wilson and Ross recalled relates not so much to who lived there as to what grew. Wilson recalled that in ‘about August’:

We’d look out the windows that looked over the flats. The flats instead of looking gray and grassy, would suddenly be white, the whole of those flats would be covered with mushrooms, great big mushrooms, big as plates, right down to little buttons. We used to rush down with baskets and pails ... all perfectly good, the best of mushrooms. Masses of them. The whole place was covered in them. That was the upper flat, around where the little cemetery was, and below the big house. That was always fascinating.<sup>191</sup>

Although not so specific about the locations, Wilson also remembered picking wild strawberries, raspberries, lambs quarters (wild spinach), and wild onion on the hillsides, as well as collecting wild flowers.<sup>192</sup> Dolly Ross, in turn, recalled roses growing on the hillsides, as well as saskatoon shrubs and ‘lovely spruce trees’, the gum of which she chewed as a child.<sup>193</sup>

Agriculture was another use that continued well into the twentieth century. This is documented in an exchange of letters between the HBC and the City in 1928-30, when the City purchased Blocks A, B, and C. The HBC noted that in 1930 the ‘major portion of Block B’ was leased to Robert Black, with smaller portions leased to Hugh Ludgate, Leong Suey, and Ernest Williams. Part of Block C, the block containing the burial ground, was also leased to Leong Suey. All of these parties were paying ‘cultivation rents.’<sup>194</sup> Aerial photographs from 1925 suggest that the area south of McLeod Avenue, between 105 Street and the western edge of the powerhouse property – the area that contains the demarcated burial ground – was under cultivation.<sup>195</sup> This use must have ceased in Block C after the City purchased the land, since the first piece of Rossdale Road was built soon afterwards. Agriculture may have continued longer in Block B. The 1925 aerial photograph shows two small structures (likely sheds) a road or trail leading up from the river, and possibly some areas where the gardens were covered over with cloches, on Block B just west of the study area boundary.



Figure 6-29

*Violet Ross, mother of Dolly Ross, c. 1915*

EA-10-1809

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<sup>191</sup> Wilson, TC 505. See the discussion of the burial ground in Section 5.3 for the ‘little cemetery’.

<sup>192</sup> Wilson, TC 715.

<sup>193</sup> Ross. TC 094, 146.

<sup>194</sup> CEA, RG 11/59/2, Letter to City of Edmonton from HBC, Land Department, Edmonton, Alberta, 4 March 1930. It is interesting to note that the leases were being administered from Edmonton by the local land agent, J.R. McIntosh, rather than from Winnipeg. Records related to leases, rather than sales, were not reviewed at the HBCA.

<sup>195</sup> National Air Photo Library, enlargement from CA 124.88, June 1925. See also CA 124.86 and CA 124.84. The images from 1923 (CA-42), do not seem to pick up the western side of the study area, but further work at the Air Photo Library indexes might produce more. The photos in the next numbers in the sequence only yielded river and forest.

Different scales of gardens were maintained. The HBC leaseholders were likely market gardeners who made a living from it. Others, like Esther Clark, who moved to Rosssdale in 1927, rented four lots in the area for a garden ‘so we had enough vegetables [which] especially helped in the hungry 1930s.’<sup>196</sup>

A major turning point in Rosssdale’s history occurred in June 1915 when the North Saskatchewan River flooded, covering the flats with nine feet of water.<sup>197</sup> The exact distribution of water across the study area has not been established, but it entered the power station and the water plant, and both utilities had to be shut down.<sup>198</sup> Industries and homes located east of 101 Street suffered considerable damage.



Figure 6-30  
The flood of 1915.  
CEA-10-882

At the time of the flood, Rosssdale had a residential population of 765 and numerous businesses.<sup>199</sup> The disaster struck when Edmonton’s economy was in a ‘bust’ phase and consequently a number of flooded industries in Rosssdale were

<sup>196</sup> CEA, MS 22, Esther Clark Papers. Clark’s description of where she gardened is not clear ‘We rented four lots in the corner between 102nd Street and along 101 Street along Rosssdale Road.’

<sup>197</sup> Elaine Bedford, ‘A Historical Geography of Settlement in the North Saskatchewan River Valley, Edmonton.’ M.A. thesis (History). University of Alberta, 1976, p. 95.

<sup>198</sup> MacGregor, p. 216. The City’s Commissioners had alerted Council of the need to take flood protection measures at the site of the power and water plants in 1913. At the time, the Commissioners advised Council that ‘it would take a very serious flood indeed to affect the operation of the power plant’ and they anticipated that the fact that the machines were several feet above ground would prevent any flood from interfering with their operation. CEA, A92-100, Commissioners Report 199, 14 April 1913. Following the 1915 flood, the

never re-established. This reduced the industrial character of the neighbourhood. In the immediate aftermath of the flood the residential population also declined, but it recovered, standing at 840 in 1925 and 1,364 in 1945.<sup>200</sup>

An indication of the City's attitude towards the flats and its residents is revealed in a letter Mayor Joseph Clarke wrote to the federal government's repatriation committee in 1919. He argued that the extent of damage suffered in the 1915 flood was a direct result of federal action (or inaction) on the North Saskatchewan, a navigable stream under its jurisdiction, and that the federal government should therefore take responsibility and use repatriation funds to relocate residents of the flats to higher ground. The Mayor outlined his plan in some detail:

While it is admitted that the reason why a large number of workmen have purchased lots and built homes in the low lying portion of the city owing to the high cost of suitable property elsewhere, and admitting that the City cannot provide substantial and sanitary accommodation to property built within the flooded area of the flats, the question of assisting healthful life of the city and future generations of citizens should induce the Government to assist in clearing these areas both on account of questions of health and also of safety.

He went on to point out that:

The City owns large areas on high ground where light, sewer, water and our other utilities are available, and without expropriation, these sites could be utilized in a re-housing scheme, the removal of the houses on the flats could be undertaken and carried through.<sup>201</sup>

While the City saw the underserviced housing on the flats as a problem, the issue didn't figure large enough to pay for a solution itself. Nor did it see locating noxious civic facilities there as problematic. In 1914 the City proposed locating a manure depot at the northeast corner of 102 Street and Saskatchewan (97) Avenue, and in 1930 the City Engineer proposed building a new garbage incinerator at the foot of 101 Street, east of the power plant. In both instances, residents of Rosedale protested while civic officials defended the location on the basis of its centrality.

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Commissioners filed a much longer report on river bank protection at the power plant and recommended the construction of a levee around the plant. CEA, A92-100, Commissioners Report No. 128, 12 June 1916, and Commissioners Report No. 146, 20 June 1916.

<sup>199</sup> Bedford, p. 197.

<sup>200</sup> Bedford, p. 197.

<sup>201</sup> NAC, RG 11, vol. 3735, pt. 3, Letter from Mayor of Edmonton to Repatriation Committee, Department of Public Works, 15 January 1919. No response from DPW on file.

The latter promised that with the proper technology in place, the facility would not cause a ‘nuisance.’<sup>202</sup> Both protests were successful. Less effective, it seems, were complaints about Diamond Park, in the northeast portion of Rosedale, which residents felt ‘attracted a considerable number of undesirable visitors, both male and female’ to a neighbourhood that was ‘rapidly filling up with a good respectable class of families.’<sup>203</sup>

Figure 6-31

*The EYP tracks and the  
Legislature’s power plant, 1920.*

*National Archives of Canada  
PAC 18361*



Fortunately, there was more to living in Rosedale than floods and proposed incinerators. Petley-Jones recalls sledding down 97 Avenue from the Legislature grounds almost to Donald Ross School. This was particularly dangerous, since riders might encounter a streetcar on 97 Avenue and had to make the crossing at 105 Street blindly.

<sup>202</sup> CEA, RG 8.10/39, Safety and Health Commissioners Report No. 332, 11 May 1914 and Report No. 45, 14 May 1914; CEA, A92-100, Commissioners Report No. 34, 11 August 1930 and Commissioners Report No. 35, 22 July 1930.

<sup>203</sup> CEA, RG 8.10/16, Petition submitted to City of Edmonton, 22 July 1912.



Figure 6-32

*Telus Field, formerly Renfrew Park, in 2002.*

*Courtesy City of Edmonton*

Petley-Jones also has positive memories of Rosssdale's parks and playgrounds, writing that in his youth:

Diamond and Renfrew Parks were the only large sports centres in Edmonton. When we were young we visited these centres as often as possible to see the best baseball and soccer in the west at that time. Baseball was king at Diamond Park, situated just below Macdonald Hill. Soccer in the summer and Canadian rugby in the fall were played to sell out crowds at Renfrew Park. This park covered a square block of land south of the Hudson's Bay field, between and 102 and 103 Street.<sup>204</sup>

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Renfrew Park became the home of minor league baseball's Edmonton Trappers. The park was rebuilt as Trapper Stadium, then renamed Telus Field.

<sup>204</sup> Petley-Jones, p. 36.

Esther Clark remembers:

There were also sports in Rosedale. Mr. A. Shirly, [an] Old timer there organized the Community League the Speedskating that was held at Diamond Park oval and skating and Hockey at the Rosedale Rink across from the Navy Barracks all work on it was done voluntary by the young folks.

Clark also reflects on the changes she had seen in the community between 1927 and 1967, writing that:

There used to be gravel streets with mudholes where even the firemen and others got stuck ... now there is a new Fireman's school on 101 Street near the river, larger Power Plant ... [Renfrew] Ball Park on 102<sup>nd</sup> Street we can hear the games from our front door. So many Highrise Apts. along the top and sides of this valley of the Saskatchewan River.

Petley-Jones also provides information about the ethnic makeup of the neighbourhood, noting that there were 'Scots, English, Irish, and Welsh descent; we also had some Ukrainian neighbours.'

Figure 6-33

*Two boys after a barn fire in Ross flats, 1929.*

*Glenbow Archives, NC-6-12480f*





Zoning was introduced to Edmonton in 1933. Generally, the zoning in the study area changed little over the years. Portions are identified as parkland and the balance as two-or-more-family housing.<sup>205</sup> Nevertheless, the character of development in the study area changed in a number of ways. Immediately after the war and for at least twenty years following, many vacant lots were developed, and small-scale apartment buildings were added to the mix. Road construction intensified and the volume of traffic crossing the flats increased. This pattern of slowly-increasing density did not impress the authors of Edmonton's Urban Renewal Study who, in 1963, found much of the housing stock in Rossdale was in poor condition and recommended that the area be cleared for parks and parkways.<sup>206</sup> Although this study was not adopted as policy, Joseph Ryan, who wrote his M.A. thesis on the effect of planning regulations in Rossdale, believes that the recommendation, in conjunction with the traffic and park land studies discussed above, negatively affected the level of investment in the neighbourhood. This resulted in what Ryan calls 'planning blight.' Especially important, in the context of residential development in the study area, was the City's acquisition of properties to facilitate road development. This, in conjunction with the Province's property acquisition west of the study area, along 106 Street, resulted in the loss of homes.<sup>207</sup> In 1978 Council adopted, as official policy, plans to consolidate all privately-owned property in the river valley, eliminating the valley communities. This plan faced considerable opposition and was reversed in 1983.

In 1986 Council adopted the Rossdale Area Redevelopment Plan. It noted that in 1983 some 545 people were living in Rossdale. No new residential construction had occurred since 1969 and the bulk of existing housing had been built before 1930. Most housing was wood frame.<sup>208</sup> The resident population included many young adults, with a high percentage of renters. Housing consisted of a mix of single- and two-unit dwellings, low-rise apartments, and one highrise (Tower Hill). Numerous lots remained vacant, especially on 105 and 104 Streets. All but a small amount of the land in Rossdale was owned by the City of Edmonton, but portions of the study area were in private ownership.

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<sup>205</sup> CEA, EAM 114 City of Edmonton, District Map to Accompany Zoning By-law No. 26, 1933. This was Edmonton's first zoning by-law.

<sup>206</sup> Joseph H. Ryan, 'Inner-City Neighbourhood Revitalization: Changes in the Socio-Economic Characteristics and Physical Structure of Rossdale,' Master's Thesis, University of Alberta, 1996, p. 8. Ryan's thesis provides specific information about Rossdale and also provides information within which arguments made by P.J. Smith, L.D. McCann, and others about Edmonton's, and North American, urban development can be considered.

<sup>207</sup> A comparison of air photos taken in 1959, 1965, and 1976 show the changes in the study area. These include the removal of homes along 97 Avenue and in the block along Rossdale Road, west of Telus Field. See CEA Air Photos YC 277-26/November 1959; YC 1312-186/1965; NW15476-21W-42-30-4-76, 1976.

<sup>208</sup> Unless otherwise noted this information was taken from City of Edmonton, Planning and Building Department, 'Neighbourhood Profile Report,' Rossdale Area Redevelopment Plan, June 1986.

## The Burial Ground

This chapter has focused on the post-1880 land uses of the study area. This section traces the different uses to which the land around the burial ground was put, and the role that memory (or lack of it) of the burial ground played in decisions about land use.

From a practical perspective, noting the transfer of property ownership and changes in land use helps to establish when the burial ground was likely to have been disturbed, and therefore suggests places and periods when the search for additional records might prove fruitful.

Evidence cited by archaeologist Nancy Saxberg and her colleagues indicates that the memory of the graveyard varied among all segments of the population. Some people clearly remembered, such as the Indian woman who retrieved her child's remains in 1908. The interview with Christina McKnight describing this touching moment infers that other bodies were moved at the same time. Other people, particularly those who lived away from Edmonton, may not have been aware of the state of the graveyard. Descendants who lived in eastern Canada or the Orkneys may only have known that a family member was buried at Edmonton. The argument that 'chronic' flooding washed away grave markers, and with it memory, seems implausible.<sup>209</sup> Flooding did occur periodically, but it was not chronic, and no documentary evidence has been found regarding its impact on the burial ground, or on its stone markers imported from Scotland. Moreover, evidence cited below shows that living descendants, personnel working for the city, and utility companies all knew about the graveyard at Ross Flats.<sup>210</sup>

It is clear from the records consulted that as late as 1930, if not beyond, many individuals and organizations in Edmonton were fully aware of the burial ground. Civic records document the questions asked by Councillors Grant (1919) and Bellamy (1930) about the location of the cemetery (see Section 7.2). It appears that Bellamy's enquiry resulted from a request from the 'Historical Society' to have the site preserved and marked. Review of the Society's records, assuming they exist, might shed more light on who was active in the group at the time, what motivated them to contact the City, and how the Society responded to the City's assertion that the bodies had been moved.<sup>211</sup> It would be interesting to know whether the Society's membership included individuals with family ties to the fur trade and perhaps a direct and personal interest in the cemetery; or whether the

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<sup>209</sup> Saxberg et al., 2003, pp. 7 and 13.

<sup>210</sup> Saxberg et al., 2003, pp. 6-13. The City's copy of the HBC's 1882 survey of its reserve at Edmonton (which shows the burial ground) held by the City of Edmonton Archives is heavily annotated (EAM 227).

<sup>211</sup> Efforts to locate these records of the Edmonton Historical Society have been unsuccessful. The Edmonton and District Historical Society is a new incarnation of that organization. A representative of the Society suggested that the records would be in the City of Edmonton Archives if anywhere; whereas the Archives suggested we contact the Historical Society.

Society's interest was more a romantic desire to preserve an aspect of the city's fur trade past. The Society's choice of words 'to preserve' as well as 'properly mark' the burial ground is worth noting because it suggests that they understood that burials remained *in-situ*.



Figure 6-34

*A large cross at the site of the Fort Edmonton burial ground. 2002,*

*City of Edmonton.*

As noted above, for a time in the early twentieth century the burial ground was leased out by the HBC for cultivation as market gardens.<sup>212</sup> During this period the power plant property worked its way west across 104 Street to 105 Street. It was not until 1930 that the City obtained ownership of Block C (which includes most of the burial ground indicated on the Aldous plan), with Rosssdale Road being built shortly thereafter, and not until 1954 did the powerhouse acquire part of Block C for its use. In this context, the significance of Engineer A.W. Haddow's 1919 report about the burial ground is obvious, since it appears it was used as the basis for subsequent decisions regarding land use.

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<sup>212</sup> National Air Photo Library CA 124.88, CA 124.86, CA 124.84, June 1925 and CEA, RG 11/59/2, Letter to the City of Edmonton from HBC, Land Department, Edmonton, Alberta, 4 March 1930.

The next documented inquiry about the burial ground occurred in 1943, when workers uncovered ‘the bones of five humans’ in the course of excavating ‘in the vicinity of the 105<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge.’ The *Bulletin’s* reporter quizzed ‘old timers’ who stated that the earliest cemetery they recalled was on ‘what is now called Capitol Hill’ and was abandoned in the 1890s.<sup>213</sup> Commissioner Gibb was quoted as promising to make inquiries to ‘establish whether or not a grave yard existed.’<sup>214</sup> The disruption of human remains was reported again in 1957, during the installation of a waterworks main (see 105 Street Bridge, above).<sup>215</sup> The road and water main construction work in the area stimulated interest in history and resulted in the publication of at least two newspaper articles describing Rosssdale’s role in the fur trade and noting that it had been the site of the Fort Edmonton Cemetery.<sup>216</sup> Construction work also disturbed burials. At least some of these disturbances were reported in the newspaper. The articles link the burials to Fort Edmonton, describing them as ‘ancient’, ‘long-buried’, and ‘a major archaeological find.’ Treatment of the remains varied, some being deposited with the University of Alberta and others re-interred at municipal cemeteries. The connection to early pioneers and First Nations people is mentioned, but no direct connections are made to living Albertans.<sup>217</sup>

The construction of the 105 Street Rotary in 1958 (see above) uncovered yet more human remains and once again reminded Edmontonians of the presence of a historic graveyard in Rosssdale. The 1958 interview with Mr. Jones cited above said that ‘the Rotary at the north end of the bridge is expected to be in the approximate centre of the graveyard.’<sup>218</sup> In 1976 a construction crew installing a telephone duct down 105 Street encountered human remains, reportedly near the last two houses at the bottom of the hill and in the middle of the traffic circle. The remains were

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<sup>213</sup> ‘Workmen Find Bones of Five by River Side,’ *Edmonton Bulletin*, 11 May 1943, ‘Old Burial Site Thought Found as Five Graves Are Discovered,’ *Edmonton Journal* 11 May 1943, and ‘Plan Reburial of 5 Skeletons,’ *Edmonton Journal*, 12 May 1943. This is likely a reference to the ‘Indian Graveyard’ on the ‘upper flats.’ See Section 5.3.

<sup>214</sup> CEA, A92-100. A search of the Commissioner’s papers for 1943 and 1944 did not yield Gibb’s report.

<sup>215</sup> ‘Shovel Uncovers Ancient Graves,’ *Edmonton Journal*, 4 September 1957. For a discussion of the various newspaper reports of disturbance see Saxberg et al., pp. 9-13 and p. 242.

<sup>216</sup> CEA, Clipping Files, Burial, ‘Pioneer Finds Timbers from Fort; Reveals Site of Indian Cemetery,’ *Edmonton Journal*, 13 May 1958, and Clipping Files, Engineering, Roadway, River Valley Road, Old Timer, The Third Column: Historic Road,’ *Edmonton Journal*, 31 December 1964. Both of these articles describe two cemeteries.

<sup>217</sup> CEA, Clipping Files, Burial/Edmonton-Power Plant, ‘Human Skulls Unearthed,’ 17 July 1967; ‘Bones May Be Major Archaeological Find,’ June 1967; ‘Long Buried Bones Revealed,’ 2 August 1967; ‘Old Fort Edmonton Graveyard Uncovered,’ *Edmonton Journal*, 16 November 1976. The name of the newspaper is missing or not legible on many of the clippings.

<sup>218</sup> *Bowell*.

interred at Beechmount Cemetery.<sup>219</sup> In 1981 archaeologist Sheila Minni found the disturbed remains of a single individual in the road fill for the traffic circle and one undisturbed burial to the west of the road.<sup>220</sup> Comparing the location of the demarcated burial ground in the Aldous survey with the surveyed location of the rotary shown in an overlay on a base map of 30 January 1953 indicates that much of the burial ground would have fallen beneath the eastern and southeastern portions of the rotary, but nevertheless some reported burials lay west and north of it.<sup>221</sup>

Several oral histories also make reference to the burial ground. One such informant was Violet Wilson, whose description of an ‘Indian graveyard’ on the ‘upper flat’ was cited in Section 5.3. A second oral history interview, with Kenneth Kinnaird, is much less detailed in its contents. Kinnaird indicates that ‘I am not sure as when they built the powerhouse they started digging up bones. They started, some excavation down there for building, brought up a lot of bones. Near there anyway.’ The Kinnaird interview is not very precise about location or date; he could be referring to the construction of the railway spur line, the 105 Street Bridge, or the powerhouse.

The third interview, with Christina McKnight, is informative, but it is difficult to assess because what exists is notes from the interview, rather than the interview itself. McKnight’s reminiscences indicate that construction of the spur line for the powerhouse, east of the demarcated burial ground, early in the century, disturbed burials. This suggests that the burial ground extended east beyond the demarcated line to at least 104 Street, where the spur line was located. McKnight’s suggestion that some of the bodies were moved at the time the spur was constructed (c. 1908) is particularly interesting, given that subsequent aerial photographs and leases suggest the area was used for agriculture in the 1920s. A careful review of records for the Edmonton Cemetery for 1908 and of the *Edmonton Bulletin* might yield further information.<sup>222</sup>

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<sup>219</sup> Saxberg et al. 2003, p.12, citing an Alberta Archaeological Survey form updated in 1981, which reported five internments. See also the report of the Amiskwaci-waskahikan burial grounds, prepared by Gerald Delorme, December 2003; this includes a 2001 statement by Norm Bilodeau, a member of the work crew. Delorme states that Bilodeau believes he excavated ‘at least 30 bodies.’ Both Saxberg and Delorme reproduce the records of Beechmount Cemetery. See also below, Section 7.3.

<sup>220</sup> Saxberg et al., 2003, p. 29.

<sup>221</sup> City of Edmonton Records, ‘Power Plant History, 1903-1964’ 91 LK 156 Box 6 Loc. 04-12-03. Plan 147 Northside showing power plant property and Rosedale Road rotary, 30 January 1953 with notes from subsequent drafts.

<sup>222</sup> The *Edmonton Bulletin* for June-July 1908 was scanned but the only references found were to debates regarding the location of the spur line. Further work in the *Bulletin* for dates later in 1908 might provide more information, but it would be best to first establish exactly when construction of the track began.

At a more theoretical level, the manner in which the owners of the property, first the HBC and later the City of Edmonton, alternately forgot and remembered the burial ground goes some way to informing our understanding of how the City's fur trade period affected its subsequent development. Certainly, the silence regarding the burial ground in the HBC records suggests that within the context of a colonial and corporate organization that was focused on getting a good return on its property, 'tender ties' were a transitory and self-serving obligation.<sup>223</sup> The City, in turn, was alternately reminded by external parties or physical evidence of the existence of the burial ground, but seems to have relied on what was, in retrospect, incomplete evidence to move forward with other uses for the property. Later and until very recently, the news of the discovery of burials was not seen as being connected with living Albertans. This rather dispiriting analysis, however, remains incomplete. The evidence amassed so far includes a number of areas of silence rather than documented decisions, and it may yet be demonstrated that the actual course of events was more complex, as is often the case, than this analysis suggests.

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<sup>223</sup> This phrase, referring to family relationships, was popularized by Sylvia van Kirk; see above, Chapter 3.

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

# 7

## Overview

This chapter reviews the available information on archaeological resources that have been identified within and adjacent to the Rossdale Historical Land Use Study Area. Consideration was given to twelve reports in the Alberta Community Development (ACD) files, as well as information available in the University of Alberta Anthropology Department files and site records maintained by ACD. With the exception of file records, the reports reviewed were completed under permits issued by ACD and complied with Provincial standards. Relevant literature has been considered in the review of the issues surrounding archaeological resources within the study area.

A wide range of archaeological resources is known, or may be expected to occur, within the study area. The most significant relate to the occupation of Rossdale flats during the fur trade era and include the possible remains of structures and deposits relating to this use, including the burial ground. Many questions remain regarding the location and condition of these resources. Evidence of prehistoric occupation that may reflect periodic use of the Rossdale flats over an 8,000-year time span is also present, as are structures and materials that result from more modern urban uses of the landforms. The potential occurrence of more of these resources is discussed in Chapter 8.

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INTRODUCTION

7.2  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

7.3  
KNOWN ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
RESOURCES

7.4  
SIGNIFICANCE

## 7.1 Introduction

This chapter explores early human use of the Rossdale area as revealed in the archaeological record. It focuses on our understanding of the nature and significance of the archaeological resources that have been identified to date. It begins with a review of the history of archaeological investigations in the Rossdale area, presents available information on the known archaeological resources in and around the community, and places them in the context of the history and prehistory of the region. The discussion concludes with a summary of the scientific and interpretive potential of the archaeological resources in the Rossdale area.

In comparison with other areas of North America, the history of archaeological endeavour in northern Alberta is quite recent. It begins in earnest only in 1960, with the formation of the Archaeological Society of Alberta. The Society represented an outgrowth of interest in the scientific investigation of Alberta's prehistory that was initiated in the mid-1950s by the Glenbow Foundation of Calgary.<sup>1</sup> The focus of the Glenbow's archaeological research and exhibition program was initially on the grasslands areas of the province, where a wide range of interested local community members had collected and recorded an astonishing variety of archaeological specimens and locations. As well as offering encouragement for the formation of the Society, the program resulted in 1963 in the engagement of the first professional archaeologists by Alberta's educational institutes – Dr. Richard Forbis at the University of Alberta (Calgary) and Drs. Alan Bryan and Ruth Gruhn at the University of Alberta in Edmonton.

Academic research by instructors and students and the avocational activities of Society members characterized early archaeological work in Alberta. The focus of these investigations tended to be in areas of specific interest and did not entail concerted efforts to complete inventories, especially in urban settings, where development had severely altered landscapes. Nevertheless some of the earliest studies undertaken in the Edmonton area responded to development issues relating to exposure of human remains in the Rossdale area. This will be discussed below.

With the passage of the *Alberta Historical Resources Act* in 1973, the Crown in right of Alberta assumed ownership and management responsibility for archaeological resources. This ground-breaking legislation enabled the Minister of Culture to require proponents to assess and mitigate the potential negative effects of planned developments and other activities when he or she is of the opinion that historical resources may be altered, damaged, or destroyed.<sup>2</sup> Establishment of the Archaeological Survey of Alberta, along with a series of internal and

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<sup>1</sup> W. J. Byrne, 'The Archaeological Survey of Alberta: Prospects for the Future,' in *Alberta Archaeology: Prospect and Retrospect*, Archaeological Society of Alberta, Lethbridge, 1981.

<sup>2</sup> *Alberta Historical Resources Act*, Revised Statutes of Alberta 1980.



extra-governmental referral agreements, provided Alberta Culture (now Alberta Community Development, or ACD) with a system for managing both development effects and the conduct of archaeological studies to the benefit of the heritage of the Province.

Under these circumstances, the emphasis in archaeological study in Alberta shifted from academic endeavour to effective management of resources in conjunction with development. With minor exceptions, all the past archaeological investigations that have bearing on the Rossdale study area had a cultural resource management focus and were completed under permits issued by the Archaeological Survey of Alberta (or its successor) and complied with standards outlined in the Archaeological Permit Regulations (Alberta Regulation 124/79) and/or the Guidelines for Archaeological Permit Holders in Alberta (Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism, 1989). Consequently, each permit-related study has been subject to regulatory review at both the application and the reporting stages and has adopted methodologies appropriate to its aims.

## *7.2 Archaeological Investigations*

Archaeological studies completed within or adjacent to the study area are listed below. Those completed under permit can be viewed at the offices of the Archaeological Survey, Heritage Resources Management Branch, in Old St. Stephen's College on the campus of the University of Alberta, or on microfiche at universities throughout the province. Excellent summaries of these studies can be found in the final report prepared for the 2000 season of archaeological studies conducted for the proposed redevelopment of the EPCOR Rossdale generating facilities<sup>3</sup> and the archaeological and historical studies completed at the traditional burial ground in 2003.<sup>4</sup> A précis of this information is provided in the chart on the next page. Many of the findings have been cited in previous chapters.

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ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS

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<sup>3</sup> N. Saxberg, C Bourges, and B. Reeves, 'Rossdale Unit 11 Historical Resources Impact Assessment 2000 Field Studies: Final Report (permit 00-62),' 2001, on file Archaeological Survey, Heritage Resources Management Branch.

<sup>4</sup> N. Saxberg, et al., 'Fort Edmonton Burial Ground An Archaeological and Historical Study (permit 01-118),' 2003, on file Archaeological Survey, Heritage Resources Management Branch.

## Archaeological Studies Relating to the Rossdale Historic Land Use Study Area

Title	Date	Author	Permit	Site <sup>5</sup>	Nature of the study
None	1966	Alan Bryan (?)	None	FjPi 63	Recovery of skeletal remains exposed by development
None	1967	Robson Bonnichsen et al	None	FjPi 63	Excavations to recover skeletal materials exposed by development
Impact Assessment and Monitoring, Developments at the Rossdale Generating Station	1977	Rod Heitzmann (Aresco Ltd.)	77-047	FjPi 63	Backhoe testing at the proposed Bellamy Substation and monitoring of the trench for 240kV powerlines
Historical Resources Monitoring of a Buried Cable Installation at the Rossdale Generating Station	1978	B. Wright	78-62	FjPi 63	Examination of a buried powerline trench in the western portion of the Rossdale generation station
Legislature Grounds Waterline Construction, Archaeological Investigation, Edmonton, Alberta	1979	D. Steer	79-110	FjPj 4	Monitoring of utility trench construction west of the Rossdale study area
Final Report FjPi-63 Archaeological Monitoring	1981	S. Minni,	81-44	FjPi 63	Monitoring of utility lines and road realignment at the 105 St./Rossdale Rd./River Valley Rd. intersection
Archaeological Monitoring FjPi-63 Rossdale 4th transformer addition project. Permit 89-01	1989	S.J. Minni	89-01	FjPi 63	Monitoring of construction excavations near Rossdale Road east of the Rossdale study area
Heritage Resources Impact Assessment Edmonton Power Switchgear Vault, Rossdale Power and Water Plant Complex	1994	E. Damkjar	93-036	FjPi 63	Monitoring of construction excavations near Rossdale Road east of the Rossdale study area
Historical Resources Impact Assessment City of Edmonton Rossdale Water Treatment Plant: Final Report	1997	B.O.K Reeves	96-071	FjPi 63	Backhoe for new intake facilities well east and south of the Rossdale study area

<sup>5</sup> The numbers shown in this column and throughout the text are reference numbers for archaeological sites in the national registry known as the Borden system. This system is based on longitude and latitude and provides a means of tracking all information relating to recorded archaeological sites in Canada.

Historical Resources Impact Assessment Northwestern Utilities Limited Edmonton Rossdale Monitoring Project	1998	B. Himour	98-129	FjPi 63	Monitoring of shallow decontamination procedures at the Northwest Utilities facilities east of the Rossdale study area
Rossdale Unit 11 Road and Site Services Relocation Historical Resources Impact Assessment 1999 Field Studies	2000	N. Saxberg and B. Reeves(a)	99-025	FjPi 63	Monitoring, backhoe testing and excavations to assess proposed facilities expansion at the Rossdale Power Plant east of the study area
New Trolley Substation and Related Facilities Historical Resources Impact Assessment. 1999 Field Studies	2000	N. Saxberg and B. Reeves(b)	99-120	FjPi 63	Monitoring and backhoe testing for proposed transportation facilities east of the Rossdale study area
Rossdale Unit 11 Historical Resources Impact Assessment 2000 Field Studies: Final Report	2001	N. Saxberg, C Bourges, and B. Reeves	00-62	FjPi 63	Major excavation in conjunction with expansion of facilities at the Rossdale power plant east of the Rossdale study area.
New Fencepost Monitoring, Rossdale Site (FjPi-63), 31 October 2001, Interim Report	2001	N. Saxberg	01-019	FjPi 63	Monitoring of test holes for proposed fence replacement at the Rossdale power plant east of the Rossdale study area. Not yet available
Fort Edmonton Burial Ground: An Archaeological and Historical Study	2003	N. Saxberg, C Bourges, Scott Haddow, and B. Reeves	01-118	FjPi 63	Major excavation to determine the extent of the Fort Edmonton burial ground within the Rossdale study area.
EPCOR Transmission Inc. RS-5 Cable Replacement Historical Resources Impact Assessment Interim Report	2002	N. Saxberg, B. Somer, and B. Reeves	02-040	FjPi 63	Report in preparation

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In addition, two more general studies discuss the archaeological resources of the Rosedale area<sup>6</sup> and a published article provides information on four of the burials recovered from the Fort Edmonton cemetery.<sup>7</sup> Numerous other references to the archaeological resources of Rosedale flats are made in the newspaper articles and documents surrounding the hearings on the proposed Rosedale generating facilities, as well as the hearings transcripts, and related documents.<sup>8</sup> Primary documents relating to archaeological resources in the Rosedale area include site record forms housed with Alberta Community Development and notes on skeletal remains housed at the University of Alberta Department of Anthropology. Historical documents, such as records housed at the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, the City of Edmonton Archives, the Provincial Archives of Alberta, the Glenbow Archives, and the National Archives of Canada, provide both direct and indirect information on the archaeological resources of the west Rosedale area, especially those associated with Fort Augustus/Edmonton House.<sup>9</sup>

Awareness of the potential for encountering human remains associated with the Fort Edmonton burial ground developed with some early accounts of the occasional exposure and relocation of human remains during periods of construction.<sup>10</sup> The first professional examination of archaeological resources in the area occurred in 1966, when University of Alberta archaeologists recovered a burial exposed by construction.<sup>11</sup> In the following year, after reports of human remains being exposed by excavation of a gas pipeline trench between Rosedale Road and the current EPCOR switch yard, U of A archaeologists completed excavations to recover the remains of five individuals.<sup>12</sup> Although these studies have never been reported, osteological analysis of the skeletal material has been completed and published.<sup>13</sup> Together, these studies confirmed the fact that many burials had not been relocated from the former fort's burial ground and still remain in the area, thereby, constituting a significant archaeological and cultural resource.

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<sup>6</sup> *Archaeology Guide and Tour of Greater Edmonton Area* (Edmonton: Provincial Museum of Alberta/Strathcona Archaeological Society). Heinz. W. Pyszczuk, Ross W. Wein and Elizabeth Noble, 'Aboriginal land Use of the Greater Edmonton Area'. Unpublished Paper, 30 January 2002.

<sup>7</sup> N.C. Lovell and A. Dublenko, 'Further Aspects of Fur trade Life Depicted in the Skeleton.' *International Journal of Osteoarchaeology* 9:248-256.

<sup>8</sup> Materials relating to the hearings on EPCOR's proposed RD 11 facilities can be obtained through the Alberta Energy and Utilities Board.

<sup>9</sup> These sources form the basis for the material in Chapters 5 and 6 of the present Rosedale Historical Land Use Study. See Saxberg et al.'s summary of the archival materials that have bearing on the location and character of the different phases of the forts and the associated burial ground.

<sup>10</sup> Saxberg et al., 2003 pp. 8-10.

<sup>11</sup> Information on this operation is limited and occurs only in the form of records maintained by the University of Alberta Anthropology Department.

<sup>12</sup> Saxberg et al., 2003, have gone to considerable effort to relocate the precise areas from which burials were recovered during the 1967 U of A salvage excavations. See their discussions on pp. 20 and 21 and their Figure 14.

<sup>13</sup> Lovell and Dublenko.

In 1973 and again in 1976 human remains were recovered in the same general area in association with further industrial development. In the former case, it is not clear whether the bones recovered were indeed human, and in the latter case, remains were collected and reburied at Beechmount cemetery. In any event, no concrete records are available for these operations.<sup>14</sup> Subsequent archaeological study in the Rossdale area related to the assessment and monitoring of development activities and were carried out under approved archaeological permits, which include standardized curation and reporting requirements.



*Figure 7-1*

*Edmonton House / Fort  
Augustus II and IV, 1967.*

*Provincial Museum of Alberta  
/ Strathcona Archaeological  
Society*

In 1977 impact assessment and monitoring of proposed development of the Bellamy Terminal and an associated underground power line at the power plant, just east of the Rossdale Historical Land Use Study Area, identified no archaeological material but recognized the value of the cemetery and the potential locations of the forts with which it was associated.<sup>15</sup> Monitoring of an open powerline trench in the same general area in 1979 provided similar results.<sup>16</sup> In 1979 a series of proposed waterline trenches in the Legislature grounds, immediately west of the study area, was examined and some features associated with Fort Edmonton V (1830-1915) were encountered and exposed.<sup>17</sup> Although a considerable number of

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<sup>14</sup> Saxberg et al., 2003, p. 12. For the 1976 recovery, see above, Section 6.3.

<sup>15</sup> Aresco Ltd. Impact and Assessment and Monitoring: Developments at the Rossdale Generating Station. Consultant's Report (ASA Permit 77-047)/ Copy on file, Alberta Archaeological Survey, Edmonton.

<sup>16</sup> Milt Wright, 'Remote Sensing and Culture Resource Management of Fur Trade Post Cemeteries: Recent Examples from Alberta', Paper presented at the 1994 Rupert's Land Colloquium, Edmonton.

<sup>17</sup> Donald Steer, 'Legislature Grounds Waterline Construction, Archaeological Investigation,' Edmonton, Alberta.

archaeological investigations have taken place in relation to Fort Edmonton V,<sup>18</sup> only the latter study has been reviewed here, as it is the only one that examined areas adjacent to the present study area.

Archaeological monitoring completed in 1981 in conjunction with installation of another series of underground electrical service lines for the Rosedale power plant, and for realignment of the roadways in the vicinity of the 105 Street / Rosedale Road / River Valley Road intersections recovered evidence of some disturbed skeletal remains and one intact burial.<sup>19</sup> This study further confirmed the presence of burials in proximity to the reported locations of Fort Augustus / Edmonton House II and IV. In 1989 developments associated with monitoring of addition to the Rosedale power plant's fourth transformer, immediately east of the Rosedale and River Valley Road intersection, were monitored, but only disturbed industrial fill occurred over in-place alluvial fill.<sup>20</sup> As well as the results reported in this latter study, the author (Sheila Minni) produced an updated site form that sketched the outlines of an approximate location for the cemetery associated with the various iterations of Fort Edmonton. These boundaries encompass a large area along Rosedale Road, starting near the current river bank and extending well into the EPCOR power plant facilities, including much of the area that would probably have been inside the perimeter of Fort Augustus / Edmonton House II. Minni's research considered the 1882 (Aldous) and 1919 (Haddow) surveyed locations for the cemetery that have been discussed above, but provides no additional archaeological information to support the sketched outlines. Because it was not included in the report, it is believed likely that the boundaries presented were intended to be used for management purposes to ensure that future developments and archaeological investigations allow for the potential sensitivity of the entire area. (This is addressed further below.)

Construction activities associated with development of a switchgear vault at the Rosedale power plant near Rosedale Road were monitored in 1994, but again neither human remains nor intact fort-related materials were encountered.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless the site form prepared for this project expanded the definition of the site to include the not yet confirmed location of the forts as well as the burial grounds associated with them. Plans to expand the intake facilities for the Rosedale Water Treatment Plant were assessed by placement of a series of backhoe excavations in 1996.

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<sup>18</sup> Over the course of four consecutive seasons beginning in 1992 the Archaeological Survey, Provincial Museum of Alberta, and the University of Alberta collaborated in conducting an archaeological field school on the Alberta Legislature grounds at the site of Fort Edmonton V.

<sup>19</sup> Sheila Minni, 'Final Report, Fj-pi-63, Archaeological Monitoring, Consultant's Report (ASA Permit 81-044).' Copy on file, Archaeological Survey of Alberta, Edmonton.

<sup>20</sup> Sheila Minni, 'Final Report, Archaeological monitoring, FJPI-63, Rosedale 4th Transformer Addition Project. Consultant's Report (ASA Permit-89-001).' Copy on file, Archaeological Survey of Alberta. p.12.

<sup>21</sup> Eric Damkjar, 'Heritage Resources Impact Assessment, Edmonton Power Switchgear Vault, Rosedale Power and Water Plant Complex. Consultant's Report (ASA Permit 93-036),' 1994. Copy on file, Archaeological Survey of Alberta.

These investigations occurred well east of the study area and encountered only relatively recently disturbed sediments.<sup>22</sup> In 1998 decontamination procedures undertaken at the Northwest Utilities facilities in the northwest corner of the Rossdale power plant complex, near Rossdale Road, were monitored, with only disturbed sediments encountered.

A series of archeological studies was begun in 1999 in association with EPCOR's proposed upgrade of its generating facilities at the Rossdale power plant, known as the RD11 Project, east of the study area. Because of the concern for historical resources, archaeological studies took place prior to each stage of development. These in turn led to public hearings. The studies began in 1999 with monitoring studies, backhoe testing, and a major excavation program to assess and mitigate the effects of early stage developments associated with the project.<sup>23</sup> This program encountered the remains of an occupation believed to relate to Fort Augustus / Edmonton House II or IV. The principal feature identified was a palisade wall, which was interpreted as 'a west wall of garden (artifacts to the east, refuse to the west), interior partition wall or exterior wall.'<sup>24</sup> Associated with this were fur-trade-related artifacts, primarily east of the wall, and chipped stone tools and butchered animal bone, primarily west of the wall. The latter materials were assumed to relate to native encampments associated with the fort.

In addition to these historic materials, evidence of much earlier encampments by Aboriginal peoples was encountered in association with a series of buried soil horizons that occur on the low river terrace that comprises Rossdale flats. One of these occurs approximately 2.3 m below the existing surface. It consisted of bone that exhibited evidence of butchering and produced radiocarbon estimates of 5,700±40 and 5500±40 years ago.<sup>25</sup> Indications of the use of fire, in the form of reddened soils and fire-cracked rock, was also present in one area.<sup>26</sup> A second occupation occurs in a buried soil that occurs approximately 3.1-4.1 m below the surface, below a layer of volcanic ash (Mazama tephra) that is known to date from

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<sup>22</sup> Brad Himour, 'Historical Resources Impact Assessment Northwestern Utilities Limited Edmonton Rossdale Monitoring Project. Consultant's Report (ASA Permit 98-129),' 1998. Copy on file, Archaeological Survey of Alberta.

<sup>23</sup> Saxberg and Reeves, 2000a.

<sup>24</sup> Saxberg and Reeves, 2000a, p. 36.

<sup>25</sup> Saxberg and Reeves, 2000a, p. 22.

<sup>26</sup> Rock used in human-directed fires, such as in hearths or stone boiling pits, often exhibit modifications that distinguish them from those affected by natural fires. Cracking and angular fractures are common in culturally affected rocks. These materials are exceedingly common in pre-contact Aboriginal sites where food products were processed and consumed.

6,850 BP (before the present).<sup>27</sup> Evidence for this occupation consists of butchered animal bone and is thought to date from around 8000 BP.<sup>28</sup>

In an unrelated project undertaken in 1999, backhoe testing and monitoring were completed in conjunction with the City of Edmonton's plan for a new trolley bus substation adjacent to the Rossdale Road / 104 Street intersection, at the northeast corner of the power plant facility.<sup>29</sup> Although no historic period artifacts or features were encountered during these investigations, archaeologists identified the presence of materials believed to be correlated with the two previously identified prehistoric occupations, one approximately 8,000 and the other approximately 5,500 years old. Materials recovered during monitoring consist of a few (presumably butchered) bone fragments, one quartzite cobble flake, and one quartzite biface from the earlier occupation layer, and butchered animal bone from the later layer.<sup>30</sup> Provided that stratigraphic units can be correlated, identification of these occupations 170 m north of the RD11 development indicates that they may be relatively widespread over the lower terrace on Rossdale flats. In this area these occupations occur at 2.5 and 3 m below surface respectively.

Archaeological studies continued in 2000, in conjunction with EPCOR's proposed RD 11 upgrading project east of the Rossdale Historical Land Use Study Area. Sixteen areas were investigated, including ten excavation blocks, with a total of 196 m<sup>2</sup> of excavation completed. Although the focus was assessing the location and degree of disturbance to the Fort Augustus / Edmonton House occupation, some of these excavations were extended sufficiently deep to assess pre-contact occupations that had been identified during the 1999 studies.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Mazama Tephra (ash) was deposited over a wide area of northwestern North America as a result of the explosion of a volcano in Oregon, which created a feature now known as Crater Lake. See C. R. Bacon, 'The Precursor and Climatic Eruptions of Mount Mazama and the Collapse of Crater Lake Caldera, Oregon.' *Geological Society of America, Abstracts and Programs* 15(5): 330 for details. This material occurs in a wide variety of depositional contexts in western and central Alberta and provides a convenient, securely dated geological horizon marker.

<sup>28</sup> Saxberg and Reeves, 2000a, p. 24.

<sup>29</sup> Saxberg and Reeves, 2000b.

<sup>30</sup> As indicated in Chapter 3 above, quartzite was available in sorted fluvial deposits in various locales throughout the Edmonton area (see T. C. Losey, 'The Stony Plain quarry site,' *Plains Anthropologist* 16(52): 138-154) and was the most commonly used source material for manufacture of stone tools. These were typically produced using percussion techniques, during which cobbles were progressively reduced to the desired form by driving material from their margins with another stone. Quartzite and other quartz-based rocks shear, rather than shatter, under impact and the process typically generates large quantities of products termed 'flakes' in archaeological studies. The term 'biface' refers to a tool that has been flaked on both faces of the object piece and typically exhibits a sharp-angled edge suitable for cutting.

<sup>31</sup> Saxberg, Bourges, and Reeves.



In many of the areas investigated, the fort occupation had been totally removed by twentieth-century development. In several areas, however, intact features relating to this occupation were identified and considerable numbers of artifacts relating to the use of the forts were recovered. As well, chipped stone artifacts and butchered bone reflecting related Aboriginal camp activities were recovered. In the southern portion of the RD 11 development area, nearest the North Saskatchewan River, pits were encountered that were interpreted as possibly representing three cellars and a chimney associated with structures in the interior of a fort.<sup>32</sup> Based on comparisons with existing historic maps of the internal orientation of structures in Fort Augustus / Edmonton House IV,<sup>33</sup> the structural information accumulated in the 1999 and 2000 archaeological studies does not appear to correlate with expectations. This and the preponderance of artifacts from the early part of the nineteenth century suggest that the structures identified may relate to one of the earlier second configurations of either Fort Augustus or Edmonton House.<sup>34</sup> Saxberg et al.'s 2000 report offers a series of three potential alternate configurations for a fort in this era.<sup>35</sup>

The 2000 excavations revealed very little additional information on the presumed 8,000-year-old pre-contact occupation, recovering only one flake tool and a few bone fragments in the 10 m<sup>2</sup> excavated into this level. As well in 2000, additional sparse evidence (2 flakes and 13 bone fragments) of the approximately 5,500-year-old occupation were encountered in association with a thick palaeosol.<sup>36</sup> In addition, sparse indications of two later occupations were recovered in the 2000 excavation program for the RD 11 project. These consist of a single bone fragment in an upper palaeosol in one of the excavation blocks and two bone fragments in a palaeosol immediately below the fort occupation.

In May 2002 test excavation and monitoring studies were completed before and during subsurface evaluations for a proposed underground power cable that would traverse the North Saskatchewan River along an alignment 75 m east of the 105 Street (Walterdale) Bridge. Two 1 x 2 m tests were dug in the Rosedale

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<sup>32</sup> Saxberg, Bourges, and Reeves, pp. 40-44 (Blocks 00-12, 18 and 19) make the case for these structures representing the interior of a fur trade post.

<sup>33</sup> Sketch maps of the general locations of the forts themselves and their internal features, accompanied a district report by James Bird in 1815 (HBCXA B.60/e/1); see Saxberg, Bourges and Reeves, 2000, Figures 42 and 43; originals are retained in the HBCA (G.1/98 and G.1/99).

<sup>34</sup> Between 1799-1802 the HBC and NWC built adjacent forts at Rosedale. The move from their original locations near Fort Saskatchewan was completed in 1801 or 1802. (John F. Gilpin. *Edmonton: Gateway to the North*, Burlington, Ontario: Windsor Publications, p. 17). The exact date of the closing of the Edmonton House with which these journals are concerned cannot be determined because the post journals for the seasons 1800-01 to 1804-06 are missing. By September 1806 the post then called Edmonton House was on the site of the present City of Edmonton. See Chapters 4 and 5, above.

<sup>35</sup> Saxberg, Bourges, and Reeves, 2000, Figures 45-47, with discussion on p. 131.

<sup>36</sup> Palaeosols are buried soil horizons formed when a period of stability allowed vegetation to concentrate organic material. Sediment deposition through flooding or other action has subsequently buried these former surfaces. If the location represents a suitable area for human use, archaeological materials occasionally occur in association with these horizons.

power plant at proposed auger test locations, and subsequent auger tests on both sides of the river were monitored. No significant archaeological resources were encountered or observed.<sup>37</sup>

The most relevant archaeological study for the Rosedale Historical Land Use Study is the research sponsored by EPCOR to locate and define the perimeter fence that enclosed the burial ground used by the various stages of Fort Augustus/Edmonton House (referred to as the Fort Edmonton burial ground.<sup>38</sup> This study synthesized much of the available information on the nature and extent of the burial ground by reviewing archival documents, maps, photographs and previous archaeological studies. In addition to the historic studies, five excavation blocks were opened with the intent of physically defining the remnants of the fence. A secondary objective was to assemble information on the degree of prior disturbance that had taken place at this site. While the detail provided in the report is comprehensive, the presentation of information could have been clarified by providing a map identifying the unit numbers at the locations of all areas of archaeological investigation completed for EPCOR during the 1999-2001 period.

The results of this work have increased current understanding about the character and extent of the Fort Edmonton burial ground in a number of ways. As noted in Chapters 5 and 6 above, the presumed location of the burial ground is shown in the Aldous survey plan of the Hudson's Bay Reserve lands (1882)<sup>39</sup> and a map that has 1919 information overlaid on a 1934 plan prepared by the City of Edmonton's Engineer, A.D. Haddow.<sup>40</sup> Both show the burial ground to be within the study area, north of the 105 Street Bridge in the vicinity of the 105 Street / Rosedale Road / River Valley Road intersection, and extending slightly into the EPCOR facility. Saxberg et al. reject information contained in later sources, based on oral testimony, that there may have been second, later cemetery dedicated specifically for people of Euro-Canadian rather than Aboriginal or Métis background (or vice versa).<sup>41</sup> However, if such a cemetery did exist and remains are still present, it might be located to the north around the intersection of 103 Street and 97 Avenue, within the study area. (For this, see above, Section 5.3.)

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<sup>37</sup> Excavation by Saxberg, Bourges, and Reeve, 2003.

<sup>38</sup> Saxberg et al., 2003.

<sup>39</sup> City of Edmonton Archives Map #227.

<sup>40</sup> City of Edmonton Archives Map #237.

<sup>41</sup> See Saxberg et al., 2003, p. 35.



Figure 7-2

*An excavation in Rosssdale by Lifeways of Canada, 2002.*

*Used with permission, Lifeways of Canada.*

In several of the early records and representations it is evident that fences were used to demarcate and protect the burial ground. Archaeological studies identified the remains of two perimeter fences, the larger of which is mapped as the ‘burial ground fence’ in the Saxberg et al. report of 2003, and is thought to date to the Fort Edmonton V occupation (i.e. after 1830). Evidence for an earlier inner fence was recovered, and it is suggested that it may represent the earlier period of occupations of Rosssdale flats, Fort Augustus/Edmonton House II and/or IV (1799–1810 and 1813–1830 respectively).<sup>42</sup> The fence orientation defined by this work, however, does not demarcate the extent of burials in the area. Three of the burials identified in the 1967 U of A salvage studies occur east of the burial ground perimeter fence, as does the single burial identified in the 2001 EPCOR fencepost replacement monitoring study.<sup>43</sup> Although several burials have been recorded within the EPCOR property near the purported site of the burial ground, none of the excavations completed for the RD11 project within the EPCOR property recovered burials or human remains. Consequently while it remains uncertain how extensive the burial grounds are, Saxberg et al. conclude that:

... graves are not likely to be located across the EPCOR site. Burials are clearly located external to all the fencelines, but the limits of

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<sup>42</sup> Saxberg et al., 2003, p. 111.

<sup>43</sup> Saxberg 2001.

the burial area are still unresolved. Since no undisturbed burials or even fragmentary human remains have ever been found in previous RD11 excavations, graves are not likely to be located across the EPCOR site.<sup>44</sup>

Geomorphological observations made during the excavations are used to support this interpretation by suggesting that human burials may be restricted to sandy deposits that occur below the modern soil horizon throughout the study area, and which extend eastward from Rossdale Road to a limited degree. This type of sediment is easier to excavate for graves than are the silts to the east, and it is suggested that the distribution of silts may have constrained the extent of potential burial grounds in this area.

Based on their review of previous information and observations in the field, Saxberg et al. have suggested that three phases of burial ground use are represented at the site. In the earliest phase burials were shallow, oriented mostly north-south, and likely unfenced. During the second phase, a small palisade fence oriented on a northeast-southwest orientation enclosed the burial ground, with deeper graves on a similar orientation. During the final period, a larger area was fenced, with at least one repair, and many of the graves overlapped or cut into other graves, with a variety of orientations, suggesting that the burial ground was crowded.<sup>45</sup>

Reviewing the documentary evidence, Saxberg reports that at least 91 individuals may have been interred in this single burial ground. The ethnic affinities of these break down as follows: 54 Métis, 25 Aboriginal and 12 Euro-Canadians. Archaeological and documentary records relating the individuals encountered by development account for 24 of these, and it remains unknown how many may have been relocated to other cemeteries. Consequently, the burial ground may still represent the resting place of many of the earliest inhabitants of the City of Edmonton.<sup>46</sup>

One objective of the 2003 study by Saxberg et al. was the determination of the extent of disturbance to the burial ground. Archaeological excavations suggest that a considerable portion of the original surface of the site may have been removed at some point in the past. This is suggested by the observation that the original nineteenth-century surface, containing artifacts and burial ground features, occurs immediately below a buried layer of asphalt and road fill, and there is no evidence

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<sup>44</sup> Saxberg et al., 2003, p. 111.

<sup>45</sup> Saxberg et al., 2003, 222.

<sup>46</sup> This number is disputed by the Métis Nation of Alberta. As noted in Section 5.3 above, the present land use study is not seeking to provide definitive answers concerning the number of ethnicity of the burials.

of a former use of the area as a coal dump nor of sand from recorded early flood episodes. Ten underground utility lines subsequently traversed the burial ground. Of these, six encountered or disturbed burials. Interestingly, however, construction of the present road surface is unlikely to have affected the burial grounds. Archaeological excavations indicate that they were placed on a layer of fill that caps earlier roads, and which ranges in depth from 75 cm at the northern end of Rosedale Road to 1.4 m near the 105 Street Bridge.

The 2003 report cites the recovery of disturbed human remains in fill encountered in an excavation northeast of the Bellamy Substation, approximately 130 m east of the presumed burial ground.<sup>47</sup> The report also mentions several instances of the recovery of human remains, which lack sufficient information to allow accurate mapping, but suggest that human remains may extend in disturbed – and possibly in intact – condition into the transformer switch yard on the eastern margin of the EPCOR power plant facilities. (See also Section 6.3.)

One of the most intriguing outcomes of the burial ground study has been its synthesis of the available information relating to the location and configuration of the several fur trade post structures that are known to have been built on the Rosedale flats. Archaeological evidence, coupled with a review of early documents, maps, and photographs, led Saxberg et al. to propose a distribution of post structures that would have Fort Augustus and Edmonton House II separated by a considerable distance along the banks of the North Saskatchewan River, likely using different landings, with the later posts (No. IV) using a single location between these locales. In this scenario, Fort Augustus II is proposed to have been situated on the western margins of the flat immediately below the rise to the higher terrace on which the final Fort Edmonton (V) was built, and Edmonton House II would have been situated within the current EPCOR facility.<sup>48</sup> This would place Fort Augustus II west of the southern part of the study area, the combined Fort Augustus / Edmonton House IV within and adjacent to the 105 Street Bridge approach, inside the study area, and Edmonton House II well to the east, inside the EPCOR property. This is based on indirect archaeological evidence and interpretation of archival evidence much of which we consider compelling. However, until directed archaeological study confirms the fort orientation suggested, we believe it is one of several possible alternatives for the potential distribution of the archaeological remnants of these important structures.

As a summary of the burial ground study, Saxberg et al. have created a map illustrating the archaeological sensitivity of that portion of Rosedale flats that includes the EPCOR and City of Edmonton facilities east of Rosedale Road, and the burial ground itself.<sup>49</sup> Based on the archaeological evidence accumulated to

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<sup>47</sup> Saxberg et al., 2003, pp. 92-94

<sup>48</sup> Saxberg et al., 2003, Figure 39.

<sup>49</sup> Saxberg et al., 2003, Figure 44; also see p. 228 for a brief discussion. It should be noted that these considerations affect only a small portion of the study area.

date, they estimate the potential extent of human remains associated with the Fort Edmonton burial ground as covering an area bounded on the south by the Rossdale Road off-ramp at the north end of the 105 Street Bridge, on the west by 105 Street, on the north by the former alignment of 96 Avenue, and on the east by a line that extends 20–30 m into EPCOR's generation facility. This area is evaluated as having the highest sensitivity, warranting avoidance if possible. Other portions of the Rossdale power plant and water treatment facilities are graded as having lower sensitivity, requiring archaeological investigation or monitoring if undisturbed areas were to be affected, or low sensitivity requiring no additional investigation.

We consider these evaluations to be well founded from a management perspective. However, from the perspective of the possible location of the original burial ground (and the area for its commemoration), we would suggest extending the eastern margin of the potential burial ground into the EPCOR facility by squaring-off the boundary line in the area of the transformer switchyard.

### *7.3 Known Archaeological Resources*

In Alberta Community Development's archaeological site files, only one site is listed in as having been recorded in the study area – FjPi 63, the Fort Edmonton burial site. This site was originally recorded as a burial in 1966, but has since been amended to include the industrial structures and material associated with development of a power plant (1993) and the nearby fur trade forts and affiliated structures, Fort Augustus / Edmonton House II and IV (1998). The final amendment included the buried prehistoric components that indicate use of the Rossdale flats stretching back perhaps 8,000 years (1999). Various aspects of this site were discussed in the previous section. Four of the historic structures at this site have recently been designated as Provincial Historic Resources.

The most recent depiction of the listed archaeological site includes all the area south of the former 95 Avenue between 101 Street to the east and Rossdale Road / 105 Street to the west. Only a small portion of the site, along its western margin, is included in the study area, but current interpretation suggests that it may be reasonable to extend the potential site boundaries to the west, up River Valley Road to a position directly south of the Terrace Building. This would account for the orientation of Fort Augustus II recently proposed by Saxberg as an outcome of the 2003 burial ground study.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Saxberg et al., 2003, pp.214-16 and Figures 39 and 41.

Two other sites have been recorded nearby on the north side of the North Saskatchewan River valley. The nearest is FjPj 4, Fort Edmonton V. Records, maps, photographs, and archaeological studies indicate that the remains directly associated with this fort do not extend as far east as the study area. However, during its operation agricultural use of the fields established by the posts on Rossdale flats continued (see Chapters 5 and 6), as did the burial ground use. Former landings and trails were also used for the post and a warehouse was built by the HBC in 1882 at the site of the 105 Street Bridge crossing (See Chapter 6).

A third site on record with Alberta Community Development is FjPj 25, the Oliver child burial. This site represents the remains of a single child recovered in 1980 from the wall of a building foundation excavation at the corner of 99 Avenue and 110 Street. This historic period burial is interpreted as the remains of an aboriginal, possibly Saulteaux, child<sup>51</sup> and is considered to be an isolated occurrence. This site lies well distant from the Rossdale Historical Land Use Study Area.

## 7.4 Significance

Understanding the significance of archaeological resources is a critical component in developing effective means of managing the resources in a context that may involve change associated with development and land disturbance. Various schemes have been advanced for assessing the value of archaeological resources; none has received universal acceptance. It is evident that local context must be considered as a key element. Some general categories that characterize most evaluation schemes can be identified: scientific, historical and cultural dimensions.<sup>52</sup>

**Scientific significance** relates to the physical parameters of the resources and their ability to address important questions about the history and prehistory of a region. Under this criterion, consideration is generally given to a site's integrity; the quantity, quality and diversity of the information present; and whether or not it represents a unique occurrence that is not duplicated elsewhere. Assessing this criterion usually requires detailed information on the character of the resource, which typically is obtained through systematic archaeological study.

SECTION 7.4  
SIGNIFICANCE

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<sup>51</sup> Baldwin, Archaeological Survey, Heritage Resources Management Branch site files, Edmonton.

<sup>52</sup> Discussion of significance criteria for archaeological sites was prevalent in the literature in the 1970s as United States government agencies struggled with assignment of appropriate mitigative measures for projects on public lands with passage of the National Environmental Policy Act and other legislation. Examples of the debate can be seen in several articles, such as: Glassow, M. Issues in Evaluating the Significance of Archaeological Sites, *American Antiquity* 42(3):413-420; Moratto, M. and R. Kelly Optimizing Strategies for Evaluating Archaeological Significance, in *Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory*, Volume 1 pp. 1-30, Academic Press, New York; and, Schiffer, M. and G. Gummerman, 'Assessing Significance', in *Conservation Archaeology: A Guide for Cultural Resources Management Studies*, pp. 239-47, Academic Press, New York. This debate is no longer current but significance evaluation remains an important aspect of cultural resources management.

In the case of FjPi 63, although many studies have taken place, these have been in response to specific development-related issues that affected only parts of a large composite site. No systematic understanding of the site has been obtained. It presumably consists of the remains of the former locations of Fort Augustus / Edmonton House II (1799–1810) and IV (1813–30), along with their associated structures and features, including the traditional burial ground; as well as two, or possibly three, deeply buried prehistoric occupations that are 8,000 and 5,500 years in age. Although some structures associated with at least one of the forts have been identified, and a relatively good understanding of the location and extent of the burial ground is taking shape, the former locations of the forts, their agricultural fields, and other structures are still in question. Evidence for the prehistoric occupations is sparse but includes butchered animal bone, some stone artifacts, and fire-cracked rock. The distribution and character of these remains is still poorly understood.

Nevertheless, based on the information obtained to date, intact fort-related remnants generally consist of an artifact-rich occupation surface that could provide important information on the activities undertaken in and around these establishments. It is expected that such surfaces have been preserved, and that a highly diverse, information-rich resource will be present to support productive scientific inquiry and make major contributions to understanding the development and operation of these posts, as well as fur trade history generally in western Canada.

Because Fort Augustus / Edmonton House II were burned after operations moved to the Whitemud Creek location, posterity would be left a considerably different set of remains than would have been the case for Augustus / Edmonton House IV, which was dismantled.

With respect to the prehistoric components of FjPi 63, the physical evidence is very sparse but appears to cover a substantial area between the river banks and the new trolley station within the EPCOR facility. Evidence obtained to date consists of five stone flakes, one core fragment, a biface/knife, several pieces of fire-cracked rock, and 46 bone fragments. The few square metres that have been excavated in the deeply buried horizons that contain these deposits may not have encountered concentrations that would be useful for scientific analysis and interpretation of these occupations. However, archaeologists suspect that more productive concentrations occur.

The burial ground is acknowledged to have a considerable degree of scientific potential. Analysis undertaken to date has provided considerable insight into a range of questions relating to the treatment of individual burials, as well as the ethnicity, health, and other aspects of the lives of the people who lived and died near the fort. The remaining interments would have similar or greater potential.

An important aspect of determining scientific significance is whether or not the information contained in a site is unique or repeated in other locations. In the case of fur trade era remains, the sequence of posts represents a relatively rare occurrence, as does an associated burial ground. Similarly, the deeply buried



prehistoric occupations represent the first identification of sites of this age in preserved stratigraphically sequent deposits in the North Saskatchewan River valley. While other sites of this character have been recorded in the Bow and Oldman valleys to the south, they are quite rare in Alberta.

Offsetting the potential scientific value of this complex site is the degree of disturbance that may have taken place as a result of modern development. Archaeological resources are non-renewable and damage to their physical remains and context is permanent. It is difficult to assess the precise effects of prior disturbance that may have taken place if the locations of the resources in question are uncertain. This applies to the fort structures on the Rossdale flats. Several potential orientations have been suggested, based on archaeological evidence and historical mapping, but they have not been demonstrated conclusively. Large portions of these structures are within the ground that has been heavily disturbed by industrial development, east of the study area. Although much of the burial ground may remain in place, several utility trenches have disturbed the area and early road construction may have intersected several near-surface interments.

If the latest configuration proposed by Saxberg et al. is considered likely, remnants of Fort Augustus II and Fort Augustus / Edmonton House IV may be situated west of the industrial site, under the current approaches to the 105 Street Bridge. It has been suggested that the modern roads in this area have been built on fill, but earlier configurations may have been placed on leveled surfaces. Disturbances in the area of the burial ground indicate that this may be the case. However, it is likely that more deeply buried components of the site, particularly the prehistoric ones, may remain intact. While these concerns apply to the approaches to the 105 Street Bridge, it should be noted that the area along the river bank at the north end of the bridge has seen significant prior disturbance that will have severely affected any resources formerly in that area.

In summary, the scientific significance of FjPi 63 is substantial. The prehistoric component is significant at a regional scale, and the historic component is significant at provincial and possibly national scales. The intense disturbance to the historic component certainly has affected its integrity, but areas that remain intact are sufficiently important to warrant preservation or detailed study from a scientific perspective.

**Historical significance** is measured in terms of a series of criteria considered by Alberta Community Development in determining whether or not resources warrant designation as Provincial Historical Resources. These typically involve the association between a resource and important people, groups, cultures, events, or movements that have made an impact on the historical development of Alberta.<sup>53</sup> Resources can also be of importance by virtue of their architectural style or engineering type, or if they represent an example of a type of historic resource that is significant collectively rather than individually.

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<sup>53</sup> Alberta Culture, Master Plan for the Protection and Development of Prehistoric and Historic Resources in Alberta, Edmonton.

Figure 7-3

The EPCOR power plant, 2003.

Courtesy City of Edmonton



Fort Augustus / Edmonton House represented major fur trade and commercial establishments situated on the margins of the Plains, and therefore had somewhat different roles than many other large posts. Few posts initiated the development of a major urban centre, as did these. They have demonstrated significant association with important people, groups, events, and cultures, as discussed in Chapters 5 and 6. The fur trade establishments at this site, including the features with which they are associated, would therefore be considered to be of high historical significance both at the local and regional scales. This significance would be substantially augmented by the historical importance of the physical remains in the burial ground, which, although disturbed, may remain comparatively more intact than other elements of the site, and which is undoubtedly important in terms of the historical information it contains. The historical values of some twentieth-century buildings on the EPCOR site, just east of the study area, have been recently recognized through designation as Provincial Historical Resources.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>54</sup> The Low Pressure Plant, Pump House No. 1, and the Administration Building were designated Provincial Historic Resources on 17 October 2001. See Larry Pearson, 'Rossdale power Plant: A Provincial Historic Resource,' *Plan Canada*, 43:2 (Summer 2003), pp 23-25.

One of the most important dimensions of significance to be considered for FjPi 63 is the **cultural significance** of the resource. Submissions to the Energy and Utilities Board hearings on EPCOR's RD 11 project, newspaper articles, and public presentations have substantiated the importance of the burial ground to First Nations, Métis, and French-Canadian cultural groups, as well as to descendants of the people interred there. It has been asserted that the Rossdale flats area, and especially the burial ground, is a 'sacred site for peoples of First Nations and Métis descent ... and might be considered the birthplace of the Métis Nation.'<sup>55</sup> Statements of the significance of the area to the French-Canadian community have also been made, indicating that Rossdale flats is 'not only important for the history of the voyageurs, guides and interpreters of the fur trade but for the first French-Canadian and Métis to settle in this area.'<sup>56</sup> The cultural and spiritual significance of the burial ground has been recognized by the City of Edmonton, which is working with a wide range of stakeholders and descendants to develop an effective commemoration of this area of the site.

Another element of cultural significance is the potential for public interpretation and education. The recently designated historical structures have potential for use in developing the theme of early industrial use of Rossdale, as well as other themes of importance to the history of the use of Rossdale flats, the development of Edmonton, the fur trade in western Canada, and so forth. The interpretive/educational potential of the Fort Augustus / Edmonton House components of the site is substantial. The extent to which this potential can be realized is offset by uncertainties about the locations and the state of preservation of the physical remains. While the burial ground has recognized cultural and historical significance, it also would have potential educational value in terms of increasing awareness of the sensitivity of such areas to descendants and affiliated cultural groups, as well as pointing out the need to manage sensitive resources of this kind.

The location of the Oliver child burial is well removed from the study area and the remains have been removed to conserve them from development activity. This site has limited scientific, historical, and cultural significance. However, because it lies near the former location of the St. Joachim Church grounds, other culturally or historically significant remains may occur in the area.

In summary, the complex of archaeological remains on Rossdale flats, which has been designated FjPi 63, represents a highly significant resource from a variety of perspectives. Recognizing that much remains to be learned about this site, some of the elements of the this evaluation can be stated only in terms of potential.

SECTION 7.4  
SIGNIFICANCE

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<sup>55</sup> Presentation by the First Peoples/First Settlers to the EUB hearings on the RD 11 project, cited in the EUB Decision Report, EUB 2001-33.

<sup>56</sup> Presentation to the Edmonton City Council by Liliane Coutru Maisonneuve of the Association Canadienne-Française de l'Alberta, 1 October 2002.

However, with well-considered long-term management it is likely that some of these values can be preserved or enhanced through public interpretation. Although archaeological vestiges of the uses of Fort Edmonton V may occur on Rossdale Flats, including what may remain of the former warehouse, landings, agricultural fields, and the burial ground, these features have technically been grouped in the FjPi 63 designation. Remains of the fort buildings and adjacent structures occur west of the Rossdale Historical Land Use Study Area. Nevertheless, they too would be considered significant from scientific, historical, and cultural perspectives.

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL

# 8

## Overview

This chapter provides a review of the potential for the occurrence of archaeological resources in the Rossdale Historical Land Use Study Area. It begins with a consideration of the geomorphologic character of the original landform that comprises the study area, examining its potential for preservation of archaeological material from the perspective of depositional sequences. The text also considers the potential desirability of the study area for prehistoric settlement and use by reviewing the disposition of the Rossdale flats landform and its location within the North Saskatchewan River valley, the distribution of locally available resources, and recognized prehistoric settlement patterns. Finally, this section reviews briefly what is generally known of historic development in the study area and what this may have meant to the integrity of potential archaeological resources.

8.1	INTRODUCTION
8.2	LANDFORM POTENTIAL
8.3	POTENTIAL FOR PREHISTORIC SETTLEMENT
8.4	MODERN DISTURBANCE
8.5	SUMMARY

## 8.1 Introduction

This discussion begins with an examination of the potential of the Rossdale terrace to contain additional archaeological resources by considering the origin and development of the landform, its desirability for settlement and use in prehistoric times, and the degree of modern disturbance that may have affected the integrity of buried resources. It concludes with a discussion on the likelihood of modern disturbance to archaeological remains within the Rossdale Historical Land Use Study Area.

## 8.2 Landform Potential

The Rossdale Historical Land Use Study Area transects a series of terraces along the north side of the North Saskatchewan River valley. As was discussed in Chapter 3, these terraces were formed as the river downcut through glacial deposits at the end of the final, Wisconsinan, glacial epoch, around 11,000 years ago.<sup>1</sup> The highest terrace (T-1), which is the level on which the Alberta Legislature was erected, formed sometime between 11,300 and 10,700 years ago,<sup>2</sup> just shortly after the plains above became habitable for the animals on which prehistoric hunters depended for survival.<sup>3</sup> Subsequent terraces (T-2-4) formed in quick succession between 10,700 and 10,000 years ago,<sup>4</sup> suggesting relatively high flow levels.

The lowest terrace, which represents the one-hundred-year flood plain, began forming as a result of the northward meander of the river. It exhibits a complex series of alluvial deposits, unlike the higher terraces, which were much shorter lived and exhibit fewer formerly stable surfaces. A date of 9,860 BP+ has been obtained on bone recovered from this terrace<sup>5</sup> and an earlier date has been obtained on the equivalent landform in the Duffield area. Mazama Tephra, volcanic ash released by the explosion of Mount Mazama in Oregon and deposited 6,850 years ago, lies buried between about 2 and 3 m below the surface on this terrace. At least one formerly stable surface occurs below this deposit and several above it.<sup>6</sup> The sedimentary sequence reflected on the lowest terrace of Rossdale flats is a result

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<sup>1</sup> Godfrey, J. D., *Edmonton Beneath Our Feet: a Guide to the Geology of the Edmonton Region*, (Edmonton: Edmonton Geological Society, 1993).

<sup>2</sup> B. Rains, and W. Welsh, 'Out of phase Holocene terraces in part of the North Saskatchewan River basin, Alberta', *Canadian Journal of Earth Sciences*, pp. 25, 454-64, 1988.

<sup>3</sup> Burns J. A., 'Ice Age Fossils' in *Edmonton Beneath Our Feet a Guide to the Geology of the Edmonton Region*, p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> Rains and Welsh, p. 461.

<sup>5</sup> J. A. Westgate, L. Kalas and M. Evans, 'Geology of the Edmonton area, Alberta.' Geological Association of Canada, and Mineralogical Association of Canada Fieldtrip C-8 Guidebook. Cited in Rains and Welsh p. 461

<sup>6</sup> Saxberg et al., 2001.

of the periodic flooding of the landform and the gradual accumulation of fine sediment. In overall form this terrace is broad and relatively level, while the terraces above are much narrower and slope to a greater degree. Little detailed information is available about the stratigraphic makeup of deposits on these higher terraces.

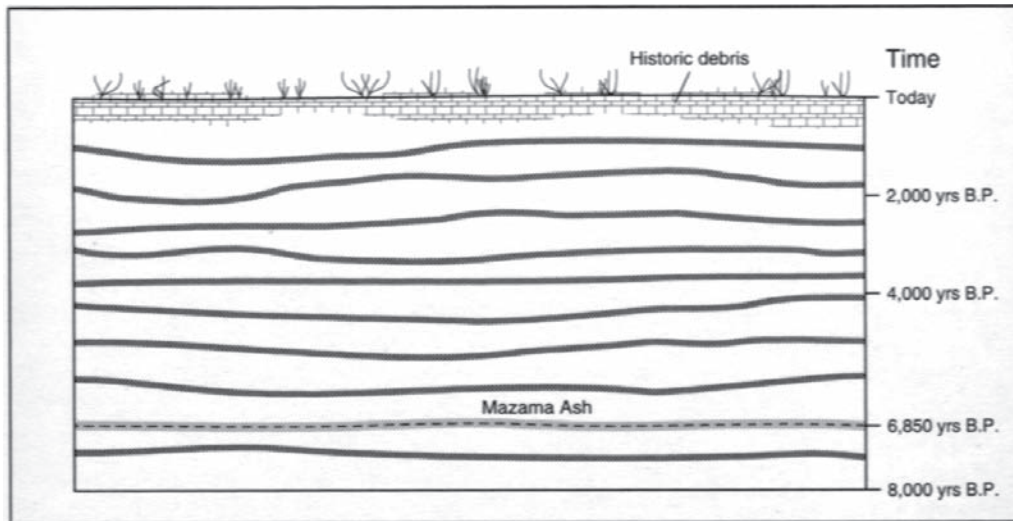


Figure 8-1

Floodplain profile, showing the Mazama ash layer.

Heinz Pyszczyk, Provincial Museum of Alberta / Strathcona Archaeological Society.

Because of the configuration of the North Saskatchewan River in this part of the valley, the Rossdale flats landform lies opposite a complementary upstream flat area known as Walterdale flats. These linked landforms provide suitable locations for crossing the river, especially in winter, when it is covered by ice. As mentioned earlier in this study, a traditionally used ford (warm season crossing-point) occurs just below the High Level Bridge, upstream of the study area.

With respect to the potential for the Rossdale landforms to contain and preserve the remains of significant archaeological resources, consideration will be given here to issues involving quaternary palaeontological, prehistoric archaeological, and historic period archaeological resources.<sup>7</sup>

Quaternary palaeontological remains are the result of natural death events and typically involve redeposition as a result of alluvial activity, which results in their

SECTION 8.2  
LANDFORM POTENTIAL

<sup>7</sup> Palaeontological resources are the remains of plants and animals that lived in the past and include fossils, bone deposits, shells, and the impressions of these remains. Prehistoric archaeological resources in northern North America are the archaeological sites, objects and affiliated materials that represent occupation by Aboriginal peoples prior to the arrival of European goods, people and the historic records that characterize their culture. Archaeological resources of the historic period generally include the sites, artifacts, structures and documents that relate to the influx of Euro-Canadians into the region in the last 250 years. These include buried remains related to the early exploration and fur trade in the region as well as later economic and social developments. Equally important historic period archaeological resources include buried artifacts and affiliated remains relating to post-contact Aboriginal people's use of the landscape.

burial and preservation. Consequently their presence in any particular location is difficult to predict but is more likely to be found in areas of alluvial accumulation. Important early and mid-Pleistocene palaeontological remains have been recovered in the river sands and gravels in the Clover Bar area,<sup>8</sup> but this formation may not be present except at considerable depth on the upper terraces within the study area; deposits at the base of the valley are post-glacial in age.

The presence of sands in the immediate subsurface context in the study area<sup>9</sup> and reports of gravel pit operations conducted below the legislature by the railway<sup>10</sup> suggest that an early post-glacial channel may be present near the base of the valley walls. Given the relatively early dates predicted for the lowest terraces of the river, it may be doubtful that this channel would have much potential for prehistoric human use, but there may be some potential for in-washed early Holocene palaeontological remains.

Late Pleistocene and Holocene age palaeontological specimens have been recovered in early Holocene sediments upstream of the Rossdale area, in Emily Murphy Park and elsewhere.<sup>11</sup> Quaternary palaeontological remains may occur in the study area, but nothing of this nature has been reported despite the range of development and investigation that has taken place. In any event, should they occur, quaternary palaeontological specimens are likely to be scattered, at considerable depth, and may be limited to more recent, Holocene age specimens, which are relatively common in the prehistoric record.

### *8.3 Potential for Prehistoric Settlement*

Prehistoric archaeological resources are already known to be present on the lowest terrace of the North Saskatchewan River valley, east of the study area.<sup>12</sup> Information available to date indicates that these occur in association with deeply buried soil horizons developed on the accumulating surface of this terrace. It is not known how extensive or densely expressed these resources may be, but their presence indicates that the Rossdale flats were used at least periodically, and perhaps regularly, over a period that may be greater than 8,000 years in duration.

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<sup>8</sup> Westgate et al., 1976, p. 29. Also see the natural history section of this report for additional information on the stratigraphic sequence of deposits in the North Saskatchewan River valley.

<sup>9</sup> Saxberg et al., 2003, p. 212, Figure 42.

<sup>10</sup> HBCA, A.12/L 109/1/6; see also Chapter 6.

<sup>11</sup> Westgate et al., 1976, pp. 14, 26.



There is also a suggestion that prehistoric occupational materials may exist within the southernmost portion of the study area. In her 1981 report of archaeological monitoring near the 105 Street traffic circle, Sheila Minni recounts a conversation with Rolf Buhmann of Comstock International, who indicated that, during installation of an underground transmission line along the north bank of the River near the 105 Street Bridge, workers encountered ‘bone, stone arrowheads and several large pilings.’<sup>13</sup> Minni was unable to find anything further about this material, which presumably was turned over to a museum. It should be noted, however, that bone in this area could as easily be related to the fur trade era as to prehistoric occupation.

Additionally, an oral account by Kenneth Kinneard to Naomi Radford in 1970 relating to the identification of skeletal materials encountered during excavations for the powerhouse has been discussed earlier in this study in the context of the possible extension of the burial ground into the EPCOR site (see Chapters 5 and 6). While such an interpretation is possible, identification of these bones as being human is lacking in this reference. Given the fact that Kinneard mentions ‘a lot of bone,’ there is a possibility that these materials were the remains of animals used as food by prehistoric occupants of the terrace.

In a general sense, this use likely reflects the favorable characteristics of the landform, including its level, open aspect; its direct proximity to a major river and its resources; the shelter provided by the valley walls; the likely presence of a resource-rich gallery forest; and proximity to a potential crossing of the river. Similar characteristics occur in several locations along the river in the Edmonton region, and it is expected that equivalent archaeological potential would be present there as well. These characteristics may have proved sufficiently attractive that the Rossdale flats would have served as what is referred to in recent archaeological literature variously as a rendezvous, aggregation, congregation, gathering site, or centre.

Based on Northern Cree ethnographic information and historical documentation, Meyer and Thistle<sup>14</sup> have described strategic locations along major rivers, particularly the North Saskatchewan, that were traditionally used for large-scale seasonal social events by regional Cree bands,<sup>15</sup> and involving perhaps 200-400

SECTION 8.3  
POTENTIAL FOR  
PREHISTORIC SETTLEMENT

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<sup>12</sup> Saxberg et al., 2001, pp. 124–27.

<sup>13</sup> Sheila Minni, ‘Final Report, Archaeological monitoring, FJPI-63, Rossdale 4th Transformer Addition Project. Consultant’s Report (ASA Permit-89-001).’ Copy on file, Archaeological Survey of Alberta. p. 12.

<sup>14</sup> D. Meyer and P.C. Thistle, ‘Saskatchewan River Rendezvous Centres and Trading Posts: Continuity in a Cree Social Geography,’ *Ethnohistory*, 42:3, 1995. Duke University Press pp. 403–44.

<sup>15</sup> Social organization amongst early contact Northern Algonkian aboriginal groups, of which the Cree of the lower Saskatchewan River valley are several, have been divided into two units, the ‘band’ and the ‘hunting group’ (see Rogers, *Band Organization among the Indians of Eastern Subarctic Canada*. In David Damas. ed. ‘Band Societies’ pp. 24–39. Bulletin No.228, Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1969). The hunting group represented a cooperating, multifamily group of 13–15 individuals that resided together for at least 9–10 months of the year. The band represented a loosely structured unit composed of a number of hunting groups (Rogers, 31) numbering 75–125 people or more and inhabiting a drainage basin along with other such groups.

people. These gatherings typically took place in spring. They involved making important political and economic decisions, technological activities such as canoe-building, trading, and conduct of religious ceremonies. Often these places were situated at locations where major terrain and resource concentrations or changes occur and appear to be situated at relatively regular intervals along the river. They reflect what Meyer and Thistle believe were the territories of the recognized bands in the region. Examples of the locations selected include The Pas, Manitoba, where the river is joined by several other major drainages and cuts through a major morainal upland; Grand Rapids, Manitoba, where an enormous fishery is present; and Cedar Lake, Manitoba, where islands occur in the delta near the entrance to this major lake. Other, less prominent, locations occur. All those at which archaeological investigations have taken place have produced evidence of complex, extensive, and rich concentrations of archaeological materials, suggesting repeated use of these areas over considerable periods of prehistory, especially the period between 6,000 and 3,000 years ago.<sup>16</sup>

Although Meyer and Thistle suggest that these locations do not extend west of the Boreal Forest / Parklands interface in Central Saskatchewan, they indicate that early fur trade operations recognized their economic significance by selecting many as the locations of prominent posts. This was not always the case and other posts were established between aggregation centres.

In their review of aboriginal land use patterns in the greater Edmonton area, Pysczyk and Wein suggest that the position of the series of fur trade posts in the greater Edmonton area may represent a conscious effort to take advantage of a traditional gathering site.<sup>17</sup> Support for this interpretation is offered in Anthony Henday's account of a visit to a place near Edmonton in the spring of 1754, where a large camp developed and hunting, canoe-building, and much feasting and ceremony took place.<sup>18</sup> Additional support is provided by reference to the reported Cree name for Edmonton, Otinow, 'a place where everyone came.'<sup>19</sup> However, none of these interpretations confirm that the Rosssdale flats constituted such an aggregation center; rather they suggest that a location analogous to that defined by Meyer and Thistle may occur in the Edmonton area.

The selection of Edmonton and the Rosssdale flats as the site of a major trading establishment was no doubt a strategic one in which the seasonal presence of aboriginal groups figured prominently. Whether Rosssdale represents a traditional

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<sup>16</sup> Meyer and Thistle, p. 414

<sup>17</sup> Heinz. W. Pysczyk, Ross W. Wein and Elizabeth Noble, 'Aboriginal Land Use of the Greater Edmonton Area.' Unpublished Paper, 30 January 2002.

<sup>18</sup> Pysczyk and Wein, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> Pysczyk and Wein, p. 1.

aggregation centre of considerable antiquity, as modeled for the Cree of the lower, Boreal Forest, section of the river, seems doubtful. Recognizing the limited nature of the investigations conducted to date, the findings on Rosssdale, suggest that the archaeological materials present, while of considerable antiquity, do not appear to be comparatively dense or diverse; nor have there been other extensive archaeological sites of the expected types identified within the river valley.

Archaeological and historic documentation suggests that, in the final stages of the Later Prehistoric Period<sup>20</sup> and at the time of contact with Europeans, the Edmonton area was occupied by Plains-oriented groups likely ancestral to the Blackfoot. Ecologically the region was on or near the edge of the Plains (see Chapter 3), which had long supported a bison-based economy significantly different from that practiced in the Boreal Forest. Henday's Blackfoot informants in 1754 told him that they received all they needed from the bison, they were not acquainted with the canoe, and they did not eat fish.<sup>21</sup> The aggregation centres along the lower Saskatchewan River are often associated with spring fisheries or the seasonal arrival of large numbers of geese, and included canoe-building as a major activity. Although it can be concluded that Edmonton likely does not represent an aggregation centre with ancient prehistoric roots, the location of trading operations here probably reflects a long-standing pattern of use of this part of the valley and a potential for prehistoric sites that is greater than the surrounding areas.

## 8.4 Modern Disturbance

Establishment of the trading posts at Rosssdale would have undoubtedly augmented the reasons for Aboriginal use of the flats. The seasonal trading opportunities would have been reason for gatherings of aboriginal people. It has been suggested that Cree peoples typically camped on the north side of the River and Blackfoot people on the south.<sup>22</sup> However this division was not entirely restrictive. Numerous references have been made to aboriginal camping on Rosssdale flats during the fur trade period and to celebrations and ceremonies that took place in conjunction

SECTION 8.4  
MODERN DISTURBANCE

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<sup>20</sup> Alberta prehistory is generally divided into three major periods: the Early, Middle and Late Prehistoric Periods (J. R. Vickers, 'Alberta Plains Prehistory: a Review,' Archaeological Survey of Alberta Occasional Paper No. 27, Alberta Culture, 1985). These correspond to periods of cultural development that are marked by changes in the weapon systems used, but also reflect complex cultural evolutionary processes that include major technological advances. The Early Prehistoric Period (11,000-7,000 B.P.) is characterized by the use of throwing or thrusting spears presence as evidenced by spear points in archaeological assemblages. The Middle Prehistoric Period (7,000-3000 B.P.) saw the adoption of several technological advances, including use of the spear thrower or atlatl, development of large scale communal hunting and use of the tipi. The Late Prehistoric Period (3,000-350 B.P.) is characterized by adoption of the bow and arrow, use of ceramic vessels and industrialization of the bison hunt. A Protohistoric Period is frequently included for the last 200-350 years to account for acquisition of the horse, firearms, and other aspects of European technology, prior to the arrival Euro-Canadians in significant numbers.

<sup>21</sup> L. J. Burpee, *York Factory to Blackfoot Country: The Journal of Anthony Henday, 1754-55*. Royal Society of Canada Proceedings and Transactions 3(1), 1907 p. 338.

<sup>22</sup> Saxberg et al 2003., p. 7.

with these activities. These activities in historic times are the likely reason for the assignment by Cree peoples of a name for Edmonton meaning ‘gathering place.’

Almost all portions of the Rosedale flats area have been used for camping by Aboriginals throughout the fur trade period, into the turn of the century, and as late as the 1920s (see Chapter 6). Although the flats east of the study area are mentioned or illustrated most frequently, the higher terraces within the study area are also indicated.<sup>23</sup> Such uses may have left remains that could be recovered, although their context would be nearer the present surface than the remains of prehistoric occupations and would be very susceptible to prior disturbance. The area that may have seen some of the least disturbance, and which is a known historic camping spot, is the southern portion of the block between 102 and 103 Streets and 99 and 97 Avenues. This area has long been used as parking for the baseball park now known as Telus Field, and appears to have seen only relatively shallow prior disturbance. These prior uses have been discussed in detail in Chapter 6 of this study, where it is indicated that it has been principally the location of athletic activities since the early decades of the twentieth century and known variously as the Hudson’s Bay, Ross Flats, or Rosedale Athletic Field.

The small block north of the former athletic field appears to have seen limited prior disturbance, having served principally as pasture and the location of the Hudson’s Bay Company stables.

A somewhat similar situation applies to the small triangular piece of land south of 96 Avenue and bounded by Rosedale Road and 104 Street. This area had been purchased from the Hudson’s Bay Company by the Edmonton Industrial Exhibition Association in 1899 for use as part of the City’s exhibition grounds. A 1907 plan shows several structures in this location (see Section 6.2) but these would have been temporary, with limited subsurface effects.

Similar concerns about the levels of surface disturbance are present in the case of archaeological remains of the complex of structures of Fort Augustus and Edmonton House II and IV. Depending on the actual locations of the forts and their related structures, some remnants of these dismantled facilities may be represented within the study area. The area where this potential is greatest is in that small portion of the study area that lies north of the 105 Street Bridge, alongside and under 105 Street as far north as its intersection with River Valley Road. However, the area adjacent to the river has seen high levels of prior disturbance.

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<sup>23</sup> A painting of Fort Edmonton by father Emile Petitot, OMI, in *c.* 1877, illustrates tipis on the middle terraces of the valley within what would be the study area (see Section 5.3). Especially mentioned in this respect is the area known as the Hudson’s Bay Athletic Field, between 102 and 103 Avenue on 97 Avenue, where each summer aboriginal people assembled in their tipis to collect their treaty money.

According to Saxberg et al., these concerns may relate to the location of the Fort Augustus / Edmonton House IV complex. This area would also be the former location of the warehouse associated with Fort Edmonton V and built in 1882. Whether the construction of the warehouse may have damaged any remains associated with the former is speculative. Also present may be remains of a landing that served one or more of these facilities and is likely to have been used for ferry traffic prior to the construction of the 105 Street Bridge.<sup>24</sup> Bridge construction and the subsequent placement of fill are likely to have destroyed evidence of the landing and may have buried any remains of the former facilities under up to 1.4 m of fill.

Perhaps the most significant, and certainly the most controversial, component of the historic period use of the study area is the burial ground associated with fur trade period occupation. Research completed by Nancy Saxberg and her colleagues has defined an area considered sensitive with respect to potential for the occurrence of human remains. This area focusses on intact burials and does not consider the possible extent of human remains that may have been displaced by twentieth-century construction activities. The extent of these latter remains are largely unknown and would be extremely difficult to predict, but are considered more likely to occur in the lower portion of the terrace to the east, within the current EPCOR facility, than on the higher terraces of the central and northern portions of the study area. Evidence exists as well for a potential second burial ground on a higher terrace beyond the northwestern portion of the study area. This was discussed in Chapter 5.

Post-fur-trade historical uses of the Rosedale flats area have been varied and colourful, and are discussed in Chapter 6. Many of the activities took place east of the study area. Within the study area, uses have been principally related to the development of transportation facilities to support a growing urban centre and to the development of housing.

Archaeological remnants of former transportation facilities have been encountered in some previous investigations and others no doubt could be identified.<sup>25</sup> As well as former roads, these may include portions of the Edmonton Yukon and Pacific railway grade, which traverses the west central part of the study area and would have been a major source of disturbance. Similarly the reclaimed remains of a gravel pit operated by the railway and situated southeast of the Legislature grounds may extend into the study area. The scientific and historic value of such features would be considered minimal without associated above-ground structures.

SECTION 8.4  
MODERN DISTURBANCE

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<sup>24</sup> Saxberg et al., 2003, provide a copy of a photograph in the Glenbow Archives (Plate 82, p. 406, NA-303-33) showing this landing before 1906.

<sup>25</sup> For example Saxberg encountered asphalt and road fill associated with the former 105 Street traffic circle during excavations for the Fort Edmonton Burial Ground study (Saxberg et al., 2003, p. 225 and Figures 30 and 32).

Figure 8-2

The grassed island by Rossdale Road, which includes part of the demarcated burial ground, with the EPCOR plant in the background, 2002.

Courtesy, City of Edmonton.



Archaeological features associated with residential development may be present in areas where housing has been removed in recent times. An example of this may be north of Rossdale Road between 104 and 105 Street, which formerly contained a range of housing. The structural remnants of foundations for these dwellings and other similar features that might be present throughout the study area would be considered to have limited scientific or historic significance. Other subsurface features present within the study area include water and sewage lines, power lines, and other utilities. However these appear to be of standard specification and of limited scientific or historic value.

## 8.5 Summary

In summary, palaeontological potential would appear to be limited to early Holocene specimens at considerable depth within the Rossdale Historical Land Use Study Area. This potential is undefined and is no better expressed in the Rossdale area than in numerous other similar landforms both up and downstream of this location. The potential for archaeological resources is significant with respect to deeply buried prehistoric materials on the lowest terraces of the Rossdale flats landform, as these may have escaped the substantial disturbances that have taken place over the surface of the area. Nevertheless, the limited investigations conducted to date have not identified any concentrations of these rare and potentially important

resources. Although the potential for concentrations of material associated with prehistoric occupation is greatest nearest the river, more distant areas have potential as well, depending on the degree of prior disturbance. In this regard, areas with the greatest potential include, those flanking and beneath the 105 Street Bridge approaches and areas under the 105 Street / Rossdale Road traffic complex, where deposition is considerable. The current parking areas west and north of Telus Field also have potential due to their history of limited disturbance.

Potential for significant historic period archaeological resources is substantial within the Rossdale Historical Land Use Study Area.

Potential for significant historic period archaeological resources is substantial within the Rossdale Historical Land Use Study Area. If the most recent reconstruction of the location of the posts is correct, structural and material remnants of the Fort Augustus / Edmonton House occupation may be present in the vicinity of the 105 Street Bridge approaches, and related remains may extend further north into the study area. The study area also encompasses the most substantial portions of the Fort Edmonton burial ground. Chapters 5 and 6 discuss the possibility of human remains extending beyond the limits of the burial ground shown on the 1882 and 1919 surveys, as is the inconclusive evidence of one or more separate burial grounds.

There is potential also for the remnants of aboriginal campsites related to the fort occupation throughout the study area, but the integrity of these would have been substantially affected by disturbance associated with development. The above-mentioned parking areas north and west of Telus Field cited above have the greatest potential in this regard, depending on the depth of prior disturbance. Recommendations for their future investigation are made in Chapter 10.

While subsequent historical development is considered important for understanding the evolving land use of the Rossdale community, the most varied developments took place outside the study area. Those in the study area relate principally to the evolution of Edmonton's transportation systems and to the development of the residential community. In archaeological terms, given the degree of change that has taken place and the state of the extant remains, the historic records relating to these developments are considered to retain more value than their current physical remains.





# GEOPHYSICAL INVESTIGATION

# 9

## Overview

This chapter reviews two geophysical investigations of the Fort Edmonton burial ground. The first was a ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey conducted by EBA Engineering Consultants Ltd. in 1992; the second a combined electromagnetic and GPR investigation carried out by Komex International Ltd. in 2001.

The two geophysical investigations were inconclusive, as a consequence of extensive prior site disturbance and insufficient testing within the known burial ground context.

9.1  
INTRODUCTION

9.2  
1992 INVESTIGATION

9.3  
2001 INVESTIGATION

9.4  
SUMMARY

## 9.1 Introduction

The study team has undertaken a review of past geophysical reconnaissance conducted in connection with the ongoing investigation of the Fort Edmonton burial ground in the Rosedale flats, which lies within the Rosedale Historical Land Use Study Area. Geophysical investigation of the site included a ground penetrating radar (GPR) survey conducted by EBA Engineering Consultants Ltd. (EBA) in 1992, and a combined electromagnetic and GPR investigation carried out by Komex International Ltd. (Komex) in August 2001.

According to Saxberg et al., the burial ground was established no later than 1823 and was certainly in use during much of the occupation of Fort Edmonton V (1830-1906).<sup>1</sup> Historical information presented in Chapter 5 above suggests that by the 1870s or 1880s, the cemetery was inactive. The cemetery's approximate location has been described in Chapters 5 to 7 above.

As has been noted throughout this study, the precise boundaries of the burial ground remain uncertain. There is archaeological evidence for at least two separate perimeter palisades, and the known existence of burials beyond these perimeters suggest that the original boundaries of the burial ground were relatively loosely defined, the boundaries might have shifted over time, and/or that certain graves were located outside the cemetery proper for cultural (or other) reasons. According to Alberta Archaeological Site inventory data, 'the burial ground is located under Rosedale Road and extends into the median to the northwest and (to) EPCOR property to the southeast.'<sup>2</sup> The number and distribution of *in-situ* graves remains largely conjectural, and has been discussed above.

Although long abandoned, Rosedale burial ground has been remembered episodically as excavations, in connection with various development projects on the site, have accidentally encountered human remains. Saxberg et al. (2003) provide a detailed and sequential account of these encounters, estimating that a minimum of 24 burials have been impacted. It is in connection with these incidents, the related cultural resource impact assessment, and relatively recent initiatives to preserve the cemetery's legacy that geophysical investigations were undertaken.

An initial ground penetrating radar (GPR) investigation was commissioned by EPCOR in 1992, in advance of constructing subsurface power transmission conduits along 105 Street from the Rosedale power station to north of Rosedale Road. More recently, an integrated geophysical investigation in the vicinity of 105 Street and River Valley Road was initiated in 2001 in connection with the Traditional Burial Ground – Fort Edmonton Cemetery Stakeholders Group. The remainder of

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Saxberg, Claire Bourges, Scott Haddow, and Brian Reeves, 'Fort Edmonton Burial Ground: An Archaeological and Historical Study,' Report prepared for EPCOR Generation by Lifeways of Canada Limited, Calgary, 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Alberta Archaeological Survey, 2001, Rosedale Burial Ground, Borden No. FjPi-63, Permit No. 2001-118, Alberta Archaeological Survey, Edmonton, Alberta.

this chapter provides a general review of the geophysical investigations, including methods, resulting data, and findings. It concludes with an evaluation of the risks that future development may pose to archaeological resources and with a series of recommended management procedures that may assist in reducing or offsetting those risks.

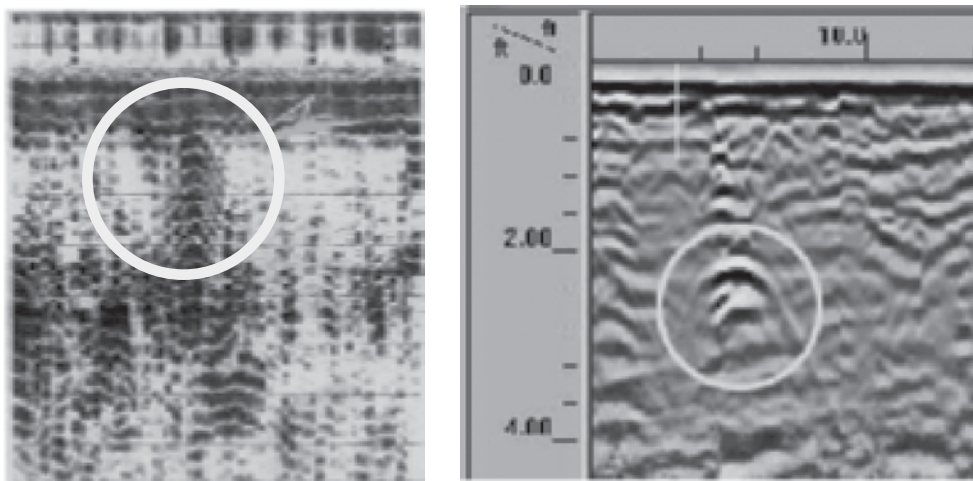
## 9.2 1992 Investigation

The 1992 investigation was conducted by EBA Engineering Consultants Limited over a three-day period from 2-4 November 1992.<sup>3</sup> GPR data were acquired within a 10-metre-wide corridor extending northward from the west wall of the Rossdale power plant, across Rossdale Road, and terminating immediately north of the westbound slip road from 95 Avenue.

Prior to initiating the main investigation, preliminary GPR soundings were acquired at two known sites in an attempt to calibrate the radar signature of expected archaeological remains. The first site was located on the grounds of the Legislature, where remains of palisades once surrounding Fort Edmonton V are known to exist. Subsequently, a series of radar soundings were acquired at a presumed burial site approximately 25 m east of the main survey corridor, where a skull had been recovered in 1981.

### Methods and Procedures

Much like a marine echo-sounder, the GPR system produces apparent cross-sectional images of the subsurface by transmitting an electromagnetic pulse into the subsurface and recording echoes returned from subsurface interfaces or localized heterogeneities. In particular, radar reflections arise due to subsurface contrasts in electrical properties, including both conductivity and dielectric constant, which



SECTION 9.1  
INTRODUCTION

Figure 9-1

Typical signatures indicating a  
burial site.

Images supplied by Guy Cross,  
Golder Associates

<sup>3</sup> Neil Parry, Letter prepared by EBA Engineering Consultants Ltd. for Edmonton Power, District Energy, Edmonton, Alberta, 23 November 1992.

are largely controlled by relative moisture content. Buried features are imaged by delineating contrasts between the electrical properties of the feature and the surrounding host soil. Localized anomalous zones, including burials, produce a characteristic hyperbolic diffraction pattern. It is also possible for a grave to be identified on the basis of a synclinal reflection and/or edge diffractions associated with the back-filled burial trench.

Radar data are recorded as a function of two-way reflection transit time. Transit time is subsequently converted to depth via measurement or estimation of the effective radar velocity. Maximum investigation depth is limited by progressive attenuation of the radar signal. In general, penetration decreases with increasing soil electrical conductivity and is typically greater for dry and coarse grained soils compared with relatively moist and fine grained soils.

Figure 9-2

*A GPR unit in use.*

*Image supplied by Guy Cross,  
Golder Associates.*



GPR data were acquired utilizing a GSSI SIR-8 radar system with a 500 MHz transceiver-antenna set. Data were recorded in real-time with an EPC 1600 electrostatic chart recorder. Continuous radar soundings were acquired by towing the active antenna package at an approximately constant rate along 1-m-interval transects. Location along transect was constrained by 1.0 m fiducial marks that are transmitted electronically to the chart recorder in conjunction with the radar signal. Parry (2001) estimates that a scan rate of 51.6 per second yielded an effective sampling interval of less than 10 cm along the profile.

It is our understanding that selection of record length and optimum gains were based on preliminary testing over 'known' targets and previous knowledge of subsurface conditions. In particular, it is known on the basis of previous construction excavations and related archaeological investigations that the native

(historic) surface is located at a depth of approximately 1.0 m beneath modern fill materials. Specifically, the 2001 archaeological site inventory form records that ‘the natural surface is 90 to 135 cm below the present surface, overlain by non-local fills.’<sup>4</sup> Results of preliminary investigations are discussed in following sections.

The main survey corridor was divided into nine subsections, within which data acquisition was conducted on longitudinal (parallel to corridor) and transverse (normal to corridor) transects separated by 1.0 m.

## Results and Findings

According to geophysicist Neil Parry (2001), preliminary GPR investigation of known archaeological remains on the grounds of the provincial Legislature successfully detected remains of a wooden palisade and thus confirmed the general utility of the method for the location of archaeological features under conducive ground conditions. However, subsequent testing over a presumed burial site in near proximity to the main survey corridor yielded inconclusive results. Although a number of relatively subtle anomalies were identified, it was not possible to discriminate between signatures attributable to human remains and similar anomalies due to tree roots, buried construction debris, and other modern soil disturbance features.

Consequently, according to Parry (2001), it was decided to locate and record all anomalies subsequently identified within the main survey area and categorize them on the basis of relative depth (shallow: 0.0–1.0 m *vs.* deep: 1.0 m) and relative reflection strength (weak – strong). A series of drawings was prepared, indicating anomaly location by category for each of nine survey subsections.<sup>5</sup> In addition, an integrated plan was provided, summarizing the overall distribution of identified anomalies. Parry (1992) noted that considerably fewer anomalies were apparent below 1.0 m than above. It was also observed that ‘only two areas showed distinctive patterns that tracked across lines. Both areas are under roads; the first under Rossdale Road, the second under the westbound lanes of 95 Avenue.’<sup>6</sup> However, it was noted ‘the exact nature and age of these anomalous areas is unknown.’

Finally, Parry (1992; 2001) cautioned that while it was not possible to rule out the existence of human remains in connection with any particular anomaly, the vast majority of identified anomalies are more probably due to other, non-cultural sources, including known and abandoned utilities. It was concluded that the

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<sup>4</sup> Alberta Archaeological Survey, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Parry, 1992.

<sup>6</sup> Neil Parry, ‘Review report of the 1992 Rossdale ground penetrating radar survey data,’ draft report prepared by EBA Engineering Consultants Ltd. for EPCOR, Edmonton, Alberta, 19 May 2001.

only way to determine the nature of specific anomalies would be to excavate the identified location.

On the basis of our review, the majority of identified anomalies (particularly deep anomalies) are located within Sections 1, 2, and 6, nearest the known limits of the burial ground.

## Review

In general, on the basis of a brief review of data, plans, and associated documentation, we concur with the methodology and findings of the 1992 GPR investigation by EBA.

It is our experience that the GSSI SIR-8 GPR employed for the 1992 investigation remains an appropriate and effective system. Although more recent systems provide for digital recording and post-acquisition data processing to enhance the interpretability of resulting data, it is our opinion that these techniques would not have significantly altered the analysis-interpretation of the Rossdale data.

Although acquisition parameters, including record length and gain settings, were based on preliminary trials at 'known' target locations, there does not appear to be any record of these settings. Rather, the project file includes a number of depth-scales apparently based on representative soil dielectric constant values. Given the categorization of identified anomalies on the basis of depth and the significance of depth *vis-à-vis* the identification of potential burials, it is unfortunate that there is no explicit documentation describing the determination of the radar velocity or the establishment of related depth scales employed. Comparison with as-built utility plans for the site suggests that the effective depth of investigation exceeded 3 m.

Although a sampling interval of less than 10 cm is more than sufficient, a transect interval of 1.0 m is considered only marginally adequate, given expected grave dimensions. It is our opinion that a transect interval of 0.5 m is more appropriate.

On the basis of our review of raw data sections and associated interpretation diagrams, we concur, in general, with the interpretation and findings as summarized in Parry.<sup>7</sup> In particular, we agree that substantial and widespread subsurface disturbance associated with historic and ongoing redevelopment of the site severely limits the effectiveness of geophysical investigations. Moreover, it is expected that most of the identified GPR anomalies are, in fact, attributable to utilities and

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<sup>7</sup> Parry, 2001. The applicability of geophysical techniques for delineating archaeological remains at the Rossdale site, Letter prepared by EBA Engineering Consultants Ltd. for EPCOR, Edmonton, Alberta, 12 June 2001.

related subsurface disturbance, and consequent, correlation with as-built utility plans could substantially reduce the number of potential grave anomalies.

Finally, it is our opinion that greater emphasis could have been given to preliminary and/or follow-up calibration by means of direct excavation of representative anomalies, or further trials within known burial areas.

### ***9.3 2001 Investigation***

The 2001 geophysical investigation was focused within three separate areas — northeast, northwest, and southwest of the 105 Street and River Valley Road intersection. Areas were selected by a subcommittee of the Traditional Burial Ground – Fort Edmonton Cemetery Stakeholders Group in the summer of 2001. A consultation process involving known descendents and aboriginal elders identified the sites to be investigated. The pilot-scale study was conducted by Komex International Ltd. (Komex) on 8-9 August, 2001 and, according to Gilson,<sup>8</sup> the objective of the investigation was to determine whether non-invasive geophysical techniques were suitable for delineating the burial area.

A combination of terrain conductivity, metal detector, and ground penetrating radar data were acquired on local survey grids having approximate dimensions of 50 m x 15 m (northeast), 40 m x 20 m (northwest), and 20 m x 20 m (southwest). Although not explicitly noted,<sup>9</sup> it is our understanding that coincident metal detector data were acquired to locate and identify buried utility lines and other buried metal.

### **Methods and Procedures**

Following establishment of reference 2 m x 2 m grids within the three survey areas, apparent conductivity data were acquired on east-west transects at 1 m x 1m intervals, utilizing a Geonics EM-38 terrain conductivity meter. Measured conductivity depends on soil texture, porosity, and related moisture content. In general, burials are located by detecting the contrast between natural compact host soil and relatively loose backfill within the grave. Specifically, the detected anomaly is most commonly due to an associated contrast in soil moisture content, dependent on prevailing environmental conditions (i.e. seasonal and recent

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<sup>8</sup> Eric Gilson, and A. Wong, 2001, Geophysical investigations at Rossdale Flats, Report prepared for City of Edmonton by Komex International Ltd., Edmonton, Alberta, 7 September 2001

<sup>9</sup> Gilson, 2001.

precipitation history). Although human remains are not usually detectable directly, related soil disturbance associated with the interment is commonly identifiable.

In addition, substantial deposits of metal give rise to strongly anomalous readings and are typically identified by a localized negative-valued signature surrounded by anomalously higher readings. For example, relatively recent graves containing metallic coffins yield a particularly evident response signature. However, buried metal is also a common source of substantial noise or interference that can mask the more subtle signature of burials and other cultural features. Small amounts of metal produce anomalous readings that can be misinterpreted as cultural features. Consequently, it is our experience that identified potential burial anomalies should be subsequently scanned with a metal detector to rule out signatures associated with modern metallic debris.



*Figure 9-3*

*The EM-38 terrain conductivity meter in use.*

*Courtesy Geonics Limited*

In the present case, terrain conductivity surveys were followed by acquisition of high-density time domain electromagnetic measurements (TDEM), using a Geonics EM-61 TDEM metal detector. Measurements were acquired on 1-m-interval transects with a wheel-triggered sample interval of approximately 0.25 m. Although it is not explicitly stated, it is our understanding that EM-61 surveys were acquired to provide complementary identification of subsurface metal in connection with interpretation of coincident terrain conductivity. Buried metal is indicated by an anomalously high signal voltage.

Finally, at the northeast and northwest sites, ground penetrating radar data were acquired at a sample interval of 0.05 m along both east-west and north-south



transects at 1 m intervals. The density of GPR coverage was quadrupled at the southwest site by reducing the transect interval to 0.5 m. Although unspecified by Gilson,<sup>10</sup> it is believed that GPR data were acquired using a pulseEKKO 1000 radar with a 250 MHz bi-static antenna system. Radar soundings were digitally recorded with 32-fold stacking to enhance signal quality.

In contrast with terrain conductivity and TDEM mapping, GPR yields apparent cross-sectional images of the subsurface, providing indication of feature depth and geometry. Alternatively, given sufficient spatial sampling, multiple radar cross-sections can be re-sampled at a specified transit time, with corresponding signal amplitudes subsequently in map format as an effective time-depth horizon within the subsurface. GPR data presented by Gilson are displayed in this so-called 'depth-slice' format.<sup>11</sup> Gilson et al. note that GPR data for the northeast site are not reported, due to data-processing problems.

## Results and Findings

Results of the 2001 investigation are reported by Gilson et al. Sections 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3 describe results in northeast, northwest, and southwest survey areas respectively. Geophysical anomalies identified within the respective survey grids are summarized,<sup>12</sup> together with as-built plans of known above-ground and subsurface infrastructure.

Principal anomaly locations identified (TDEM) within the northeast survey area are tabulated in Gilson's Table 1, with associated interpretative comments. In general, although elevated terrain conductivity levels were noted at several locations, it was concluded that all identified anomalies could be associated with 'known cultural features' or 'change in soil lithology.'

Relatively little direct correlation was noted between identified anomalies and known cultural sources within the northwest survey area. Gilson summarizes identified anomalies and their detection via different geophysical methods.<sup>13</sup> In particular, Gilson notes that although Anomalies 7-10 were identified by all three methods, there was no observable correlation with known above-ground or subsurface infrastructure.

Finally, investigation of the southwest grid identified a number of terrain conductivity and TDEM anomalies, including a larger-scale zone of anomalous conductivities within the midsection of the grid. The latter feature was tentatively

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<sup>10</sup> Gilson, 2001.

<sup>11</sup> Gilson, 2001.

<sup>12</sup> Gilson, 2001, Figures 3, 4 and 5.

<sup>13</sup> Gilson, 2001, Table 2.

attributed to 'soil disturbance or changes in soil lithology,' and the remainder to unknown 'buried metal.' Numerous GPR anomalies were identified within the southwest portion of the grid and it was noted that correlation with identified conductivity and TDEM features provided 'further evidence that buried objects exist.'

In summary, Gilson et al. observed that results of the 2001 geophysical investigation were generally inconclusive, with no specific 'evidence to suggest that (identified) anomalies are definitively associated with human remains.' Finally, as observed by Parry (2001), Gilson et al. (2001) noted that substantial 'reworking' of the site during the past hundred years has created difficult subsurface conditions for the remote detection of unrecorded grave sites.

## Review

It is our experience that the integrated approach pursued by Komex, and reprinted in Gilson et al., involving a combination of terrain conductivity, ground penetrating radar, and metal detection is an appropriate and effective methodology for detecting and identifying unmarked grave sites. In particular, for identification of prehistoric and early historic burials, where little or no metallic content is anticipated, a combination of terrain conductivity and GPR for detection, coupled with metal detection for discrimination, can be a particularly effective strategy. Consequently, we generally support the methodology pursued by Komex.

However, accepting that the historic ground level may be more than a metre below current surface,<sup>14</sup> the limited investigation range of the Geonics EM-38 (approximately 1.5 m) may pose a significant limitation. Moreover, given the expected dimensions of anticipated burials, it is our opinion that a 1 m x 1 m sample interval for EM-38 terrain conductivity readings is only marginally adequate. It is our experience that a sampling interval of 0.25-0.5 m along transect yields a substantial improvement in spatial resolution with only a minor decrease in acquisition rate. It is also our standard practice to employ a transect interval of 0.5 m.

Although we note that a significantly higher sampling density was adopted for EM-61 TDEM surveys, a line interval of 1 m was retained. In general, it is our practice to carry out metal detector discrimination work as a follow-up, subsequent to the identification of suspect conductivity anomalies. It is our experience that localized metal detection is a relatively cost-effective approach for source discrimination. Moreover, although we routinely take a similar follow-up approach with GPR, it is our opinion that site-wide GPR coverage is preferable where permitted by project budget. Consequently, we fully support the acquisition of high-density

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<sup>14</sup> Alberta Archaeological Survey, 2001.

ground penetrating radar data as undertaken by Komex. One specific limitation, however, of the 2001 GPR survey component was the use of a relatively low frequency (250 MHz) transceiver-antenna system. In general, higher frequency systems (400-500 MHz) provide enhanced resolution and sufficient penetration for detection and delineation of relatively near-surface archaeological features.

Colour-distributed GPR 'depth slices' presented by Gilson et al. (2001) demonstrate the potential of high-density GPR data acquisition. However, it is our experience that meaningful interpretation of these images requires substantial reference to complementary cross-sectional displays to assess the nature of associated structures. Consequently we strongly advocate the presentation of both vertical and horizontal data sections. In addition, Gilson et al. (2001) provide no specification of time-depth for displayed reflectivity horizons, which is of particular interest given the substantial depth of historical deposits.

With respect to the interpretation of the resulting data, it is our impression that Gilson et al. may have implicitly assumed that subject burials were interred in metallic coffins. In particular, this assumption would explain the decision to conduct site-wide TDEM surveys and the utilization of relatively low-frequency GPR transceiver-antenna system. In general, Gilson et al. appear to attach particular significance to TDEM-identified features and implicitly indicate that direct correlation with anomalous terrain conductivity and GPR signatures implies enhanced significance. To the extent that metallic coffins or other substantial concentrations of metal are expected in connection with burials, we largely concur with the reported assessment and findings.

However, given the historical context of the burial ground and the prior knowledge of associated aboriginal burials, it is our expectation that few, if any, graves would include substantial metallic content. Consequently, rather than seeking to identify correlation with TDEM data, it is our opinion that EM-61 results should have been utilized to rule out potential conductivity-GPR grave signatures on the basis of metal content. In general, it is our experience that the expected geophysical signature of early historic graves is substantially more subtle than the anomalies identified by Gilson et al. For example, in the case of the northeast survey area, in nearest proximity to the known burial ground, geophysical anomalies identified by Gilson et al., were restricted entirely to relatively high-amplitude signatures associated with large-scale metallic infrastructure. In fact, the terrain conductivity plan, presented in Gilson et al. (Figure 6), displays substantial smaller-scale variability that is potentially indicative of early historic and aboriginal burials. It is admittedly difficult to interpret these relatively subtle signatures in the background of substantial interference, and we fully concur with Gilson et al. that extensive modern disturbance of the site greatly restricts the ultimate effectiveness of geophysical investigation techniques. However, it is imperative that efforts to identify potential grave sites be focused at the appropriate scale.

Finally, although the results of non-invasive investigations are inevitably equivocal, it is once again our opinion that interpretive confidence could have

been substantially enhanced by incorporating some means of internal calibration. It is our understanding that the areas surveyed were identified on the basis of consultation with known descendents and aboriginal elders. However, to our knowledge, there are no known graves within the identified search areas and we are unaware of any prior archaeological investigations to constrain the interpretation of the geophysical data.

## *9.4 Summary*

Notwithstanding the identified limitations of both 1992 and 2001 geophysical investigations, we concur that the findings, in both instances, were inclusive. As it stands, these studies provide no significant constraints on the location or extent of the Rosedale burial ground. To a large measure, this outcome is an inherent limitation of non-invasive investigations. However, it is our experience that interpretive confidence can be substantially enhanced via the establishment of context and calibration of expected geophysical signatures.

By nature, the results of non-invasive geophysical investigations are interpretive and require confirmation and verification by means of subsequent archaeological testing. In particular, identification of specific geophysical signatures as potentially indicative of unmarked burials is based largely on context. Accepting that human remains are not directly detectable, the detection of burials amounts, in practice, to the detection of associated soil disturbance. Moreover, natural soil features and disturbance due to animal and recent human activity yield largely indistinguishable geophysical signatures. Consequently, the same features detected outside the context of a known burial ground would not reasonably be attributed to graves.

Because of the unique cultural significance of burials, it is not ordinarily desirable or acceptable to disturb potential graves. This has been confirmed by the local Aboriginal community, whose Elders have indicated that they would prefer not to see archaeological investigation or other disturbances.<sup>15</sup> Consequently, barring confirmation with direct archaeological excavation, the establishment of context is ever more crucial. In addition, there is a greater necessity for calibration of expected geophysical signatures.

Regarding the specific case of the Fort Edmonton (Rosedale) burial ground, a combination of historical documentation and previous archaeological investigations establish a general context for both the 1992 and 2001 geophysical investigations. In addition, some attempt was made to provide for signature calibration in connection with the 1992 investigation. However, in neither case was there verified context or calibration. Consequently, it is our opinion that further geophysical investigation should be initiated within the known cemetery

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<sup>15</sup> Noted by David Schneider, Manager, Communications, City of Edmonton, in conversation with Harold Kalman, 1 December 2003.

boundaries and use existing archaeological information to constrain and calibrate the interpretation of detected geophysical signatures. It is further recommended that serious consideration be given to limited direct archaeological assessment and evaluation of representative anomalies identified as potential burials on the basis of context and previous archaeological information. On the basis of this preliminary study, non-invasive investigations would be subsequently extended outward, in an attempt to establish and delineate the extent of the cemetery and associated burials. Specific recommendations are provided in Chapter 10.



# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

# 10

## Overview

The first half of this final chapter summarizes the key findings of the report. It begins with an overview of the land use history of the Rossdale study area, and continues with a summary of what has been learned about the Fort Edmonton burial ground. The third section provides recommendations for the long-term management of the archaeological resources. The final section offers a series of recommendations for the holistic management of the Rossdale Historic Land Use Study Area.

10.1  
KEY FINDINGS OF THE REPORT

10.2  
THE BURIAL GROUND

10.3  
LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT FOR  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

10.4  
RECOMMENDATIONS

## *10.1 Key Findings of the Report*

This report has investigated and described land uses in the Rossdale Historical Land Use Study Area from prehistoric times to the present era, from the earliest visits by Aboriginal people, through its intensive use by both Europeans, First Nations, and Métis during the fur trade, to its development as a neighbourhood in the City of Edmonton. The historical evolution is described in Chapters 3 to 6, and the archaeological and geophysical evidence is discussed in Chapters 7 and 9. The material has been drawn from secondary (i.e. previously published) sources and also from extensive research in primary (archival) sources. A research strategy was developed to enable investigation of those records as yet unsearched in the Rossdale context that were deemed most likely to yield new information. While additional archival materials remain unexamined in the present context, the outcome of any further research would likely be constrained by the law of diminishing returns.

In prehistoric and early historic times the North Saskatchewan River was the principal transportation corridor through the region. As a consequence of the river's supreme importance, the flats by the river were highly valued by their users and were seen as being the centre of that segment of the universe. For this reason, First nations congregated here before contact with Europeans, and the European fur-traders built their posts here.

Things changed in the late nineteenth century with the arrival of the railway. Economic development now focussed on the high land at either side of the river – first Strathcona to the south and later downtown Edmonton to the north. The river and the flats were no longer the centre of all activity. Indeed, the river began to be seen as a barrier rather than as an artery. The flats gradually diminished in importance and became land with relatively little economic value. For several decades after Fort Edmonton closed its doors, the Hudson's Bay Company retained the idea of selling its land in the flats for a tidy profit, but over time found that the market showed little interest in it and it was barely sellable for low-cost housing.

As the ownership of much of the land was gradually transferred from the HBC to the City over the years, Rossdale became a place for utilities and transportation routes – the power plant, the water treatment plant, a gravel pit, roads, bridges, and very nearly a manure depot, an incinerator, and an expressway. In the 1920s the HBC grazed its horses here and unused land was cultivated for market gardens. An example of the attitude shown to the flats was one roadway traversing them being dismissed as a 'cross-valley road,' with no reference to the neighbourhood over which it passed. Such was the establishment's view of Rossdale.

Civic amenities developed here as well, again taking advantage of the low land values. The Edmonton Industrial Exhibition was held here from 1899 to 1909. A number of parks appeared, the Rossdale Recreation Ground and Renfrew Park attracted many Edmontonians, and a large-scale river-corridor park was planned. City-wide recreational uses remain today, most noticeably at Telus Field.



All this time a community was settling in Rosssdale. Development included residences and industries, with most private activity occurring east of 101 Street, beyond the study area. The flood of 1915 had a bad impact on Rosssdale, as many flooded industries were never re-established and the population declined. In the middle of the twentieth century the character of Rosssdale was established as a small, lower-income neighbourhood with an ethnically-diverse population that had very little clout in civic decision-making.

## *10.2 The Burial Ground*

A key focus of interest in the present study is the former Fort Edmonton burial ground. This section provides a succinct summary of information on the burial ground found in Chapters 5 to 9 of this report. The summary is in point form, and is compiled for convenience. Readers are urged to read the full descriptions, arguments, and references contained in the main report to achieve a full understanding of the complex history of the site and our understanding of the issues involved.

With respect to the burial ground, the focus of the present study is on its location and the time periods in which it was used. This report uses the terms ‘burial ground’, ‘graveyard’, and ‘cemetery’ interchangeably.

- The first burial recorded in ‘Rosssdale flat’ was associated with the North West Company in 1801. This was likely to have described a different place along the North Saskatchewan River from today’s Rosssdale Flats.
- Deaths at Edmonton House IV (which was probably located at the north end of the present 105 Street Bridge) were recorded in the records of the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) from 1814 onwards, but initially with no reference to where the deceased were buried.
- The first recorded burial at the Fort Edmonton (Edmonton House) burial ground was in 1823.
- The graveyard was cited 27 times in the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) post journals between 1824 and 1879.
- Based on sound archaeological evidence, it has been concluded by Lifeways of Canada that the burial ground was used for burials of all ethnic groups represented at the post and during three distinct time periods, although the evidence does not enable providing dates for those periods.
- Roman Catholics began to be buried at St. Albert from 1864 and Protestants at the Methodist Burial Ground (located near the present day McDougall

United Church) from 1871. The extent to which the Fort Edmonton burial ground continued to be used in this period is uncertain.

- A painting by Father Émile Petitot, likely created in 1876 or 1877, shows the burial ground, with a surrounding picket fence in good condition.
- A land survey made by Montague Aldous 1882 demarcates the 'Burial Ground' southwest of the intersection of McLeod (95) Avenue and Fourth (104) Street. This is the area at the western edge of the present EPCOR power plant, now largely covered by Rossdale Road, where a number of burials have been exposed over the years. The boundaries shown in the Aldous survey likely represent the alignment of the fence that was standing (or evident) at the time.
- Edmonton Cemetery (located on 107 Avenue at 119 Street) opened as a non-denominational burial ground in 1886.
- The HBC record is silent concerning the location of the burial ground, although the post journals do cite burials in it.
- A survey done under the authority of City Engineer A.D. Haddow in 1919, and distributed in 1933, indicates a demarcated burial ground close to the location shown in the Aldous 1882 survey, although its edges are shown as a trapezoid rather than a rectangle.
- The area around (and including) the burial ground was leased by the HBC for cultivation by market gardeners in the 1920s.
- The City of Edmonton purchased Block C, which includes the demarcated burial ground, from the HBC in 1930.
- The alignment of Rossdale Road has changed several times through the twentieth century, most recently with the creation of the present alignment in the late 1980s.
- The eastern portion of the 105 Street rotary, a roadway configuration constructed in 1958 and removed in the 1980s, was built over the demarcated burial ground. A portion of the present Rossdale Road runs over the graveyard.
- Archaeological investigations of the area have been conducted at several times since 1966, mostly in response to the accidental disinterment of human remains. The most recent and comprehensive of these, undertaken by Lifeways of Canada Limited, was reported in January 2003. Burials have been located both within the boundaries shown in the Aldous and Haddow surveys and outside those boundaries.

- Scattered documentary evidence points to the possibility of there having been a second burial ground in Rossdale, an Aboriginal graveyard on the ‘upper flat’ west of 106 Street, east or northeast of Fort Edmonton V (just south of the present Legislature). No burials or physical evidence have ever been recovered from this area and the likelihood of locating any is slim.
- Other documentary and archaeological evidence suggests that there may have been either a separate burial ground, or an extension of the principal one, to the east, on present EPCOR property.
- Geophysical investigations were undertaken with the intention of locating burials, but the results are inconclusive.
- Neither documentary, archaeological, nor geophysical investigation done to date can indicate the exact limits of the area containing burials. The boundaries remain inconclusive.
- The demarcated burial ground remains the ‘epicentre’ of the human burials. The likelihood of finding human remains diminishes as the distance from the burial ground demarcated in the Aldous survey increases.

### ***10.3 Long-term Management Plan for Archaeological Resources***

This section provides a framework for activities that may be undertaken to preserve the remaining cultural values of the archaeological resources in the event of future development in the Rossdale Historical Land Use Study Area. The basis of any strategy for effective historic resource management must be guided by the principles of the *Alberta Historical Resources Act* and its regulatory instruments. A management strategy should recognize the values assigned by the scientific community, community stakeholders, and the general public, as well as the legitimate interests of the City of Edmonton in enabling the revitalization of the Rossdale neighbourhood. These interests will occasionally be in apparent conflict, and finding a balance through procedures that can be accepted by all is the central challenge.

SECTION 10.3  
LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT FOR  
ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

#### **Archaeological Investigation**

The most important component of such a management strategy is to undertake effective community consultation with respect to proposed activities that have the potential to disturb archaeological resources. It is through the consultation process that issues requiring management will be brought to light, information gaps may be filled, and potential solutions can emerge. Effective consultation with

stakeholders at the planning stages of a project is generally recognized as the best way to avoid costly disruptions as the project progresses towards development.

An important stage of the consultation process is stakeholder identification. Because of its legislated management role with respect to archaeological resources, Alberta Community Development will act as the regulator. Other stakeholders would be identified through processes already well established by the City of Edmonton. It is recommended that these processes be inclusive and transparent, and that sufficient time be allotted to ensure they are completed before plans are finalized, and that they inform those plans.

The previous chapters have identified numerous uncertainties with respect to the specific locations and significance of the prehistoric and historic archaeological resources that may be present in the study area. Some of these uncertainties may require additional physical investigation to clarify unanswered questions. It is essential that sufficient lead time be allocated in development planning to allow the necessary investigations to take place. This would allow a certain degree of flexibility when finalizing development plans.

Under the provisions of the *Alberta Historical Resources Act*, the Minister of Community Development is responsible for 'the co-ordination of the orderly development; the preservation; the study and appreciation; and, the promotion of appreciation of Alberta's historical resources.'<sup>1</sup> The first of these activities, preservation, ensures that the other roles can be effectively fulfilled. Consequently, in the case of archaeological resources, preservation is often Alberta Community Development's preferred course of action. Archaeological study typically involves consumption of the context of the resources and, in many ways, is a destructive process.

For some of the archaeological resources known to occur in the study area, avoidance of disturbance can be planned for. The Fort Edmonton Burial Ground Study completed by Saxberg et al. in 2003 has identified an area that is considered highly sensitive and may well contain intact human remains. Avoiding any additional surface disturbance to this area is a primary management recommendation of the present study. No additional subsurface utilities or other forms of disturbance below current grades should be planned. Surface facilities could be installed in this area without disturbing existing remains, but careful planning would be necessary and consideration would have to be given to other interests and initiatives underway, which involve public commemoration and interpretation. Appropriate protocols should be developed for future maintenance to existing underground utilities.

Outside this area considerable uncertainties are present. The land that lies beneath and flanks the 105 Street Bridge approaches may contain deeply buried prehistoric occupational materials, structural remains and artifacts associated with early fur-trade occupations, remnants of a boat landing, and possible evidence of a

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<sup>1</sup> *Alberta Historical Resources Act*, Section 2

Hudson's Bay Company warehouse. This area has reportedly been built up with fill that would form a cap over these resources. However, given the potential significance of the resources that may be present, the potential impacts of any proposed development in this area should be carefully assessed prior to approval. There may be potential for scientific investigation and public interpretation in this portion of the study area.

North of the riverfront, the potential for historic fur-trade-related archaeological remains diminishes, being limited to possible out-structures, such as gardens and sheds. However there remains modest potential for prehistoric archaeological materials in a relatively shallow context, and near-surface remains of historic period aboriginal camps associated with the fur trade and later activities, such as the exhibition and collection of treaty payments. The locations of these occupations cannot be specified on the basis of currently known documentary information. Their susceptibility to damage or destruction as a result of development suggest that areas that have seen little prior disturbance would have the greatest potential for containing intact remains of this type. The areas with the greatest potential in this respect are the parking areas north and east of Telus Field and, to a lesser extent, the small area north of 97 Avenue and southeast of the Ortona Armoury. The impacts of developments planned for these areas should be assessed prior to approval.

Pre-development assessments will require study by a qualified archaeologist operating under the provisions of an approved permit issued by Alberta Community Development. Such assessments would be sponsored by the developer, whether a private or a public entity. It will take at least five working days for issuance of permits once the appropriate documentation is submitted; in-field programs must be completed, an analysis of the recovered information must be undertaken, and a report prepared. Consequently it will be necessary that sufficient time be allocated to allow for these studies, and for any remaining requirements to take place before development can proceed. Development schedules should take this into consideration.

The suggestion that a second cemetery for non-aboriginal people may be present in the north-central part of the study area, while unsupported by evidence, warrants consideration. The area specified in the references to this feature has been developed as residential housing. This type of development would have significantly affected such a site. Given the speculative nature of the information and the levels of existing development, no specific management recommendations are made to account for this possibility.

The remainder of the study area has seen significant development since the beginning of the twentieth century. Residential development involving foundation excavations, road and utility construction, and landscaping will have severely affected the integrity of any archaeological resources that might have been present. In areas that have been subject to residential or transportation infrastructure development, no prior assessment for archaeological resources would be considered necessary.

Sections 31 and 37 of the *Alberta Historical Resources Act* requires the reporting of any archaeological resource encountered during development. It is recommended that developers be made aware of the potential for the occurrence of buried archaeological and palaeontological materials in the study area. It is further recommended that the terms of reference for development contracts include clauses requiring contractors to cease operations and immediately contact Alberta Community Development if bones or artifacts are encountered during soil-stripping or foundation or utility excavations.

If potential conflicts should be identified, whether as a result of pre-development assessments or during construction, the Minister of Community Development may establish additional requirements before development proceeds. Mitigation of potential impacts may take many forms. These typically include avoidance through development redesign or information recovery programs. These procedures will need to be discussed with Alberta Community Development, involving close collaboration. The Minister may also encourage more innovative means of offsetting development effects, such as development of public interpretation and educational or commemorative programming.

## Geophysical Investigation

Consideration should be given to initiating continued geophysical investigation within the known boundaries of the burial ground and using existing archaeological information to constrain and calibrate the interpretation of detected geophysical signatures. It is further recommended that serious consideration be given to limited direct archaeological assessment and evaluation of representative anomalies identified as potential burials on the basis of context and previous archaeological information. On the basis of this preliminary study, non-invasive investigations would be subsequently extended outward, in an attempt to establish and delineate the extent of the cemetery and associated burials.

Given extensive subsurface disturbance in connection with recent and continuing development on the Rossdale site, and the substantial thickness of modern fills, it is recommended that the proposed investigation be undertaken using a combination of terrain conductivity and ground penetrating radar. In particular, terrain conductivity would be acquired using a Geonics EM-31S, having a coil separation of 2.0 m to provide an optimum trade-off between investigation depth and spatial resolution. The primary objective of terrain conductivity reconnaissance would be to locate and map known and unknown subsurface infrastructure, with subsequent detailed confirmation via as-built plans. Subsequently, high-density, site-wide GPR data (400-500 MHz) would be acquired for detection of graves, with internal calibration provided by known archeological remains. Resulting GPR data would be interpreted in both cross-sectional and depth-horizon formats to yield maximum interpretive confidence.

Finally, if supported by community stakeholders, a representative sample of identified potential grave signatures could be archaeologically investigated to further calibrate the interpretation of remaining signatures. Given positive results and an indication that the burial ground's limits had not been established, the investigation would subsequently be expanded outward.

## *10.4 Recommendations*

1. For all proposed activities that would have the potential to affect archaeological resources, undertake effective consultation with stakeholders at an early stage in planning. Alberta Community Development (ACD) is the regulator; stakeholders should be identified through processes already well established by the City of Edmonton. These processes should be inclusive and transparent and sufficient time must be allocated to ensure they are completed before plans are finalized.
2. Through planning, avoid any additional surface disturbance to the area believed to contain the traditional burial ground. No additional subsurface utilities or other forms of disturbance below current grades should be planned for this area.
3. Any proposed maintenance or repairs to existing utilities in archaeologically sensitive areas should be discussed with Alberta Community Development. A protocol should be developed with ACD to anticipate future interventions that will be required for maintenance and repairs.
4. Should industrial use of the EPCOR lands immediately east of the burial ground cease at some time in the future, a protocol for mitigation should be developed in consultation with ACD.
5. Where concerns are known to exist, issues emerge from the consultation process, or uncertainties with respect to the potential for conflicts are present, it is important to complete advance studies, including Historical Resources Impact Assessments, to clarify and resolve these issues. It is essential that sufficient lead time be allocated to allow the necessary investigations to take place, including contingencies for further delays in the event that potential conflicts are identified.
6. Adopt preservation (i.e. non-intervention) as the preferred course of action to mitigate potential conflicts where this is feasible.
7. In areas subject to previous residential or transportation infrastructure development, no prior assessment for archaeological resources is considered necessary, except where deep excavations are required for new developments.

SECTION 10.4  
RECOMMENDATIONS

8. Prior assessment for archaeological resources should be required for any proposed development in the Rosssdale Historic Land Use Study Area that occurs within the areas shown as having highest archaeological sensitivity (coloured red) or areas shown to contain historic material (coloured orange) on the Plan of Areas of Archaeological Sensitivity reproduced as Figure 44 of Nancy Saxberg et al., 'Fort Edmonton Burial Ground: An Archaeological and Historical Study' (January 2003).
9. Archaeological investigations may be undertaken on a proactive basis on areas that have been subject to very little prior development, most notably the parking areas north and east of Telus Field and, to a lesser extent, the small area north of 97 Avenue and south of the Ortona Armory, and the base of the 105 Street hill (see Figure 10.1). [Note: This recommendation has been relocated to keep all the archaeology together.]
10. The terms of reference for any development / land sales contracts that may be issued and for any road or bridge construction should include clauses requiring contractors to cease operations and immediately contact Alberta Community Development if bones or artifacts are encountered during soil-stripping or in foundation or utility excavations.
11. Since previous geophysical investigations of the Fort Edmonton burial ground have been inconclusive, because of extensive site disturbance and insufficient testing within the known cemetery context, consideration should be given to undertaking further geophysical investigations extended outward in an attempt to establish the limits of the burials.
12. Efforts to commemorate the Fort Edmonton burial ground, currently underway, should be continued and encouraged with all the relevant stakeholders. Care should be taken to ensure that any structures or landscape work that are produced do not disturb the archaeological remains that they are intended to commemorate. Avoiding disturbance may require creative and innovative design.
13. Consideration should be given to defining the commemorative area through the community consultation process (similar to the process used in 2001), which in turn should be informed by historical and archaeological research. Research confirms that the focus of the commemorative area should be on the burial ground that is demarcated in the Aldous survey of 1882. The commemoration will mark both the physical remains and the traditional use of the site and adjacent lands for burial purposes.
14. Initiatives should be taken to commemorate and interpret all the significant history of Rosssdale flats, including the many uses during the fur-trade era and the variety of other uses that have occurred before and after that era. Commemoration and interpretation should recognize the achievements of the many cultures who lived and worked here for millennia, and who collectively were instrumental in creating the City of Edmonton.



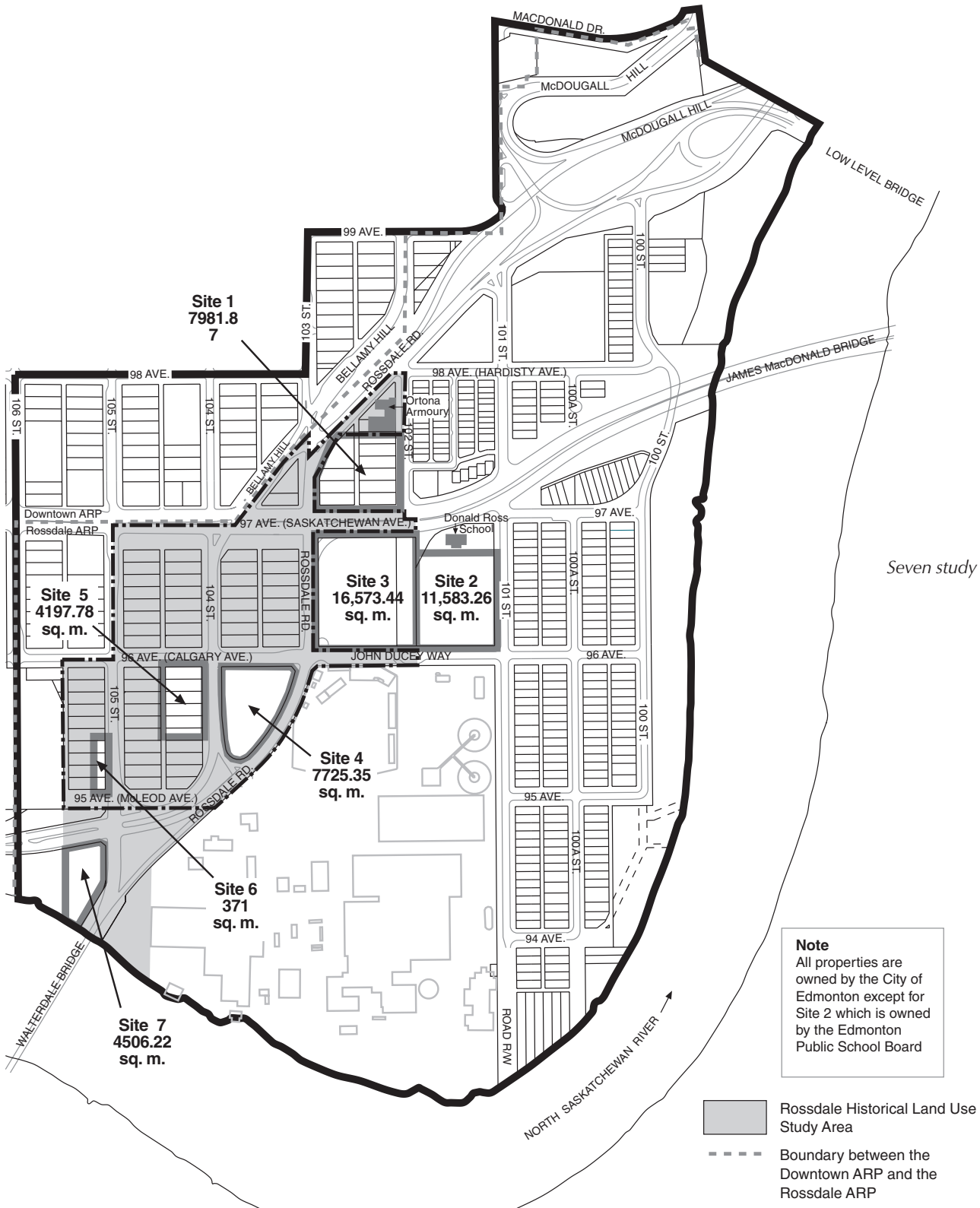


Figure 10-1  
Seven study areas within Rossdale.



# APPENDIXES

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APPENDIX 1  
LETTER FROM ALBERTA  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

APPENDIX 2  
BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX 3  
PROJECT TEAM AND  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

APPENDIX 4  
ABBREVIATIONS OF REPOSITORIES

APPENDIX 5  
MAPS

# Appendix 1 - Letter from Alberta Community Development



ALBERTA

Minister of Community Development  
Deputy Government House Leader

MLA, Edmonton Mill Creek

RECEIVED  
AUG 28 2001  
2210-01

MAYOR'S OFFICE 27 AUG 01 AM 8:06

August 24, 2001

His Worship Mayor Bill Smith  
City of Edmonton  
1 Sir Winston Churchill Square  
Edmonton, AB T5J 2R7

FROM THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR		
<input type="checkbox"/> COUNCILLORS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMM SERV	<input type="checkbox"/> HR
<input type="checkbox"/> AMPW	<input type="checkbox"/> CORP SERV	<input type="checkbox"/> LIBRARY
<input type="checkbox"/> CAC	<input type="checkbox"/> LDE	<input type="checkbox"/> OCC
<input type="checkbox"/> COO	<input type="checkbox"/> EPS	<input type="checkbox"/> P & D
<input type="checkbox"/> OMO	<input type="checkbox"/> ERD	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANS & ST
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER P. Lobregt, C. Gillis, B. Duncan		
ACTION REQUIRED:		
<input type="checkbox"/> FOR INFO ONLY	<input type="checkbox"/> LOG & RETURN	<input type="checkbox"/> LOG & FILE
<input type="checkbox"/> DIRECT RESPONSE	<input type="checkbox"/> DRAFT FOR MAYOR	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMENTS
DATE: 08/27/2001		

Dear Mayor Smith:

Thank you for your letters of July 6 and July 27, 2001, on the topic of the Rossdale Flats. I greatly appreciate the explanations and proposals you provide in regard to the cemetery location project, ground-penetrating radar for detecting other graves and historical resources, and archival research on Rossdale gravesite history. These activities are valuable initiatives that will help to build the solid information base required in order to proceed in a manner respectful to all concerned parties.

While archival research will no doubt shed much light on the situation, in particular from a non-Aboriginal perspective, no historical investigation of this type could be considered balanced and complete if the large, parallel body of knowledge that resides in the minds of people most closely connected to the deceased were not included. This oral history would need to be garnered from First Nations, Métis and non-Aboriginal communities. In keeping with standard policies and procedures that have been applied successfully in Alberta for over 25 years, Alberta Community Development would not undertake to organize, perform or fund the necessary research itself. Therefore, I would urge you to add an oral history component to the research proposed for the Rossdale area. My staff would of course be available to provide advice to any proponent of such a project.

The entire Rossdale Flats and adjacent areas have much to tell about the history of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal activities and settlements not only in the core of our capital city, but also throughout central Alberta. For this reason, I believe my staff should review all proposals for ground-disturbing developments in the east half of Section 31, all of Section 32, and the west half of Section 33 (Twp. 52, Range 24, West 4<sup>th</sup> Meridian). This unit of land includes many known historical resources on both sides of the North Saskatchewan River and undoubtedly contains many more which, at this stage, we know little about. I should add, as well, that it is our legislated duty to maintain an interest in the management of historical resources wherever they occur in Alberta.

.../2


229 Legislature Building, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T5K 2B6  
Telephone 780/427-4928 or 415-4840 Fax 780/427-0188

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His Worship Mayor Bill Smith  
Page Two

I find our exchange of information and ideas on the Rosedale situation very useful and, as suggested in your letter of July 27<sup>th</sup>, I would be pleased to meet with you to discuss the matter further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gene Zwozdesky". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Gene Zwozdesky  
Minister of Community Development  
Deputy Government House Leader

cc: Honourable Pearl Calahasen  
Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development

Honourable David Coutts  
Minister of Government Services

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The staff of the Edmonton Archives, the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, The National Archives of Canada, the National Air Photo Library, the Provincial Archives of Alberta, and the Stark Foundation.

## *Appendix 4 - Abbreviations of Repositories*

CEA – City of Edmonton Archives

HBCA – Hudson’s Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg

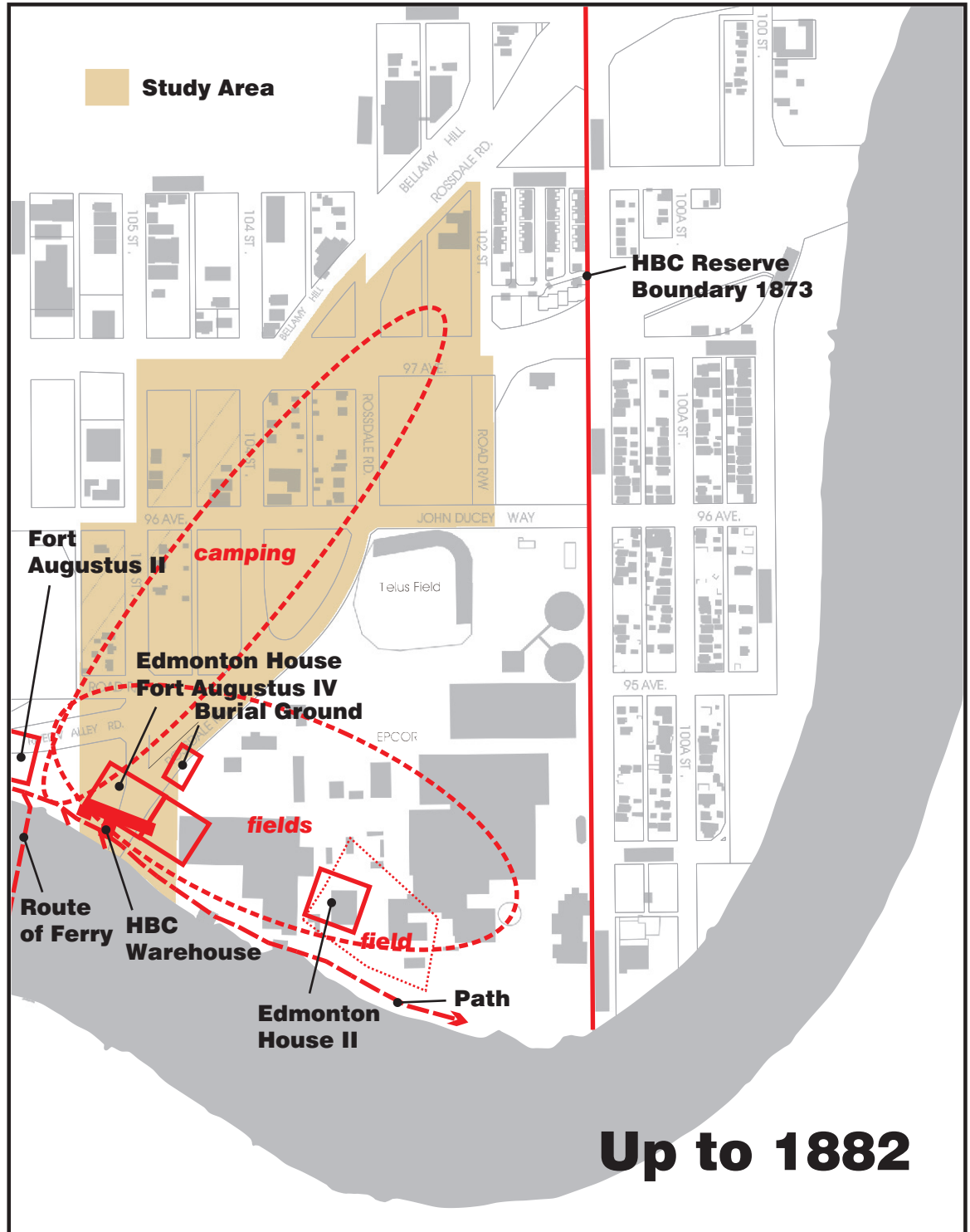
NAC – National Archives of Canada, Ottawa

NAPL – National Air Photo Library, Ottawa

PAA – Provincial Archives of Alberta, Edmonton

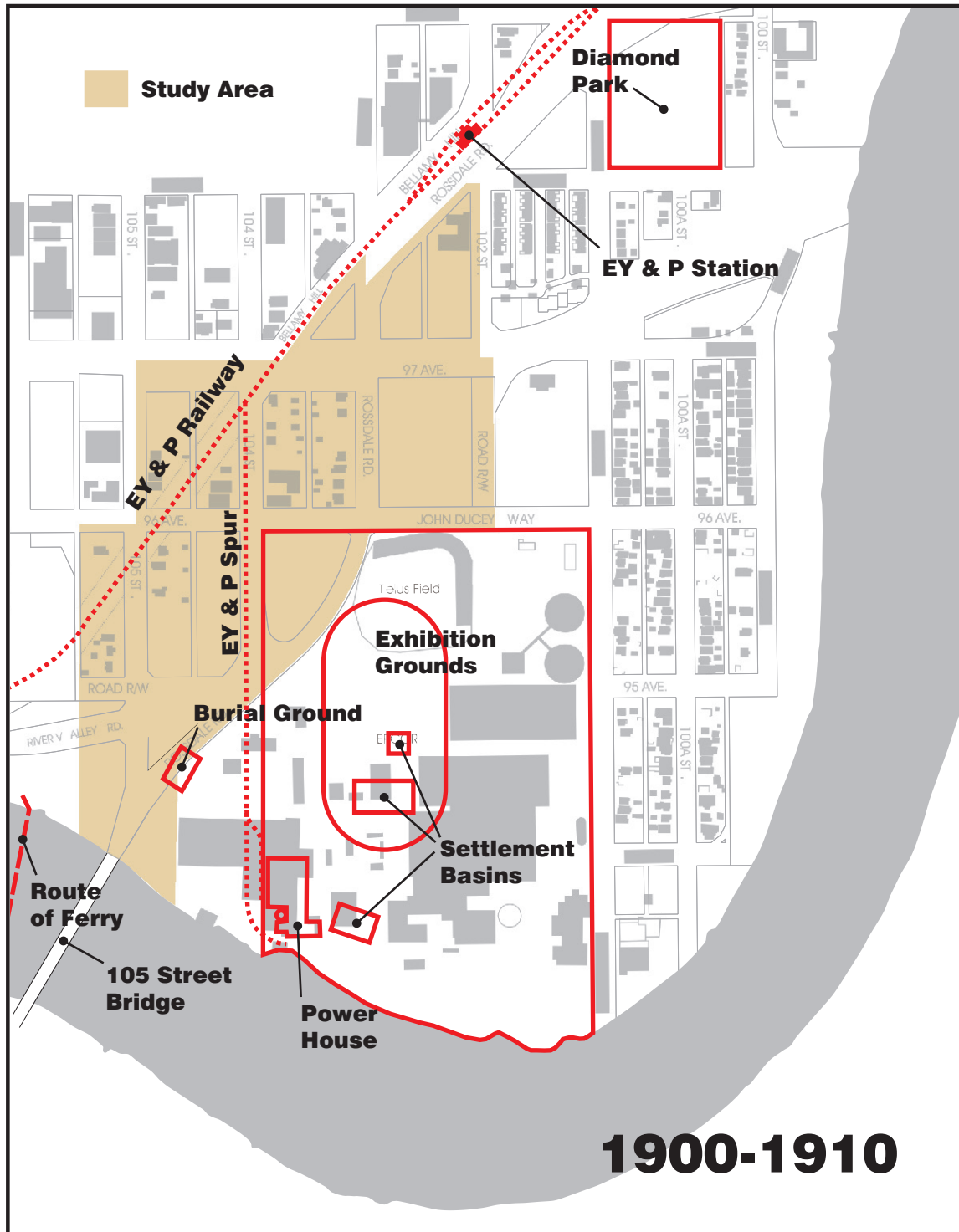
Appendix 5 - Maps

Map 1

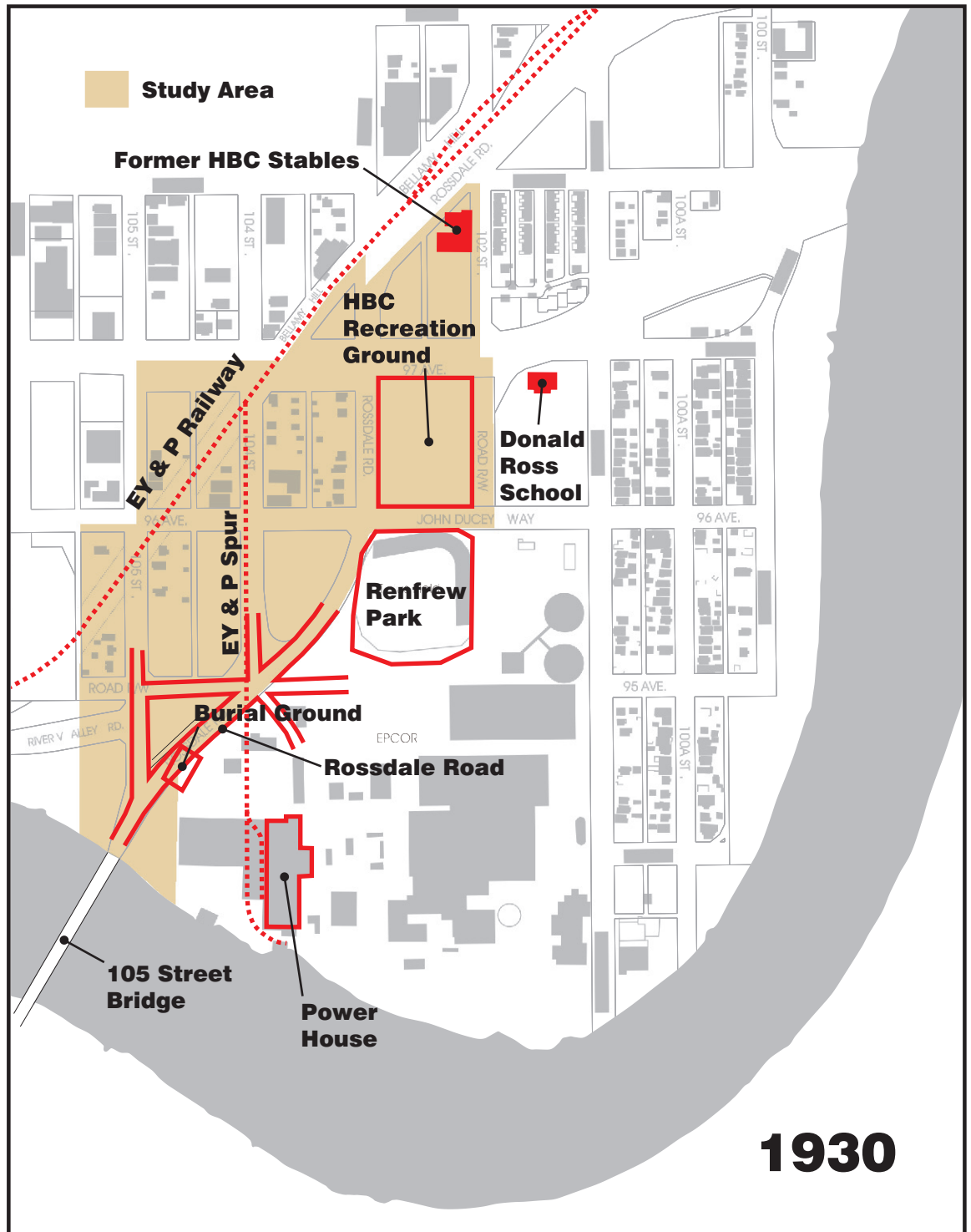




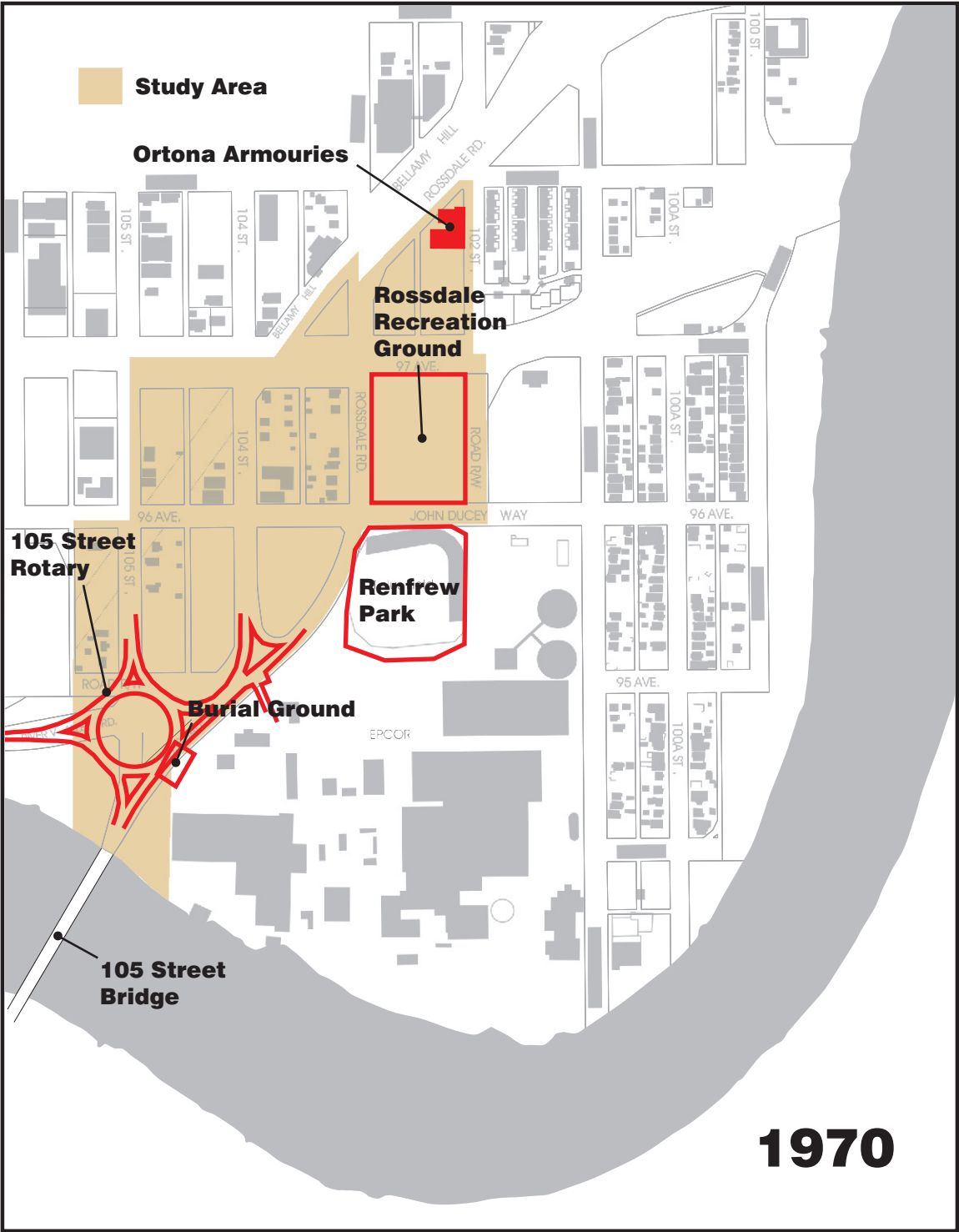
Map 2



Map 3



Map 4



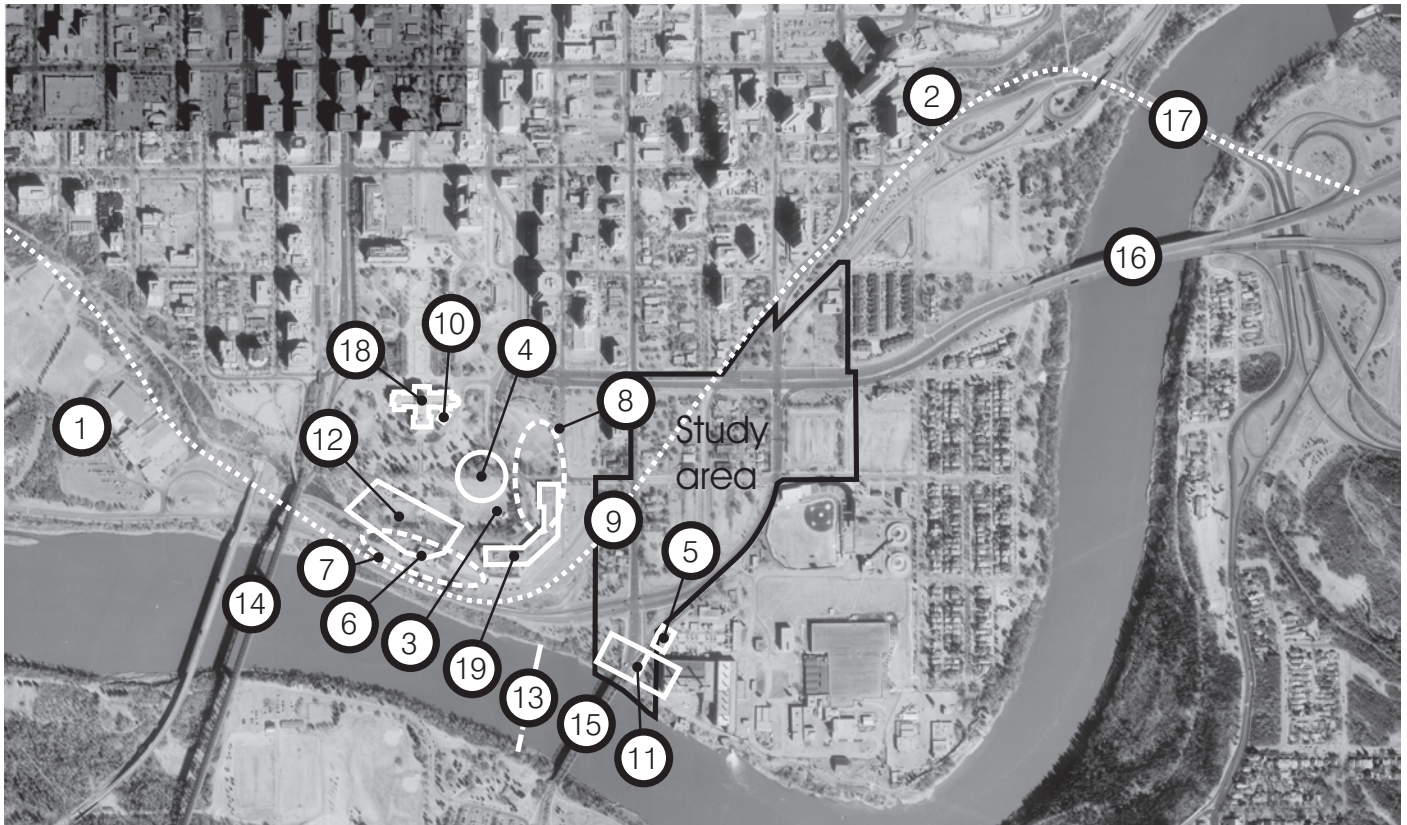
Map 5  
Subdivision  
Plan





Map 6  
Subdivision  
Plan

Map 7



- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Victoria Park  | 12. Fort Edmonton V                     |
| 2. Donald Ross Hotel  | 13. Approximate route of Walter's Ferry |
| 3. Probable location of cross erected by Fathers Blanchet and Demers  | 14. High Level Bridge                   |
| 4. Probable location of 'Indian Graveyard' described by Violet Wilson | 15. 105 Street Bridge                   |
| 5. Fort Edmonton Burial Ground  | 16. James MacDonald Bridge              |
| 6. Government Power House   | 17. Low Level Bridge                    |
| 7. EY & P Gravel Pit  | 18. Legislature                         |
| 8. City Gravel Pit  | 19. Terrace Building                    |
| 9. EY & P Railway   |   |
| 10. Hardisty House ('Big House')                                      |   |
| 11. Fort Edmonton IV (as proposed by Lifeways of Canada)              |   |