VISUALIZING THE CANADIAN PRAIRIES

PHOTOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATIONS OF RURALITY

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Abstract

Who is the rural prairie dweller? What do their communities and landscapes look like and how are they changing? The rural is often placed in a position outside modernity, often thought of as backward, a fading condition, and written-off as a site of little interest. With the recent rise of conservative populism comes an imperative to produce accessible, searching, prying, and emotive scholarship for understanding the rural condition. Visualizing the Canadian Prairies explores, reinterprets and makes legible depictions of the rural condition for both academic and popular audiences by adopting an interdisciplinary and multi-modular approach, which utilizes elements of visual sociology and arts-based research as a way to explore and challenge presumptions of prairie space. The project blends a production-orientated approach that is informed by a photography-centric art history of Western Canada. Utilizing photographic and archival materials entirely focused on rural spaces, the dissertation creates a visual and theoretical account of changes in rural representation of Alberta since 1980, when the province celebrated 75 years as a political entity. The analytical and photographic outcomes arise from numerous and extensive field research trips between 2015 and 2019, a series of journeys, both physical and fluid, stationary and imagined into the heart of rural prairie culture in Western Canada. In addition to personal observations and community photographs, the dissertation also draws upon Canadian image-makers, social theorists, and historians to provide additional context, beginning with the celebrated first photograph of the prairies in 1858, and a series of 20th and 21st Century photography projects.

Each of the three chapters are composed of three disparate but interconnected elements: analysis, visual narrative, and written narrative; distinctions that aim to blend textual and visual didactic and analytical forms with creative non-fiction. The chapter titled 'Digging In' challenges a provincialist framework by exploring the 1980 documentary project Keepsake, and first introduces the concepts of rural banality and the rural as a significant site of regional heritage. 'Mapping Out' adopts the framework of regionalism, continuing the exploration of documentary photography of Western Canada by focusing on the region's contemporary image-makers and their relation to space and landscape. While another chapter titled 'Returning To' uses a framework of localism and ideas of post-photography to develop a case-study of a specific prairie town, my hometown Mundare, AB, as a way to deconstruct ideas of ruralism through an alternative history of Place.

Through this exploration of photography as it relates to the prairie, I propose two characteristics that define representations of rural Western Canada: space as a form of dated heritage; and landscape as banal iconicity. Both contribute to a uniquely prairie sense of place in lived and imagined ways. This study is driven by a desire to document and challenge these presumptions of the prairies and is unapologetically about chasing a sense of place rather than reaching a conclusion of a complex region.

Keywords: rural, documentary photography, prairies, post-photography, regionalism.

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Note to the Reader

This document was designed as the equivalent of a series of print booklets, not necessarily intended to be read in a strictly linear fashion from beginning to end.

Navigate between the sections of this PDF version as if they were separately-bound booklets.

When viewing this PDF, ensure *two-page view* is enabled.

Bookmarked Sections *(Each starts with its own table of contents):*

- Overview & Introduction ..... 71 pages

- Digging In - Analysis ..... 55 pages
- Digging In - Narrative ..... 18 pages
- Digging In - Visual ..... 35 images

- Mapping Out - Analysis ..... 78 pages
- Mapping Out - Narrative ..... 24 pages
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- Returning To - Analysis ..... 56 pages
- Returning To - Narrative ..... 16 pages
- Returning To - Visual ..... 40 collages

- Citations: Bibliography, Image Details, & Research Instruments ..... 65 pages

Format

A Short Guide to Reading this Dissertation

The dissertation that follows is non-linear and multi-modular. The introduction includes a discussion of method and a preliminary creative non-fiction preamble, which provide route markers for the overall discussion by establishing key concepts and concerns and outlining methodology and creative approach. After this, the reader may enter the remaining sections in whatever order they wish. This is achieved as each chapter is composed of three disparate but interconnected texts. In each chapter analytical and didactic forms are juxtaposed with creative non-fiction, documentary photography, and conceptual art practice as a way to understand the Canadian Prairies.

To emphasize accessible knowledge and respect the interests of multiple audiences, the format of this document is structured so that the reader can decide their own point of entry. Some may begin by delving into the visual narrative of the 'Mapping Out' chapter and follow that by reading the visual narrative of the 'Digging In' chapter before turning their attention to the analytical sections. While others may begin with the analysis of the 'Digging In' chapter, they may skip ahead to the visual section of the 'Returning To' chapter. Reading this document in this way requires a leap of faith, or a number of leaps of faith, a leap towards embracing process and praxis and a leap towards play and experimentation inherent to any creative undertaking. The dissertation's deconstructed nature is also an artistic statement, once laid out the dissertation's components act as a flat tapestry of ideas mirroring the 'flatscape' of the Canadian prairies. In this sense, the document's physical exploration mimics the theoretical ideas of the space itself while functioning as the reader's "choose your own adventure" book. There is no wrong approach. Because the dissertation is without a traditional concluding chapter, each chapter gives the reader the opportunity to draw their own conclusions, specific to its concerns, with the synthesis among chapters and sections left unexamined and outside the parameters of the arts-based research and creative process. Each component works singularly and collectively (in or out of order) to provide a telling of prairie place. What follows is a creative and intellectual adventure into the photographic representations of the Canadian Prairies that not only aims to be original but relevant and approachable and maybe even a little fun. Enjoy.

(If viewing this document as a PDF please feel free to move between sections and ensure *two-page view* is enabled).

Introduction

Welcome to the Prairies

"Stare, pry, listen, eavesdrop, die knowing something. You are not here long." - Walker Evans (Evans & Thompson, 1982, p. 161)

When we think about the Canadian Prairies what ideas come to mind? Do we recall borrowed tropes of hardship and frontierism or more newly established characteristics of Conservative politics and resource abundance? Do we come to know a place, by either entering or leaving it? I left the Canadian Prairies eight years ago but continue to return in an attempt to understand my homeplace. My first departure was to London, England for my Master's where I began to think critically about prairie space. During photo-critiques, I would show images of small prairie towns from my thesis project *Out West*, a work that documented small communities in Western Canada (British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba). Two classmates' responses struck me: my images were overly similar and plain and that they looked more American than anything else. Prior to this, I had never thought about the inherent plainness of prairie spaces, its buildings and its people, or how individuals outside the region might not have any specific references of Canadian space to rally around. Canadians often adopt American references indiscriminately to Canadian spaces without thinking about how the American landscape, the American eye, the American frontier may not apply. Straddling the world's cultural juggernaut, it is easy to see how, lacking our own far-reaching narratives of the region, we borrow from its rebellious older brother to the south. This motivated a series of questions

that have occupied my creative and academic endeavours for the past six years. What is the common understanding of rural places in Canada? What is the role of rural communities in Canada today? How are rural spaces and inhabitants being represented? What is the role of archives to fictionalize or perpetuate state-structured identities? What can be learned from documentation of rural communities? What lies ahead is the exploration of these queries, and concludes with two overarching arguments: firstly, that the prairie region's landscape is consistently represented as banal; and secondly, that rural spaces are the dominant source for establishing regional heritage.

The definition of banality used in this study aligns closely with how the work of the New Topographic photographers was being characterized in the 1970s as anti-aesthetic, banal, and boring (Foster-Rice & Rohrbach, 2013). My use of the term banal stems directly from this framing and as such, is more closely associated with the synonyms of banality of being insipid, vapid, flat and inane, than with definitions and understandings of the term as it is used within cultural studies. Defining banality in visual terms is essential to reading prairie space as numerous prairie photographers were influenced by the work of New Topographic photographers. These image-makers ultimately helped establish the banal nature of the region as an integral component of visualizing rural spaces in Western Canada. Simply put, prairie spaces are banal in their lack of geographic relief and distinctive qualities and characteristics in elevation that make a recognizable and distinct spirit.

Prairie plains are plain; not just cleared for settlement, but a blank slate for continual harvest. I do not mean banal in the sense of thoughtlessness and disengagement (Arendt, 2006), but rather in the sense of homogeneous space: meaningless and insignificant, without signification, ready to be reaped and cultivated but not yet inhabited (Lefebvre, 1991b; Seigworth, 2000). In terms of cultural signification in visual communication, banality stems from "negative aspects of media--over-representation, excessive visibility, information overload" (Morris, 1988, 13, interpreting Baudrillard, 1990), by which I take over-determined as key; the opposite of thought-provoking or sublime. This aspect helps explain why the prairies are often under-represented, a scenario where conditions may also produce fetishism and awe through a lack of reference to the space. As a result, prairie scenes and their associated landscapes and theories are recorded and retold as inherently banal, even if that banality generates excitement or sentimental nostalgia. This banality is fatal to the region, for "in an age of overload, rampant banality…the last Pascalian wager may be to bet on the return, in the present, of what can only be a simulacrum of the past" (Morris, 1988, 13).

Against, banal, homogeneous space, Lefebvre (1991b) proposes the lived, inhabited social space made meaningful through symbols and associated images, writing that "representational space is alive; it speaks… It embraces the loci of passion, of action, of lived situations, and this immediately implies time" (p. 42). In a time of information overload and abundance, nostalgia is evoked for meaning, which is inherent in the use of rural prairie space as a timeless arena for meaning-making in the region. Looking beyond the region, the rural plays an integral role as an element of banal nationalism (Billig, 1995).

Ruralism and the rural as heritage, as the local and everyday function of the nation, can be related to Billig's description of routine identifiers of social membership and citizenship, in this case with rural spaces operating as a site of heritage helping to bind the region and the nation. Representations of the prairies are ordinary facets of regional or national culture that reveal themselves from a local approach that emphasizes individual experience. In my work, photographic banality becomes the place's identity, similar to how banal nationalism operates as a way to further nationalistic ideas of a nation or a region. Documentary photographers capture the essence of people and place as ordinary. This is a cultural process that is not merely experienced but also recorded and re-experienced as a form of visual banality, by placing a lens upon everyday movements and interactions and as a result, make them just a little extraordinary.

The Canadian Prairies are both a geographic and imagined place. Place is defined in this dissertation primarily as a stage where meaning is performed, struggled over, remade (Cresswell, 2004), and as a site where multiple identities and histories collide (Massey, 2005) to produce meaning for individuals. For the purposes of this study, the region is spatially defined by geographical parameters: the Rocky Mountains to the West and three distinct forested regions (Boreal, Parkland, and Grassland) to the North and East. The region encompasses the Fertile Belt, Palliser's Triangle and other sub-regions where significant settlement occurred in the early 20th Century. The prairie region is a harsh land with a high albedo and Arctic air mass which, at times, makes it colder than the Arctic, Antarctica, and Mars. Since Charles Galpin's *The Social Anatomy of an Agriculture Community* (1915) rural sociologists have been articulating definitions of the rural that

compliment the urbanist's construct of their 'court'. Urbanism is written about as an idea or an ideology to subscribe to, one that often features in direct contrast to ruralism. As a result, under modernity, ruralism is placed in the position of the Other (Crouch, 1997), a catch-all space draped in negativity for 'everything that the urban is not', all the residual people and spaces not accounted for as urban (Thomas, 2011; Woods, 2005). The rural is difficult to demarcate as it is not only an amalgamation of spaces, communities, and united people, but a unifiable space in and of itself. This is in line with current disciplinary rhetoric in rural sociology "that argues 'space' is a critical new intellectual frontier for the field" (Porter & Howell, 2012, p. 23).

This study uses a compound definition of interpretive and descriptive elements to define what constitutes rural space in the region (Sorokin & Zimmerman, 1929). First of all, small population and density is key (Gilbert, 1982; Smelser & Baltes, 2001). Statistics Canada defines rural census areas as any location outside of metropolitan areas (i.e. without a nearby urban core of 10,000 or higher). Towns were of particular interest in addition to surrounding landscapes with all of the locations visited, photographed, and studied fitting these parameters. Secondly, and in sociological terms, rural areas are a counter-space to urban modernity and the metropolitan bastion of official tradition and political culture (Töennies 1963, 1971; Simmel 1971). Thirdly, the rural has a unique relation to time and heritage. From the position of the colonial-settler, rural spaces of the prairies define the region, they are a resource to visualize (Ashworth & Graham, 2017), a place more of the past than the present.

The historical backbone of the Canadian Prairies is centred around rural spaces and the narratives of heritage constructed around them. Through photography and other representational forms, the idea of the timeless rural is created, perpetuating the rural as an outdated space, a place outside of time (Zeleny, 2014). The rural operates as the conventional source of an abstract, timeless heritage (Lynch, 2001), the "part of the past which we select in the present for contemporary purposes, whether they be economic or cultural…and choose to bequeath to a future" (Ashworth & Graham, 2017, p. 7). The rural acts as a source for pondering progress — 'look at how fast we climbed out of sod huts and into modern cities'. By focusing on the region's rural past, the "sacralization of the cultural and natural heritage" (Oltmanns, 2016, p. 61), we evoke an idea of heritage as a conduit to determine what we have lost and gained in the pursuit of modernity. This also allows for a re-engagement with rural landscapes and communities "not only by those who occupy them, but particularly by the majority urban population" (Troughton, 2005, p. 301), which increasingly extends influence over rural areas. The argument that the rural is a source of heritage is also increasingly difficult to maintain, and is often thought to be antithetical to modernization, or at the bare minimum factually incorrect, given that less than twenty percent of the region's population resides in rural spaces.

There are also other resilient narratives that the Canadian psyche relies on, including ideas of nature and space, which are largely intertwined with contemporary and historical ideals of rurality. As Jody Berland (2009) writes, "you would hardly know, looking at Canada's canonical written and visual works, that nearly 80 percent of its population lives in cities" (p. 118). Rural people and places have historically held a

disproportionate influence over political direction, economic priorities, and narratives of heritage across the region.

The hegemonic telling of the region's formation does not begin with First Nations people, or urban centres, but with the plow and the agrarian immigrant. While the urban is the locus where cultural and artistic productivity is generated, it is rural tropes that are employed as the elements that constitute regional narratives. It is not uncommon for those leaving the city to feel as if they are entering spaces of the past, of nostalgia and of heritage (Wetherell, 2005). The feeling of driving into history. What is problematic about using the rural as a site of nostalgia is that the heritage function of these spaces overrides a reading that they are still active spaces. This inadvertently consigns rural spaces to the past and therefore are read and documented as places of decline. Rural spaces are not only the spiritual centre of the region, but operate as its historic economic centre and are characterized as "'the backbone of Canada's economy and its 'community enterprise'" (Wetherell, 2005, p. 188).

The importance of rural space and its bearing on heritage is not limited to the prairie region. There is a strong body of work suggesting that rural spaces serve as key symbols of Eastern Canadian, American and British ideals (Daniels, 1992; Kinsman, 1995). Across nations and geographical regions, the rural functions by providing a collective memory, a beginning and aided by time, a space for heritage to grow. This is particularly true in Western Canada where, prior to the arrival of colonial settlers (a little over a hundred years ago) there was no written history to provide a sense of value or direction

(Bennett, 1969). As prairie settlement increased in the early parts of the 20th Century, the small town anchored itself as an integral part of both the social and literary history of the region. The prairie region illustrates the argument that marginalized rural environments have long been utilized and incorporated into urban narratives when aligned ideologically, particularly when establishing politically and economically driven origin stories. For instance, the narrative of European settlers colonizing harsh western lands predates the emergence of the province and extends Western Canada's colonialist and nostalgic account of its own recorded history. If the region (or the nation for that matter) does not appropriate the rural as heritage then the region has very few myths for identity-formation. Heritage is a fluid myth system subject to perceptive changes and post-modernist ideals and critical engagements with new immigrant groups that do not identity with rural space, as well as, a revisiting and reconciling of Indigenous peoples complicates the myth of the rural and colonial-settler as key markers of heritage. As Deborah Bright (1989) argues and Liz Wells (2012) so elegantly summarizes, "the idealized landscape panders to small-town North American attitudes, precluding identification with rural space for a significant majority of urban and non-White inhabitants, yet contributing to perpetuating North American foundation myths that are highly selective and ideological" (p. 114). The rural as heritage is therefore only specific to early 20th Century waves of (largely European) settlers and functions as an exclusionary bracket determining who and who does not (visually) represent the region.

The legacy of this narrative, not only the dominant conception of the province, but also the presumed way of life for rural inhabitants, is being rewritten as the rural is drained

of its vitality: rural drain – urban gain. As rural space becomes emptied, defunded and ignored by urbanites, academic and political elites alike, a fissure opens for which divisive political movements can percolate. The most recent return to conservative populism calls for a "Wexit," continuing hostility towards the Federal government with rumblings of a separatist movement (Leyland, 2019; Toneguzzi, 2019). The rural is placed in the position of the 'Other', often thought of as backward and fading and resultantly written-off as a site of interest or study. As a new wave of Western Alienation grips the prairies, voters are increasingly disregarding socially progressive policies in favour of populism to express their discontent as being perceived as second-class federal citizens. The rise of populism in the globalized West shows the structural weakness of the neoliberal project (Kulcsar, 2018), while highlighting the angst felt amongst rural communities less equipped (practically and ideologically) to deal with resource-based recessions and adapt to a changing economic environment. This results in two populations at ends with another, each failing to understand their fellow citizens as a narrative of "existential clash between rural rednecks and latte liberals" (Kulcsar, 2018, p. 3) becomes opt repeated. The rise in populism makes, accessible, searching, prying and emotive scholarship on rural areas that makes important in-roads for understanding and visualizing rural inhabitants and rural spaces all the more imperative.

While rural areas contribute heavily to the nation's economic and social wellbeing, as well as, food and energy security (Flora, Flora & Fey, 2004), an unprecedented change is occurring in rural spaces, a restructuring so deep it may fundamentally "destabilize but also potentially reconstitute rural ideologies" (Pini & Leach, p. 2). Half of the world's

population lives in cities, the other half does not and some academics are sounding the alarm. Rem Koolhaas (2012) presents his manifesto on the countryside, revealing how little attention has been paid to the countryside in the past decades and how this unknown territory is rapidly transforming. With a focus on the urban as the exclusive and growing form of settlement, the rural becomes a colossal terra incognita, a cultural black hole. Communities in the prairie region (and in wider North America) are occupied by a different set of fears than their urban counterparts. Since their foundation, these communities have existed in perpetual decline, a waypoint from the 'new world' to the 'urban world'. As a result, the region's rural psyche is on its back foot with a malaise of rural alienation setting in from urban populations failing to understand the needs, desires, and fears of rural spaces, while rural inhabitants themselves fail to understand their changing position in the global order of things. This relationship is further complicated by the natural abundance of the region where resources are rich but the social and economic benefits of their extraction largely flows to urban coffers.

Finding Value on the Prairies

With the rise of populism and divisive politics understanding the prairie region becomes paramount to understanding our rural neighbour. A review of existing literature uncovers that no studies of the region have been conducted that deal with the visual representations of rurality and rural space. This may or may not surprise as the rural operates as a space on the margins, often overlooked and archetypically read as white, middle-class, and conservative. However, as the nation moves towards a post-industrial

society, emphasizing information-exchange as a model for economic prosperity, communities focused on manually-intensive resource extraction (oil, gas, cattle, grain, and lumber) are left behind (Soja, 2000; Reed & Parkins, 2012). There are also cultural reasons for understanding the prairie region. As a nation with a vast geography, distance and space are crucial components defining the Canadian psyche. But as this relationship shifts with rural spaces further emptied and populations coalescing in urban areas, these regional myths of space are becoming unstable. These changes are slow and not catastrophic, as a result they are often overlooked as the slow ticking of progress, a way of life perpetually in flux. Furthermore, there are few studies which contribute directly to this discussion, representing a lacuna in the existing literature; as a result, this study responds directly to this void by contributing sociological and creative knowledge about the prairies. Given the complexity of representing the prairies, the project embraces a mixed-methods approach to investigate a complex prairie organism where analytical, textual and visual narrative sections operate as a blueprint for how academic rigour and artistic creativity can be melded.

Research Aims and Outcomes

What follows is a constellation of ideas crucial to understanding the rural on the prairies, with additional emphasis placed on popular discourse and the intermediary space between lay and professional (academic) ways of knowing. Because of its disciplinary straddling, the work offers a unique contribution to visual sociology, Canadian studies, visual studies, mobility studies, communication and culture studies, and by virtue of

opposition, American studies. Through an interdisciplinary approach, scholars and academics the likes of J.B. Jackson, Liz Wells, Harold Innis, and Joan Fontcuberta (to name a few), are brought into conversation with one another to develop a complex discussion of the prairie region.

The project was initiated with the personal experience that my rural roots were viewed with indifference and required better understanding, not least for myself. *Visualizing The Canadian Prairies* is focused on collecting, documenting, and analyzing the rural while drawing the conclusion that the rural is physically and psychologically diminishing. The study's primary aim is to ask how rural spaces on the Canadian Prairies are visually represented and who are the people who call these towns and landscapes home? To accomplish this, documentary photography and arts-based research are used as a way to probe and find understanding. Because it is a relatively uncultivated landscape of the mind, the Canadian Prairies are a fruitful laboratory for the cultural geographer, the sociologist, and the artist to "open avenues of critical understanding without necessarily coming to a conclusion" (Meir, 2015, p. 4). Although starting without the intention for establishing definitive conclusions, the project resulted in a number of outcomes. What follows is a list of the outcomes generated by the study.

1. The first outcome is the production of a unique document of the Canadian Prairies. Reliable, detailed and comparative information regarding the rural exists (Reimer, 2002); however, there is a lack of long-term qualitative data depicting in creative (visual and textual narrative) means how the rural has been represented pictorially through the social

history of photography and by contemporary practitioners. In this framework, rurality is not viewed as a problem (and therefore requiring no solution), but as a generally under-explored and misunderstood space of scholarship, making the focus of this study a timely account of prairie space (Bunce, 1994).

2. It is not enough to simply 'gaze upon the rural' through traditional means but requires we expand our inquisitive tool-kits. One of the outcomes of the study is to analyze the Canadian Prairies through a series of unique place-based lenses (provincial, regional, and local) and ontologies (post-photography, arts-based research, and documentary photography) that once juxtaposed offer a unique insight into the region. By studying representations of the prairies we contribute to the underdeveloped field of photography on the prairies while also producing a contemporary account of rurality and rural space on the prairies. The result of which is a refined way of viewing the rural through three unique interpretations, as a way to advance our understanding of the rural's past, present and future. By studying different rural tenses we can interrogate imagined and lived ideas of place and perceptual changes to the region.

3. Once common visual narratives of prairie life are documented and analyzed their position within the cultural imaginary can be interrogated. When represented photographically, Prairie communities are often fetishized or defined by their pastoral qualities. The rural prairies are a space with an uneasy and shifting historical narrative. The prairies' identity has long been associated with economic exploitation from Central Canada, the imperialistic activities of Great Britain and the United States historically, as

well as (with increasing focus), cultural redundancy from urban spaces within the region itself. The visual narratives of the prairies are therefore simplistically inaccurate and used to express hegemonic tendencies that emphasize rural spaces as banal, empty, in decline and belonging to the past, as heritage, sustained through nostalgia.

4. This study uses the photographer as a cultural barometer, as a way to interrogate how ideas of rurality on the prairies have been reflected in their work and how this has contributed or contradicted generally accepted ideas of prairie ruralism. Therefore, this project is as much about exploring the rural condition as it is defining (and contributing to) prairie photography. Through an exploration of documentary photographers and the production of three case studies, we will arrive at a sense of the prairies and the specific form of ruralism found within the region.

5. Epistemologically, the study undertakes the difficult task of transmitting theory and practice in equal measure—academia as 'world of thought' and a wider context of the 'world of action'. Adopting this position also means abandoning the pure 'objective-ness' purported by early social scientists and photographers (Pink, 2007; Edwards, 1992). By blending an outcome-orientated approach the study achieves its wider theoretical goals while addressing the praxis gap within academia. As a result, the study itself provides a new methodological framework for inquiry (explored in more detail in the methods section) where the melding of practice and theory are prioritized. To achieve this, elements of arts-based research, traditional social science research, concepts of post-photography,

and knowledge dissemination are employed experimentally to inquire into the visual representations of the rural.

The Structure

The colonial settler's Canadian West is a bit of an experiment. So recently constructed, its narratives of place and people are underdeveloped for history requires the camera and the pen with hegemonic or subversive intent to produce meaning. As Lorry W. Felske and Beverly Rasporich (2004) write in the introduction of their edited collection *Challenging frontiers the Canadian West*, the "Western Canadian identity is a puzzle in motion with new pieces added and old ones discarded, all without a sense of where the edges lie" (p. 1). Reflected in the chapters of this project, what constitutes the Canadian Prairies is a multiplicity of spaces with a multiplicity of potential readings, puzzle pieces to add and subtract.

The study begins with an introduction and methodological chapter that explores key elements of documentary photography, visual sociology, and arts-based research as separate but interconnected methodologies. The methods chapter is followed by a preamble section that explores historical conceptualizations of rural space. This is followed by three chapters focused around a specific theme that conceptualizes visual representations of rurality on the prairies. In the following chapters movement and journey, both within and between each chapter, is utilized as a way to understand and to

create in the region. This is most evident in the visual and textual narrative portions of each chapter.

Centred around the documentary project Keepsake, 'Digging In' introduces the idea of prairie banality that is associated with contemporary narratives of ruralism. Authored in 1980, Keepsake is arguably Canada's most expensive, in-depth, and obscure photographic project depicting rural life and rural community on the prairies. Conducted four decades ago, and largely forgotten, Keepsake operates as an entry point into understanding visual representations and as a unique time-capsule of rural living in Canada. The narrative sections of the chapter address Keepsake by providing an updated visual account of three communities from the original project. To this end, the chapter operates as an exploration on how producing documentary work in a provincial context can effectively build or subvert what is constituted as a regional identity, while facilitating a discussion on representation, the hegemonic nature of the archive, and the idea of the rural community.

'Mapping Out' continues the exploration of how documentary photography communicates ideas of prairie ruralism, with a focus on how space and distance contribute to representations of rural space. Projects related to this topic by historical and contemporary documentary photographers in the region are discussed in-depth. The chapter also operates as a critique of Keepsake and argues against the visualization of rural communities restricted to municipal town borders (Giffen, 2004). Instead it puts forth the argument that, by moving freely through the region a greater understanding of prairie individuals and landscapes is achievable. Furthermore, the chapter utilizes mobility studies

and the car journey as a playfully ambiguous method—the automotive flaneur (Zeleny, 2014), as a journeyer navigating space within his cushy automotive capsule and through the voyeuristic lens of the detached but not disinterested researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The creative and narrative sections of the chapter are an accumulation of a number of long-form and meandering road trips (interventions) in the prairie region. In doing so, the research is interpreted through a frame of regionalism and builds upon contemporary spatial narratives of Canadian landscape with key topics from the 'Digging In' chapter carrying forward (issues of representation, banality of the space, and the rural as heritage).

Drawing on the history of a specific community, "Returning To' sets forth an alternative view of the rural—a view that is difficult to construct within the confines of an outsider-informed (short-term) photographic project. As a result, the chapter's creative output informs a critique of the problematic nature of authoring representations of community and place that is not constructed by community members but by outsiders. The chapter represents a long-term involvement in a community and uses multimedia forms and ideas of post-photography (the proliferation of images and the call to rethink modernist ideas of representation) as a way to create and challenge dominant accounts of the rural on the prairies. Furthermore, this chapter uses localism as an approach to understand the wider condition and idea of prairie rurality.

Each chapter is a silo offering a glimpse into the rural condition, stand-alone elements that are disconnected so that they can be read compartmentally, but with enough cohesive threads to represent one sequential and unified study of representations of the

prairies. Each chapter is grounded in a specific theme: 'Digging In' is about the region's history, 'Mapping Out' is about space and place, and 'Returning To' is about community and memory, all discussed in relation to pertinent photographic accounts. Additionally, each chapter uses a unique spatial frame as an added parameter in its exploration of rural representations. Focused on Alberta, 'Digging In' uses the frame of provincialism (the study of specific political boundaries to understand social dispositions and ideas of place), 'Mapping Out' expands the scope and looks at the wider prairie through regionalism (the study of space constructed outside of political or formal boundaries), while 'Returning To' utilizes the framework of localism (the study of a particular site of interest as a microcosm of activity to understand how local dynamics and transactions influence the community) by focusing on a specific rural community. Constituted together these imagined communities form an interrelated tapestry of place(s): Mundare as a place, Alberta as a place and the wider region as a place, which overlap and mutually inform, contradict, and ultimately further our understanding of the prairies.

Justifying the Form

What follows in each of the three chapters is composed of three disparate but interconnected sections (analysis, visual narrative and written narrative) where visual and textual didactic and analytical texts are blended with creative non-fiction and visual forms. As a way to emphasize approachable knowledge and multiple audiences, the format of the study is structured so that the reader decides their own point of entry. As a result, there are thousands of permutations by which this dissertation can be read. This has also been done

to ensure that the narratives are not read as supplemental material or as 'data' but as critical writings in their own right. Reading the study in this way requires a leap of faith, or a number of leaps of faith, a leap towards embracing process and practice, and a leap towards play and experimentation inherent to any creative undertaking. By embracing a playful and non-traditional approach to not only research creation but its form, the project navigates away from disciplinary boundaries as a way to understand the rural prairies as a unique place, while also acknowledging the limits of specific academic disciplines and creative mediums. Critical analysis and visuals alone can provide specific insights, however each fails to provide a narrative voice, the voice of the landscape (or place) itself. There are tidbits of information not easily transmitted through a visual narrative or academic jargon which is fulfilled by the creative writing of nonfiction. These components work together (in order or out of order) to provide a unique telling of prairie place.

The use of images as contained chapter sections are used to express what sociologist and documentary photographer Luc Pauwels (2015) describes as "'unwordable' scientific insights" (p. 98) where images provide an avenue for the unspeakable or the unquantifiable to be heard. As W.J.T Mitchell (1994c) discusses in *Picture Theory*, images and text achieve and communicate excellence in different ways and operate as different, but equally valid, approaches for knowledge creation. By producing narrative components (visual and textual) a phenomenally-minded interdisciplinary approach is called upon to contribute a unique perspective alongside that of the traditionally trained sociologist (Harper, 1988). Narratives do more than provide additional context, they provide us another voice to leverage. As the father of visual sociology Howard Becker (2007) explores,

photos are just another way of 'telling', another language that we can leverage in our attempt to understand our surroundings. Each photo in the visual narrative sections of the following chapters tells us something essential to understanding the prairies, however, they are not meant to be de-coded individually but read in sequence, as a cohesive text and in relation to the study as a whole. This approach draws on the history of the photobook as a form of data and evidence but also as poetry and as ideas. The visual section of each chapter may also be thought of as (visual) essays about the prairies. Here we invoke the initial meaning of the word essayer as a way to make an attempt at understanding and to put forth a challenge in a less orthodox way (Pauwels, 2015). Furthermore, these visuals add an aesthetic value that has the ability to not only inform but also to move, or in Barthes' sense (1980) to prick the onlooker. As we continue down this path we move further away from the early objectivism associated with the photographic medium towards an approach that is more poetic or experimental (Pink, 2007; Edwards, 1992; Nichols, 1994). Social scientists often fail to adequately acknowledge that their activities can be classified as storytelling and content creation where academics are not only competing against one another for people's energy and time but also skilled producers outside of academia. Pauwels (2015) discusses Grady's idea of the visual essay and how it can revitalize sociology in the classroom, in peer-reviewed journals and beyond the walls of higher education. This is similar to how the photobook acts as an extended and tangible version of the photo-essay. We must also avoid what photojournalist Simon Norfolk characterizes as an oversimplification of the medium to tell complex stories (Ritchin, 2013). This is accomplished in this study by complementing the images with critical analysis and textual narrative.

It has taken the social sciences a considerable amount of time to embrace the textual narrative as a form of valid knowledge creation (Bochner & Riggs, 2014). Similar to the use of visual narratives, the textual gives emotional framing to subjects and subject matter and is used to humanize the social sciences by placing people, place and experience at its centre and by "inviting the development of reflexive, relational and interpretive methodologies and drawing attention not only on the actual but also to the possible" (Bochner & Riggs, 2014, p. 195). By taking the position of the storyteller, embracing textual narratives in the social sciences can "be considered a solution to a problem of general human concern, namely, the problem of how to translate *knowing* into *telling* (White, 1987, p. 5). The narrative approach offers a unique voice that differs (but also complements) the neutral and objective voice of the social sciences and focuses more on *telling* and *living*, than *knowing* (Tedlock, 2011). As P. Bochner and Nicholas A. Riggs (2014) write on the approach, it is "less about covering life experience with disembodied concepts and more about finding ways to personify the 'untamed wilderness' of lived experience" (p. 206). This is similar to Barthes' (1983) interpretation of the use of narrative as a *translatable* medium (White, 1987). Alone, visual and textual narratives have the ability to replicate worlds and ideas in ways traditional academia has largely shuttered, however utilized conjunctively and aided by sound scholarship, the effect can be synergistic and powerful.

In the opt-repeated *On Photography* (2014), Susan Sontag quotes Lewis Hine who famously said "if I could tell the story in words I wouldn't need to lug a camera" (p. 145); however the opposite is also true, if I could tell a story in just images I wouldn't need to lug

around a notepad or a MacBook. The methodological form this study follows provides a creative and critical balance to understanding rural space. Although under-utilized, this approach is hardly innovative as the work of renowned visual sociologist Doug Harper (2004) illustrates: "the three elements, visual images, sociological analysis and observations, build a composite portrait - a Gestalt - that offers more than the modes of analysis offer separately" (p. 93). The portion that is created is both unified albeit qualitatively distinguishable from the sum of its parts, creating what Sergei Eisenstein in his seminal 1939 essay on montage defined as a 'third something' (Di Bello, Wilson & Zamir, 2012). The result of this melding is a "…synergy of distinct, but combined, forms of expression: images, words, layout and design, adding up to a scientifically informed statement" (Pauwels, 2015, p. 11). In other words, the format is indicative of a middle-ground approach that uses narration and art as a storytelling device to deliver rigorous and empirically-sound content, or what Ivan Brady (1991) calls 'artful science' where "the language of science merges with the aesthetics of art" (Benson, 1993, p. xi). This constitutes an experimental form within the academy, while operating as a closer approximation to conventional ideas of storytelling found in new journalism, creative nonfiction and mainstream press (Bochner & Riggs, 2014). This represents a move from what LeGuin (1986) calls the ' father tongue' of the social sciences towards one that is more expressive, subjective and experiential. Through a blended outcome-orientated approach (in and outside of academia), this format achieves its theoretical objectives while addressing a praxis gap present within academia. Furthermore, since each section provides a different way to think about the prairies, each section can be read with varying intent. For instance, the analytical sections can be read as standard academic texts and for the merit of their

ideas and their rigor, the visual narrative sections as a series of photo-books or photographic articulations allowing us to visualize the prairies, and the textual narrative sections can be read as creative non-fiction that conveys crucial ideas of prairie living in simpler terms.

Ruralism in the West

A Brief History of Prairie Settlement

What follows is necessarily a more brief discussion of historical events on the Canadian Prairies over the last 150 years, informed by in-depth histories such as Gerald Friesen's *The Canadian Prairies* (1984) or Douglas Francis & Howard Palmer's edited collection *The Prairie West* (1992). Above all, this dissertation acknowledges that the Canadian Prairies and its landscapes are the result of colonial settlement that displaced Indigenous Peoples (Wolfe, 1999; Kunard, 2002; Payne & Kunard, 2011; Rowe & Tuck, 2017). Through this process of colonization, new settler spaces and landscapes were created, and Indigenous rights and ways of life were removed. Photography often acted as a parallel technology documenting and furthering this process—an optical technology of empire (Giblett & Tolonen, 2012). Although this project is ultimately haunted by this knowledge, it remains a spectral concern (Cariou, 2006) that could not become a central aspect of the dissertation. The central objective of this project is the photographic visualization of the Prairies, and Aboriginal image-makers are discussed when they adopt lens-based practices, whether or not their practice is defined as documentary. This is addressed particularly in the analytical section of the 'Digging In' chapter in an effort to

include a review of Indigenous artists and their images within the larger research creation project.

The New World produced a unique set of conditions for the romanticization of country virtues. A seemingly limitless wilderness elevated by a mixture of Frontier Theory's westward captivation (Turner, 1894) and divine Manifest Destiny. The New World became a virgin space to first fear and then to pacify and develop. Whereas Protestant Americans viewed the land as a gift from God, Canadians viewed the fortitude of the settler and his ability to 'prove' the land as the Godly gift itself. Helped along by a more moderate climate, Americans saw western settlement move swiftly while Canadian settlers held an equal ambition for settlement of their West (Bennett, 1969; Owram, 2016). As the American frontier closed with settlers finding themselves on the shores of the Pacific, the Canadian frontier, comprised of 'unsettled' crown territory amounting to half of the British colony, was beginning to open. The metaphysical idea of an open frontier does not invade the Canadian psyche as it has in its Southern neighbour, as Voisey (1988) found in his in-depth study of Vulcan, Alberta, the idea of a Canadian frontier is a rather troublesome one. The physical frontier still exists in Canada, in the northern permafrost of the prairie provinces, in the expanses of British Columbia's interior, and in the Far North, spaces most Canadians have little interaction with. While on the prairies, the frontier, long past its physical formation, still holds significance because as a symbolic frontier it lingers on (Voisey, 1988).

The Canadian Prairies, stolen from the Indigenous peoples, trampled by the rancher, homesteaded by the farmer, financed by eastern-bankers, and policed by lawmen in red tunics, underwent a quiet revolution. Settlement and small-scale food production en masse would be the keys to turning a seemingly empty and resource-rich area into a productive extraction-based economy. The mass settlement and building of communities where none had existed before (Voisey, 1988) was used as a mechanism to bridge the nation from coast-to-coast, mitigate threats of American expansionism from the south, and ultimately secure the future of the Canadian nation. However, true unification of the nation did not occur with Canada's 'Last Spike' near Revelstoke, BC, which bridged but did not bind the nation (Francis, 1992, 1997). The unification of the nation hinged on rural families throwing their backs against the proverbial wheel of progress on the Canadian frontier—cowboys, ranch-hands, miners, outlaws, and farmers (Felske & Rasporich, 2004). The history of Western Canada is a modern apologue—a highly constructed and curated story of material progress and economic development. It was only in 1896 that large-scale settlement began in the Western provinces (Laycock, 1990), eight years after George Eastman developed the first easy-to-use Kodak camera. When the United States and Eastern Canada were urbanizing, uncluttered farmers were breaking virgin soils on the Canadian Prairies. This was in high contrast to land ownership in other parts of North America and Europe where cheap land was in short supply and workers could be exploited. In Western Canada, the individual and his family (the farmer class) could own land and with a potent mix of luck and mental and physical fortitude could produce a life from it (Meinig, 1986). Those who lacked the prescribed mixture of luck and fortitude to 'prove the land' moved onward, often to small towns to help service the agrarian entrepreneurs, and

later to larger urban centres as regional density allowed. As a result, the family farm is a form deeply etched in the psyche of the Western Canadian often overshadowing the importance of other extract-based industries (logging, mining, oil production, etc.).

To ensure wide scale settlement a narrative of expanse and abundance (a garden myth), the myth of the "The Last Best West" was conceived and adopted by parties with vested interest (financiers, transportation mongrels, and political mavericks) (Harrison, 1977). As early as 1869 notions of the prairies, previously described as barren or as a semi-arctic wilderness, began to be discussed as fertile; weather conditions, previously described as inhospitable and biting, began to be described as mild and good for the soul (Owram, 2016; Rees, 1988). This is a significant diversion from not only the prevailing reading of prairie landscape, but also the garrison mentality of Eastern Canada of fearing emptiness and the unknown that influenced early attitudes towards Canadian landscape (Frye, 1971).

The shifting narrative of the prairies from inhospitable to plentiful helped establish a case for mass settlement. Looking at the earliest photographic slides from the Hind Expedition's photographer Humphry Lloyd Hime (1858) the idea of a barren prairie is communicated. Hime's image titled 'the Prairie on the Banks of the Red River' produces the nowhereness and everywhereness of the prairie landscape. Free of discernible features, like the Rideau canal in Ottawa or Mount Robson in British Columbia, Hime's images of the prairies provide a visual bridge, a blank canvas, of the prairies on the cusp of a great social and geographical transformation (Birrell, 1975; Kunard, 2002). The coming changes would

disrupt the serene prairie ecosystem and Indigenous peoples' interaction with it in irreversible ways. Perceptual changes of the landscape also occurred with the open prairie taking on a more passive role as conquerable, however the space would still be read by outsiders to the prairies as a non-place, a space defined more by what it is not than what it is (Rogers & Ramsay, 2014).

For early settlers the space moved from inhospitable to ideal, the landscape began to take on a biblical reading, the never-ending sky became 'God's country'. A delicate mixture of religiosity and expansionism emerged in the settling of the region, a region publicized as the largest land grab in human history. Descriptions of the prairies become a significant marketable commodity; an almost Edwardian real-estate frenzy ensued in Europe, Central Canada and America for the 'Last Best West'. Between 1880 and 1930 the population of Western Canada grew from 'nothing' to 300,000 farms and 2000 nucleated centres (Troughton, 1995). Towns and farms were based on the geometrical convenience of a gridded survey system defined by townships and range roads, with rural communities being at the epicentre of commerce and western growth. Farms and rural small towns (RSTs) were the building blocks of society in Western Canada and were required before sizable cities with specialized industry and services could emerge and prosper. These cities would recruit the talent of people from rural areas in a continuous process. Once a town was established it rarely saw steady and stable population growth beyond its initial boom years. As a result, many rural communities have retained their populations from the 1930s, some have diminished in size or altogether disappeared, while others have occasionally prospered.

Setting Ground: Rural Preamble

Why The Rural Matters Now More Than Ever…

In the wake of the 2016 U.S. presidential election, the defeat of the Democrats to Donald Trump was not simply framed by progressives' inability to secure critical swing states in a tired narrative of right-wing red versus left-wing blue states. Instead, as America woke the next day and rubbed its eyes, it became clear the critical failure was to overlook the rural vote that led to clusters of counties shifting the election, rather than whole states or regions. Of course, states still registered as either blue or red but zoom in and you see red states with fortress-like blue clusters in urban areas across the nation. On the whole, and regardless of region, skin colour, gender, and religion, urbanites rejected the Republican party from the high plains Boise in Idaho to the inner streets of Baltimore. The Democrat party's fall from grace with the working poor and the middle-class and their inability to reconcile this during the election signalled the consequence of not understanding rural people, their spaces, and their way of life (Hochschild, 2018; Morgan and Lee, 2018). The election signalled an ideological cry for help, rural America's new Alamo, a last ditch effort to be heard, to be understood, and to (re)claim power.

This is not solely an American phenomenon but a global one. Alberta saw the rise of the UCP (United Conservative Party) with its racist and xenophobic rhetoric. Brexit saw shocked Londoners outnumbered, Paris's liberal tenure is being encroached by Marine Le Pen and her right-wing party, Tokyo balloons as the nation's population shrinks, China and India speed towards modernity and urbanism is leaving rural populations as secondary

citizenry. In Canada and The United States, as rural whites continue to feel left behind, populist candidates give rise to divisive politics engineered to separate groups and gain emotional favour. In rural Western Canada, where the economic backbone is manually-intensive resource extraction, a feeling of being left behind and underrepresented prevails. These spaces are considerably more conservative in their votes than they are in contrast to the liberalizing hubs of Edmonton and Saskatoon. The following section will explore the rural vs urban divide, its historical development and its contemporary significance, as well as, the ramifications of placing the rural on the periphery as a way to understand the region's lesser populated spaces.

The concept of the rural as an idyllic space is an ancient literary device (Marx, 1964) as old as civilization itself (Williams, 1973). This device originated in philosophy, literature, poetry and art and dates back to classical times (Bunce, 1994). The most prolific story for Judeo-Christian's is the virtue instilled in the Garden of Eden and the metaphor for their exile out of a rural paradise (Smith, 1970). This is a compelling metaphor that exemplifies the oscillating narrative of the rural where Adam and Eve leave one rural for another, from the safety of paradise to the harsh realities of the wilderness.

The urban-industrial revolution resulted in the first mass depopulation of rural areas (what German philosopher Max Weber would term *Landflucht*), as a result, County Life reformers began to champion the country as virtuous and economically rewarding (Danbom, 1979; Jones, 1982; MacDougall, 1913; Berger, 1970). However, this is not a new process, as the rural as virtuous is a trans-cultural and time-old narrative. As Michael

Bunce (1994) writes, “modern sentiment for the countryside is the latest version of an ancient theme” (p. 4). More recently, the narrative of rural idyllicism has been used in times of urban crisis; as Claudia Oltmanns (2016) argues, “the countryside has the function to preserve what the city 'destroys'” (p. 61). During the interwar years in Western Canada, rural communities were positioned as a space of social stability and order, a place where the broken morality of the soul could be repaired, while cities were vilified as the cause of social breakdown (Wetherell, 2005). This is confirmed by early and mid-century sociologists adding academic weight to the idea that city life creates situations where the breakdown of community occurs (White & White, 1962).

At the same time urban spaces are viewed as centres of community breakdown, they are also being discussed as the frontier for economic opportunities (Woods, 2007). As Wetherell (2005) discusses, despite the frequency with which town advantages are detailed, people continue to drift to the cities, searching not only for economic benefit but for social and cultural advantage. There exists an unbalanced power differential between the rural and the urban (Williams, 1973), one that oscillates between making the case for virtuous living in urban and rural areas. Looking beyond Canadian borders, we can see that whether romanticized for its danger or its quiet idyllic nature, ruling depictions of the countryside have historically been understood in terms of literary and artistic expressions of a few great thinkers (Bunce, 1994). In his treatise *The Country and the City,* Williams (1973) explores how rural idyllicism is constructed, disseminated, and reconstituted through literature. Since the advent of photography, visual representations of rural spaces have advanced from the brush to the pixel, a topic explored by Wells (2011) and other

photo-theorists interested in the incomplete and 'open to interpretation' meaning of photographs. In addition to common representations of the rural as pristine, as a space of moral superiority, the rural is paradoxically also characterized by multiple negative associations (Thomas, 2011). As Phillips (1998) argues, rural geography has been recognized as an aging and highly racialized, nationalized, and sexualized space. Rural spaces are characterized by population loss, outmigration, and an aging population and minorities often vacate rural areas within five years of settling (Fleras, 2015). In the face of urbanormativity, where the rural is abnormal, unreal and deviant (Thomas, 2011), rural spaces are being branded as hot-bed for conservatism, backwardness, and regressive spaces of community (Rye, 2006). Economic downturn and deficiency in public services (health, recreational, adult education, etc.) have further hampered the rural's ability to compete with urban spaces for young workers, families, and economic opportunities.

These competing factors point to a rural that is multi-dimensional, a rural that is well beyond the idyllic British conception, or the one envisioned by Benjamin Franklin and later Thomas Jefferson and St. John De Crèvecœur when they wrote about the great agrarian state. The post-modern echo is to intertwine the ideas of 'who is rural' and 'what is rural' where multiple groups and localities are re-defining this space (Mormont, 1990; DuPuis, 2006). At the extreme these communities are disappearing and dying (Kenway, Kraack, & Hickey-Moody, 2006). In Western Canada there exists a discrepancy between the past and the present, the nostalgia that comes along with longing to return to a simpler time when there was rural 'prosperity' in the region. From a photographic perspective, we often see the glorification of landscape and community mixed with dystopian and troubled

images of 'the country'. The historical backbone of Western Canada can be found in its rural spaces, as evidenced in the romanticized tales of frontierism defining the region. As a result, we create the idea of the timeless rural and perpetuate the rural as an outdated space, a place out of time through photography and other representational forms (Zeleny, 2012). Similar to Thomas King's (2013) writings on the Dead Indian, where the idea of the Aboriginal is a historical concept rather than a contemporary reality, perhaps there is a Dead Rural.

First and Second Rural

In his article *The Two-ness of Rural Life and the Ends of Rural Scholarship*, Michael M. Bell (2007) presents his concept of the two rurals. For Bell, first and second rural represents the prevailing conceptions of rurality. First rural addresses the spatial, material, and ecological dimensions, while second rural addresses its symbolic and ideational dimensions. Photographic representations are ultimately caught between the two, largely a rendering of space through the document as related to first rural, while also lending itself to second rural through its ability to create symbolic spaces and abstractions. These two epistemologies of rurality can be equated to the idea of the interpretive (ideal moment) and statistical (material moment). As Christiane Sörensen and Wiltrud Simbürger (2016) write,

> "the rural idea in its symbolic and ideational articulation is about creating a place rather than space, or perhaps it is about further defining a space. This second rural

> concerns itself with the ideas and narratives of the rural, from the nostalgic idyll to social opts and collectivism to backwardness, conservatism, and poverty" (p. 66).

Bell's concept of first rural is the rural that 'everyone knows', the one that is categorically pitted against dominant forms of urban life and settlement. It can be visually expressed and like a feature on a map it can be pointed to. The postmodern second rural is more difficult to classify, as it is more about 'representations of the rural' and about ideation of the rural (Bell, 2007). This lends the second rural well to abstraction, as Belgian sociologist Marc Mormont (1990) writes, "the rural is a category of thought" (p. 40). Human Geographer Paul Cloke (2006a) describes the rural as a social construction, a way of thinking about the distinctiveness of rural space from a socio-spatial perspective. The second rural is the rural of ideas and associations, it is where the good, the bad, and the ugly interact, it is where the prairies grasses bathed in idyllic sunlight mingle with the unrefined and isolated Other. The image of a sunbathed field can be both tranquil and nostalgic, while also being isolating and backwards.

Michael Bell (2007) also argues for a *rural plural* vision that equally embraces both rurals as a way to advance our understanding of the rural condition. Bell's idea of a unified rurality shares similarities with what British geographer Andy C. Pratt (1996) describes as an attempt to arrive at 'true rurality', but who ultimately concedes to the idea of 'many rurals'. However admirable the idea of a true rurality may be, it is limited by the representational power of available cultural texts to render it discernible. As Halfacree (1993) concludes, the idea of an "all-embracing definition of the rural is neither desirable

or feasible" (p. 34). Following this reasoning, the rural is an imaginative space, difficult to categorize, and often only legible enough for reasons of simple consumption. Which is rendered occurs numerous cultural texts, such as novels, films, poetry, and photography (Williams, 1973).

Western Ruralism in the Position of the 'Other'

How often can it be argued that a predominantly white, middle-class group occupies the position of the Other in society, a position where the group in question is subordinated by a group in society that is also largely a white-patriarchal order? However, increasingly so this is the reality that many rural communities on the prairies experience. The rural is a site of a number of power differentials, there are the 'visible' Other (minority groups) and then there is the 'Rural Other'. The 'Rural Other', is not necessarily what modernity exploits, but rather what has been left behind, as it continues its push toward mechanization and urbanity. Taken together, the combination of American hegemony from the south, regional dismissiveness from the east, and urban indifference internally, a unique situation is created where the rural is placed in a position of the 'Rural Other', a series of landscapes, objects, events and sparsely populated caricatured figures widely consumed as spectacle (Roberts, 2018). A series of orbits, American orbits (Flaherty & Manning, 1994), Central Canada orbits, and urban orbits contribute to the creation of the Rural Other. This form of Otherness is not defined by racial difference but geography, the Socs versus the Greasers, the uptown city-slickers versus the dust-covered hicks, a discourse focused on power and place, rather than power and pigment or power and

gender. It is about the Othering of a place and a lifestyle, disenfranchisement layered upon disenfranchisement. It is important to remember that 'the 'Other' is not necessarily a person or group but can signal a pattern in a socio-economic hierarchy (Elder, 1989). And although none of the aforementioned forms of Othering are particularly severe, once compounded they do merit discussion. This can be expressed through Western Canada's large and quirky monuments, or its rodeos and demolition derbies. The Calgary Stampede, "the greatest outdoor show on earth", involves the 'Hollywoodization' of a rural culture into a commodified form for urban consumption, or what American writer bell hooks (2009) would term the 'commodification of Otherness'. As a result, the rural occupies the role of a residual cultural category in Canadian culture. hooks' idea of embracing the 'primitive' also applies to the rural periphery. Ruralites are often recounted as backward, the unwanted sludge, the suds at the bottom of the finished beer. If for hooks (2009) the Other is in fear of being "eaten, consumed, and forgotten" (hooks, p. 380), then the Rural Other is what has already been either shit out or discarded, the detritus we put aside to make room for more important things (Tompkins, 2006).

If the rural is a residual category, then contemporary academic discourse is not complacent in this process. A common function of liberalized institutions is to discuss ruralism from an urban perspective. Urban language and discourse is applied to rural space, further adding to the peripheralization of the rural. Marginalized and culturally under-represented in numerous facets of society, the history of those at the bottom of the social hierarchy (the farmhand, the "Indian", etc.) are seldom told in first-person. Thus the economic, social, or political narrative put forth for people embodying a rural lifestyle is

often not their own. Demographically, ruralites are now the social minority on the prairies and have been for over half a century. This raises the question of who and how are rural spaces and their inhabitants represented and are they adequately self-represented? Who and how are their narratives being recounted and possibly co-opted by other social groups? As Michael Troughton (1995) reaffirms, "rural Canada has moved from a dominant position to that of dependence and residual status within the national system; the result is a system that is fragmented, increasingly powerless, and near collapse" (p. 290). This is not only signalling the removal of the rural's dominance, although it can be argued there never was much (outside of some short-lived attempts as farmer cooperatives and socialist-leaning governments), but also the signalling of the coming demise of a unique cultural body.

The removal of power from rural Canada is not solely a 20th Century occurrence. The process is tied to an economic system heavily reliant on staples where Western Canada operates as an internal colony of the nation's urban centres where wealth and power coalesce (Woodard, 2012). The system of colony-like resource-extraction moved from one controlled by Britain to one controlled by urban centres in Ottawa, Toronto, and Montreal, and eventually by urban spaces of Edmonton and Calgary on the prairies themselves. As a result, the ruralite is both the colonizer and the colonized. Canadian scholars are intimately aware of the nation's relationships to resource extraction: Macintosh and Innis' work on staple theory, Innis on the fur trade (1930), Innis on the cod fishery (1940), Lower on timber (1933, 1938), and Fowke on wheat (1957), where staples theory is a useful guide for understanding post-productivist ideas in Canada, particularly on the prairies where

productivism (otherwise known as growthism) still operates as the benchmark of success. The power dynamic is not solely one that is east versus west, old money versus new, but one that is consistently urban versus rural, where the rural is continuously placed in a position where it is unable to assert dominance over its own economic output and financial position. The failure of coal towns like Nordegg and Cadomin in Southwest Alberta, and more recently Uranium City in Saskatchewan, suggest the fragile nature now faced by Small Rural Towns and rural hinterlands whose primary economic function is resource extraction.

Richards and Pratt, in their 1979 classic *Prairie Capitalism* controversially asserted, "we find no confirmation of the thesis that provinces, heavily dependent on the exploitation and sale of staples, are thereby placed in a permanent position of political dependency *vis a vis* external capital" (p. 8). As Sociologist Paul Kellogg (2015) explores in *Prairie Capitalism Revisited*, contrary to common belief, most of Alberta's oil and gas related operations are Canadian and mainly Alberta owned; this represented what Kellogg calls the "Canadianization of oil, gas, and bitumen" (p. 223). A valid critique, however it downplays the global nature of staple production leaving small communities dependent on external factors that are often national or global in nature. Furthermore, the importance of national and international support diminishes as a regional economic class emerges and external capital is replaced by urban capital from prairie-based cities.

Canada has always retained its status as a colony. This process of Othering is ongoing and creates a 'layer-cake' of colonization. French Canada, at the hands of the

English Dominion is not only the victim, but also the perpetrator as European settlements (French and English) systematically disqualified the rights of Indigenous nations in the form of colonization. As Britain distanced itself during the post-war period, America swooped in with its car culture and rock hits. As Northrop Frye (2003) elegantly states, Canada has already had the "…feeling that head office is somewhere else, in London, Paris, Rome, or Washington, and that the individual gets his dignity from his place in the organization" (p. 468). The term 'colony', commonly used by political economists in the 1970s and critical Canadian scholars prior to that to describe dimensions of extraction and unequal distribution, has returned under the guise of the 'resource colony'. The resource colony, otherwise known as 'exploitation colonialism' is often used to describe practices taking place by developed countries over the less developed. The most common example being the Global North's ability to accumulate wealth "by intervening into the hinterland to organize the collection or extraction of the raw material staple required in the metropolis" (Kellogg, 2015, p. 255). However, this process can be regionalized, where lesser economic centres are exploited by more dominant ones, for instance, Edmonton's socioeconomic dominance over agricultural production in the hinterland. In either scenario, deals are made, hands are shaken, and raw materials flow to cities and far-off ports, while finished goods flow back to the hinterlands.

Neighbourly Othering

The Canadian Prairies, similar to the American Midwest, is placed in a position of the Other, a space that has great productivity capacity but is best kept in a position of an

internal neo-colony. The Canadian Prairies operate as a colony within a colony, echoing Harold Innis's evocative phrase that Canada has moved from a colony to a nation, back to a colony. As scholar Glen Williams' (1976) explored in the 1970s, Canada still embodies a colonial or semi-colonial status with 80% of our outbound trade going to the United States and only 20% of theirs going north. A decade later Mel Watkins (2002) would echo this point "asserting that Levitt's analysis and the school of political economy it engendered has proven that Canada is 'the most neo-colonial country in the world'" (p. xii). Canadian studies has long occupied itself with the nation's role to America—a moon orbiting a planet. Sharing the largest unprotected international border, Canadians often speak positively about their brothers born of the same mother. Others, more critically, label this an unbalanced relationship where a neo-imperialist juggernaut reduces Canada's ability to assert itself economically and socially. Bruce Elder (1989), discussing communication theorist Anthony Wilden, writes, "when under the oppression of what he refers to as a dominating Other, we take for our identity everything we believe the other not to be" (p. 10). This is a common feature of identity formation in individualized societies—to define ourselves we emphasize a commonality shared amongst the group while highlighting the distinction between those within the interior and those on the periphery (Williams & Korn, 2017). But as Edler (1989) goes on to discuss, "any identity achieved through the process of negation is only an imaginary identity and not a real one" (p. 10). Canadians are well aware of the cultural pull of our southern neighbour, but they often forget how this affects their understanding of themselves as a nation made up of distinct regions. While constantly looking south, Canada's sole neighbour fails to look back (Berland, 2009). Borrowing a classical sociological theorem from William and Dorothy Thomas (1928), if social actors

believe a thing to be real then it is real by its social consequences. At the regional level, the ideas and tropes of the American West have heavily influenced Western Canadian myths and ideas—cowboy culture, gold and land rushes, were not made but borrowed. What can be observed within the prairie region is the plurality of identities; the miner picks at the mountain, the farmer sows the fields and the cowboy roams the arid lower prairies.

Western Alienation

A history of the Canadian nation is incomplete without a discussion of resource extraction, where land was settled and forts were struck. The prevailing colonial narrative situates regions as belonging to either the heartland (those with power) or the hinterland (those without). From the perspective of the prairie scholar, the prairie region has been consistently placed in the position of the hinterland (McCann, 1982; Richards, 1968; Careless, 1967, 1989). In his book *Promise of Eden* Doug Owram (2016) explores how the underlying expansionist movement for western growth was predicated on the assumption that the hinterland would serve central Canada's economic needs. From the beginning of its gridded and settled form, Western Canada has inhabited a position of economic dependency through internal colonization where it was economically and culturally exploited by Central and Eastern Canada (Lawson, 2005). This is a common sentiment in colonial power dynamics where the periphery must serve the core (Thomas, 2011). The 'economic Other', that was present early in Western Canada's development, continues to linger with the idea of Western Alienation featuring prominently in the political lexicon of many in the West (Lawson, 2005). At the root of Western Alienation is a regional

discontent and real and imagined differences in political ideology (Gibbins & Berdahl, 2003) with a general call for secession and not separation (Pratt & Stevenson, 1981). As Robert Lawson (2005) argues "'Western Alienation' is both an exceptional type of regional alienation and is more salient for many Western Canadians than other types of alienation" (p. 127). An example of this being Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta being denied the ownership rights to their natural resources collectively for 110 years (Smith, 2010).

A number of events, along with social and political movements, have emerged as a result of this exploitative relationship between Canada's centre and the West; the Riel Rebellion, the Social Credit Movement, the United Farmers Association, and early forms of Western Populism. A historical feeling of alienation from the centre, the cultural Toronto, the political Ottawa and the separatist Quebec, has been combated by the West's strong economic position within the nation. This is a similar position of misunderstanding that pervades Montana and Idaho's position that creates dislike and ambivalence towards New York and Washington. Stroll into a bar in Great Falls, Montana or Boise, Idaho and they will soon tell you how they feel about the East. Western Alienation as a thesis aids us in understanding one component of the dynamics facing rural spaces on the Canadian Prairies, but is limited in its ability to explain macro nation-to-nation dynamics, as well as, more micro exchanges taking place within the West itself, for instance, between neighbouring rural and urban spaces themselves. As Lawson (2015) argues, Gibbin's Western Alienation ignores the regional complexity of the West and the marginalization that occurs when the West feels it lacks the appropriate political representation.

The idea of Western Alienation, a term used to describe political and economic relationships, can also be expressed in cultural terms. A common perception of the prairies by outsiders is that this place is not a destination but a space to traverse, a way-point onto something else. Riffing off of Auge's (2008) ideas of space, the Prairie occupies a geographical non-space, a gap that one flies over or drives through, rather than to. The rural is the "nowhere" point between two "somewheres". This is a concept discussed in Randal Rogers and Christine Ramsay's (2014) edited work *Overlooking Saskatchewan* but the concept is rather universal to the prairies. Alberta escapes this position only slightly with the bitumen-stained pants it wears and its small claim to mountain paradise which sits in stark contrast to the rest of the prairies.

In-Province Alienation

In-province Alienation, or urban-to-rural alienation is another prominent form of Othering affecting the Canadian Prairies. A case study by Philip Resnick (2000) highlights regional discontent within British Columbia where certain regions exist at odds with one another. Resnick uses a regional frame to explore discontent within the province, however, another way to discuss the study and its finding is based on population densities and along a rural/urban divide. By analyzing political orientations and voter patterns, it is evident that urban areas exhibit a higher concentration of liberal views while rural areas exhibit more conservative views. This is true of Edmonton in Alberta, Regina in Saskatchewan and Winnipeg in Manitoba. Regional alienation is also felt in other peripheral areas, acutely in

the Canadian North and (Far) East, where urban vs rural divides are less apparent (Henry, 2002).

To reiterate, the prairies are placed in the disenfranchised position of the Other (Krause, 2013). This sense of othering stems from three compounding sources—Eastern Canadian dominance, American imperialism, as well as, indifference from urban centres within the West itself. Collectively, these forces diminish the cultural vitality of the prairies, where ruralites internalize their lifestyle as irrelevant, under threat of disappearing, and at times backward. And given the prairies' economic competitiveness, ruralites increasingly feel their position at the bottom of the ladder is undeserved. It is important to note that its best to avoid a 'victim position' and the potential vilification of the 'Other' (or in this case Others) that comes with the territory of lacking a strong cultural identity. They are not yet disenfranchised in ways other poor areas of North America are and perhaps that will not be their fate, but there does exist in the region a latent feeling of being ill-equipped (or perhaps unwilling) to deal with potential changes. As a result, there is the possibility that the region's rural areas will continue to retreat into political conservatism that breeds divisive politics and radicalization. It is also important to make note of specific rural groups within the prairies who are severely socioeconomically disenfranchised, particularly Indigenous communities and other 'at risk' groups (youth, transients, sexual minorities, elderly, immigrants) to ensure their needs and concerns are recognized (Hurd & Woodward, 1991). Understanding the conditions and forms of Othering that contribute to sentiments of rural alienation on the prairies allows for an entry point into not only

understanding the dominant expression of rural culture, but that allows us to draw conclusions as to what lies on the horizon for the rural.

Ethical Considerations of the Study

Visually representing rural communities can be a sensitive matter. As a result, the fieldwork prioritizes care for its subjects first, to the study next, and the researcher last (Fontana & Frey 2008, p. 72). Speaking reflexively, my internalized identity is at the root of my ethical relationship to the research site. Issues of identity and intent are further complicated by my fluid history as an inhabitant, worker, photographer, and researcher within the region. During all fieldwork interactions I held my primary identity as a visual researcher and leveraged my knowledge of the region, while also being cognizant of the blurred lines of insider-outsider to limit researcher biases (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994). The insider-outsider relationship and membership role I've internalized is contingent on the community or sub-region I am interacting with. For instance, chapters 'Digging In' and 'Mapping Out' largely document rural communities and spaces in Alberta that I have significant knowledge of but where I have never acted as an insider, therefore operating as peripheral member research. The chapter 'Returning To' differs in that it is centered around a community in which I have been an insider for over three decades, the result of which is an extensive and intimate body of knowledge of the community's operations and (official and unofficial) history making my role an active, rather than passive, member researcher (Adler & Adler, 1987). Being reflexive of my roles as insider/outsider and member/non-member helps establish guidelines to create ethical interactions with

participants, while also producing provocative representations of rural individuals and their environments, with the ultimate goal of reducing harm and producing thought-provoking and socially-engaged scholarship (Adler & Adler, 1987).

Ethical protocols have been designed for the project to ensure the principles of respect for persons (and their privacy), concern for welfare (protection from harm), and justice are not infringed upon, particularly as they relate to photographing rural individuals and the use of archival material (see Appendix IV). Defined here, harm reduction is a series of strategies used to limit potential harm to subjects (real and perceived harm). Case studies of documentary photographers and social science researchers have helped me navigate the difficulties of conducting ethically-mind social research where dissemination is critical to the philosophy of the study. Furthermore, the protocols aim to ensure the researcher is cognizant of evolving situations where power dynamics are present (issues of gender, ethnicity, education deficit, etc.) between participants and the researcher (Fontana & Frey, 2008). As a result, after exchanges with participants, I have continued to evaluate my role within the research. This is achieved by weekly reviews of field-books and photographs that have assisted in identifying and mitigating ethical or morally weak points in the research.

Interactions with rural prairie dwellers occurred through referrals and chance encounters, the sum of these interactions having been largely anecdotal. Requesting a written consent form in these scenarios has significantly altered the interaction and has negatively affected the outcomes by formalizing the exchange. Furthermore, the use of a

signed consent form is intrusive and in the context of an institutional framework, ethical considerations are disputably "out of date for the purpose of qualitative research and entirely useless for the development of culturally, racially, and ethically sensitive methods" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 1123), particularity those that pertain to visual or archival research creation (the blending of creative and academic research as a form of scholarly investigation. This study has a general hesitation towards the use of signed consent forms as they operate as overly foreign and bureaucratic operations to rural communities. However, they are fundamental to protecting participants, therefore, signed consent forms were common practice in ensuring the rights of the individuals who were being photographed were not violated. These forms were employed when an individual was the subject/ focal-point of an image; groupings of people in public settings, or in situations where an individual's face was hidden a form was not required. The consent form allowed the research ethos to be clearly outlined for the subjects, while also helping establish transparency between the researcher and the communities/ individuals photographed. However, scenarios exist where a consent form would seem foreign and legalistic, this could negatively impact interactions and hinder the outcomes of the research. To remedy participant hesitation based on a written contract, a verbal consent process was incorporated into the ethics protocols. In this scenario, a verbal consent form is acceptable only when the participant is willing to engage in the study and have their portrait taken, but have declined to sign a written consent form for one of the following reasons: issues of illiteracy, fear of legality or a foreign bureaucratic process (real or imagined), or a cultural preference to form verbal contracts. In a rural culture of 'word is bond' and a 'handshake seals a deal', and where bureaucratic formality and institutions are met with coldness,

there is a social precedent for agreeing upon a verbal understanding. If a potential participant declined signing a form because they did not want to be involved in the study, then a verbal consent form was not an option. Participants could also reserve the right to revoke their consent at any point during the research process and contact information was exchanged at the discretion of the subject for this purpose (Pauwels, 2008; Wiles et al., 2012). Print information was made available to the participants in the form of a popular format, a postcard ('contact information form'), designed to provide the participant with information about the study. Chapters that utilize the Keepsake archive or other regional-based archives were not subject to an academic ethics process as they comprise publicly accessible collections, and are free of any 'reasonable expectations of privacy'. However, issues of copyright and ownership of private archival material are more complex matters; in these scenarios (particularly for the 'Returning To' chapter) consent is required from the holder of the private archive. Additional considerations will also be taken when disseminating these images to ensure they are being used in an ethical manner and when possible that the 'right to reproduce' has been granted from the individuals, organizations, or entities holding ownership of the images.

Production as Method

This study of the prairie region is situated between the disciplinary cross-roads of sociology, documentary photography, cultural studies, cultural geography, and Canadian studies. To address its inherent interdisciplinary nature, *Visualizing The Canadian Prairies* utilizes a unique mixed-methods approach (Cresswell, 2010; Greene 2007; Johnson,

Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007), as opposed to a single methodology to study, observe, imagine, and represent rural places (Tilley, 1994) with the overarching approach being rooted in visual ethnography (Pink, 2001), visual sociology (Harper 1998a, 2012; Pauwels, 2015), and arts-based research (Cole & Knowles, 2008; Barone & Eisner 1997; Speiser, 2004). Additionally, the project draws heavily from contemporary documentary studies, as it relates to visual sociology and practice-based approaches (by artists and academics) to explore representations of the prairies. In an attempt to produce a critical and creative method for interpreting the prairies, the academic rigour of visual sociology is paired with the universality of documentary photography and the inventiveness of arts-based research (ABR) methods. Through in-depth fieldwork, the approach advances praxis as a valid research method (Patti, 1986), where through movement and experience understanding is achieved (Lather, 1986; Roth, 2006) and the particularities of both the townscape and the landscape of the Canadian Prairies are rendered perceptible. The following section details the methodological underpinnings of the study's mixed methods approach through a discussion of the interconnectivity of visual ethnography, visual sociology, and arts-based research.

Visual Ethnography

From its early adoption by anthropologists to its contemporary use in numerous disciplines, ethnographers have long embraced the camera as an objective recording device (Pink, 2001). Through the appearance of removing bias, traditional ethnographers naively supported the narrative of the 'realist tale' generated by the camera (Edwards, 1992,

1997a). While anthropologists have expanded their 'tool-kits' during the 20th Century to include the use of imagery in a variety of ways (images used for as data or for their mimetic value), sociologists have largely continued to centre their use of images around the tenets of 'scientific objectivism' (Becker, 2004). By embracing the post-modern approach of new ethnography, visual sociology (and anthropology) emphasizes the 'partial truth' of conducting visual research (Harper, 1998a). As new ethnography moves away from pure objectivism of visual field-research, it becomes more closely aligned with emerging ABR methods that prioritize creativity, subjectivity, and deconstructionism. In a special edition of *Visual Ethnography* on art-based ethnography, editor Chiara Pussetti (2018) gathered anthropologists, artists, curators and performers to defend a "more experimental approach to ethnographic representation, privileging art-based, participatory and collaborative research as methods" (p. 1). The special edition is indicative of an upsurge in publications discussing the relationship between ethnography and art (Campbell, 2011; Buckley, 2016; Horst & Hjorth, 2014). With a body of growing literature that intersects art and ethnographic practices (Grimshaw, 2001; Svasek, 2007; Crawford, 2008; Kesterl, 2008; Rutten, 2016; Hamer, 2016) and advocates for a "stronger engagement with a sensorial, emotional, person-centred and postcolonial representations of the field, instigating discussions about how creative or experimental collaborators between ethnographers, curators and artists can be useful in the research process" (Pussetti, 2018, p. 2). The work that follows is not meant to be interpreted as strictly autoethnographic, although the narrative sections do place personal experience at the centre of understanding social context (Reed-Danahay, 1997; Denzin, 2016). The narrative forms are meant to be creative, intimate, and a compliment to the institutional distance found in the traditional analysis

section, a blending of the sociological eye with a communicative heart (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2016). There is also overlap between the autoethnography and ABR, both of which recognize the limits of scientific knowledge by placing greater appreciation on subjectivity, personal-voice, and accessible work (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2016), while also rejecting the idea of closure and prioritizing process over "undebatable conclusions" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 744).

Following the unprecedented capacity of images today, photography is utilized as a way to understand the world without limitation and to render it creatively. Doing so places emphasis on the evoked image while pivoting away from the written word. As Jane Tompkins (2006) writes, "language tends to be wielded most skillfully by people who possess a certain kind of power: class privilege, political clout, financial strength" (p. 51). The prairie region also calls for a mild rejection of language as understanding the landscape requires it is rendered visual and experienced (Tompkins, 2006). To experience the landscape is a methodological imperative that is best achieved by adopting a combination of mobile and visual methods. By being present, observing and moving, the (visual or mobile) ethnographer is antithesis to the arm-chair academic in their approach to produce an intimate portrait of the people and places of their subject area. The project is also informed by previous field-research, or what otherwise can be termed 'prior ethnography' (Corsaro, 1982), as well as my longstanding position as a past insider and insider/outsider. As a result, the research undertaken in this study is not a direct result of a grounded theory approach (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) as I have preconceived notions of rural prairie space (Byrant, 2015). However, the work is still reflexive and yields to the exchanges that occur

between individuals, the environments photographed, and the archival material uncovered to challenge and re-evaluate dominant perceptions of the region. Adopting visual ethnography as our single methodology will only move us so far in questioning the personal and institutional structures and experiences that comprise the prairies; we must also look to visual sociology and ABR as complementary methodologies to further this objective.

Visual Sociology

Visual sociology emerged with Howard Becker's (1974) call to make sociology more visual. The term visual sociology is used in two unique but complimentary ways, as a sub-discipline concerned with the iconosphere and the visual sociosphere of society and as a methodological orientation (Smelser & Baltes, 2001). The connective relationships between society and photography are rather self-explanatory; both mediums emerged around the same time as a way to directly observe and comment on contemporary society (Becker, 1974; Harper, 1988). We can expand this relationship to include not only photographers but also artists sharing similar goals and interests as sociologists (Becker & Keller, 2016). The interest of the sociologist and the photographer or artist is about making the familiar strange and the strange familiar, about questioning the obvious and reframing it (Pauwels, 2009). Historically and contemporarily, photography and sociology address the same foci of concerns through different but complementary 'lenses' (Becker, 1974). Prior to the development of the camera very few depictions of marginalized groups existed; paintings and writings on rural areas were common and helped extend their constructed

and bucolic properties, while doing little to shed light on the prevailing issues of the lower class. Sociology and photography both address this by operating as windows into the lives of others where sociology acts as the window into the social and the photographic operates as a tool to individualize social concerns. Combining the two results in a new way of seeing (photography) and a new lens of interpreting (sociology) (Harper, 1988). As Becker (2004) writes "photographs were an integral part of the disciplinary project of repairing a society that wasn't working well" (p. 193). Lewis Hine's early images of lower-income areas and child-labourers act as a testament to the power of this approach by providing a frame for social activism and reform (Becker, 1995; Ritchin, 2013). The Farm Security Administration (FSA) provides a further example of how the observation of the social world occurs through photography (without terming it sociological) and how images can be leveraged for their universal appeal at a national level. Under Roy Stryker, a former cowboy turned professor turned editor, 35,000 images were produced documenting the lives of farmers and share-croppers in the impoverished American South of the 1930s. Walker Evans, one of the FSA photographers, would later go on to publish *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1965) with James Agee, creating a collaboration of text and image that can be interpreted as an early sociological document of Depression-era tenant farmers in Alabama. Photography as a method of social inquiry is often praised for its ability to reach the masses and 'prick' its onlooker, however, it is still an individual construction and as such is open to the failings of individual interpretation. Although Evan's images personalized the social issue of Southern poverty, it is difficult to tell how 'true' his representations are. As the eminent photo writer and MoMA curator John Szarkowski writes, "it is difficult to know with certainty whether Evans recorded the America of his

youth, or invented it" (Ritchin, 2013, pg. 18). What Evans' work does speak to is the power of photography as a tool to explore, to represent, and to disseminate ideas of place and issues of social importance. Over the last century this practice has become common within sociology where images and text are collected and prepared as ethnographic accounts of social life (Morris, 2014; Harper, 1982, 1987, 2001; Schwartz, 1998; Grenbalt, 2004; Page, 2005; Greenfield, 2004). Since photography plays well with others we can place the visual sociologist and the documentary photographer (as well as the visual artist for that matter) in the same tier, often producing representation-based work that furthers the interest of the social sciences (Anderson, 1975; Becker, 2004; Langford et al., 2015).

The connective threads between Hine, Evans, and sociology discussed above are retroactively applied. Hine and Evans likely would not have described their work as visual sociology. The discipline would remain under-developed for decades before Becker's (1974) call for sociology to become more visual. The early photographers, which visual sociology drew inspiration from, were skilled observers of the human condition but largely unskilled in the way of the social sciences. These photographers were able to produce aesthetic and meaningful images but were unable to complete the necessary analysis to make those images more than a pictorial or lyrical text. It is only when skilled social scientists become skilled photographers (or vice versa) that a very rich type of social science is generated (Chaplin, 1994). Doug Harper's *Good Company: A Tramp's Life* (1982) is an example of a study that operates as both sociological analysis through visual and textual narratives to produce a unique academic output. Harper's work represents the next step in the evolution of sociology's relationship with photography, from one of implied

overlap to the formal construction of a new discipline. Beginning with Becker's seminal essay, social scientists begin advocating for an increase in the visualization and the use of photography in anthropology (Collier & Collier, 1967) and sociology (Becker, 1974). Advanced by a small group of rogue scholars in the 1970s, visual sociology has established itself as a key facet of American and Continental sociology, however opposition within the social sciences towards the use and effectiveness of visual methodologies is not uncommon. The general use of photographs within sociology for their subjective, artistic or storytelling worth alone have traditional academics scratching their heads. As a result, the use of images has often been placed on the periphery, read as supplemental or raw data and less frequently as output or as verifiable findings. This has occurred partly because visual sociology, as a young method of inquiry, continues to deal with a number of philosophical dilemmas including: realism versus constructivism, objectivism versus subjectivism, and universalism versus relativism. However, recent books by Harper (2012) and Pauwels (2015) are making a strong case for the practicality and numerous advantages of the approach. Furthermore, the ethos behind the adoption of photography into a research model has the ability to obfuscate disciplinary boundaries. Appealing to the creative, emotive, and interpretive properties of the medium in conjunction with the objective, is at times too novel an idea in mainstream sociology. With regards to the study of the prairie region, descriptions of landscape and prairie dwellers, as well as the intelligent need to photograph them, are increasingly less empirical and result from the subjective interaction of the photographer/writer within the region (Stowe, 2009; Tilly, 1994). As argued by photo historian Elizabeth Edwards (1997b), an understanding of anthropological (or sociological for that matter) and photographic theories of representation can be utilized to

produce a deeper understanding of the *expressive* possibilities of photography in the social sciences (Pink, 2007). Edwards is stressing the need to understand the mechanics of photographic representation and its ability to further social understanding, while also emotively conveying findings as a way to create engaging scholarship. Visual sociology reflects this changing relationship within the social sciences by providing practitioners a way to make rich and dense observations of the outer layer of social behaviour (Smelser & Baltes, 2001). In other words, visual sociology offers its disciples the ability to stress that which cannot be understood with words alone.

The personal nature of this approach and its reliance on praxis as a socially valid source of information is a departure from strict empiricism. Through its embrace of elements of the social sciences and documentary photography, the subjective interpretation of this study is valued not over, but alongside the objective. The photographs used in this study are acknowledged as subjective, portrayals of *a* reality and not *the* reality, one that is incomplete and positioned within a wider discussion of recording, thinking, and living (Pauwels, 2015). Furthermore, this study connects with descriptive sociology as it "does not involve sole reliance on narrative but seeks to link narrative, numbers, and images" (Bach, 2001; Burrows & Savage, 2007, p. 896). Andrew Abbot (2007) critiques objective-based narratives and our sole reliance on them for academic storytelling suggesting that lyrical sociology is an effective alternative that prioritizes the "…recreation of an experience of social discovery" (p. 70), while also acting as an appeal to authorial emotion or what can be labelled as authoritative emotion. The lyrical appeals to researchers and sociologists who are also intimate with their sites of inquiry, allowing the

researcher to build upon their knowledge of a known environment and express an expertise of the local (Burrows & Savage, 2007; Zeleny, 2012).

The use of visual and textual narratives and a general appeal to emotion assist in embracing the wider gambit of the use and value of alternative texts (Sandelowski, 1991; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). As a result, this methodology views images as durable and as a useful record (Wagner, 2007) which builds on the idea that "…any research procedure which can tell us something about the subjective orientation of human actors has a claim to scholarly consideration" (Blumer, 1979, p. xxiii). By embracing an outcome-centered approach, the study inherently places output and not a fetishized method (Dépelteau, 2017) as that which is of utmost importance. The visual and textual narrative sections inherently ask more questions than they answer while re-orientating the importance of process over that of conclusions. This position is in line with sociology that produces relevant knowledge that is disseminated widely and that reflexively questions the relevance of the field. As a result, this study draws upon recent work in public sociology to 'commit sociology' or in the words of Becker, to 'practice sociology' (Burawoy, 2005; Becker, 2007). As intolerance towards those who aim to produce critical knowledge increases (academics, documentary photographers, artists, and journalists) there is a strengthening of racism, sexism and homophobic ideas and generalized falsehoods by way of fake-news (Dépelteau, 2017), which requires an urgent and measured response from academics and creatives alike "to 'commit sociology' in all of its possible forms" (Doucet & Siltanen, 2017, p. 362). Furthermore, social scientists must challenge and expand their 'took-kits' to address the underlying hierarchies and hegemonic formations that exist

within academia. This requires we deconstruct and reconstruct the field to embrace more, to engage more, and perhaps even to *feel* more (Stanbridge, 2014). As Pauwels (2015) writes in *Reframing Visual Social Science*, "scholarly work, be it written, visual or numeric is not (just) about describing or reflecting aspects of the outer world, but about making it more revealing, accessible, insightful and possibly more predictable or controllable" (p. 311). As social scientists we should be able to not only draw conclusions from our data but also *feel* our data. But there seems to be a limit within the social sciences as to how far we can go with *feeling* our data, or producing it in creative, non-traditional or experimental means. To remedy this we will turn to the emerging field of arts-based research.

Arts-Based Research

As Ken Plummer (2004) writes, "millions of photographs are produced by lay person and professional alike each year, but still sociology remains relatively unscathed by it" (p. 284). Our contemporary world is highlighted by a new and perverse wave of immateriality, profuse connectivity, inundation of media, and ephemeral digital forms of communication, much different than the one Becker (1974) or Mitchell (1994) wrote about. The creative industries, marketing firms and commercial photographers are adapting to and driving a post-photographic world that the social sciences are slow to adapt to (Burri, 2012). Therefore, the claim by visual sociologists that presenting social life photographically and sharing those findings in a more visual manner can be an ideal methodology rings truer today than ever before (Harper, 2004; Pauwels, 2015). As the use of visual methods within sociology grows, there is still a host of social scientists unaware of

their existence (Pauwels, 2015). A testament to this is how infrequently visual sociology courses are taught within sociology departments. Another concern is the slow rate at which sociologists understand the changing nature of photography and recording technology and invite inventive or multi-modular processes into their practices (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Bateman, 2008; Van Leeuwen, 2011). There is also an important element of collaboration between the author and the reader where each image must be created and read (encoded and decoded) to determine its 'readability' (Close, 2007). There is also the difference between legibility and readability where the image can take on different meanings—a result of the photograph's ability to act as a universal language that is subjectively oriented (Pauwels, 2015). Visual scholars have the difficult task of not only producing strong analytical and critical discourse, but must also possess creative skills and a high level of visual literacy to produce and critique work. Few are able to accomplish this to the extent that their visual and textual work registers as equally insightful to their site of study. If the issue of social scientists not understanding the full potential of photographs (aesthetic and analytical value) then the opposite is true of photographers being unable to understand the written word, with most from each camp failing to understand the importance of the two united. As Robert Adams remarks in *Why People Photograph* (2005),

> "photographers seem so strikingly unable to write at length about what they had made, in fact, that I came to wonder if there was any exception at all, a single case where an artist's writing did not end up making a picture smaller…less worthy of comparison with life." (p. 32)

Luc Pauwels (2009) furthers this sentiment, writing that "photographers and social scientists are often torn between being a detached (sometimes cynical) observer/reporter and a person truly engaged and involved with the field of observation" (p. 265). Both are pulled between the expectation of creating scenes of realism and appealing to the more artistic expressions afforded by the medium of photography. In a post-photographic world it is important to understand the limitations of photography where making a photograph is complicated by "gender, class, age and other sociological attributes of the photographer and subject" (Harper, 2004, p. 93). As the old adage goes: I don't know photographs that lie, but I know liars that photograph. Intentionally and unintentionally images lie (or mislead) and perhaps the prevailing definition of visual sociology is outdated, as it fails to address the rapid changes in communicative practices and to embrace contemporary post-photographic documentary practices.

One way to address the discrepancy between what visual sociology does/sees and that of the wider world is by embracing more ABR methodologies. Developing around the same time as visual sociology (Sinner et al., 2006), ABR has gained momentum as an expanding and comprehensive (perhaps even vague) method of inquiry. ABR is further complicated by its many alternative names: research creation, art as inquiry, a/r/tography, practice-based research, performative inquiry, research-based art, and so on. ABR is an umbrella term that "prescribes no specific procedure to produce an arts-based research product, but identifies a genre within which there are a variety of approaches" (Barone & Eisner, 1997, p. 98) where the narrative turn is embraced as a way to humanize the social sciences (Geertz, 1988; Van Maanen, 1988; Bochner & Riggs, 2014). ABR methods appeal to

those looking to be free of academic jargon, while offering a unique insight into the human condition (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Diamond & Mullen, 1999) and as such has the potential "to reach a broad range of people and to be emotionally and/or politically evocative for diverse audiences" (Chilton & Levy, 2014, p. 403). Similar to visual sociology, ABR is about illuminating the lives of others, and telling stories in unique and innovative ways (Cole & Knowles, 2001). And while the Durkheimian concept of sociology is rooted in scientific objectivism, visual sociology can embrace its inherent subjectivity, and in doing so balance empirically driven sociology with symbolic or creative scholarship (Harper, 1998b). This produces scholarship that is empirical and objective while also being playful and subjective within "which the personal vision of social researchers—as an instrument of investigation—can contribute substantially to empirically sound accounts" (Wagner, 2007, p. 34). This blending also requires a re-examination of ideas related to ethnography and sociology as both fields have their own fictions (Clifford, 1986). As the astute interdisciplinary scholar James Clifford (1986) writes, "ethnographic work recognizes its fictional side, as a 'system of truth shaped by power and history…inherently *partially* committed and incomplete'" (p. 6). All studies have their fictions (or subjective truths); it is important to note that these fictions do not necessarily devalue their ability to illuminate an issue. The photograph is no longer held as an objective document, it has undergone a fundamental cultural change and as such its usage within the social sciences must be modified. As discussed above, some sects of the social sciences have a general issue with the aesthetic value of the photograph (Pauwels, 2015, p. 8), which ABR can address. As Fred Ritchin (2013) describes it, if the idea of photography as simply a recording medium is removed, then photography becomes "…transformed into a considerably more malleable,

synthetic medium, not unlike painting, expressing personal truths with scenes reassembled according to how each author wanted them to look" (p. 144). Ritchin is describing the advent of digital manipulation, which could be applied to the narrating, curating, and sequencing of books. Additionally, the deployment of mixed mediums can result in innovative ways of creating research and disseminating findings. These methods include the adoption of supplemental documentary-based technologies (360 degree cameras, VR, drones, sound recording), digital platforms (Scalar, Instagram), as well as, the use of secondary materials in the form of found and archival content (images, text, and objects). By further embracing the possibilities of ABR this process removes the sanitization of experience while also re-inviting play and creation into academia (Barone & Eisner, 1997). By engaging with the familiar (the sociology of the self) a new understanding of place is constructed by rediscovering, embracing, and problematizing that which is closest—to find critique and stimulation in the pleasure of old routine. This is often a cerebrally strenuous task to achieve at home, as Rebecca Solnit (2002) writes, "to satisfy curiosity you must be willing to seem naïve, to engage, to explore, to stare and be stared at, and people nowadays seem more willing or able to enter that state elsewhere than at home" (p. 281). Furthermore, play presents the researcher freedom to explore ideas that on the surface may not seem academically fruitful or viable, ideas that may even be nonsensical. However, it is at the heart of the experimentation found in ABR that not only allows for, but champions the act of following 'leads down rabbit holes'. Related to this idea of play as process is the making and remaking of place where the process and not preconceived outcomes guide the study. This process also supports the recent call to slow academia (Berg & Seeber, 2017). To reduce pace also helps render the complexities of place more

legible for those far away from the site of inquiry, while the visual and textual narratives operate as creative vessels for us to experience a specific region at a specific time. By embracing an ABR approach, the academic also becomes the artist and gives their site of inquiry a sense of place, to convey what it is to be there or what Edward Relph (1976) would call the sharing of 'vicarious insideness'. Through the use of creative narratives the poetic and lyrical are utilized as a valid form of knowledge where the poetic is not limited to romantic or modernist subjectivism, but can be historical, precise, objective, a hybrid textual activity traversing disciplinary boundaries (Clifford, 2004). Pauwels' writes that the social science researcher is a collector and an interpreter, but by embracing ABR methods the researcher becomes not only a collector and an interpreter but also a creator producing new work, interrogating the old, and in some instances, combining the two to make a provocative statement. There are visual sociologists embracing aspects of these practices, but while other creative turns have occured in sociology, including storytelling (Geertz, 1988; Van Maanen, 1988) and poetry (Clifford & Marcus, 1986), more experimental visual practices have yet to receive similar attention. The field could learn from ABR's inclusion of more subjective and emotive practices of producing work, like those adopted in the 'Returning To' chapter of this study, which allows for the modification and manipulation of photographs to produce a specific narrative of place. This requires two leaps of faith, one leap by the author (or creator) and the other by the reader to recognize and accept the authority of the data (Brewer, 1994). The roots of documentary photography and sociology have been well documented, however their relation to ABR is largely absent from existing sociological literature. This is interesting given that ABR "…adapts the tenets of the creative arts in social research in order to make research publicly accessible, evocative, and

engaged" (Chilton & Leavy 2014, p. 403). The title of Luc Pauwels' (2015) recent book *Reframing Visual Social Sciences: Towards a More Visual Sociology and Anthropology*, suggests a paradigm shift within the disciplines of sociology and anthropology and there is promise of a discussion of experimental visual and digital methods, however, neither is fully realized. As a result, the academic and creative possibilities of ABR are not integrated into the traditional social sciences. ABR finds companionship with a number of emerging ethnographic perspectives and fits well with the postmodern assertion of 'new ethnography', which proposes that ethnography can be a form of fiction that emphasizes the subjective nature of knowledge production (Pink, 2007). Furthermore, these approaches are not contradictory and when paired with sociology's rigour, as demonstrated in this study, ABR offers a holistic approach to conducting cross-disciplinary research and utilizing innovative knowledge production and dissemination practices.

Movement as Method

In addition to visual sociology and ABR this study uses mobility as a method to conduct 'in motion research' and as a way to record and understand rural communities. Building on Christopher Tilly's (1994) unique combination of space theory and mobile practice, the methodology of this study is framed by the understanding that "a place can only be appreciated as part of movement from and to it in relation to others, and the act of moving may be as important as that of arriving" (p. 31). In a similar vein, de Certeau (1984) tells us every story is a travel story and a spatial practice where through movement, the researcher or photographer is able to take hold of landscapes and social situations with

unprecedented speed—the Kodakisation of landscape (Massey, 1995). By feeling different earth under one's feet, social observations are enhanced and the researcher is afforded the opportunity to scrutinize the intersections—the differences and similarities—that bind or break our conceptions of the prairies. It is through a pedagogy of moving and visiting that we learn the wisdom that sits in all places (Chambers, 2006). This is an appropriate methodology given that rural communities function in mobile networks, with remote communities having a unique nowhereness quality. As such, each chapter is modelled around specific journeys, a return to the road-trip, a journey into the heart of the region, and a return home, as a way to understand the prairie region.

'Digging In' Chapter

Physical or temporal movement coupled with visual methods of producing and understanding yields not only new data but also provides us a unique cultural 'measuring stick'. This is no more evident than in the 'Digging In' chapter where forty years have passed since the creation of the original Keepsake project. Speaking about the project in an interview with Candas Dorsey, Anthropologist Michael Asch commented that perhaps "the real test of its success will come when future generations dig into the archives of which the exhibition is to form a part" (Simpson, 1981). Asch's comments are speculative, appealing to the future historical value of the project. Rural spaces are undergoing transformation; nothing remains untouched by the dedicated hands of change. Which of these communities will grow, stagnate or disappear is also speculative. From Asch's perspective, the archive

will guide us as to why some thrived and others declined. This was a common thought amongst the architects of Keepsake; co-lead Linda Wedman saw this as a significant part of the project's process and its overall success. It was important that this repository be built for future scrutiny and understanding; for the moments when we wondered 'what it was like back then', we could point to the archive and say 'ah yes, of course, that's it right there, that's what rural living was'. In some ways, this is the application of supply-side economics to the archive—build it and they will come. However, nearly forty years since the project's first inception, I am the first researcher to dust off the lids. Reviewing my notes, I find I often make the mistake of calling Keepsake the 'Keep-safe archive', a Freudian slip for what is perhaps an equally valid title. The meaning is obvious, Keepsake becomes a collection that must be kept-safe, to be guarded in a controlled environment, or a hermetically sealed vault, away from dust, UV rays, humidity and finger grease. Once revived from its hibernation, it can re-enter the cultural lexicon of rural Alberta—the dead prairie scrolls. The archive can be used as a way to return to the past, a temporal journey, a time machine to 1980's rural Alberta. By viewing the archive in relation to contemporary explorations of these communities something greater than a historical comment on rural Alberta can be achieved. By engaging with the archive and using it to make creative-interventions, a far greater sense of place is possible from the distance time creates—a road trip not only through space but also through time. Through an in-depth reading of community-specific images from photographers Orest Semchishen, Hubert Hohn, and Wally Houn, with my own from visits to these communities, I am able to make a response that not only explores visual representations of rural Alberta, but also comments on the changes taking place within these communities. The work of these photographers provides us with more than

the basis for a simple re-photography project (Rieger, 1996), it facilitates a space, a conduit, for critique, and a return that is not only visual but also non-aesthetic in the form of social, cultural, and political commentary (Rieger, 2011). The result is a dialogue occurring over forty years (for other examples see Edwards, 1990; Geary, 1990; Hammond, 1998). Through a two-day road trip the changes (or lack thereof) occurring on the prairies are observed. 'Digging In' is therefore not only a visual travelogue, but also a form of cultural intervention into rural space with specific starts and stops, anchored by community visits to Coronation, Hussar, and Coleman. Journeying outside the community, the process of moving (along the road) is as important as arriving in the towns. As a result, the connections between community and hinterland and the space beyond is rendered visible and made meaningful.

'Mapping Out' Chapter

Every journey occurs within another journey, an ongoing series of small and large expeditions that help us make sense of our homes, our environs, and our own positions. Similar to the 'Digging In' chapter, the idea of the road as a 'content-producing machine' that drives the documentarian to seek, document, and learn as they move through space is explored. While 'Digging In' is about a deliberate road-trip, this chapter is about a series of journeys that utilizes the automobile and the road as a method to produce work, connect with communities and understand space through experiential movement. The process embraces the ideas of mobility and ephemerality to create the Automotive Flaneur (Zeleny,

2014). The Automotive Flaneur navigates space within his cushiony capsule of separation, he feels at ease at high speeds, and on the move. From Walter Benjamin's *flaneur* to more contemporary theorists Les Back, Alex Taylor, and Cheng Yi'En (2014), movement is often discussed in terms of encounters, embodied spaces, everydayness, and rhythms in urban spaces. These concepts are often under-utilized for the purposes of understanding the rural and discussing its relationship to automotive movement. Given the importance of the automobile in bridging space and creating meaning in North America, it is surprising that the relationship between the road and photography has gone undeveloped. David Campany's *The Open Road* (2014) is one of the few texts to address this relationship but lacks comprehensiveness, featuring a single essay that chronicles the work of a handful of American road-based photographers. Campany's essay is well written but largely held within the context of photography and lacks cross-disciplinarity, dealing mainly with how the photographic world has approached the road as a subject, and less about how it has been a working method to produce work, or how road photography builds on the long history of journeying dating back to Homer's *Odyssey*. As a result, Campany misses a number of fundamental texts and arguments to understanding the genre's wider cultural importance. There are few symbols more American, more expressive of the continent's desires and needs to autonomously bridge space, than the automobile. The car is a cultural process (Featherstone, 2005), while also being a cultural output, an object that acts as a "literary and visual icon" (Dennis & Urry, 2009, p. 37). Pop psychology tells us that the car is a status, a symbol of power and a sex bundled together, a mobile show of the haves, as well as, the have-nots (Jackson, 1994). On the Canadian Prairies, the car is not only a symbol, it is the modern cathedral with which we drop our jaws at and it is the mobile

castle in which we find safety. Sometimes it is a sacrificial lamb, becoming 'odd parts' for another car, target practice for a 6-gauge, or the steel gladiator in the arena during demolition derbies, the ultimate sacrifice to the automobile gods. The commodity power at the heart of the automobile is its facilitation for escape or the "idealization of movement, or transformation of movement into a fetish, [which] depends upon the exclusion of others who are already positioned as not free in the same way" (Ahmed, 2004, p. 152). There is a fundamental difference between the automobile and its relationship to urban centres and rural spaces. In urban areas the automobile is a convenience, but in the rural it is a necessity, therefore understanding the automobile is necessary for understanding prairie space.

Pre-dating religious pilgrimages and ancient Roman roads, the journey is both method and metaphor for self-healing and discovery. The trope of the journey is a classic narrative, that we modified by adding treaded rubber wheels, a carburetor, and 5w-30w oil. Since the early 20th Century hardships long associated with the journey begin to dissipate making way for travellers to label their journeys as 'romantic', 'picturesque', or 'sentimental'—trophies of mobility rather than trials (Adler, 1989). The preparations and funds required for a Transatlantic Galleon trip, or a journey across Canada in a covered wagon, faded away. As the Nineteenth Century tilted towards the Twentieth, increased (auto)mobility spurred a search for authenticity. With an evolving frontier, America was a prime subject for European and domestic travellers looking to cultivate authentic experience. The journey for the sake of journeying (the journey and not the destination mentality) takes hold in 20th Century North American culture. American roads became

equated with a magnified sense of space, with the automobile acting as a magnifying glass (Slethaug & Ford, 2012). Modern-day travel has become defined by its imperfections and spontaneity, as well as its middle-class friendly costs. As Urry (2000) explores in *Sociology Beyond Societies*, the automobile allowed for an increased emphasis in being able to determine one's own drive, to control the path and the gas pedal in equal proportions. In other words, the automobile allows for general temporal and spatial freedom, to start and stop, to move and meander, to listen, to talk, to look, and to be looked at, and as a way to understand and be understood. Recalling the metaphor of the prairies as a stage without a centre (Adams, 2005), perhaps the road is a conduit too which one can arrive to other stages with photography as a tool to document them. The road is a performative space where "issues of 'mobility' are centre stage" (Sheller & Urry, 2006, p. 208) and where documentation plays an integral role in providing 'proof of existence' (Lash & Urry, 1994). In this sense, this is where this chapter differs from 'Digging in' in that it explores the region in a fluid manner, not confined by direction or time, and only complete when the work *felt* complete. As such, what follows in the narrative portions of 'Mapping Out' represents a meditation on the region accumulated from a number of prairie journeys between 2015 and 2018.

'Returning To' Chapter

Similar to how people claim ownership of a place from their past, I claim ownership of Mundare—the community of my past. Wallace Stegner (1962) once wrote about his respective small town, "what this town and surrounding prairie grew from, and what they

grew into, is the record of my tribe. If I am native to anything, I am native to this" (p. 20). I claim ownership of this space in two ways, as a researcher and as a community member. As an insider who thinks like an outsider attempting to balance lived experience with learned knowledge, or as Rebecca Solnit (2002) would phrase it, "present and detached from the world around, more than an audience but less than a participant" (p. 24). Through a nuanced academic and emotionally informed understanding of the community, 'Returning To' is about telling one of many poetic truths about the complicated nature of a prairie place. The narrative sections of this chapter are about producing a representation of the community, a visual poem, from the particular view of the insider with outsider knowledge, the ex-local trained as an academic and artist. This approach also gives weight to what Walter Benjamin referred to as the "incompleteness of the past" (Azoulay, 2015), where the past is incomplete and requires continuous revisions by numerous voices.

The movement described in 'Returning To' differs significantly from the other two chapters as it is about small movements within a community and its surrounding area, in addition to movement between different time periods, between the present and the past which are manifested in the form of visual and textual narratives. A return to home is often associated with the impossibility of a return to not only a location but to a time. Doreen Massey (2005) writes that the truth is "you can never simply 'go back', to home or to anywhere else. When you get 'there' the place will have moved on just as you yourself have changed" (p. 124). The return home, or the failure to do so (either physically or spiritually), is a common literary trope. American novelist John Steinbeck writes in *Travels With Charley* (1962) "you can't go home again because home has ceased to exist except in the mothballs

of memory" (pg. 206), while Thomas Wolfe (1934) simply decreed 'you can't go home again'. The result of one's return is often rather unfortunate—a person who feels like a stranger in familiar places. A feeling of anxiety seems to be at the core of the experience of returning home and perhaps allowing oneself to embrace it is not only acceptable but also productive. In 'Returning To' the subjective is embraced as a way to interrogate place. As Nicola Ansell and Lorraine Van Blerk (2007) write on the topic, "in this way, a focus on emotions allows researchers to compliment material considerations of place (e.g. The economy, the built environment) with an examination of those more fleeting, but still crucial, 'emotional, cultural, and imaginative ties to place'" (p. 18). Emotion then becomes a tool to leverage and learn from. As my childhood neighbour once told me, I already have a PhD in rural living. My thoughts were formed here, or, in the words of the prairie-born author Margaret Laurence (2013), "my eyes were formed there" (p. 169). Stegner (1962) manifests similar sentiments when he writes, "however anachronistic I may be, I am a product of the American earth, and in nothing quite so much as in the contrast between what I knew through the pores and what I was officially taught" (p. 23). Researchers spend a significant amount of time and energy mitigating or minimizing their emotional faculties as a way to obtain 'bias-free knowledge' when perhaps they should be harnessing that potential. This is particularly true of photographers and writers who poetically render place. This constitutes a bias, but not all biases are corruptive if they are acknowledged. For the purposes of this chapter, focus is placed upon the bias of the practitioner, who appeals to the creative insights that only a critical and subjective practitioner can author.

Digging In - Analysis: The Lost Archive of the Canadian Prairies

Selection of Spreads from Keepsake

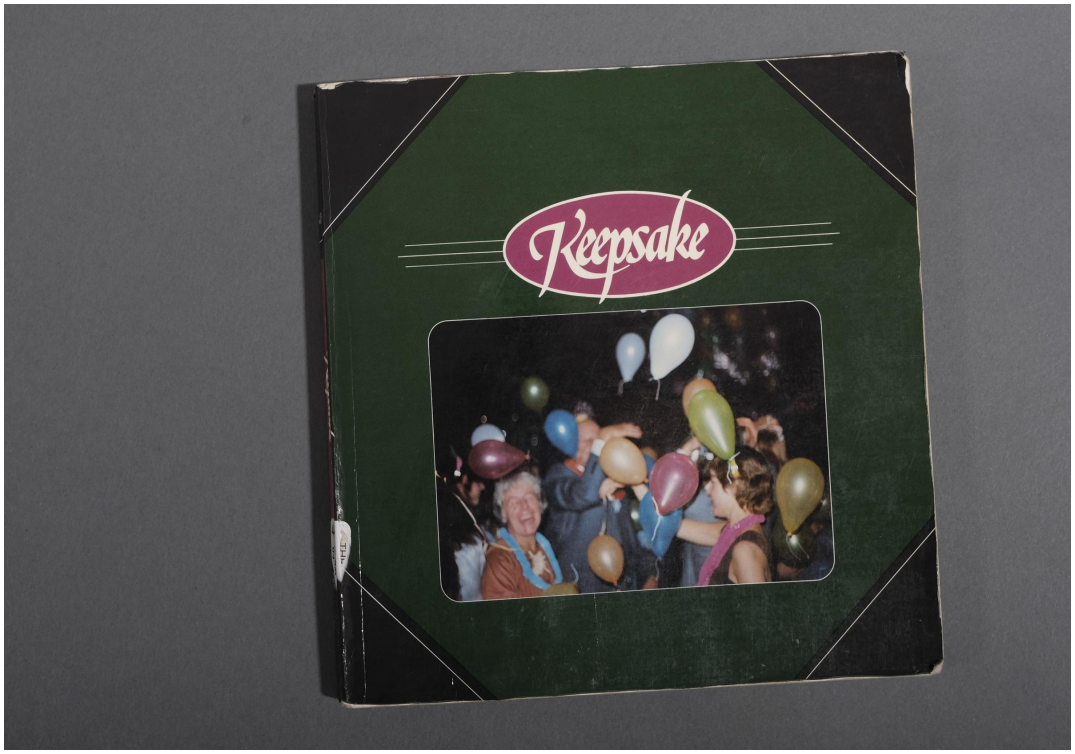
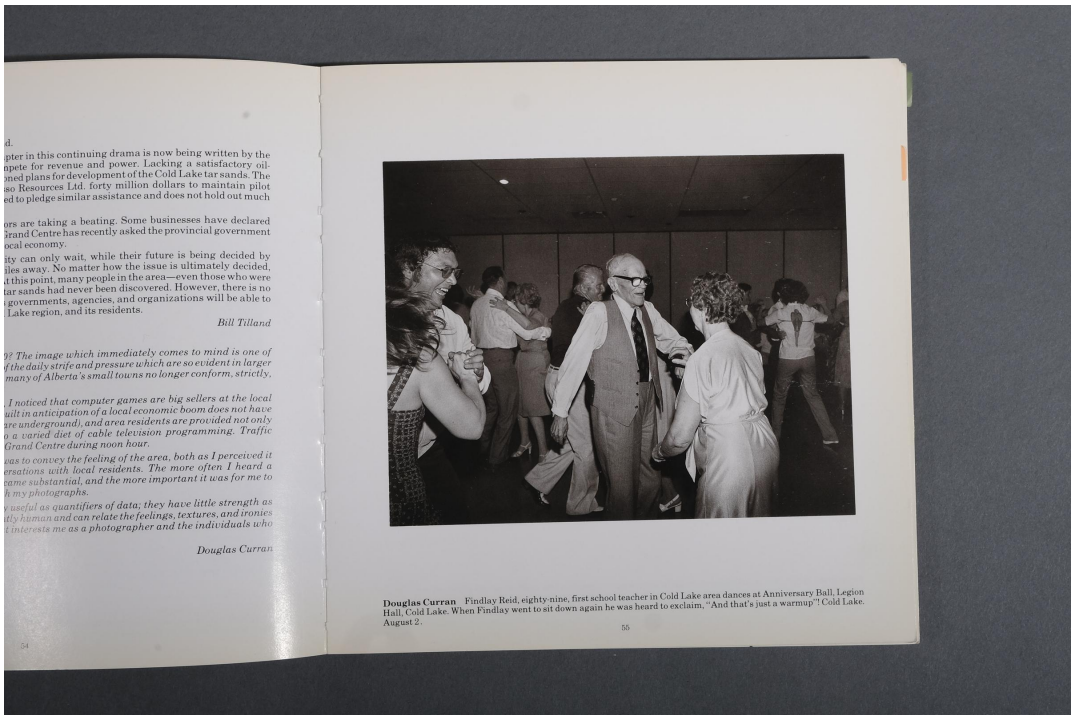


Figure 1: Cover of the *Keepsake* (1981)



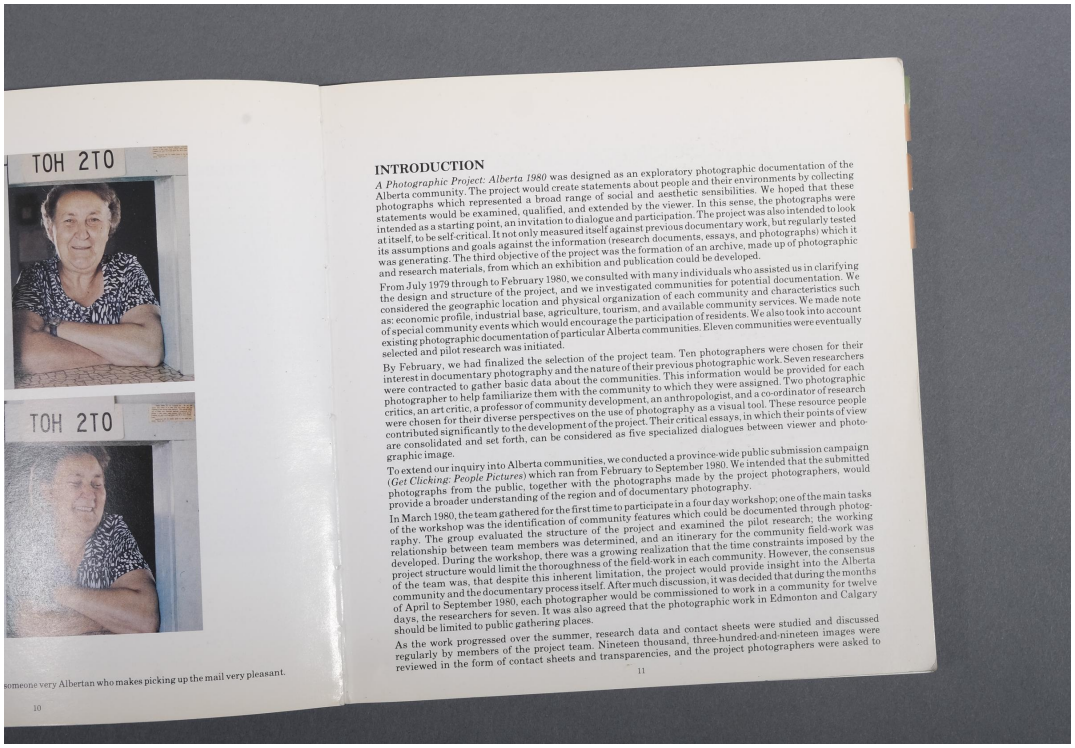
Figure 2: Public submission by Karlis Muehienbachs, pg. 133.



Douglas Curran Findlay Reid, eighty-nine, first school teacher in Cold Lake area dances at Anniversary Ball, Legion Hall, Cold Lake. When Findlay went to sit down again he was heard to exclaim, "And that's just a warmup"! Cold Lake. August 2.

55

Figure 3: Community text by Bill Tilland (left) and an image of Cold Lake by Douglas Curran (right), pg. 55.



TOH 2TO

TOH 2TO

someone very Albertan who makes picking up the mail very pleasant.

10

INTRODUCTION

A Photographic Project: Alberta 1980 was designed as an exploratory photographic documentation of the Alberta community. The project would create statements about people and their environments by collecting photographs which represented a broad range of social and aesthetic sensibilities. We hoped that these statements would be examined, qualified, and extended by the viewer. In this sense, the photographs were intended as a starting point, an invitation to dialogue and participation. The project was also intended to look at itself, to be self-critical. It not only measured itself against previous documentary work, but regularly tested its assumptions and goals against the information (research documents, essays, and photographs) which it was generating. The third objective of the project was the formation of an archive, made up of photographic and research materials, from which an exhibition and publication could be developed.

From July 1979 through to February 1980, we consulted with many individuals who assisted us in clarifying the design and structure of the project, and we investigated communities for potential documentation. We considered the geographic location and physical organization of each community and characteristics such as: economic profile, industrial base, agriculture, tourism, and available community services. We made note of special community events which would encourage the participation of residents. We also took into account existing photographic documentation of particular Alberta communities. Eleven communities were eventually selected and pilot research was initiated.

By February, we had finalized the selection of the project team. Ten photographers were chosen for their interest in documentary photography and the nature of their previous photographic work. Seven researchers were contracted to gather basic data about the communities. This information would be provided for each photographer to help familiarize them with the community to which they were assigned. Two photographic critics, an art critic, a professor of community development, an anthropologist, and a co-ordinator of research were chosen for their diverse perspectives on the use of photography as a visual tool. These resource people contributed significantly to the development of the project. Their critical essays, in which their points of view are consolidated and set forth, can be considered as five specialized dialogues between viewer and photographic image.

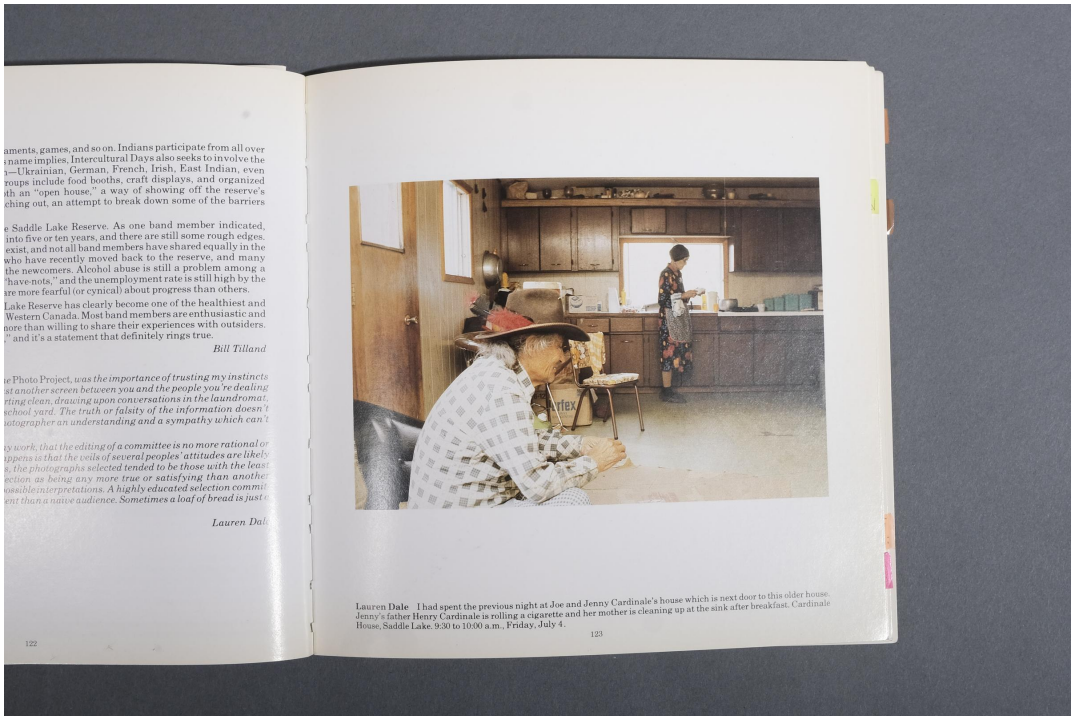
To extend our inquiry into Alberta communities, we conducted a province-wide public submission campaign (*Get Clicking: People Pictures*) which ran from February to September 1980. We intended that the submitted photographs from the public, together with the photographs made by the project photographers, would provide a broader understanding of the region and of documentary photography.

In March 1980, the team gathered for the first time to participate in a four day workshop; one of the main tasks of the workshop was the identification of community features which could be documented through photography. The group evaluated the structure of the project and examined the pilot research; the working relationship between team members was determined, and an itinerary for the community field-work was developed. During the workshop, there was a growing realization that the time constraints imposed by the project structure would limit the thoroughness of the field-work in each community. However, the consensus of the team was, that despite this inherent limitation, the project would provide insight into the Alberta community and the documentary process itself. After much discussion, it was decided that during the months of April to September 1980, each photographer would be commissioned to work in a community for twelve days, the researchers for seven. It was also agreed that the photographic work in Edmonton and Calgary should be limited to public gathering places.

As the work progressed over the summer, research data and contact sheets were studied and discussed regularly by members of the project team. Nineteen thousand, three-hundred-and-nineteen images were reviewed in the form of contact sheets and transparencies, and the project photographers were asked to

11

Figure 4: Introduction text by Douglas Clark and Linda Wedman, pg. 10.



aments, games, and so on. Indians participate from all over
name implies, Intercultural Days also seeks to involve the
—Ukrainian, German, French, Irish, East Indian, even
roups include food booths, craft displays, and organized
th an "open house," a way of showing off the reserve's
ching out, an attempt to break down some of the barriers

e Saddle Lake Reserve. As one band member indicated,
into five or ten years, and there are still some rough edges.
exist, and not all band members have shared equally in the
who have recently moved back to the reserve, and many
the newcomers. Alcohol abuse is still a problem among a
"have-nots," and the unemployment rate is still high by the
are more fearful (or cynical) about progress than others.
Lake Reserve has clearly become one of the healthiest and
Western Canada. Most band members are enthusiastic and
ore than willing to share their experiences with outsiders.
" and it's a statement that definitely rings true.

Bill Tilland

e Photo Project, *was the importance of trusting my instincts*
st another screen between you and the people you're dealing
rting clean, drawing upon conversations in the laundromat,
chool yard. The truth or falsity of the information doesn't
otographer an understanding and a sympathy which can't

y work, that the editing of a committee is no more rational or
ppens is that the veils of several peoples' attitudes are likely
s, the photographs selected tended to be those with the least
ection as being any more true or satisfying than another
ossible interpretations. A highly educated selection commit
ent than a naive audience. Sometimes a loaf of bread is just

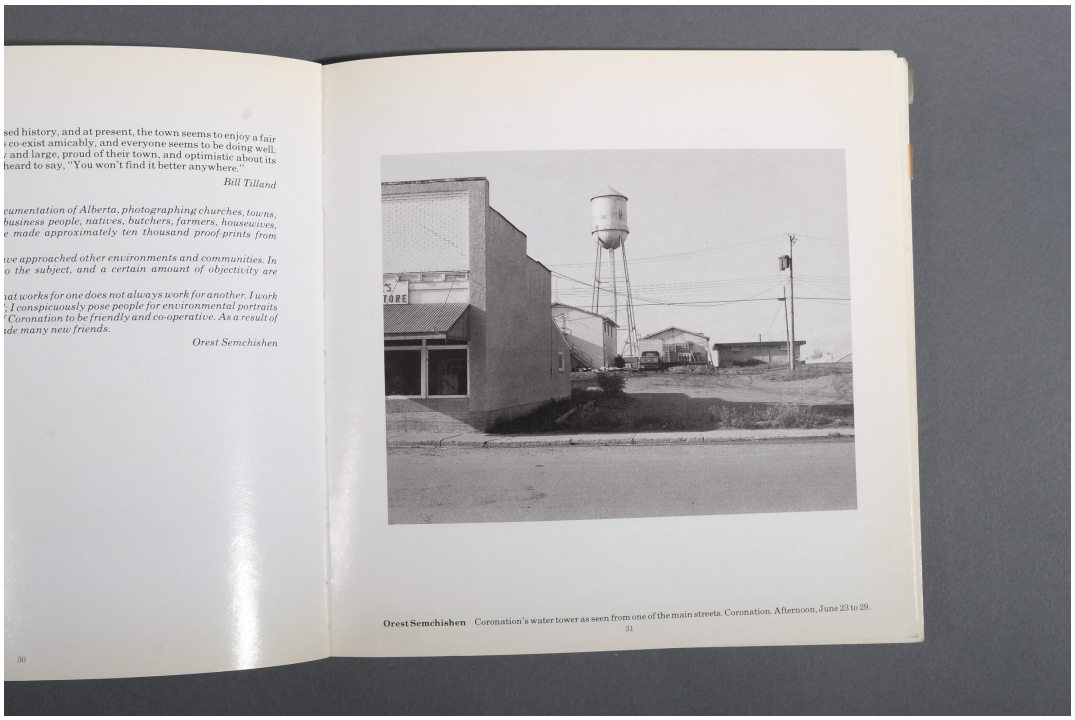
Lauren Dal

122

Lauren Dale I had spent the previous night at Joe and Jenny Cardinale's house which is next door to this older house. Jenny's father Henry Cardinale is rolling a cigarette and her mother is cleaning up at the sink after breakfast. Cardinale House, Saddle Lake. 9:30 to 10:00 a.m., Friday, July 4.

123

Figure 5: An image of a community member from Saddle Lake by Lauren Dale, pg. 123.



sed history, and at present, the town seems to enjoy a fair
co-exist amicably, and everyone seems to be doing well.
and large, proud of their town, and optimistic about its
heard to say, "You won't find it better anywhere."

Bill Tilland

cumentation of Alberta, photographing churches, towns,
business people, natives, butchers, farmers, housewives,
e made approximately ten thousand proof-prints from

ve approached other environments and communities. In
o the subject, and a certain amount of objectivity are

at works for one does not always work for another. I work
I conspicuously pose people for environmental portraits
Coronation to be friendly and co-operative. As a result of
de many new friends.

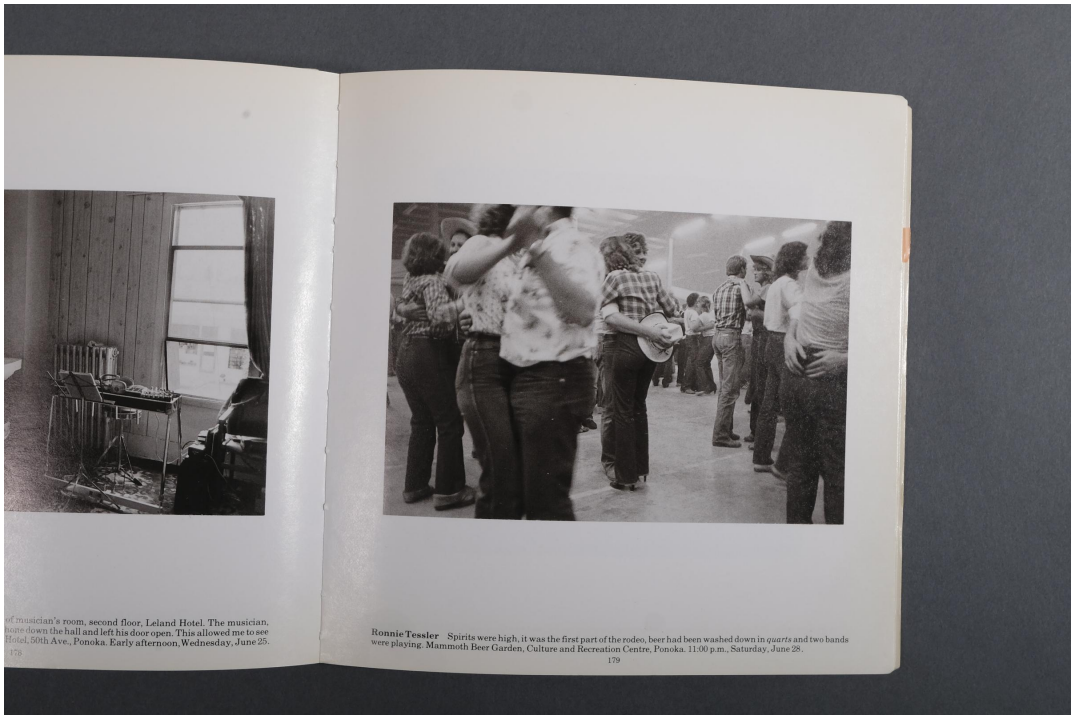
Orest Semchishen

30

Orest Semchishen Coronation's water tower as seen from one of the main streets. Coronation. Afternoon, June 23 to 29.

31

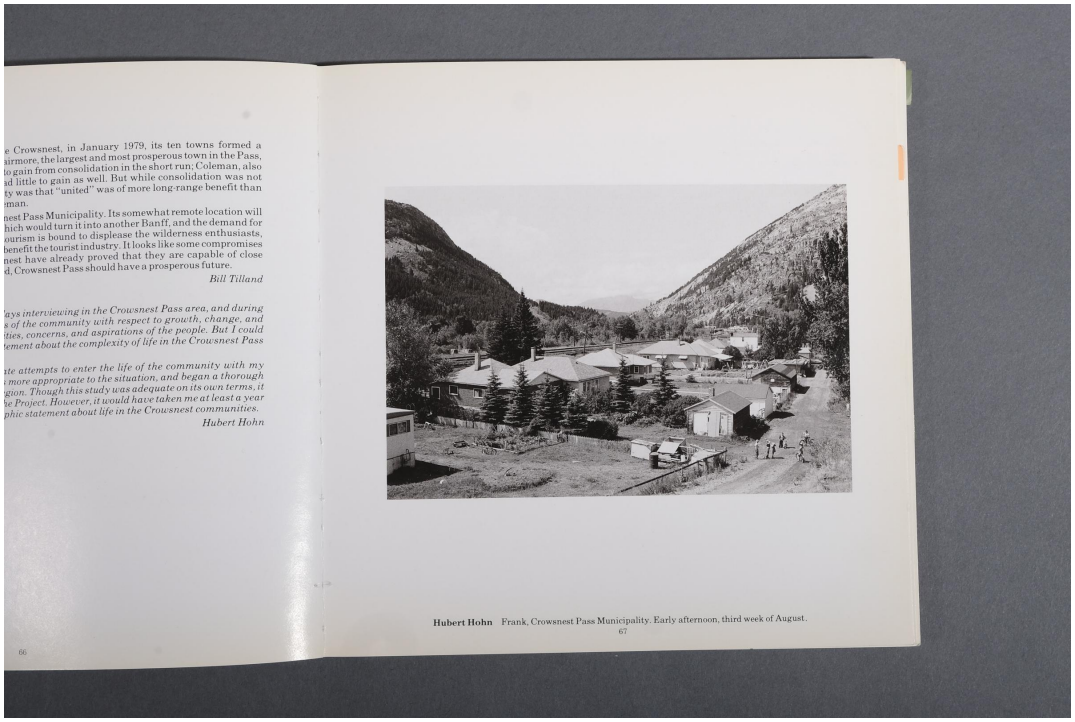
Figure 6: An image of Coronation by Orest Semchishen, pg. 31.



of musician's room, second floor, Leland Hotel. The musician, ...home down the hall and left his door open. This allowed me to see ... Hotel, 50th Ave., Ponoka. Early afternoon, Wednesday, June 25.
178

Ronnie Tessler Spirits were high, it was the first part of the rodeo, beer had been washed down in *quarts* and two bands were playing. Mammoth Beer Garden, Culture and Recreation Centre, Ponoka. 11:00 p.m., Saturday, June 28.
179

Figure 7: An image of Ponoka by Ronnie Tessler, pg. 179.



...e Crowsnest, in January 1979, its ten towns formed a ...airmore, the largest and most prosperous town in the Pass, ...to gain from consolidation in the short run; Coleman, also ...ad little to gain as well. But while consolidation was not ...ty was that "united" was of more long-range benefit than ...man.
...nest Pass Municipality. Its somewhat remote location will ...hich would turn it into another Banff, and the demand for ...ourism is bound to displease the wilderness enthusiasts, ...benefit the tourist industry. It looks like some compromises ...nest have already proved that they are capable of close ...d, Crowsnest Pass should have a prosperous future.

Bill Tilland

...ays interviewing in the Crowsnest Pass area, and during ...s of the community with respect to growth, change, and ...ities, concerns, and aspirations of the people. But I could ...ement about the complexity of life in the Crowsnest Pass

...te attempts to enter the life of the community with my ...more appropriate to the situation, and began a thorough ...gnon. Though this study was adequate on its own terms, it ...e Project. However, it would have taken me at least a year ...phic statement about life in the Crowsnest communities.

Hubert Hohn

66

Hubert Hohn Frank, Crowsnest Pass Municipality. Early afternoon, third week of August.
67

Figure 8: An image of Crowsnest Pass Municipality by Hubert Hohn, pg. 67.

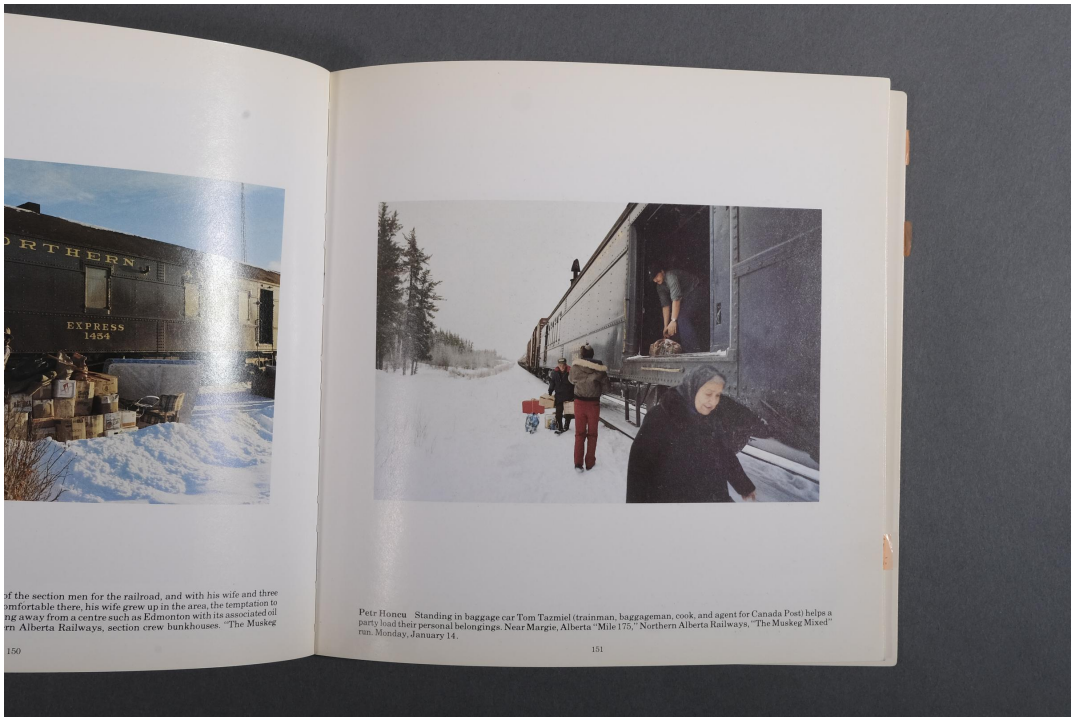


Figure 9: Public submission by Petr Honcu, pg. 151.

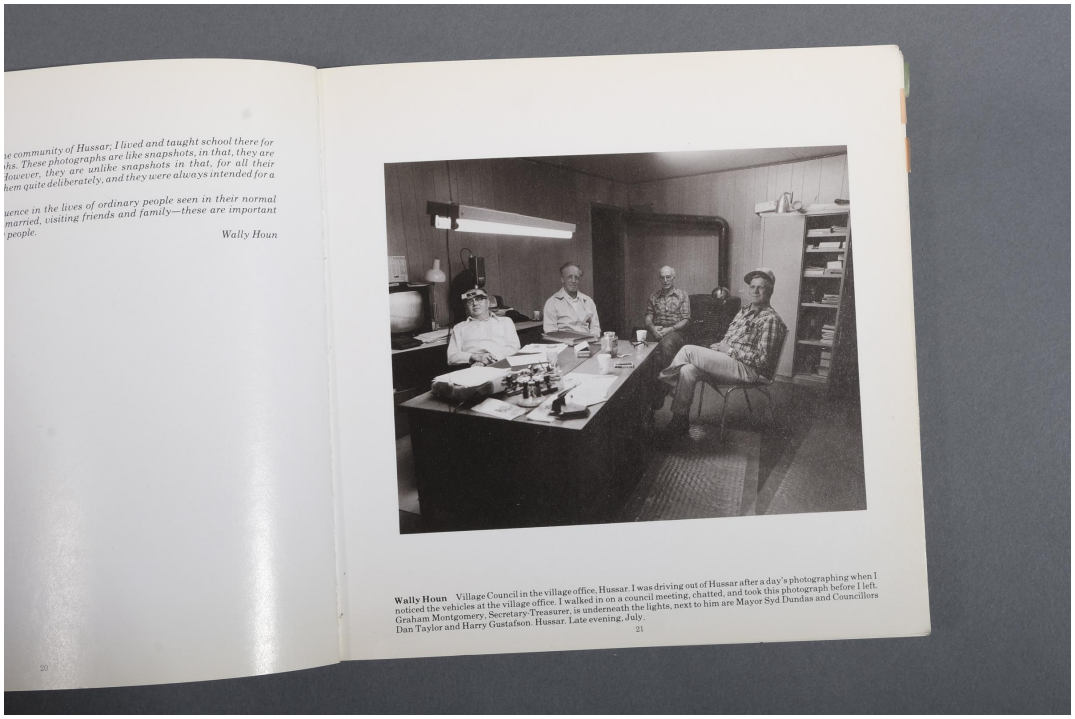
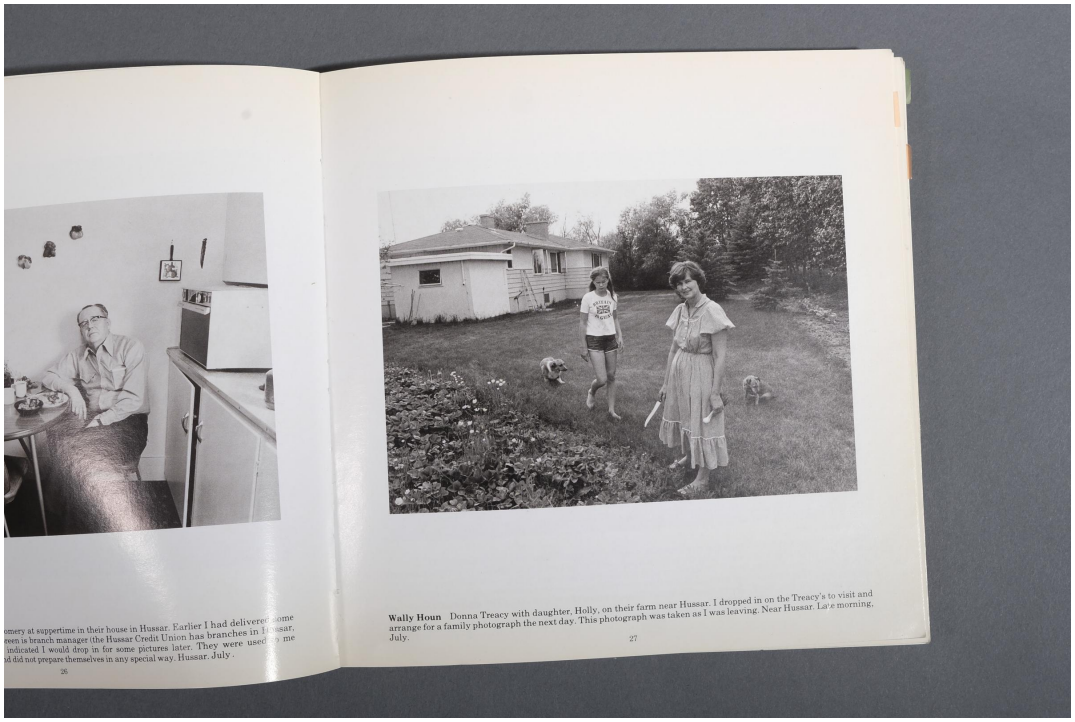


Figure 10: An image of Hussar by Wally Houn, pg. 21.



omery at suppertime in their house in Hussar. Earlier I had delivered some
reen is branch manager (the Hussar Credit Union has branches in Hussar,
indicated I would drop in for some pictures later. They were used by me
d did not prepare themselves in any special way. Hussar. July .
26

Wally Houn Donna Treacy with daughter, Holly, on their farm near Hussar. I dropped in on the Treacy's to visit and arrange for a family photograph the next day. This photograph was taken as I was leaving. Near Hussar. Late morning, July.
27

Figure 11: An image of Hussar by Wally Houn, pg. 27.



ylie, and Vietta Vasele (three sisters) posing at the Keller family reunion
y, June 29.
74

Warren S. Hall These three girls are squirming as they find the embarrassment of being photographed not entirely offset by the flattery. 6th Street, South Lethbridge. Monday, April 7.
75

Figure 12: Public submission by Warren S. Hall, pg. 75.

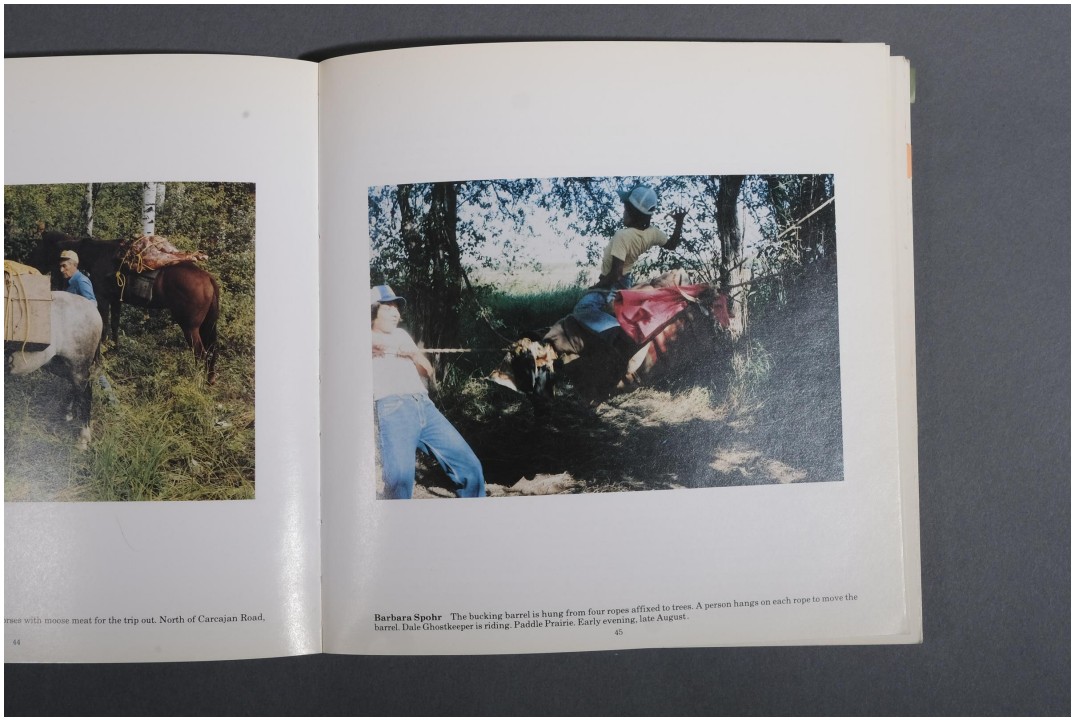


Figure 13: An image of Paddle Prairie by Barbara Spohr, pg. 45.



Figure 14: An image of a community member from Saddle Lake by Lauren Dale, pg. 127.

Introducing the Province of Alberta

Keepsake: Selections from the Archives of a Photographic Project, is arguably Canada's most expensive, in-depth but obscure photographic collection. Produced in 1980 at the cost of $325,000, the project brought together a team of 26 photographers, creatives and academics to document Albertan towns. Largely focused on rural communities, Keepsake is a photographic exploration of the province's small towns and the unique sense of community found within them. Furthermore, Keepsake is a well-planned, albeit poorly executed, exercise in the representation of life and the everyday. Through the use of photography and long-form essays, complex prairie relationships are reduced to consumable icons, where the dominant-narrative of the white-settler, and their early and continuing trials and tribulations, are enacted and emphasized as a way to authenticate prairie life. As with all projects using photography as a cultural barometer for a complex region, Keepsake is incomplete; using photography to dilute a space of cultural multiplicity into a singular narrative. In addition to becoming institutionally lost, the archive has become culturally misguided, passively affirming through the absence of non-settler accounts who the project aims to remember. First Nations, Hutterites, Mennonites, Ukrainians, Japanese, and non-ethnic minorities stand as a forgotten people in a forgotten archive. Their erasure opens a space for a quiet conflict. This conflict is not based on what has been documented but rather what has not, serving as a reminder that not all violence against people is direct or obvious. A quiet conquering of the Other is also a form of violence.

The project was featured in a number of magazines, showcased in numerous exhibitions and distributed in a dedicated publication. A humanistic project at heart,

Keepsake intimately blends private subject matter with publicly accepted photographic conventions, similar to Annebella Pollen's (2016) exploration of *One Day For Life* (1987). As Don Snyder, (the only photo-historian to respond to the project writes, the work can be placed in the same lineage as *The Family of Man* (1955), *The Snapshot* (1987), and *Wisconsin Death Trip* (1973) as a project devoted to producing, exhibiting and replicating the image as a 'snapshot' in the form of what can be termed the 'official community album'.

With its subtle provincial posturing, the project employs provincialism as a lens of inquiry, a concept defined by Josiah Royce (2009) as any social disposition, custom, or form of speech which defines the province and which the local inhabitants share attachment towards, as either a form of pride or general fondness. As such, Keepsake lends itself well to a re-evaluation through a similar provincialist lens. Provincialism is not simply the physical parameters of a demarcated space, but also the mental space created by a shared concept of the collective ideas that constitute a space. The project is related to exploring processes and the motions of the everyday, with the work being an expression of "illusion and truth, power and helplessness" (Lefebvre, 1991a, p. 21) and the intersection between representation, identity, and power.

Using an interdisciplinary approach of arts-based methods and sociological analysis, this chapter explores the shortcomings of the Keepsake Project: an obscure collection lacking diverse and accurate representations of a complex space. Keepsake is a tool for exploring prairie specific conditions, such as how contemporary narratives of ruralism are often reduced to heteronormative voices, how the rural is consistently viewed as banal and a place of the past (as opposed to the present or future), and how the rural operates as a unique space of Othering. A discussion of rural othering is particularly pertinent as tension

grows between rural and urban populations in the developed world. While reinforcing an arguably oppressive position, Keepsake also has the potential to challenge and subvert the outdated model of rurality on the prairies.

Background of Keepsake

Keepsake was the keystone project developed for Alberta's 75 Anniversary Commission by Alberta Culture, who were interested in exploiting the tremendous energy being invested in Canadian photography at this time (Walls, 1980). The Banff Purchase, with its numerous partners and art grants, was one of those projects that generated $120,000 towards the purchase and exhibition of established Canadian photographers. The Banff Purchase, as opposed to Keepsake's celebration of provincialism, was nationally-minded and represented seven of Canada's most renowned image-makers. This would mark the 'new' Group of Seven visualizing space, communities, and key concepts in art and Canadiana. The modus operandi of the Banff Purchase, as discussed by the curators Lorne Falk and Hubert Hohn was "to create support and greater public awareness of the importance of the medium of photography, as well as, to bring national and international recognition of the fact that significant photographs are being made in Canada" (Fisher-Taylor, 1979, p. 6). In addition to establishing a Canadian statement on photography, the purchase coincided with the drive to establish the Banff Centre as a hub of photographic study in Canada. The underlying raison d'être guiding both projects is that Canadian photography is an underdeveloped and undervalued tool. As Karla McManus (2015) writes on the Banff Purchase, "Falk and Hohn wished to challenge the place of the photographic medium in the Canadian imaginary by using the exhibition and its accompanying publication 'as a catalyst' for growth and professional development within the

photographic and photo curating communities" (p. 80). For the Banff Purchase, the primary goal was the promotion of the image-makers themselves; for Keepsake it was a celebration of place and Alberta lifestyle.

In the 1970s, critical discourse around the use of images had yet to developed, as a result, photography was often used as a nostalgic mechanism for recalling the 'good times of days past'. As Susan Sontag (1977) writes in her oft-quoted treatise *On Photography*, "it is a nostalgic time right now, and photographs actively promote nostalgia" (p. 15). With the Vietnam War, the FLQ crisis, and oil and energy crises, the 1970s were not particularly a stable decade. During this period photography was being used as a representational form by nostalgics and anti-nostalgics alike. Michael Lesy's *Wisconsin Death Trip* (1973) and Otto Bettmann's *The Good Old Days—They Were Terrible* (1974) are examples of anti-nostalgic rememberings of the past, as photographic confrontations to the idea of the 'good ole days'. These individual projects existed in a time when photography was about the record and about nostalgia, as witnessed in the ethos of the Keepsake project. Similarly, the provincialist Nebraska Photographic Documentary Project (1975-77) by Robert Starck and Lynn Dance aimed to document Nebraskan life, landscape and architecture but missed the Keepsake rhetoric about recording change, as it was simply about documenting the familiar. The theme of documenting the spirit of place was also present in a project about Kansas initiated by Terry Evans. The project brought together nine photographers to work independently and provide insight into Kansan culture. Punctuated by the involvement of Terry Evans, Garry Winogrand, and other high-profile photographers, the project culminated in a book titled *Kansas Album* (1977) and aptly explored an American sense of rurality and small town individuality. Functioning on a larger scale, the National Endowment of the Arts Survey's 'Through the Lens of the City' (1976-1981) represents a

largely forgotten collection of photographic excursions into creating a picture of America. Alone and in teams, over 100 photographers were commissioned to photograph "neighbourhoods, small towns, suburbs, cities and entire states, taking photographs and collecting historical photographs that they felt best represent the particular places they were examining" (Rice, 2005, p. xii). According to Mark Rice (2005), they succeeded in creating a "textured portrait of the nation as a whole, in which stories of optimism, of frustration, and of nostalgic yearning for a simpler past jostle to be heard" (p. 35). Similar to Keepsake, Through the Lens of the City fostered the idea of the 'future past', where the photographs being made were for the future consumption of later generations. However, the two projects differed in the extent to which they were funded, the involvement of notable professionals and the public at large. While Keepsake photographers were artistically stifled, The Through the Lens projects were structured to maximize artistic freedom and assigned $83,000 in total to projects as diverse as the documentation of Los Angeles, Kentucky ($12,000), Minnesota, the Appalachia's ($10,000), and the Delaware Water Gap.

The Keepsake project functions as a quasi-institutional representation of place and people in rural Alberta. The project is equal parts time-capsule and incomplete portrait of rural living as nine of the eleven communities documented were rural. The project was conceived by Linda Wedman and Douglas Clark and in total twenty-six people were involved: seven researchers (who helped inform the photographer's about their respective communities), ten photographers (one photographer photographed both urban spaces) and an additional six (support and advisory) staff. The photographers collectively captured 19,319 images as they documented their communities over a twelve day period. The project was also comprehensive in that it included a number of introductory essays and

supported a campaign where amateurs submitted images of 'Albertaness' for publication alongside the commissioned photographers (3,285 images were submitted by Albertans) (figure 1). By engaging with the public and adding an amateur submission process, Clark and Wedman (1981) were looking to "provide a broader understanding of the region and documentary photography" (p. 11). The mixture of professional and amateur images used in presenting the province (in exhibition and later in publication form) presents a precarious attempt at a dual genre, to create a "synthesis of spontaneous effort and institutionally-supported documentation" (Snyder, 2011, para. 2).

The Alberta that Keepsake reproduces is an overtly positive one, a nostalgic rendition that structures the settler-narrative as the master narrative of Alberta. And although the project collectively and compartmentally embodies the idea of a trusted cultural artefact (a personal keepsake, a document and a snapshot from a family album), through a photographic-absence it also implicitly states the purpose and audience for whom the narrative is intended. In his *Keepsake* essay, Glen Eyford (1981) calls the project a 'sort of public album' (p. 139), not one that challenges but re-affirms and strengthens the dominant codes and ideas of what it means to be Albertan. Eyford (1981) later goes on to acknowledge this absence, writing that "no album can ever be complete and, as a result, a number of things are left out: the foothills and the mountains, winter and wilderness…There are no ugly or unpleasant subjects; there is no depiction of poverty, sickness and disease, loneliness, pollution, or violence." (p. 143). Evidently Keepsake was conceived not as a space to challenge but as a space for counting blessings.

The uniqueness and merits of the project are difficult to deny. The question that confronts me is why has the work been so harshly forgotten? Why are explorations of the

content non-existent, why was I the first researcher to touch the collection since it was completed, boxed and archived? Should we consider the forgotten nature of this collection a failing and if so, who failed and who did they fail? Keepsake's professionally commissioned images represent a significant contribution to not only photography in Western Canada but to understanding the rural condition in North America. And although the project can be read as a visual form of provincial boosterism, it was also about creating impactful imagery, imagery intended to arouse (Fenton, 1981). This is similar to the Farm Security Administration (FSA) photographers (which evidently inspired Keepsake), who aimed to produce aesthetically strong images of American poverty during The Great Depression. FSA is exemplary of when sociological observations and documentary photography mix to produce impactful storytelling and scholarship. Under the direction of Roy Stryker, a sociologist with great admiration for Lewis Hime's photographic process, Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Ben Shahn, Russell Lee and several others were commissioned to produce work that advocated for the rural poor, while also exploring the fortitude and spirit of the people in the American South (Fenton, 1981), or what Tagg (2001) would call Lost America. In a similar sense, Keepsake is about capturing a spirit, a sense of place through documentary photography. As Terry Fenton (1981) discusses in his essay about the project, the FSA had discovered a visual American vernacular, one that would come to define photography going forward; perhaps Keepsake was attempting the same for the Canadian Prairies.

The remainder of this chapter will contextualize the Keepsake project and its contribution to understanding representations of rural Alberta. This will be achieved by conducting a critical-constructive overview of the project and its legacy. This will help us determine how and for whom was the narrative constructed, and more importantly, why

did Keepsake enter into such obscurity. Furthermore, an exploration of the work will allow for a renewed interest in the collection and contribute to a discussion of what a more inclusive idea of rurality on the prairies should look like.

Mechanics of Keepsake

Keepsake is an exercise where photographic depictions are used as a cultural barometer to portray an under-represented group of society—the rural. Tainted by a hefty tax-payer price-tag and notions of being a provincial puff piece have rendered Keepsake effete, unintentionally driving attention away from the inherent complexity and virtue of the project. In total 800 proofs were produced for editorial consideration with 202 images mounted for exhibition in Edmonton (Edmonton Art Gallery), Calgary (Nickle Arts Museum) and Banff (W.J. Phillips and Peter Whyte Galleries), with discussions for exhibitions in Toronto (Canadian Centre of Photography), and Ottawa (National Film Board Stills Division) failing to materialize.

Naturally, the book (figure 2) outlives the exhibition and as such our analysis will largely focus on images and texts (an introduction and five 'expert panel' articles) included in the book. As the organizers wrote from an early planning phase, "this material will deal with the photograph as a communicator and as a vehicle for the observation of culture. Viewpoints will include that of the Critic, the Anthropologist, the Sociologist, etc." (Clark & Wedman, n. d.). In addition to a curated set of images in the book, each community is contextualized by a community brief (1,000 words) and a short artistic text (figure 3). These texts function as a critical look at the area, the economic factors, cultural processes, community spaces and relations that constitute its 'uniqueness'. Fairly formulaic for the

researchers, they were asked to document specific socioeconomic and cultural categories, which included: physical habitat, cultural habitat, the community as people, social stratification, economic centre, history, and values and groups within the community, in addition to producing a complete community profile. The effectiveness of these texts are questionable in actual practice, for instance, Orest Semchishen, one of the photographers, admitted that the researcher's information was of little use (Semchishen, 2017). Lauren Dale, another photographer, expressed similar thoughts, writing that the "background information is just another screen between you and the people you're dealing with" (p. 122). One of the issues of the camera is its ability to effectively render representations of space, as one of the photographer comments, "in a few hours visit the camera can gather the outer face of the community, and a sense of the larger regional culture as well" (Collier, 1980, p. 3). Given a few hours in each community, particularly if one already has familiarity with the region, an adequate picture can be painted. In a few hours the outer-face of a community can reveal itself; the Keepsake photographers (largely outsiders) spent 12 days attempting to capture something more. This is not to draw attention to a criticism, merely to highlight a position. It is this position that inspired a road-trip to revisit three of Keepsake communities, which comprises the visual and narrative portions of this chapter.

Deciding Where and When to Photograph

Similar to many exhibitions, the photo-book (or exhibition catalogue) lives on as an echo of the project's original form. Keepsake's legacy lies within the 190-page book published by Western Emerging Arts and distributed widely throughout the province. The following analysis draws heavily from the book, as a document that can be explored for its

own visual merits, in addition to archival materials and personal interviews that indicate the public's reception of the project in 1980.

In their introduction of *Keepsake* (figure 4), Wedman and Clark (1981) offer a short description on how communities were selected based on the "geographic location and physical organization of each community and characteristics such as: economic profile, industrial base, agriculture, tourism, and available community services" (p. 11). While this section provides us with a list of parameters by which communities were selected it says little about the creative process, which is not unexpected given the format was a commercial (photo)book. This information is reserved for the archive and the planning documents, however few documents address the creative process. One document discusses an early-stage workshop (March 1979), a preliminary meeting of the research panel of three critics (one being an art historian), an anthropologist, a sociologist and a writer/editor where methodology and philosophy were discussed. A key topic of concern during this workshop was how the one-week time constraint imposed upon the photographers and researchers would limit the thoroughness of the field-work in each community. The process favoured photographic accounts versed in brevity as opposed to depth. Time restriction also had adverse effects on the work of particular photographers. For instance, photographing Saddle Lake, Lauren Dale was 'rained out' nine out of twelves days and was concerned that her narrative of the community would be misconstrued as dark, lacking the positive impressions slated by the ethos of the project (figure 5). A second workshop in September of 1979 included the photographers, researchers and advisory panel. Spanning four days (three days in some documents) it became the unintentional goal to agonize "over the old problem of documentary photography…ethics versus aesthetics…long before they experienced their actual subject matter" (Wollheim, p. 22).

Other discussions focused on issues of bias, balancing representation, mitigating issues of varying photographic styles and the privacy of community members. It was decided that the photographers and researchers would study the communities at a time when a significant community event was taking place. For instance, photographer Orest Semchisen and researcher Geoff Le Boutillier studied Coronation (figure 6) during its Annual Town and Country Fair (August 19-20) and photographer Hubert Hohn and researcher Jenette Boman documented Crowsnest Pass during Crowsnest Pass Days and Rodeo (July 9-13). The only rural community not to be represented by an event was Paddle Prairie.

How Were the Photographers Chosen?

Photographers from across Canada and with varying technical backgrounds were recruited to participate. As a result, Keepsake, a project about representing Albertan communities, relied heavily on photographers who were trained or lived elsewhere. This was done practically, rather than for political motives, as I would argue there exists a dearth of proficient documentary photographers residing in the province—photographers David Ballantyne and George Webber were only beginning to hone their craft. Of the ten invited photographers, six were trained either fully or partially outside of the province (Gabor Szilasi, Ronnie Tessler, Mark Arneson, Douglas Curran, Hubert Hohn, and Lauren Dale), with the remaining four photographers either Alberta trained or self-taught. Given the limited availability of post-secondary photography programs in Alberta, aspiring photography students are faced with the decision to either embark on a program of self-training, seek training elsewhere, or undergo a combination of the two. This highlights the precarious position of the photographic arts in Western Canada in the early 1980s, a scenario that arguably persists today (Zeleny, 2016).

Writing about the project in *Interface*, Canadas Jane Dorsey (1980) shares that the "photographers were chosen on the basis of their interest in and dedication to the documentation process in photography" (p. 9). Although vague, this is the most direct piece of text describing how photographers were chosen. No documents in the archive detail what ought to have been a rigorous selection process. To give some reference, Alberta Selects (1980), an exhibition involving some of the same cast of characters, which was ultimately cancelled due to "protest and lawsuits", provides ample documentation on how their process was conducted. Furthermore, there were also rumblings of favouritism towards certain practices and photographers. Internal correspondence between Les Graff (Director of Visual Arts) to Sheelag Dunlap discusses the issue of "giving jobs to only our friends and they in turn, exhibiting and contracting their friends…The answer, of course is no. However, covering any future photographic project, I would like to see new curators and new points of view" (1980). The letter not only addressed the issue of favouritism and insularism (a number of the photographers had been associated with Ryerson Tech), but also hints towards the lack of diversity within the project, photographers with similar backgrounds—heteronormative, white and European representing communities similarly, but of course, with a dash of Aboriginal tokenism.

Who Photographed Where?

Photographers were assigned locations based on their experience and expertise. Ronny Kessler was recruited because of his extensive work on the rodeo circuit and therefore should focus on a community featuring a rodeo or 'cowboy culture' (figure 7). Orest Semchishen was chosen for his exhibition record and his knowledge of Alberta and

the 'Albertan experience' and could virtually photograph any community in the province with competency. Wally Hohn was chosen to photograph Hussar because of his familiarity with the community, having lived there for the last six years. Hubert Hohn's background as a photographer and educator made him well suited to photograph the mountain valley area of Crowsnest Pass (figure 8), an area geographically similar to Banff, with which he was familiar. Outside of these four photographers no documentation exists giving reasons or detailing the decision-making process for how they were invited and assigned to particular communities.

In their fragmentary nature the archived records, housed at the Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA), provide significant insight into other operations of the project, as well as a full visual manifest of all images produced from the project. Archived documents inform us that the expert resource panel met over eight days in September to whittle down the selection to 202 images for the premiere exhibition in Edmonton. The archived documents also outline the budgetary reports—the required accounting for a publicly funded project. It is in the budget that we can truly understand the uniqueness of Keepsake, of how a well funded project could have such a seemingly inconsequential impact on contemporary Canadian photography.

Costs

A number of projects received funding for Alberta's 75th, including a bronze statue ($85,000) and Medalta pottery ($53,060), but Keepsake, with its price-tag of $327,500, was the celebratory flagship. This sum covered the cost of administrating, publicizing, and producing the work, as well as the costs associated with mounting a large-scale exhibition

and producing a large-run photobook. This cost is significant and very few photography projects exist from which we can draw adequate comparisons of success or failure. The majority of the incurred costs included 140 days worth of photographing, eleven weeks of researcher hours, salary cost for Wedman and Clark, travel and food per diem ($24,700), miscellaneous costs like mailing, office phone, and office supplies ($11,150), exhibition mounting ($39,050), exhibition-related expenses ($7,400), and the print publication ($77,360). Adjusted for inflation, Keepsake is a million-dollar photography project equally as ambitious as it is obscure.

Legacy of Keepsake

Background and Legacy

What is the legacy of a project that is little remembered? What is the value of a collection muted in the archives shortly after it was produced? Why did Keepsake not become the de facto photographic representation of rural Alberta or rural Canada for that matter? Why is it rarely cited and championed as a worthwhile and successful photographic endeavour in Canada? Is the project as a whole a metaphor for a long forgotten rural Alberta? The following sections explore its effectiveness and questions what, if any, cultural legacy exists today. To answer these questions we must delve deeper into the archival material and ask even more questions: what was the reception of the project in 1980? What groups were represented and which were marginalized? What are the politics of these inclusions and omissions? And most obtuse, whose west is this?

Upon its release in 1980, *Keepsake*—the exhibited collection and the subsequent publication—received lukewarm-to-negative reviews, a far cry from gaining unilateral

praise or being heralded as a triumph of rural representation or exemplar Canadian photography. Its legacy today is defined by its obscurity, known neither for its misrepresentation of the province or for illuminating photography in Western Canada. As French historian Pierre Nora (1989) has argued, modern memories are archival and as a result rely heavily on the"materiality of the trace, the immediacy of the recording, the visibility of the image" (p. 13). For nearly four decades the archive was 'institutionally lost'. Because of the PPA's backlog and the decades old transfer of the original files, the collection was uncategorized, unsearchable, lost in the vault. Keepsake is not simply *an* archive but an archive of *a* collection and all the documents—budgetary reports, negatives, contact sheets, scribbles on scrap paper, methodology papers, related newspaper clippings—that go along with the 1980 price tag of $327,500. These papers and objects now make up the Keepsake archive, a constructed hegemonic force (past and present) open to revision. As Simone Osthoff (2009) discusses, the archive is not simply a medium, it is also a contested site and in some cases also an artwork. Now rediscovered, the Keepsake archive, an artwork within an artwork, can be contested, celebrated, or eulogized.

Keepsake was undertaken with the best of intentions but it never became the cultural beacon its organizers hoped it would be. We need to return to the beginning to understand its eventual derailment. But what does a return mean when nearly four decades have passed, numerous participants have passed away, and no archived documents aptly address foundational values, actual process or the project's 'Weltanschauung' (world view)? As a result, the book plays an integral role as the 'public articulation' of the project. The ethos is simple, to document and celebrate rural Alberta on its 75th anniversary. According to Glen Eyford (1981), the project became "an eloquent statement about one of the central values in our society—family, friends, and home…a

quiet celebration of family, friends and home" (p. 139). This eloquent statement, as Eyfrod puts it, is dominated by the traditional colonial-settler narrative of prairies, a problematic reading of settlement that ignores the cultural mosaic doctrine of contemporary Canadian identity. The contributors were not oblivious to this narrative, as Lauren Dale writes about Keepsake, "I'm glad it happened, glad it exists, and glad I had the opportunity to do it…[but] that project saying what was it *really* like in Alberta—i'm not sure *that* project happened" (Dorsey, 1980, p. 10).

The project was covered in the local media and a concerted effort was made on the part of the organizers to ensure a handful of print magazines reported on the project. The work was featured in *Vanguard Summer* (1981), Candas Dorsey wrote an article for *Interface Magazine* (1980) and *Photo Communique Magazine* (1980) along with 4 colour and 10 duotone reproductions and an article (Keepsake purchased 3,000 copies of the magazine at wholesale and handed them out at the exhibition). The only review of the book came from photo-theorist Don Snyder in a piece titled 'Writings on Photography and Other Media', a piece rejected by Photo Communique because of its critical nature. Photographically informed and balanced, Snyder's account is of particular interest to understanding the critical reception of the (photo)book. In Snyder's (2011) words, the book "is serious, thoughtful and well-produced; the ten photographers acquit themselves well; and the work does at least partially represent a geographical area and a way of living" (para, 4). The compliment before the criticism, Snyder (2011) goes on to say that,

> "it is confusing and frustrating to try to deal with the book as a whole, read the essays and integrate them with the imagery, understand the character of each community and the reasons for its selection, relate the photographers' statements to

> their work, keep track of individual photographers and styles, and effectively relate the submitted individual photographs to the groups of images done by the assigned photographers" (para, 4).

The narrative is straightforward, "this is *about* rural Alberta, this *is* rural Alberta", but beyond that what does it say? Is it ultimately a progressive, critical, or status quo work. Does it reproduce old tropes, is the narrative focused on the past, the present, or is it future looking? The project is further hindered by the filtering process that takes place when a complex project is reduced to a small coffee-table book. Adding insult to injury, Snyder (2011) goes on to criticize the use of public submissions, calling the combination of pros and amateurs a mistake that "grates like a badly mixed metaphor" (para, 5). The curation and sequencing of the book make it difficult to pull the two apart, and what might have sounded feasible in an art-grant pitch or as a conceptual piece fails in demonstration. As a result, we are left with a rather shapeless artefact. It is admirable that the average Albertan could take part, but at the expense of a cohesive narrative, as a result, the sequence is jarring, fractured and confused.

If one of the objectives of Keepsake was to be a truthful telling of the region, then the public submissions work against it. The submissions are a curated selection of socially productive and celebratory moments devoid of trauma and pain (Holland & Spence, 1991; Spence, 1995), their narrative a celebratory one. As a photo-book, *Keepsake* is a complicated matter, a Frankenstein-esque production of text, documentary tradition and amateurish snapshots. One could argue that it should be given the same label we apply to the family album, for as Ronald Barthes (2000) explores, "the family album is a show of cohesion, of togetherness, or an informal archive, a 'reality in a past state'" (p. 82). Not the

reality but *a* reality, this 'provincial album' is constructed of what Marianne Hirsch (1997) describes as a "screen made up of dominant mythologies and preconceptions" (p. 7-8). Through its field-working foot-soldiers (10 photographers, 7 researchers and numerous public submitters), Keepsake depicts a rosy Alberta, while we are often reminded by media, and our own anecdotal experiences, our existence is anything but victim and violence free, but for our provincial album we will communicate nothing less than a full celebration, a real homecoming (Williams, 1994).

Stifled by the rigours and systematic nature of the project and left out of the review and curation process, the documentary photographers were, by design, made acquiescent in this process. An active attempt at removing artistic intent was made, as Henderson (1981) writes in his *Keepsake* article, 'Documentary Speech', "we were attempting to avoid the distortions which individual photographers might impose on the product by reason of their own documentary or 'art' interest" (p. 105). The organizers attempt to avoid what they termed 'artists distortions' from the final work, a position that seems comical given the myriad of 'artistic distortions' that resulted from the public submission process. Looking back to the FSA, the elder of large-scale photographic government projects, I wonder if Stryker had instructed his photographers to avoid 'artistic distortions'? The FSA photographers were not about sugarcoating or celebrating America but about advocating for and repairing its soul. Artistic flair, the ability to express themselves in a unique and impactful way, extended the FSA mandate of advocacy. The FSA photographers operated with near carte blanche on what and where they would photograph. Of course they were not part of the curation process and Stryker himself would often punch holes in negatives he did not like, effectively 'killing' the image before it could be published. However, looking at *Home Town*, an edit of FSA photographers by Sherwood Anderson (1975) that focused

on communities, we see a rural condition similar to that depicted in Keepsake, with minor differences which can be accounted for by artistic interpretation, and the temporal difference of 50 years. Of course this curation is meant to fit the needs of Anderson's writings and if we look at Walker Evans and James Agee's *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (1965) we are provided with a different narrative.

Reception

Local newspapers were quick to demonize the project. An article in the Edmonton Sun by Derek DeBono (1980) titled 'Amateur Out-Shoots Pros', starts off by saying that the "refreshing aspect of the *Alberta 1980* photo exhibition at the Edmonton Art Gallery is the unpretentious contribution made by the more than 3,000 entries from across Alberta" (para, 1). The praise is for the public submissions, which DeBono frolicsomely compares to Henri Cartier Bresson's early images of Paris. DeBono hinges his critique on Harry Adam's amateur series on the importance of the train for the remote community of Plamondon, the only public photographer to be allotted a series in *Keepsake* (figure 9). As a result of its apparent (cohesive) style, it is hard to differentiate Adam's account with those of the commissioned photographers. Citing the project as Alberta's most expensive photo-effort (and likely Canada's), DeBono (1980) goes on to write that the "photographers, especially some professionals, should carefully reassess the direction of their work" (para, 12). Wally Houn (figure 10 & 11) was heavily criticized, as DeBono writes, "the biggest disappointment in the show is a series of fourteen photographs by one of the commissioned photographers…He has gone too far in his efforts at 'snapshooting' and has miserably oversimplified the concept" (para, 7). The essays in *Keepsake* and other print articles offer some support, if only in a deflective manner, for Houn and his approach. Peter

Wollheim's 'Petrodollars and Prairie Oysters' article in *Vanguard Summer* (1981) addresses the snapshot nature of Houn's images in stereotypically Canadian fashion—by way of minor praise—when he stated "at the other extreme, Wally Houn works unabashedly out of the snapshot aesthetic, and his work is artful without pretension" (p. 23).

It is hard to gauge community reception but one opinion piece titled "Another Photo Exhibition" located in the archive is a poignant, albeit anecdotal instance of public reception. The article warns the viewer not to be fooled (this is not a work of Alberta by Albertans) before going on to discuss the partisan objectives of the exhibition, stating that,

> "what is so provoking about this exhibition is not that it is hard to find anything interesting to look at but that Alberta Culture commandeered the Edmonton Art Gallery and the Nickle Arts Museum to show photography which suits their vision of what should be exhibited…The government is, in essence, telling the people of Alberta what they should appreciate." (Walls, 1980)

This critique comes from a place of fiscal conservatism where the idea of spending $150,000 on an exhibition to be "forcibly shoved down our throats" is simply too much for most Albertans.

Critiques were not only limited to the photographic work featured in the exhibition and the publication, but also the project's ethos. In an *Edmonton Journal* article titled 'Big Project, Bland Result', Jim Simpson (1981) writes that perhaps "the real difficulty with *A Photographic Project* arises from the sheer enormity of the undertaking. How possible is it to document in film the sparking mass of land, people and activities that constitutes a

province of this size?" (p. H7). How can a single project come to signify a province, territory or region? And perhaps more importantly what is the role of photography in creating ideas of place? In Wollheim's (1980) Petrobucks article a framing of regionalism/provincialism emerges,

> "Alberta - it really is another country. Separated from its geographic neighbours to the west and south, easily distinguished from the other prairie provinces. Alberta has a political and cultural history which suggests that regionalism - both economic and artistic - are far from dead issues even this late into the twentieth century." (p. 21)

As explored in the 'Mapping Out' chapter, the idea of regionalism and creating visual impressions of regions is problematic, stemming from the complex nature of exchange between arbitrary and capricious boundaries (weather, geography, language, political-economy, societal norms, etc.). Wollheim (1980) goes on to discuss the project's success at creating a provincial framework, acknowledging that the project falls short of its ultimate goal, but that it achieves other goals that make it a major advancement for photography in Alberta. The counterpoint to Wollheim's positive critique is that nearly four decades later, the prairies are no closer to establishing a vibrant culture of documentary photography, or having a more developed understanding of what constitutes the aesthetics or conventions of prairie photography. It would be nonsensical to hold the Keepsake Project accountable for the lack of a photographic culture in Western Canada, but it is an interesting case study given the project's ambitious scope. To some extent Keepsake became a series of distillations. A distilling of Alberta's culture into ten rural communities to be photographed largely by strangers over ten days, further distilled by a selection of nearly 20,000 images

to 202 for the exhibition, with even fewer included in the book. Photography has the ability to function as a representational model, 'its digestiveness' is found in its simplicity, but at 202 images little other than visual indigestion will result.

Further on the idea of representation, another critique is how for a project about a constructed place (Alberta), very few images actually entertain the idea of place. Rural settlements are not closed systems but networks of activity (Hudson, 1985) and understanding these connective fibres is integral to making sense of rural space (Russman & Byrant, 1984). Focusing only on the communities, Keepsake's narrative is constructed of images that appear to be indistinguishable from other parts of Western Canada and the Midwest. This observation lends some credence to the idea that Western Canada and the prairies are simply an afterthought in the socioeconomic and cultural history of North America and as a result reduced to a non-place, an imitation, mimicking places already in existence (the Midwest for example). Perhaps if artistic interpretation was not intentionally limited, the photographers could have engaged in a more playful and creative construction of place, where images express originality and contribute to the process of place-creation. There is admittedly a blandness to the images; whether that is thought to be pleasant or not is dependent upon one's perspective. As one critic commented,

> "while there is a lot of smiling going on, there is very little activity. How much of this is inherent in the art of photography and how much is a consequence of an apparent intention of the project's organizers to maintain a neutral stance is hard to say. Whatever the reason, after a few minutes many of the photographs start to look alike." (Simpson, 1981)

Perhaps this is what Alberta in the year 1980 is about, a haven of homogeneity, a space of visual and emotional neutrality, and a uniform blandness. After all, to be boring is a time-honoured Canadian stereotype, a badge of honour. It is important to make the distinction between this being a criticism and a social comment. The narrative is far too reductionist and 'PG' to express the complexity of the prairie region or the province, and as a result of succeeding in being safe, Keepsake failed to make a strong social comment. Furthermore, the banality of the prairies is exactly what makes it a unique region, a uniqueness found in its ordinariness or its 'already been done-ness'. Visual similarities with other regions can also be observed in the images (the Midwest and the American West). This is because the area was founded by the same social groups around the same time and on a similar landscape. Perhaps lacking a sense of place is the prairies most defining and endearing feature of its 'placeness' (or rather placelessness). In other words, and rather paradoxically, the placelessness of rural Western Canada may be the feature that makes it a place after all.

Whose Narrative?

"Photography itself serves as a vehicle for establishing power mechanisms based on systems of oppression, and is used as a tool to convey ideology as well as to manufacture narratives, myths and national terminology." (Downey, 2015, p. 37)

Keepsake is a provincially-funded narrative of place, built on agrarian principles and occupied by European-settlers. Photography is a tool to extend and manufacture myths and the idea of place itself. It can reinforce an oppressive position, but it also has the potential to challenge and subvert it. Keepsake represents the structural nature of the othering process where the dominant group of white, middle-class, able-bodied, sound-minded

individuals determine the narrative of place (Philo, 1992). A question to ask is whose narrative is accounted for in Keepsake, and whose voice is marginalized or neglected, and does this also then create a scenario where a process of layered Othering (or layer cake of Othering) occurs? The concept of Othering in Canada is complicated by multiple factors. For the immigration-dependent nation of Canada, the common conception of Othering of 'us' versus 'them' is overly simplistic. Elke Winter (2004) uses a framework of 'us', 'them', and 'others' (others could mean other groups within the system—Aboriginal Nations—or groups outside of it—America) to describe Othering as a trilateral set of social relations. Winter's (2004) model is one that "defines pluralism as changing sets of triangular social relations, where the compromise between unequal groups- 'us' and 'others' – is rendered meaningful through the confrontation with real or imagined outsiders 'them'" (p. 129). Therefore it is better to use Winter's formulation as a theoretical framing to allow us to move away from binary oppositions, one that implicates numerous social and political groups, into a nation's understanding of itself. In their introductory text, Wedman and Clark (1981) state that the project purports to "…create statements about people and their environments by collecting photographs which represented a broad range of social and aesthetic sensibilities" (p. 11). The project was also intended to be self-critical, to not only contribute to the canon of documentary photography but also to test the assumptions and idealizations it was generating, although it is unclear how this self-critique would come about and if it factored into the curation of the exhibition or the publication of the book.

Wishful thinking perhaps, self-critique is absent from the book with the project's range of sensibilities and assumptions measured against the yardstick of the European settler. This is not uncommon, for although we define Canada as a multicultural nation, its history is often written from the perspective of eastern Anglophones and Francophones

and Keepsake's narrative is by no means a radical divergence from this practice, nor is this a regional issue specific to Western Canada. In his writings on Australian nationalism (similar to Canadian space) Ioan Davies (1995) explores how the doctrine of multiculturalism is flawed as it is still predominantly conceived as white. As a result, those within the nation and the nation itself oscillate between identities of colonized and colonizer—a concept known as settler subjectivity. Returning to the Canadian Prairies, as Wollheim discusses in his article Petrobucks, as "asociological portrait of a province, [the exhibition] *Alberta 80* contains unbelievable omissions: the region shown here is without poverty, pollution, racial segregation or social conflicts" (p. 24). Keepsake builds a positive idea of Alberta as a province and a region, while masking the prevailing socioeconomic and cultural issues present within. It is the narrative of the 'PR' agency and the provincial celebrator and not that of the modern sociologist or the socially attentive and culturally sensitive documentarian. It is important to recall the context of the project's development and the institutional and cultural gains made over the last four decades. For instance, it was historically common for rural social scientists to ignore the experiences of those that did not fit the homogeneous cast of what the rural ought to represent (Little, 2006). Only recently have rural academics begun to incorporate the voices of marginalized groups. Philo addresses this issue in his highly influential review of Colin Ward's *Child in the Country (*1988), as well as Paul Milbourne's (1997) *Revealing Rural 'Others'*.

If Keepsake is a document about Alberta at a specific point in time, then the statement it makes is one which lacks diversity. The narrative is not cautionary or critical but contrived, an incomplete narrative of community—minority populations and later settler groups are not represented, or (as in the case of Indigenous peoples), are represented in highly structured ways. The visualizations of minorities on the prairies has

been frustratingly elusive since the first surveyor expeditions arrived in Western Canada (Thompson, 2007). These missing groups operate as what Allan Sekula (1986) termed 'shadow archives', controlled by a visual regime without their participation or consent, often in the form of a hegemonic simulacra where simple representations are used to represent the complexity of life. In some ways the public submissions show more diversity than the commissioned photographers. For instance, it is in the public submissions that (if selected by the committee) we see minority groups self-representing—three girls outside a shop in Lethbridge (figure 12), an image of a Powwow on Peigan Indian Reserve near Pincher Creek. However, there are two communities present in the Keepsake project showing First Nations people. Barbara Spohr photographed in Paddle Prairie (figure 13), a northern Metis community, where she captures images of boys playing on a make-shift bull rig, a man and his pack horses, and in another frame a man gutting a pig. Lauren Dale's Saddle Lake is similar to Spohr's work in that it makes its primary focus the people and their interaction with the land—a Chicken Dance at night, a woman stretching a moose-hide on a broken stretcher (figure 14), and a series of repetitive interior shots. Giving contrast to the highly structured spaces found elsewhere in the book, these images depict relaxed social conventions and non-Western cultural milieus (Asch, 1981).

Because Keepsake is centred around settler ideas of community, groups that adopt alternative structures are systematically overlooked or represented in a form of tokenism. The prairies are home to the Metis, Plains Cree and Blackfoot, however their nomadic lifestyles and forced assignment to reserves make them unfitting as 'communities' by Keepsake standards. This exclusion is problematic as it perpetuates a silencing, or what Bruce Erikson (2013) calls a 'gentle colonization' and perpetuates a process of Othering and cultural hegemony. Keepsake's inclusion of Saddle River and Paddle Prairie is a form of

gentle colonization, the clash of colonial ideals and contemporary life, objects to be folded into the whole for celebratory reasons. Writer Bruce Erikson (2013) discusses how Indigenous peoples have constituted 'problem groups' for the production of Canadian identity. The same can be applied to the prairie region, Indigenous groups are either "objects to be excluded, or subjects to be ingested and subsumed" (Erikson, 2013, p. xiv). There are projects that explore Indigenous peoples on the prairies, for instance Larry Krotz and John Paskievich's book *Urban Indians* (1980), or George Webber's *People of the Blood* (2006). However, neither of these books are representations by the represented and could be argued to be a continuation of a long history of the making of the 'authentic' Indian by non-Indians (LaRocque, 2004). The potential for Indigenous peoples to produce their own visual accounts of community, as well as to reclaim colonial photography (Langford et al., 2015) is a topic for further consideration.

By widening the geographical scope to look beyond the province of Alberta and by employing a more expanded interpretation of what constitutes documentary work (conceptual, performative, and installation-based), we can invite a number of Indigenous artists into our discussion of the representation of cultural and ethnic minorities. This allows us to discuss the work of numerous Indigenous Saskatchewan-based artists, including Edward Poitras, Lori Blondeau, and Adrian Stimson; the latter two push against colonial stereotypes and prairie tropes in an exhibition that acted as a response to depictions of the west that were being celebrated as part of Saskatchewan's Centennial and through a series titled '100 years, 100 Towns' (Bell, 2011). In a similar dispute of place, Ukrainian-Canadian Sandra Semchuck and Cree actor James Nicolas's collaborative project

'*understoryoverstory*' conceptually creates a narrative of the complex process of asserting multiple interpretations of place. In doing so, the project explores the Other or rather, as Lynne Bell (2011) explains it, "an-Other Saskatchewan, one that is radical in its marking of the province's intersecting cultures, geographies, and histories" (pg. 173). Winnipeg born but Ottawa based Metis Rosalie Favell's work is also performative and often uses a personal narrative to dispute and rewrite the telling of place and identity. By incorporating text into family snapshots and by layering images with pop icons and other photo-collage work, Favell confronts ideas of the familial gaze. Her project *Wish You Were Here* (2010) and *Close to Heaven* (2012) are particularly interesting as Favell layers images taken by family members in the past with her own images of the present. Through these projects Favell is able to make a unique personal and social comment on intergenerational identity, one that allows for a reinterpretation of the position of the Other in society.

There are a number of Indigenous artists beyond the prairies worth mentioning. This includes Ontario-born Adrian Stimson known for his performance, painting, installation, and photographic work, Toronto-based Greg Staats known for his lens-based, performative and sculptural work around trauma, renewal, and bi-cultural heritage, Toronto-based Arthur Renwick's work around Alcan, BC, a company town specializing in Aluminum extraction next to his people (the Haisla), and Toronto-based Patricia Deadman who curated an exhibition at the Banff Centre titled *Staking Land Claims* (1999) addressing issues of cultural perception, tradition, memory, trauma, and identity. The prominent

Mohawk multidisciplinary Shelly Niro's film and photographic work is also important to discuss as it focuses on issues of identity, cross-border politics, and gender politics and in doing so, challenges stale stereotypes and upends colonial representations of Indigenous peoples. It is also worth mentioning the work of Daniella Zalcman, a Vietnamese-American based between Paris and New York who produced a body of work called *Signs of Your Identity* (2016), which focused on the legacy of western colonization, the trauma of residential schools, and the persistence of memory. By double-exposing portraits of residential school survivors in Canada with the remnants of the institutions themselves, Zalcman creates reportage that is forceful yet respectful to the subject matter.

It is telling that work by the Indigenous artists briefly discussed above are largely defined by practices that are multi-disciplinary, focusing on an engagement with personal narratives of subversion, resistance, and the politics of being. Traditionally an instrument of colonialism, these artists use the camera to disrupt how the west has been imagined while also offering a personal and often postcolonial critique of society, and to an extent, the medium of photography itself. Through image-based work and other forms of artistic creation, we are forced to think about the colonial present in projects like the '100 years, 100 Towns' series produced for Saskatchewan's Centennial or Keepsake that act as cultural texts and articulations of political ideals that not only inform the present but also guide our future readings of prairie space.

The prairies represent a space where 'multiple rurals' exist. These rurals overlap and rub up against one another, they help support a post-rural concept of the region (Halfacree, 2006). Keepsake is a text that contributes to the diminishing of the 'rurals' (plural), favouring instead a meta-narrative of the rural (singular). This outcome is achieved through exclusionary practices towards other social groups and their removal from the narrative of 'Albertaness'. The Anabaptist sects of Hutterites and Mennonites are essential to the functioning of the prairies, providing local products and goods, labour and assistance to neighbours and fire departments—all of which I have experienced firsthand. An abundance of contemporary examples fill in the missing links. George Webber's documentation of a Hutterite community in Alberta titled *A World Within: An Intimate Portrait of the Little Bow Hutterite Colony* (2015), is an intimate look into the inner workings of a mysterious Albertan community. Tim Smith's long term series *Growing Up Hutterite* and *In the World But Not of it* (2009-present) provides an in-depth look into Hutterite culture in Manitoba, often by challenging assumptions of Anabaptist groups. Kelly Hofer's book *Hutterite: The Things I Saw Growing up as a Hutterite Teen* (2016) is a youthful exploration of Hutterite culture in Winnipeg, from the perspective of a community member dealing with the stresses of identifying as LGBTQ in a religious community. In addition to work by Edward J. Spiteri and Tim Van Horn amongst others, the work of these photographers are a testament to the allure of the connective, albeit allusive and often misunderstood social groups of the prairies. Larry Towell's critically acclaimed *The Mennonites* (2000) is the only documented study of Mennonite culture in Canada; no prairie equivalent exists, but given the uniformity of these communities certain inferences can be made based on Towell's visual account.

Another visible minority group excluded from the narrative are Southeast Asian families, primarily the descendants of Chinese workers who settled on the prairies after labouring to construct its vital railway lines. More contemporarily, they have played a pivotal role as rural restaurateurs by feeding prairie folk a fusion-style culinary experience known as 'Chinese Western'. Calgary photographer Elyse Bouvier's project *Royal Cafe* (2016) and York University Professor Lily Cho's *Eating Chinese: Culture on the Menu in Small Town Canada* (2010) are indelible resources for understanding this diaspora community, as are John Fukushima's work around Raymond, Coledale and Magrath. By virtue of their absence, Keepsake's narrative excludes the telling of black-Canadian settlers. Although not representing a large population, black communities did settle in the province in Bretton and Amber Valley. No photo-projects document the struggles of blacks navigating the physical and spiritual landscape of the prairies. By minimizing or removing representations of these groups from the province's photographic history, the region is robbed of the potential history-making process (and possibly a healing process). For instance, how does an understanding of the province's historical treatment of Indigenous peoples through residential schools or Ukrainians through internment and the three waves of 'red scare' on the prairies change the region's narrative? Can we accept the racist undertones historically found in Caroline, or in Kinsella with its cheeky Kinsella Kozy Kitchen (KKK) cafe? Can we celebrate a place or region critically and at the same time leave all its surfaces polished? Perhaps by removing the self-censorship process and acknowledging that "not all memories are celebratory" (Williams, 1994, p. 191), we can gain an understanding of place that is not only more representative but that allows for a distinct sense of place to take root.

In Keepsake's homogenized narrative invisible minorities are not explicitly included as part of the region's social fabric. This is common in nation or region-building projects where a singular identity is constructed at the expense of cultural difference (Bhabha, 1990; Chatterjee, 1993). Community members with non-visible disabilities, or members identifying as LGBTQ are excluded from the popular telling of community on the prairies. The 'queer experience' on the prairies, as a focus of study, has so far been an urban narrative constituted mainly of an urban centric literature (Taylor, 2011). Compounding the 'urban gain rural drain', the experience of queer ruralites is precarious at best, taking a flight path from rural areas - from negative space (freedom from) to positive space (freedom to), from misunderstanding and prejudice, and for hopes of acceptance and community. As Marple (2001) writes, the "rural is the site of torture from which queers flee, and it is home to the less fortunate or disadvantaged queer" (p. 72). The urban personified is a secular missionary, a place of safety, where "the removal of the queer from the rural can then be equated with deliverance" (Marple, 2001, p. 72). The perception of the rural as an inhospitable space for sexual minorities equates the moving of queers to urban spaces as a form of liberation. Although the narrative from rural to urban is complex it is not one that ceases when one moves permanently out of rural space, as highlighted in the film *My Prairie Home* (2013) about the queer singer Rae Spoon and her complex relationship to her rural upbringing. A queer friend of mine once remarked, "you can take the gay out of the small town but you cannot take the small town out of the gay." There is a space for gays in rural communities. As Jonathan Petrychyn (2015) explores in his paper *Anecdotally Queer: The Then and There of My Prairie Home*, "contrary to the common perception that the urban is the only spatial configuration in which queers can flourish, I rescue the rural as a necessary approach to thinking [about] queer life" (p. 1). Petrychyn is attempting to decouple our understanding of urban space as queer space with a position

that expands understandings of queer space as both urban and rural. This is admirable, as Marple (2004) explores, "rural queer experiences are often made invisible, are problematized, and when they are seen it is as a deviation from the norm" (p. 71). If institutional silence can be equated to a form of oppression, then inclusion in the narrative of what is rural becomes a form of empowerment for LGBTQ communities.

Accounts of (invisible) minority groups living in small communities on the prairies are scant, their daily activities and tribulations often concealed from the common ruralite. By omitting the roles of non-whites and sexual minorities (Other rurals), Keepsake unknowingly contributes to the homogenizing of rural space, a narrative that is white, and unfriendly to 'the Other', which consequently, feeds the position that urban areas alone are bastions of tolerance and diversity. This may be somewhat misleading since the vast majority of Canadians live in cities, and while 19.1% of Canada's total population are visible minorities, Canadian media consistently portrays the nation's identity as Anglo-Saxon and European (Mahtani, 2001). However, rural spaces are still predominantly Anglo-Saxon, in a 1996 study Ronald Beshiri and Emily Alfred found that 6% of the total rural population was made up of international immigrants, in comparison to urban populations at 27% (Azmier, 2003). Keepsake constructs rural communities as homogenized entities. Minority voices or poly-narratives of rurality (multiple rurals) do not factor into the project in a significant way, outside of what is observable as Aboriginal tokenism. As such, Keepsake favours the collective over the individual—the conceptualization of a master narrative of a place over a complex reading of place—to the point that it ignores rural class differences (Pini & Leach, 2016) and does little for the enfranchisement of the 'Other of the Other' (Cloke, 2006b, p. 449).

The Rural as Places of the Past

Keepsake not only attempts to explore 'Albertaness' but incidentally also functions as a gateway into the rural condition—a condition supported by claims to a proud history and expressions of hesitation about the future, a feeling that the best days have already passed. Perhaps this hesitation towards the future is built into the settler's psyche, an uncertainty of when the next drought, snow storm, or drop in the price of wheat will come to devastate. The farmer, the old epitome of ruralism is always anxious about conditions out of his control. Looking west he wonders when the rains will come, or when the sky will lift and the fall winds will blow the wheat dry. The farmer functions as a contemporary rural metaphor for worry, hesitation and most important, reluctant patience. As a result, the farmer, now in short supply, is a spiritual guide for the rural condition. Prairie historian Gerald Friesen (2001a) suggests, we need new myths of the west as the old icons and regional folk tales have grown stale. How Friesen suggests we do this is vague, only stating that we should take stock of a new West and leave behind the old imagined prairie. From a photographic perspective, this means forging a new visual conceptualization of Western Canada, a vision that is post-rural and post-prairie but not overly urban in its rendition.

The evacuation of the rural has always been a smouldering fire. For every hour you spend reading this, approximately one family (2.78 persons) will have migrated or settled in urban Alberta (Census Program). A rather unremarkable statistic, it highlights the chronic depopulation of rural communities. Looked at as a long-term process and compared to other forms of metropolitanization in North America and Europe, this process is worrisome (Robinson, 1990). This trend is likely to continue as Alberta's baby boomers, a significant portion of the rural population, enter their twilight years. Long term

population decline often signals a reduction in a community's economic capacity. The prevailing perception of rural spaces is that they are not places of the future and as a result are assigned to the past (Calder, 2013). This is rather fitting for prairie communities as one way of defining their existence is as an internal colony established to produce economic resources and bolster population and services in urban centres. The idea of rural spaces as places of the past is a common motif of many documentary projects created on the prairies—Keepsake after all was initiated to celebrate the disappearing and changing spaces of Alberta. Hu Hohn's 1976 exhibition at Red Deer College, David Ballantyne's *Urban Prairies Photographs,* as well as my monograph *Out West* (2014), describes the rural as a form under threat, a disappearing vernacular and with it, the people who worked so hard to establish it. How each project classifies 'threat' varies, but the communal thread is that the rural is undergoing significant changes.

Virilio sees the past as interweaving with the present, something that weighs down the present, perhaps even contaminating it (Rose & Virilio, 2000). If the rural is haunted by its past is this haunting self-imposed or imposed by others? Moving away from an urban-centred discourse, what is the function of a narrative of banality or rural decline? Whose narrative is it, how is it expressed in documentary projects, and how does it affect perceptions of the rural prairies? No projects document the progressive changes taking place in rural spaces: the changes in farm mechanization and the genetic modification to plants and animals needed to feed a growing planet, or how its dams, wind farms, solar parks are producing energy to feed urban habits (Carlow, 2016). The dependency of the urban on the rural for resources is long documented (Thomas, 2011). There are documentary projects that focus on trends of decline or stagnation, the loss of the family farm and oil culture in decline. These projects mirror urban consumer habits that are

increasingly returning to small-plot gardens, meat and carbohydrate reduced diets, and the elimination of oil dependency. As Azmier discusses in his article *Fighting the Odds* (2003), parts of "rural Western Canada have lost a large number of jobs as a result of technology changes and commodity price declines. Between 1996 and 2002, 52,000 jobs were lost across the West in agriculture alone—a reduction of 30% of the farming workforce" (p. 2). This is a trend that has been observable since the original settlement of the prairie region. What these changes further signify is the retreating of the farmer and the rancher as the prevailing cultural personalities of rural Alberta, replaced by energy industries (oil, wind, and solar) and bustling urban activity. The remaining farmers, once ubiquitous in their supply, will become sparse and exoticized, and like the homesteader, or gold miner, the idea of nostalgia will infect the idea of the farmer (Boym, 2016). The strong back (accompanied by equally strong Christian values) of the farmer has given way to the modern pragmatic farmer, an unromantic notion of man who spends as much time on his smartphone talking to John Deer techs about his self-driving GPS technology, as he does wiping excess axle grease on his Levi overalls. As mechanization in the post-industrial epoch makes workers redundant, and the scale of economically feasible farm operation increases, the workforce required to 'prove' the land diminishes (Reimer & Apedaile, 2000). This has and will continue to impact rural towns as they are largely dependent on farmers to sustain their businesses. And although agri-businesses remain profitable through scaling, those profits are shared amongst a smaller portion of the population and a process of distanciation occurs within these communities (Bantjes, 1997).

Rural communities face a number of issues that will reduce their competitiveness with urban spaces. Low population densities in rural areas makes maintaining aging road and sewer systems difficult and the implementation of new services expensive. With a

reduced population services are often reduced or removed; this includes medical services but also social services and supports (Weisheit, Falcone, & Wells, 1994), as well as protective services (Halseth & Ryser, 2006), and educational opportunities (Bollman, 1999). The prairies are geographically disadvantaged by virtue of the region's immensity and the space that one must traverse to reach a neighbouring community. More recently, this relationship has changed as satellite television, smartphones, high speed internet and other Information Communication Technologies (ICTs), have collapsed communicative distance, although this relationship is somewhat problematic, as the same technology that brings people together in Marshall McLuhan's Global Village also contributes to the breakdown of community through isolationist habits. Why visit the village pub when one can stream the Oilers game on their home entertainment system, or why visit a cousin when one can just send them Snapchats? As Emile Durkheim, Karl Marx, and Ferdinand Tönnies have argued, the division of labour and the emergence of modern technologies will supplant rural forms of production and in turn forms of community (Smelser & Baltes, 2011). Autonomous cars may help reduce rural decline in areas close enough to metropolitan centres to be considered commuter-areas. In this scenario people trade space and more affordable housing for an increase in commute times (where they can potentially work, eat and sleep in their automobiles). This does not necessarily address issues of community fragmentation and the loss of social bonds exasperated by new technology. This scenario also requires individuals buy into' the positive aspects of rural living, which include: increased life satisfaction (Helliwell, Shiplett, & Barrington, 2018), reduced light, sound and air pollution, reduced cost of living (housing) and proximity to nature.

Communities are coming up with inventive ways to stop decline and reduce negative public perception of rural living. Some communities have offered innovative tax

and property incentives to bolster investment in the community and encourage local entrepreneurship. A number of communities across the prairies have offered land for free or next to nothing ($10 in Pipestone, Mb for instance or the gifting of $32,000 for opening a business). The town of Mundare, AB advertises business plots on main-street for $1. As a result, a daycare, real-estate office, wood-working shop and liquor store have recently been constructed. Other communities are coming together in regional economic partnerships and special municipal regions and advancing ideas of place-making (Massey, 1984). These accounts for rural place-making are post-productive, based on transitioning a community's narrative from resource extraction to leisure and tourism. This is done so that people can see the value in a community, but this is often difficult to achieve across the region en-masse when communities are in direct competition with one another.

Visualizing Decline

What might appear to some as the documentation of decline, may simply be the documentation of a way of life. Responding to Orest Semchishen's work on Indigenous communities, Snyder shares an important lesson about representation, when he writes that,

> "these are not documents of poverty or despair; but rather, what we have lost in our race towards progress and material success. Not everyone lives for the same goals, nor aspires to the same future, and many residents of isolated communities are content with their lives. They have no desire to be assimilated into the larger urban centres." (Semchishen, & Snyder, 2005, p. 16)

The common visual narrative of the rural is, on the one hand, a narrative of decline, and on the other, a narrative of lifestyle, with the latter being arguably incompatible with modernity's urban-centric and materialistic view of progress. Perhaps historical work on small towns by Semchishen and the remainder of the Keepsake photographers, and more contemporarily by George Webber and myself are mislabelled, not based in extending the narrative of ruin and decline but rather the documentation of a way of life. Flipping through Semchishen's *Through Alberta Eyes* or my book *Out West*, it is hard to untangle the idea of decline and the documentation of a 'way of life'. As a result, the argument that decline is not part of the rural narrative, or that the rural way of life is not undergoing decline (or change) is a difficult one to make.

The narrative of decline is fitting for a number of communities that lack the insulation to surmount economic hardship. As a result, they exist in a fragile balance where the collapse of a local industry, or the diversion of a highway can significantly undermine the economic and demographic long-term health of a community. This is not a rural-focused narrative; changes to North America's steel and automobile sectors have also resulted in severe economic downturn in specific urban areas (Windsor and Detroit amongst others). And of course not all rural communities are in a weakened economic position. The narrative of rural decline can be equally matched by one of rural prosperity. Corbett termed this occurrence the 'perceptual paradox', where many small communities not only persist but grow, given the often expounded disadvantages of living in them (Everitt & Gill, 1993). Everitt and Gill (1993) discuss how the collapse of the small town is a process common to the Canadian Prairies and the American Midwest (Burns, 1982). This is a slow and continuous process that for over a century has dominated the narrative of the rural not only in the Prairie region but which also influences perceptions of rural life in the

Rust Belt, the American West, and the American South. As a result, documentary photography in North America has been deeply drawn to the narrative of economic and social decline, often fetishizing it to the point it operates as uncritical 'ruin porn'.

Banality as the Narrative

For our purposes, it is not enough to associate the concept of visual banality with that which lacks originality, Prairie banality must also be thought of as boring. That is not to say that banal images are anti-aesthetic, as they can be aesthetic by way of their banal nature (think Stephen Shore's visual travelogue of breakfasts and hotel rooms, or Robert Adam's images of newly developed suburban housing). To be banal is to bore and to offer the ordinary as grounds for further scrutiny. Visual accounts of the rural often depict spaces as a part of the past rather than the present. The concept of rural banality is by no means a purely Canadian construction. However, on the Canadian Prairies, the idea of banality is magnified by the visual redundancy found in its environs. Each small town looks the same, each grain elevator a stand-in for another town's elevator. A uniformity blankets the Canadian Prairies, but this plainness is also compounded from another source, the startling detail that it looks like a 'slightly-off' version of the American West or Midwest. As a result, there are two factors that contribute to the rural trope of banality—that the prairies constitute a uniform region and that they share similarities with American regions settled just prior to the Canadian West.

Let us pivot our discussion from banality to exoticism as this will help us understand how the flat landscape of the prairies can take on a prosaic character. In her widely cited treaties *On Photography*, Susan Sontag (1977) states that which "is completely

exotic, [is] therefore worth photographing" (p. 56). To look for difference, to find the exotic near and far, can be a problematic marker of visual worthiness; for exoticness, like banality, is subjectively embraced. Granted the projects that focus on the prairies (*A Plain View, Prairie Gothic, Out West)* were not produced as works of exoticism, but rather plainness (*plain*-ness), they alternatively can be viewed as such through an external reading. These projects focus on the 'banality of the known' and are constructed through interactions with a familiar milieu. Photographing that which is plain is an exercise in photographing that which is hard to perceive as beautiful. While others might define rural banality as unimaginative (or as ugly), it is also an exercise in attempting to find beauty in the mundane and ordinary. Returning to the idea of prosaicness as something akin to the outsider's belief that the landscape is humorously filled with nothingness. It is often the outsider, or those within wishing to escape, that see a treeless-featureless emptiness; while historically others (the prairie's articulate poets and profit-driven prospectors), have described it as 'a romantic horizon', a hospitable space ready for conquest (Rees, 1988).

We have become a culture reliant on the image for meaning-making (Thomas, 2011). Since the birth of the photographic medium, simulacra depictions of the prairies have focused on its banal features, the trading of the landscapes 'thingness' for 'nothingness' (Patchett & Lozowy, 2012). For those not born of the space, instead of seeing something, they may see nothing, an interpretation of the landscape often perpetrated by urban readings (Thomas, 2011). The first photographer to capture the 'featureless' topography of the Canadian Prairies was Lloyd Hime in 1858. Hime's photograph titled *The Prairie, Looking South*, depicts an indistinguishable landscape. If it was a sketch or a painting it would be considered incomplete. Hime's image is a testament not only to the

prairie's lack of geographical features that might otherwise constitute a 'view', but also the cultural relativism of eastern Canadians and Europeans who may choose to see nothing. In this narrative the landscape is more a cadaver than a live specimen, a space to settle and modify rather than to live in harmony with (Giblett & Tolonen, 2012). This is an important point as landscapes are both geographical realities as well as abstractions. We can choose to see the prairies as barren or as a landscape made enticing by fertile land and a ubiquitous sky. On defending the features of the Prairies Canadian novelist W.O. Mitchell (2006) calls "the least common denominator of nature: earth and sky" (Schwartz, 2007, p. 968). Over the course of its socioeconomic development, the narrative of the prairies has transitioned to reflect more positive attributes of the land. Canadian photo-historian Dona Schwartz (2007) takes up this school of thought calling prairie space "a monument to treelessness" (p. 968).

In a favourable fashion, the prairies share the desert's sterility and arid character, while also embodying the flatness and calm of the ocean. When the wheat fields are mature, full and swaying from the westerly winds, the prairies resemble the stirring waves of an ocean, which supports the rumour that Saskatchewan is particularly good at producing sailors. When the fields are not flowing in harvest they are another type of ocean, an ocean of barrenness and a sense of isolation, not uncommon to other writings on Canadian space, where each farmhouse and each town is alienated from one another by distance (Kreisel, 1969). Viewed from above, the prairies is a series of islands as Canadian geographer Cole Harris discussed in a lecture on Canadian regionalism (Friesen, 2001a). Few geographies hold allegorical attributes of both the wettest and driest formations on earth, however going back to the etymology of the word desert we can read that it is in fact derived from

the idea of 'things abandoned'. A nineteenth century focus on the arctic and sub-arctic as an inhospitable trade route accompanied by notions of American desert condemned the North West to be thought of as an arid and demanding region (Owram, 2016). A narrative of hard work and agriculture ingenuity would come to challenge the prevailing attitude of the prairies as a space with "little to attract the eye" (Owram, 2016, pg. 14). We return once again to the ideological position of the prairie as empty, a convenient narrative for the inevitable settlement further entrenching British and New Canada imperialistic narratives onto the prairies. The agricultural ingenuity of the early 20th Century ensured the idea of the open prairie moved conceptually from desert to a belt of fertility ready for western settlement.

A narrative of expansion and emptiness gives way to opportunity and productiveness. From this point on, the prairies are no longer framed as desolate in popular discourse, and talk turns towards the region's stored capacity while still retaining its banal character. How this is expressed photographically is interesting in a post-photographic world where rural banality, a character expressive of the region itself, is enhanced by the banality of the medium itself (a result of the proliferation of imagery). As Ritchin (2013) explores in *Bending the Frame*, "in the digital environment, lens-based image making has become a form of communication nearly as banal, instinctive, and pervasive (or profligate) as talking" (p. 11). Ritchin's argument is that photography today is banal. So what happens when a banal process (to photograph) is applied to a banal subject (the prairies), does this synergize, modify or confuse the expression of banality? Although not part of the post-photographic world, Keepsake's subject and repetitive manner can foster an interesting discussion on the topic.

Conclusion

As a comprehensive record of rural living, as a rosy provincial album, communicating nothing less than a full celebration, Keepsake has entered the annals of obscurity. Buried but not burned, it provides us with the most in-depth study of prairie culture in Canada. Keepsake was produced for two reasons, as a record of the province for reasons of prosperity and celebration and secondly, as a key cultural work to help foster the photographic community in Alberta. Four decades later and with these two objectives as categories for arbitration, we can evaluate the project and determine whether it succeeded or was simply an extension of colonial photography. Although it may have produced some temporary interest in photography it failed to contribute to the development of documentary photography in the region and was largely left out of national discussions on the merits and abilities of the medium to explore social issues. Any fostering of a photographic community it may have been responsible for has largely been undone; there are very few reputable programs in the province devoted to teaching documentary photography (Alberta University of the Arts as potentially the only exception). Keepsake's success may be more systematic than immediate, having influenced photographers who in turn influenced other photographers—George Webber (2017) appreciated the project very much and Lawrence Christmas (2018) was inspired by photographers included in the project and potentially Keepsake itself (2018).

The Keepsake project was hampered by a filtering effect. As it progressed it became a series of distillations, a distilling of Alberta's culture into nine rural communities, photographed over twelve days by strangers, further distilled by 20,000 images whittled down to 202 for the exhibition, with even fewer images selected for the book, all in the

span of a few weeks in the summer of 1980. The question of whether Keepsake is an accurate representation of place and people is a complicated matter. When the project was released, criticisms were focused on questions of what and who rather than on questions of which groups were excluded, which narratives were allowed to surface and which were allowed to sink. Keepsake does provide an expansive record of white rural settlement, as someone would expect from a project funded for the celebration of Alberta, as opposed to an impartial and critical documentary undertaking of the province.

Another way to approach this is to ask, was its cost enough to warrant its creation? As one of the contributors wrote about the project, "its success is as much in the very fact that it was tried…I think our birthday money in this instance has been well spent" (Dorsey, 1980, p. 10). Keepsake is ambitious—it has no equivalent in Canada—and does offer a unique, albeit not comprehensive, insight into understanding prairie life through photography in the 1980s. It now stands (or rather hides) as a compressive record to rural Alberta and in an idealistic sense, its inherent worth can be found in its function as a record, a record that complicates the prevailing narrative of the rural as a symbolic space of nothingness, of no future, emptied of jobs, youth and prosperity, and as a place of the past. We can wonder how the other items (the Medalta pottery and the public installation) funded by the special 75th anniversary fared? After all, they did not carry the burden of adequately representing an entire province and condensing those representations into a series of exhibitions and a photobook. Keepsake was an ambitious undertaking and deserves no less attention because of this. But if we ask in a critical matter, did this project adequately represent the province and the uniqueness of Alberta, then the answer is likely, no it failed us, perhaps not in design, but in its implementation and even more so in its legacy as an archive. However, its failure can also be its success as it can provide important

insight for future scrutiny as to what historically and contemporarily constitutes the rural on the prairies and how it has and ought to be represented.

Digging In - Narrative: Revisiting Keepsake Travelogue

Road - 7:05 am

For the past eight years I have been occupied with studying contemporary prairie issues and the changing relationship between rural inhabitants and the place they call home. In my process of exploring the Canadian Prairies, I have traversed thousands of kilometres on both paved and gravel roads, visited hundreds of communities, shot hundreds of rolls of film, scribbled in numerous notebooks and experienced both the brilliance of simplified rural living and the harsh reality of conservatism and isolationism. Over this period, and through conversations with locals, free association while driving and the reviewing of images and field-notes, I have arrived at a number of observations and truisms, one of those observations being that on the prairies the grid is king, both on the roads and in the towns. Driving can be therapeutic and prairie roads can be meditative, linear rips in the landscape representing large-scale planning and design uniformity—the parcelling for mass settlement. This is a region defined by its banality, long stretches of land with little elevation change, where the idea of a scenic drive is often more amusing as an idea than as an actual practice. This is not to say prairie folk are not without appreciation for their landscape, quite the contrary, if you substitute their wide vistas for concrete dividers, or the shelter of trees, it will cause anxiety in many of them. What follows are a few of those observations made over two days as I revisited three communities from the original Keepsake project.

The prairie landscape often registers as a landscape of nothingness, a near desert-like formation of grasses and genetically modified crops. A town sprinkled there. An old farm house there. Not much to write home about. But there are lessons that can be learned here. For instance, understanding the prairies is about seeing the interdependent relationship between its endless sky and its endless horizon, equally banal and colossal impressions of the space. Knowing this you are one step closer to understanding the psyche of the prairie dweller. Because it is relatively featureless, tall structures, like water towers and grain elevators, are impressionable buildings, a vertical thrust providing a challenge to the horizontal character of the region. As a result, grain elevators have become a common fixture for photographers like Hans Dommasch, Frank Gohlke and Bernd and Hilla Becher. The grain elevator is the most emblematic structure of settler culture in Western Canada. And if you enter a farmer's house you're likely to see a picture or a painting of a prairie landscape dotted with grain elevators. The region was once known for its suitability for grain farming and cattle ranching, the premise for which the entire region was advertised, sold, and settled. The farms and pastures are still producing, but assisted by (mechanized) progress, the large-support systems needed to produce 'off the land' has been reduced, jobs have moved to cities, shops shuttered, and grain elevators have been demolished in favour of high-capacity terminals in more centralized areas. Early poets and architects referred to these forms, designed for their utility, as prairie cathedrals, the dominant structure of power and community on the prairies. Others called them prairie castles or prairie sentinels, where inside a number of secreted mechanical operations take place: automatic conveyor belts, hoppers and fumigators, and fans operating to ensure the grain is clean, dry and moved when required. From the outside these quiet towers are community emblems

where farmers would bring cash crops and discuss politics amongst the grain carts and trucks. From the inside they are dormant bomb factories, holding hundreds of pounds of highly flammable grain dust, packed into crevices at all levels. Ordinary and yet highly emotive, these structures are nonsecular monuments. God provides good fortune in the way of good weather and economic prosperity follows with the region's social and economic fertility. This is epitomized in the number of grain elevators along the tracks, the more grain elevators the stronger the town's local economy. Driving through the prairies, you know you're closing in on a town when you see one of these structures on the horizon. Driving from the city to my hometown, my cousins would play a game of 'who could spot the grain elevators first'. At its peak there were nine grain elevators in my hometown of Mundare, AB, now there are zero, with the last structure demolished in 2013. This is a symbolic death for the community only rivalled by a town's railway line being pulled, unpleasant forms of community castration. Ozymandias' ruin has come to the prairies.

Coronation - 1:46 pm

Entering Coronation, the 'American-style' water-tower reigns supreme, no more prairie cathedrals to challenge its dominion. Much has changed in the forty years since Orest Semchishen set his camera upon this town as part of the Keepsake project. In 1980 Coronation was one birth away from hitting 1,500, as Semchishen captured in a community sign that read "Welcome to Coronation, town on the move, population 1,499". Today Coronation's population sits at 940. Like many of the small towns on the Canadian prairies, it has experienced a decline. Located in central-east Alberta, the town was named after the

coronation of England's George V. Coronation's early development is an example of the exploitive power of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR). The community was slated to become a major CPR junction between Chicago and Edmonton. The CPR advertised the depot internationally, land lots were speculated on and auctioned off at inflated rates, lots initially owned by the CPR. The depot never materialized and by the 1930s the area experienced the exodus narrative common to many prairie communities. Increases in mechanization, chronic drought and dust storms led to the abandonment of farms and businesses and the search for opportunity elsewhere. Despite these hardships, the community persisted because of its geographic positioning—straddling good farmland to the north and good ranchland to the south. By the 1950s the community became a hub for oil exploration, which allowed for decades of steady growth. The economic forces of the region have more or less stayed the same. Ranching is on the decline, farming in comparison is doing just fine, and oil is still king in the province but the empire is shrinking and it is being felt in Coronation.

The Coronation Semchishen records in Keepsake strike to the heart of photography on the prairies, bland and banal, cold and distant, simple and yet serene. An approach that is impersonal, distanced, yet not careless or lacking aesthetic precision. His subjects—buildings and people alike—seem relaxed, a feeling of indifference to his presence persists. A series of images that have not been stolen but rather secreted. Semchishen is tapping into something more than an objective and accurate representation of the community, he is addressing the changing face of rural Alberta, that slow face of decline. Semchishen's Coronation work is similar to that of the New Topographics, a beautiful medley of the built

environment and portraiture. Semchishen's mastery of light and shadow evokes feelings of Robert Adams' work in America, where ordinariness is an ever-present motif.

Drives through the countryside and stops in quiet prairie towns do not entice many urbanites. What is there to see, why would we stop? I'd rather be at the cabin this weekend. Give me the beach. These communities can teach us lessons about their 'vibrancy', the importance of a slow pace, and familiar social bonds, but these lessons are often hidden, and they must be sought out. Even to the experienced traveller they can be difficult to gauge. The time when one arrives is a large determinant of what one will experience, a community event, a quiet Sunday afternoon in fall, or a busy Monday in summer. What you see is what you get. Come back the next day and the community might be strikingly different, for each community has its own rhythm. One gets a paradoxical sense in these small towns that things are eternally fixed, yet perpetually caught in a tide of slow change. This results in images that are not dynamic, nor static, rather the space-time they inhabit has slowed. There is a timelessness to these small towns, a feature that makes them feel 'stuck in time' where progress is often not a term associated with these spaces.

After reviewing Semchishen's images and visiting the community, what I see is eerily similar to what Semchishen documents. Aside from environmental portraits, street-level scenes appear devoid of activity, cars and buildings abound but little movement on the streets. We glimpse this from Orest's image of Coronation's 'American style' water tower. The focus is on the tower but we get a clear view of 'Jack's Shoe Store', a store that still stands today in much the same condition. We get little indication of why Jack closed

shop. The store has seen little change over the past decades, the paint is in good shape, the crack running through the foundation has not visibly worsened, and the sinking corner of the building is only a little concerning. The grasses to the right are overgrown, common in the southern prairie, and the power lines are still 'true'. This produces an image that is warmly familiar, yet eerily distant. The prairie environment is harsh, but not overly harsh, the dry prairie winds and severe weather eat at things slowly.

Semchishen depicts a frozen community that is equal parts pristine and eerie, nostalgic and pitiful. When I arrive in the community the sky is overcast, the sun is obscured not by clouds but by a high atmospheric fog, a result of fires burning wild in British Columbia and western Alberta. This entire region is glowing under a tungsten filter, everything smells of campfire. Two-hundred new fires have started this weekend alone. The condemned Avalon theatre of 1980 is now a functioning gym. The Wild Rose takeout that Semchishen photographed is now shuttered. A block away Chan's Gardens Restaurant Chinese Food is open. I stop at Chan's to eat, I am the only one who sits, others grab white grocery bags full of styrofoam containers for takeout. This is probably to be considered one of the more vibrant businesses in town. If community cannot be located around food then I'm not sure where to find it within the town, perhaps the bar. A fly circles my dish, I'm not annoyed but reminded of the Chinese Western restaurant where ants had formed a chain and climbed on the table. I finish my meal and leave. I walk the streets mentally contrasting what Semchishen's images depict and what I see, what the record shows and what I am recording. Every town has a set of unofficial local historians eager to share the 'good ole days', I find myself in these conversations all over Western Canada. They tell me about the

prosperity of the town in its 'heydays', how you couldn't find a parking spot on main-street on a Friday night, how stores were open until midnight, how there would be competing town dances. I think about this as I walk down Coronation's streets, empty of people, empty of activity. I think about this often. The boom years are gone, and they weren't the 1980s. By the time Keepsake was documenting small towns they already had their old-timers, faced towards the past, telling stories about 'good ole days'.

Road - 5:33 pm

I drive towards Hussar where Wally Houn photographed for Keepsake. The atmospheric fog breaks and the sun warms the pavement. I pull off the highway to enjoy the mood of the prairies. The space is quiet and undisturbed, it is warm, giant and calm. A landscape that has fantastical lightning storms is without any charge today. It is resting and I'm resting within it. The only car that passes-by pulls over, a teenager asks if I need help, sitting on the hood, I tell him I'm enjoying the landscape, he nods and drives off. He's from a nearby town or farm, if he was from the city he wouldn't have stopped. He wouldn't have understood why I was sitting on the hood. I stop in Vulcan, Alberta, and meet a man named John Sheppard, a rubber-tramp who spent the last three years sleeping outside on the Golden Coast. He walks around with a yellow cassette Walkman, and asks for change and turns down my offers to give him a few bananas and fruit cups. He laughs and looks jovial. He is waiting in town until he can see the church's preacher. He is one of the many characters to be found in small towns, where the sporadic nature of these communities and their apparently quiet demeanour make encounters like this all the more important.

Driving onward I am confronted with a storm, heavy winds, the kind that whips dust against your shins and face. There is a saying in Alberta, “if you don’t like the weather, wait five minutes”. This region of the province is experiencing drought but that won't change in five minutes. The grass is burnt brown, and some crops have been prematurely baled, better to get something than nothing since they’d never make it to harvest. The peas are holding, but even the hardiest wheat varieties are failing. I think back to an article I read predicting decades-long drought, I think about this as I replay all the farmers who shook their heads, denied climate change to me and labelled me a disciple of that ‘jet-loving hypocrite-preacher Al Gore’. It is starting to get dark, but there is enough light to make out the collection of shoes nailed to a fence post, maybe 30, 40, no 50 posts long. The road is a communicative space and these fence posts are communication posts, like telephone lines they carry meaning. I’ve seen hats, boots, shoes, and see-saw horses all thematically in repetitive positions, communicating. These roads are where you will find mid-century combines and thrashers displayed along the road, memories, and relics rusting in peace and in place. I’ve slept in many places during my travels, the couches of strangers, lumpy motel mattresses, in tents on cold ground, in the back of cars, in areas where locals call the cops on me, in dog parks, on the edge of lakes, roadside pull offs, in bar parking lots, and the dark corners of parks. Where I sleep this night doesn’t matter as much as the idea that I’ve pretty much slept everywhere on the prairies.

Hussar - 10:15 am

Hussar is an unassuming community in central Alberta. One hundred kilometres east of Calgary, it is close enough to be a bedroom community but too distant and without sufficient amenities to be a popular one. Much like the surrounding area, the community caters to the needs of farmers and ranchers and experienced an early 20th century boom which ended with the arrival of the Great Depression. Visit today and stand at Centre Street and First Avenue and you get a sense of the commercial character of the town. Few stores are open and the lack of closed structures suggests there has not been a significant number of stores for quite some time. From this vantage point you can see Tom's General Store - advertising liquor and cold beer, the village office, a credit union, Our Saviour Lutheran Church, and Don's Cafe and Lounge. Don's Cafe exists in a limbo state where you are unsure if it's opened or closed, a more common question for many buildings in small towns than one would think. Looking farther to the north you can see a Senior Centre, and a new Community Hall featuring lakeside baseball diamonds. One street over there are a few automotive and oil-related businesses. There is limited foot traffic. This is a sleeper town.

Wally Houn's Keepsake record of Hussar is unique in that it provides us with the only community from the project to be photographed by an actual community member. As a result, the work is decisively intimate and cohesively candid, dinner visits with family, drop-ins during family time. The collection has a warmth associated more with the family album than with documentary photography. The images are inviting, often more informal than other Keepsake photographers, their compositions relaxed, the imperfectly perfect—

angles misaligned here, a foot cut off there—allowing us a window into Houn's town. Houn's work is rather matter-of-fact, a virtue of his familiarity with the community and the community with him and offers a version of rural living that the remaining Keepsake photographers or myself would fail to produce.

I have been through Hussar, AB a number of times. The last time I visited the community it was drenched in thirty-six degrees of prairie heat. Today the wind whips through the streets below a clear blue sky. Unlike Coronation, the community has not dropped in population, growing from 182 people in 1980 to 190 in 2016. The school that Wally Houn photographed in 1980, with a graduation class of eight students, still stands although it has recently been boarded up. The back basement windows have been kicked out, books remain on the shelves, a copy-room is visible, the hard plastic of a printer from the 1990s is yellowing. Presumably the graduation class picture of the eight from 1980 can still be found on the main floor, where youthful and forward-thinking smiles are also yellowing. As a resident of Hussar, AB, Houn's more than capable of capturing this small town through its residents in their homes, or their surrounding environs—near hay bales or in the garden. Those who grew up in rural areas of the prairies will understand Houn's position for his images not only conveys a message but triggers a memory. An image of a boy riding in his truck with his mom, his expression escaping adequate description, something stuck between surprise, awe and uncertainty is reminiscent of drives down gravel roads. Another image of two men leaning up against a truck-hood expresses the countless conversations that take place around the automobile, while the heat which radiates from the engine keeps you warm on a crisp Fall day. Another way to view Houn's

work is in the frame of ordinariness; the images are inviting and we are very much asked into the back yards and living rooms of families. The camera is more a friend than a device dropping in for coffee, or to see how the cucumber patch is coming along, the 'everydayness' of ordinary people in their ordinary spaces, doing banal things at the heart of rural living.

The Hussar I capture is not cold, it is simply empty. While Houn shows us the interiors and residences that make a place feel alive, my observations, in contrast, are strictly surface-level commentary. It is in towns like Hussar that I often wonder about the people who decided to invest time and energy into bettering the community, those that raised a family, carried on a business, and retired there, the 'stickers' that chose to ride it out with eternal pangloss. I also wonder who wore away the town's newness, who failed to keep up the houses and storefronts, to keep the stores stocked and operational and who opted to leave rather than continue to struggle to build community. I wonder who are the people not remarkable enough to be enshrined for their community building actions and the people who were not enshrined because of their lack of action. I also wonder if any of them saw the end of an era coming, that from this point on all that would follow was a slow decline, a community moving forward in the shadow of past prosperity. In the end, in places like this, those that did and those that did not often share the same fate, they are not remembered, at least not by many and not for long. Perhaps it is with this in mind that photographers and writers can return to them to capture the ghosts of places not yet dead.

Road - 12:50 pm

Heading south from Hussar the land transitions from that suited for grain farming and pastures for cattle grazing into full-blown cattle country, hilly and arid. The problems that the prairies will face in the future are much the same problems the region has faced since it was first settled by Europeans. The economy is intimately tied to resource extraction and at the whims of largely uncontrollable forces—unpredictable weather patterns and complex global markets. There are two types of gold in Alberta and they are both black. Black gold in the form of nutrient rich soil - the fertile giver of life - and unprocessed raw bitumen - powerful, valuable and destructive. The death of the family farm and the small-scale farmer have reduced the cultural role farming plays in the province, what has replaced them are tech-savvy farmers with an intimate understanding of markets, global commodity fluctuations, and economies of scale. Those without access to this knowledge, without access to ridiculous amounts of equity, not to mention the luck required in farming, are in danger of disappearing, they face either retirement, foreclosure, or worse, death. The province's other economic 'backbone' is oil dependency, the dirty kind made up of bitumen, also concerning as global efforts are underway to move away from its carbon-footprint heavy extraction. As a result, one of Canada's largest industries and its entire support apparatus is placed in a precarious position. Other Western Canadian industries are also under stress. Issues over soft-lumber and NAFTA renegotiations may undermine the region's economic position. A reduction in the consumption of meat is also impacting mixed-industry farmers and ranchers. All of these industries could reach points of crises or collapse in the near future. These crises have been visible in the landscape for

quite some time, unpainted farm houses without doors or windows, collapsed barns, pastures overgrown with antiquated machines rusting quietly, empty corrals and fences beyond repair bleaching in the prairie sun. These scenes provide visual examples of the constant that is change and of things to come. These scenes are as timely as western settlement in the area, with apprehension towards change and a fear of that which will come embedded deeply into the psyche of the ruralite. The crisis is defined by more than simply visual decay, there are smells associated with the crisis. When I think of urban decay I think of San Francisco's Mission Street reeking of urine, and the unpleasantly moist smell of the 'Tubes' on the Piccadilly Line in London, England. When I think of rural decay I think of Prairie Sage and the roadside bouquet - an aromatic mixture of wild grasses and flowers, Aster, Balsamroot, Dotted Blazing Star, Locoweed, and Prairie Goldenrod. These floral ditch arrangements are not to be confused with the plastic flowers adorning memorial crosses and wreaths, the synthetic and sun dried signs of violence and of remembrance that can be found alongside prairie highways.

Coleman (Crowsnest Pass) - 4:03 pm

Located in the south-west corner of the province, Crowsnest Pass is a special municipal region born of ten mountain communities amalgamating into one administrative unit along HWY 3. The community's original economic base of coal has eroded and although still abundant in the mountains, it is no longer king. In 1980 coal mining was an operation, today it is simply heritage. As a result, the region must make a pitch for tourism and compete against other mountain towns like Banff, Canmore, Kananaskis, and Jasper for

tourist dollars. By leveraging its history, its experience as 'coal country', its history of prohibition and its numerous scenic peaks, the community is emerging as a leisure cluster within the province. This is helping stabilize its population and provide it with an alternative to the possibility of slow decay that numerous rural communities in the region face.

The municipal region is one of the few settled areas in the province without significant farming or ranching activity, or a homogenized ethnic community. Crowsnest is not the likely 'sky beneath your feet' country often associated with the prairies, in fact it represents the very edge of the region. To look any further West requires a wholly different imagining of geography. Crowsnest Pass breaks away from prairie convention of being monotonous and without a sensationalized history. Similar to many mining towns, tragedy is often associated with things that occur at a depth and in the dark. The famous Frank Slide (1903) saw seventy lives lost and most of the town buried as millions of tons of limestone from Turtle Mountain descended upon the town at night. The Hillcrest Mining Disaster (1914), Canada's worst mining disaster, saw the death of 189 miners. Supported by infamous train robberies, rum-running, police shoot-outs (one that resulted in the last hanging of a female in Canada), red light districts, and lost gold mines (the Lemon Mine), the history of 'The Pass' is far from dull. The first in the string of communities is Bellevue, highway draws are a general tourist boutique and an 'old-fashioned' ice-cream parlour. West of Bellevue is Frank, with its own unique mining history, and a few kilometres onward is Blairmore, the municipality's acting economic centre. The final community in The Pass is Coleman, a town under such growth it will soon rival Blairmore's position as

the area's economic top seed. Coleman is the meeting place of the old and the new, small miner bungalows made of clapboard in the valley, new condominiums with precision-manicured lawns nestled on the hillside, and recent house developments nestled higher than that. There is an old main-street in the valley, parallel to the rail tracks; it is here you'll find aging hotels, and restaurants, and the customary Legion. When Hohn came to the community, the old main-street was more or less active: The Grand Union Hotel, a hardware store, and Chris & Irvins' Restaurant (Home of the Miner's Burger with its swivel stools), were still trading services and goods for cash and credit. However, the motif of downturn existed even when Hohn photographed it in 1980 as the visual signs of progress and regression coalesced. Today, you have the option of having a Pilsner in the Legion, down near the tracks, or a ginger-mint kombucha in a converted church near the highway. As the automobile replaced the train as the region's dominant form of transportation, services gravitated towards the highway. This is reflected in Hohn's images, the skinny new buildings and amenities sticking to the highway. In 1980 the school down below in the valley was boarded up; in 2019 the school is still closed, advertised for sale by a Gas City realty sign. Little has changed here. This all being said, Hohn's images of Coleman in 1980 do seem to be more bleak than what is on view today.

Of all the rural spaces explored through the Keepsake project Hohn's may be the most diverse, perhaps even the most romantic, of all spaces. As visibly appealing as the space is, Hohn understood the dilemma rests with any artist who hopes to turn complex interactions into a simplified representation. As a result, Hohn's images operate solely as a distanced window into The Pass—no interiors, no invites to the dinner table, in fact people

are seldom featured. Hohn's image's are topographical in nature, a survey of the symbiosis of the natural landscape and the built environment: houses, automobiles and other forms of infrastructure like power lines and roads. The images are shadow-less, as if the sun never leaves its position of high noon, shot in a style reminiscent of Walker Evans and other earlier documentary photographers of the American West. Hohn created a number of exposures of the valley and the community from atop hillsides, doing a better job than me in understanding the relationship between that which lies below and that which lies above. The changing altitude allows Hohn to create dynamic images that play on the idea of space and distance. His account is particularly interesting as it does not represent the iconic tropes of prairie space (flat land with endless vistas of sky). On another contact sheet, a motel called the 'Sleepee Teepee' where the units are in the shape of teepees, a conflation of travel, appropriation and a curated historicity packaged together as a consumable experience. It is fitting that the Sleepee Teepee itself is a consortium of ideas, given that the word motel is a portmanteau of motor and hotel. These teepees—eight in number with a chuck wagon office and a neon sign to draw you off the road—are in high contrast to the valley of miner row-houses in Coleman. The community of Coleman is separated by the once life-giving but now antiquated railway, housing and business on one side, and industry on the other. I went in search of the 'Sleepee Teepee' but its remnants are gone along with the infrastructure for coal extraction. What is left for the Pass are numerous pockets of the community standing alone, separated by hills that jut towards the rail tracks. But the future for The Pass is not as bleak as other rural spaces as it is the only community featured in Keepsake with an economic future outside of resource extraction. Coleman, and the remaining Crowsnest Pass communities, represent the edge of the prairies, where the

plains transition into the Rockies, a space where we mark difference, where ideas of geography begin to shift but where the development cycle is much the same, from nothing to something and back to nothing. The frontier curve from hope and habit to country rut.

Revisiting Keepsake (2015)

Keepsake is arguably Canada's most expensive, in-depth and obscure photographic project depicting rural life and rural community on the prairies. Conducted over four decades ago and largely forgotten, the project operates as a unique time-capsule of rural living in Canada. The Keepsake archive is resurrected as a way to make a physical intervention into rural space by providing an updated visual account of three communities from the original project. By embracing visual and mobile ethnographic modalities and framed by the historical relation between the open road and photography, an exploratory road-trip into the heart of the prairies is performed. Over two days an intense trip was made to create an updated account of local Wally Houn's portrait of Hussar, a small rural community in decline, Orest Semchisen's portrait of stable Coronation, photographed by the father of Canadian prairie photography and Hubert Hohn's portrait of Crowsnest Pass, a bordertown that provides regional contrast to the prairie-based accounts. The importance of the spaces between these communities is also discussed as it helps illustrate the importance of the landscape and roads that bind rural spaces. Furthermore, since each community is only represented by six images in the original Keepsake publication, it is through a comprehensive look at the negatives and contact sheets (housed at the Provincial Archives of Alberta) that a set of common visual tropes and motifs of prairie living is unearthed.











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BACK TO GOD
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Turtle Mountain
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Mapping Out - Analysis: Mapping the Prairie Region

Introducing the Region

'Mapping Out' is about thinking through rural space in the region. As such it adopts a framework of regionalism, as opposed to provincialism or localism, for exploring representations of the prairies. It seeks to answer the question: how has the region been created, recorded and critiqued through photography, and what external forces are at play within this relationship (technology, geography, history, or political dynamics)? Visual regionalism is not simply about the land itself, but the interactions that take place between people and their environment (Wells, 2012). Adopting a regional framework allows for the study of the relationship between the natural landscape, the built landscape, and the people who call it home. This chapter is about mapping beyond the limits of the town to understand the region and the prairies as nodes in a complex system of exchange (Castells, 2000, 2008). These ideas are furthered by a discussion of the importance of space and time specific to the prairies, with emphasis placed on geography and landscape and their relationship to documentary photography. This naturally leads to a discussion of transportation methods that are crucial to understanding the region's development and its understanding of space. For instance, a number of nation-building myths persist in Canada; one myth speaks of a nation that was formed when the last spike of the Trans-Canadians railway was struck (Francis, 1997). Upholding this narrative means conceding that Canada was founded only after its vast space was bridged by a transportation technology. From these steel ribbons to ubiquitous car culture, mobility has significantly contributed to how

rural communities are structured, operated, and read. With the theoretical groundwork set with regards to ideas of space and movement, attention is turned to the relationship between photography and the landscape. Prior to a discussion of the contemporary voices visualizing the region today, a detailed history of documentary photography on the prairies is conducted. Furthermore, discussions on regionalism, space, space-time, and transportation methods will aid in our discussion of common prairie tropes, with emphasis placed on the trope of the inherent banality found within the landscape and reproduced by its photographers. In short, 'Mapping Out' examines the historical, aesthetic, and ideological lenses through which the prairies have been represented by documentary photographers working in the region and finds that the region is dominated by the ideas of the rural as a place of heritage, a place in decline and as a generally banal space that is difficult to beautify for the outsider.

The visual and narrative components of this chapter act as a critique of visualizations of rural communities restricted to municipal town borders (Giffen, 2004). The spaces between communities are essential to understanding rural representations and flows (people, goods, and ideas). To facilitate this, the chapter utilizes a free-roaming (automotive-based) methodology that allows for the exploration of rural space beyond community borders. Furthermore, the chapter utilizes mobility ethnography and the road trip as a playfully ambiguous method—the automotive flaneur (Zeleny, 2012) and the voyeuristic lens of the detached but not disinterested researcher (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). Through a combination of research-creation and visual sociology, this chapter explores the narratives put forth by other photographers, as well as my own. In doing so, the research

will document and build upon the spatial narratives and the spirit of place unique to the Canadian Prairies. The research is also self-reflective and carries certain biases; to this end, it is important to stress that this is simply one narrative of what lies on the prairies. Like all other images, they interpret the world by constructing what is to be seen as important through one's scopic regime (Rose, 2001).

Thinking Through Regionalism

Framed by a lens of regionalism, 'Mapping Out' moves beyond political boundaries to examine the relationship between communities and their surrounding landscapes through photography. Regions are collectively negotiated—places of the mind fulfilling a function that political boundaries often fail to (whether that is social, cultural or economic). Regions in North America are often not defined by political but geographical and cultural boundaries; as Janice Dickin (2004) writes, regions have "no political or legal status, but Canadians talk about them all the time: the West, Central Canada, the Maritimes" (p. 101). Comprised of shared economies and historical settlement patterns, regions often exhibit strong subnational identities which, at times, override national loyalty (Matthews & Davis, 1986; Simeon, 1977). Thinking through a regional lens contributes positively to local and national conversations as regionalism allows for more complex approximations of reality (Friesen, 2001b) and thus produces more appropriate visual representations of people and place (Rose, 2015). Representation (what and where is Canada) is at the heart of understanding the Canadian condition. As prominent cultural geographer J. B. Jackson (1984) discusses in *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, representations are created by

legislative acts and are surrounded, infused with humbler, less permanent spaces. Nations and provincial boundaries are dreamed up for political raison d'être, regions dream themselves up. Amelia Kalant (2004) situates the tension between national and regional identity in Canada writing that "the dilemma of Canadian identity is a product of a metanarrative that makes uncertainty of place *foundational* to the imagining of the Canadian nation" (p. 25). The Canadian nation is paradoxical; as McCormack (1993) discusses, it is important to note that it is "a national identity founded in the determined absence of any such thing" (p. 298), and only as a post-national construct does the Canadian nation make sense. As Kalant (2004) writes, the nation is comprised of regions next to regions creating a situation where Canada as a whole suffers from a 'failure of place,' a narrative of territorial failure, a historically successful one at that" (p. 33). Speaking for the prairies, the region has failed to produce a strong sense of place. Of course, one exists and people may claim to know it, but it has not been scrutinized, developed or challenged to the same degree as other North American regions—particularly not visually. Dealing with a colonial hangover, vast distances, and fear of cultural encroachment from its imperial neighbour, Canada has a hard time understanding its position in the world. As Marshal McLuhan once remarked, Canada may be the country in the world that knows how to live without an identity. But simply knowing and being comfortable with that knowledge are two separate mindsets. Not all Canadians can be bound together in one single narrative, making the construction of a metanarrative of the nation arduous, and perhaps even antithetical (Elder, 1989).

Regional framing helps alleviate issues associated with setting uneasy nationalistic agendas and ensures scholars and creatives are not overreaching and engaging with concepts too vague to nationalize. The loss in potency of nationalism (Anderson, 1991; Augé, 2006) allows us to dismiss highly curated narratives, neo-colonial formations, and exclusionary and often problematic expressions of nationhood, in favour of a regional approach as an alternative to understanding place. A word of caution, regional narratives are curated and can be exclusionary, as explored in the 'Digging In' chapter where minority voices are minimized for the cohesion of a provincial (settler-colonizer) narrative. Photography on the Canadian Prairies has perpetuated colonial formations of space and is intimately tied to a discourse of power and colonialism. As a result, it is hard to disentangle the relationship between ethnocentric readings of the prairies and the visual representations that support them, even if they express elements of authenticity. As David Harvey (1996), warns, the "'quest for authenticity' leads only to artificially invented traditions and a commercialized heritage culture" (p. 302). This is mentioned as a warning, as studies in regionalism on the prairies can provide unique insight into the culture of the region (Friesen, 2001a). After all, the prairies are more than white cowboy hats, rhythmic oil derricks and vanishing grain elevators, in the same way that the nation is more than Molson Canadian commercials, Tim Hortons, and toothless hockey players.

Like much of North America, and in defiance of what would prevail as geographical common-sense, the prairies were politically parcelled. Alberta and Saskatchewan would remain separate political entities (similar to the separation of Idaho and Montana) to ensure their power would not rival the long-established political centres of the nation. The

borders that demarcate the provinces today are just one of many possibilities, as "history is littered with regional visions that never came to pass" (Tomblin, 2007, p. 2). Alberta and Saskatchewan share boreal forest, prairie grasses, and a marginal but important semi-arid ecosystem. Geographical differences exist across the provinces but the focus of this chapter is on the prairies and the regional construction of rurality—the idea of the rural. It is through a regional framework that we can reconcile deserts, dinosaur bones, high prairie, parkland and grasslands into a unified geographical space that, through photography, represent ideas of place.

What Kind of Prairie Regionalism is This?

It is generally accepted that there are four common types of regionalism: formal, functional, mythic and post-modern (new regionalism), the most pervasive being formal regionalism, where a region is classified according to a common feature, most often a common physical environment. Although some analysts have looked to other distinguishing features besides topography, such as climate, ethnicity, or voting behaviour, as means to differentiate one region from another (Francis, 2004). For formal regionalism the landscape is central, uniform, unchanging, and absolute and has the ability to psychologically influence its inhabitants (Gustafson, 2006; Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2014). This is an early formation of regional thinking where either geography (Herbertson, 1905) or cultural particularities (Fleure, 1996) produce difference. However, it is not without its limitations, as it lacks the ability to "explain local differentiation or to take into account the

varied landscapes within the region as a whole" (Francis, 2004, p. 34), nor is it capable of explaining how regions can be perceived abstractly.

Mythical regionalism is a cultural creation, or what Richard Allen terms the "region of the mind" (Thompson, 2007, p. ix). Eli Mandel (1973), a western poet, wrote similarly that the region is a state of mind and a myth. The mythical allows us to merge numerous forms of regionalism (formal, function and post-modern), making it a robust classifier and given our visual focus, more representative of the plurality of the prairies. The mythical advocates for the perspective that regions are "more than physical or economic phenomena, and that even the concept of the region engendered in these perspectives - the region as an environmental determinant or as an economic hinterland - are shaped more in the 'mind' than in 'reality'" (Francis, 2004, p. 37). Images, poems, novels, as well as the works of historians, sociologists and geographers, propel mythical regionalism forward where a single rural comes to speak for the psyche of the region. As Robert Kroetsch (1970) wrote, "in a sense we [westerners] haven't got an identity until somebody tells our story. The fiction makes us real" (p. 63). A myth based in fact, it is often not stolen but borrowed, a form of modified history that contributes to the place-making process. Regions are made functional through their imaginative tellings and most importantly through curation—selection of this landscape over that landscape, selection of these people over those people, this object over that object, and so on. As a result of people imaging space (an individual and collective process), the prairies consists of numerous battling and overlapping 'Wests' which are continuously reworked, enforced and challenged to allow for a dominant idea of place to emerge. Edward Said (1978) describes this process as the

symbolic forms of representation that are modelled onto space and used to govern individual and collective perceptions of that space (Oltmanns, 2016). As discussed by Western scholars Lorry W. Felske and Beverly Rasporich, "there is no single imagined West" (2004, p. 26), no single imagined system for those within or those outside. The Prairies, like Shambala, or The Lost City of Z is simply a popularized ideal.

Often a region requires the help of creatives (entrepreneurs, thinkers, writers, and artists) to complete its meaning (Felske & Rasporich, 2004), to move the prairies from a blank space to a unique region. As Francis (2004) explores, "artists are primary agents of regional and cultural identities whose representations need to be examined and understood through their cultural assumptions and within their historical time frames" (p. 27). Nationally, artists have an established history of creating ideas of nationhood (Alan, 1992; Osborne, 1988, 2013). At the regional level, artists are channellers of prairie identities, first accomplished by the stroke of a horse-hair tipped brush, or the fountain pen in the field journal and taken up passionately by the camera and the computer. In a broad sense, photographers engage in regionalism whenever they photograph their landscapes (Sailor, 2019). Since Hime's first exposure of the prairies, a banal landscape has been front and centre as the defining feature of the prairies (Irwin, 1997). Since the cultural turn in geography, regions are no longer considered static phenomena, but rather dynamic in their definition and identity (Rijnks, & Strijker, 2013; Johnston, Gregory, Pratt, & Watt, 2006; Paasi, 2003). If myth making is a cerebral process, and landscape assistants the myth, then we can infer that landscape is of the mind. This is also where mythic regionalism succeeds at creating a multi-layered idea of the region.

The Importance of Regionalism on the Canadian Prairies

If regional approaches produce regional identities, then that process occurs through internalizations by the region's inhabitants and the confrontation of those ideas by outsiders. This process of identity negotiation results in strong senses of place (Jorgensen & Stedman, 2001), as well as place attachment, place meaning and place dependence (Manzo & Devine-Wright, 2014; Lewicka, 2011; Stokols & Shumaker, 1981; Williams & Vaske, 2003). These numerous and interconnected processes are the result of a nebula of social and geographical constructs—climate, industry, economy, dominant ideas of space/place, history, and political and social structures—(Rijnks & Strijker, 2013), which are adapted, interpreted, mythologized, or omitted to produce meaning. It is through these parameters that we can understand how a region becomes defined; for the prairies, it is the homogenous landscape more than any other category, or at least as it is imagined (Francis, 2004). A series of landscapes subdivide the nation: British Columbia's Cordillera from the Prairies, the Prairies from the Canadian Shield, the Shield from the Maritimes, and the entirety of these regions from the northern hinterland of the 'true' Far North. As Northorp Frye (1982) illustrates in a discussion of geographical solitude, "every part of Canada has strong separatist feelings because every part of it is in fact a separation" (p. 58). For Frye (1971), the imagination of Canada is a regional question that seeps into the psyche and is no more prevalent than in the prairie region. As Douglas Francis (2004) writes in *Challenging Frontiers*, the prairies are unique in the way geographical features (or rather featureless geography) and historical development associated with landscape influence the region.

Geography splits the nation into regions and the nation splits geographic formations into political classifications, the prairie example being the disconnection of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba (Woodcock, 1981), which was initially proposed as one western province (Gibbins & Berdahl, 2003) but denied as it would create a formidable power challenging to Central Canada. Other geographic disconnections express themselves north and south of the US-Canada border. Katherine Ann Roberts (2018) defines the border as a 'geographical handshake', as geographical formations in North America tend to run vertically. When Canada is considered by its American counterparts, it is often regarded as a less temperate extension of its geographical patterns. As Victor Konrad (1996) writes, "the parallel ridges of Western Cordillera, the Great Plains, and the Appalachians—extend into Canada…a casual glance across the border confirms that Canadians developed their land in harmony with the United States" (p. 6). As I've explored elsewhere in relation to defining the region,

> "the North-to-South formations of the Prairies and Rockies arguably bind the Canadian West more to its southern neighbour than to Eastern Canada. The East to West split in the United States is often defined as the 100th Meridian. The 100th Meridian acts as a geographical (western boundary of moisture from the Gulf of Mexico) and cultural border (settlement patterns change west of the demarcation) that creates a clear demarcation for the American West. Comparatively, Canada is without a geographically or culturally constituted 'east/west claim. As the French

> geographer Andre Siegfried (1937) postulated, America is Western Canada's geographical centre." (Zeleny, 2016, p. 56)

Through a shared geography, and in defiance of the arbitrary border on the 49th parallel, there are few striking geographical differences between American and Canadian Prairie spaces. The 49th parallel did not only create a fissure through a landscape it also made a fissure through a people. As Wallace Stegner (1962) wrote about in his own experiences on both sides of the border in *Wolf Willow*, for some it is more of a boundary than a border or barrier. Discussing the border work of photographer Andrea Rutkauskas (*Borderline*), Karla McManus (2016) came to a similar visual conclusion: the border is not easily pictured because it is the same landscape, and, more or less, the same people. With the rise of post-national thought, using a trans-national regional approach is appropriate. Laurence Smith (2012) writes that new data reveals the social values of Albertans and British Columbians now resemble those of the Western United States with proximal Canadians and Americans identifying better with each other than with their far-off countrymen (Bennett, 1969). Canadian Studies scholars often romanticize the Canadian frontier as more civilized, the 'Mild West' versus the 'Wild West', (Bennett, 1969; Katerberg, 2006), the bridging of space (Innis' West) as opposed to space as conquerable (Turner's West) (Francis, 2006). However, these may be constructions, attempts to mark difference; as western historian Brian Dippie (2000) suggests, the cowboys on the 49th parallel are interchangeable and perhaps other elements are as well. Drive to the border today and walk along the obelisks that 'distinguish' the two nations, and one will find a very similar farmer or rancher on either side. Not only could they hold a conversation but they would understand each other

and their shared landscape despite the international boundary (Elofson, 2000). Bring a prairie farmer to a discussion with a Torontonian, and it can be assumed little would be exchanged beyond pleasantries. In a similar manner, a Canadian Prairie boy stumbling into a bar in Great Falls, Montana will be received more sympathetically than a fellow American from Washington or California who passes through the same doorframe. As long discussed by Canadian media scholars, the presence of American visual culture long-ago wrapped itself around the Canadian psyche. This occurrence is present in the region, and arguably more prevalent; a result of a shared 'heritage concept' and 'remembered experience', as well as a similar frontier egalitarianism that fostered a shared geography, experience, and myth making (Isern & Shepard, 2006), while also giving the region an unapologetically American tinge to it. The traversing and cross-border cultural exchange is not solely that of the farmer who owns lands on each side, or the rancher who rode cattle North in summer, it also belongs to the Cree who called the region home before horses populated the continent and Europeans began to draw lines and parcel geography under the Dominion Lands Act (Ens, 2006). Hutterites and Mennonites often cross, to plow fields south of the border, or to visit nearby colonies. It is with these sentiments in mind that we push our understanding of the region beyond the 49th parallel.

Defining the Region

Before diving deeper we must define the prairie region as bound by a shared geography and economic base (staple production and issues of political imbalances—centre and periphery), a similar development history (colonial-settler in practice), and

present-day socio-economic characteristics, with a focus on regional geography modified by man-to-land interactions (Robinson, 1996). These parameters are used to define the region as antithesis to other formulations of regionalism, particularly the province-centric views of nationalism where the province or series of provinces defines the region itself. To illustrate this point further, political scientist Nelson Wiseman writes about Saskatchewan and Manitoba as 'the midwest', while Alberta and British Columbia are considered the' far west' (2007); this is in some ways what Cole Harris (1981) discusses as part of our vocabulary of spatial ambition. However, there is a fundamental misapplication of these provinces as British Columbia and Alberta share little, to the point that Philip Resnick (2000) has described British Columbia as its own 'province-region', historically separate from the rest of Western Canada. This is a position supported by Garth Stevenson (1980), who proposes a nation of five regions (British Columbia, Prairie, Ontario, Quebec, and Atlantic). This is similar to a paper I gave a few years ago discussing documentary photography in Western Canada (Zeleny, 2016), where I argued for the psychological separation of Western Canada into the 'west west' (British Columbia), and 'west' (Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba), or 'far west' and 'central west'.

We are getting closer to defining the prairie region; however, the scope is still too expansive, and as a result, ineffective. The issue of discussing regions within the nation, where provinces are enacted as the markers for the region, is that they are not natural, they exclude portions of the American North-Western States that share a similar history, geography, and economic base as discussed above. As well, it lumps in large northern sections of the prairie provinces that are not prairie in their geography but are largely

uninhabited boreal lands. As a result, the northern sections of the prairie provinces are not included in this regional analysis, while sections of the United States are.

Growth of Regionalism in Western Canada

Contemporary Canadians routinely think of the nation as a series of regions (Thompson, 2007). This has been an issue since Confederation and continues to experience ebbs and flows of interest from one generation to another (Friesen, 2001b). Regionalism was particularly strong among prairie scholars and politicians in the early 1980s with Pierre Trudeau's unpopular nationalization of oil and a general feeling of Western Alienation. Since the days of Trudeau Sr. a national consciousness has continued to develop; now "this region's identity has been honed to such anguished perfection that it coexists, uneasily, with the nationalist aspirations of the nineteenth century" (Thompson, 2007, p. ix). In the past few decades the prairie provinces have looked to assert their economic autonomy, a way to combat what they perceive as an 'economic bleeding' by the nation (a colony within the nation). A study released by Independant Alberta Association claims it costs Albertans 1.4 billion dollars annually to be a part of the nation (Thompson, 2007). Accurate or not, the study supports regionalism and fuels resentment towards the East, often referenced as the despised equalization and transfer payments.

The 1980s appear to be the apex of regional discussion both in popular and academic contexts. In 1979, John Richards and Larry Pratt released *Prairie Capitalism: Power and Influence in the New West*, discussing the rise of a regional capitalist class and a

new prairie capitalism (Kellogg, 2015), while Joel Garreau (1982) published the popularized *The Nine Nations of North America*, that defined North American regionalism outside of national boundaries. What Garreau writes about is the "significance of culture as a differentiating and ameliorating force among North America regions and across the border between Canada and the United States" (Konrad, 1996, p. 52). In *American Nations* by Colin Woodard (2012), the contemporary equivalent to Garreau's *Nine Nations*, Woodard suggests that North America can be thought of as plural, nations within nations, not bound by international boundaries. Woodard places the Canadian Prairies in the section of the 'Far North', or what Garreau equivalently and diminutively terms 'The Empty Quarter'. In both of these popular regional renditions of the continent, the prairies are lumped in with the Rocky Mountains and the great boreal forests of the north. In Garreau's account, the prairie region itself is inadvisably split into 'The Empty Quarter' and 'The Bread Basket'. Both Garreau and Woodard's accounts are well researched but their differences in defining the region are a result of the complicated nature of classification—what does and does not warrant inclusion. This has led Roger Gibbons (1982), among other theorists, to suggest that regionalism is not only an invalid lens for understanding, but one that is faulty as the prairie becomes more similar to other regions of the nation. What Gibbins under-estimates is the regional character of the prairies and its continued reliance on staples for economic production. Gibbons is accurate in the assessment that the prairies are becoming more industrial, more urban, but those are global conditions and not necessarily conditions that will ensure the prairies become any less of a region.

The prairies have a long history of thinking regionally, prairie partnerships include: The Prairie Economic Council (1965), and the Pacific Northwest Economic Region (1991), which included BC, AB, SK, Yukon, NWT, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, Washington, and Alaska (Berdahl, 2011), and the New West Partnership Agreement signed between BC, AB, and SK, with the goals of building an economic region to overcome trade barriers, international marketing, and to create trade networks. We often see the leaders of the Alberta government meeting with foreign governments; from the perspective of international relations this is rather unique, however for Canada, as one of the world's leading proponents and practitioners of regional development policy (Boots & Hecht, 1989), it seems rather natural. A policy has been fervently adopted by the Canadian Prairie provinces as a response to Western Alienation and as a way to create coalitions to extend economic prosperity, assert economic independence and reduce the political clout of the East. Part of this drive to assert itself as a unique cultural entity may be a regional inferiority complex. Edward Watts (2002) in *An American Colony: Regionalism and the Roots of Mid-western Culture* discusses a Midwest' inferiority complex, a position that could be extended to the prairies, at least until it began to emerge as a unique economic centre in the nation filled with wheat, oil, and lumber to feed, fuel, and furnish markets. The Midwest, although similar in its position of being a resource colony or a 'third world entity', does not have the deep and diverse resources of the Canadian Prairies. We can observe something similar taking place in the American Midwest where the region is post-colonial but also still colonizing itself. As a result, the Midwest, similar to the prairies, operates as a colony within a colony, a form of Western Alienation of a unique character—the colonized prairie regionalist. Regional partnerships allow for the geographical areas in question to

combat the position of being a resource depot, a colony, as a way to gain economic and cultural autonomy.

Through greater cultural autonomy the region is able to assert its own narratives. Regional stereotypes are resilient, often rooted in historical conditions no longer present (Reed, 2010; Schuman, 1966). The cowboy and the farmer are outdated models of representation for the region (Brandth, 2002), however they are often coded as defining characters of the space. Western Canadian regionalism is built on the rural industry (trappers, ranchers, and farmers) and rural space (fields, ditches, and dugouts). The rural is what creates the idea of the region as it is expressed and explored through popular media (for our purposes the medium of documentary photography). Furthermore, through ruralism, nodes of community favour the idea of regionalism, where towns operate as networked and interdependent components (Wetherell, 2004), as opposed to being imagined as single-actor entities. J.B. Jackson (1994) in *A Sense of Place, A Sense of Time*, reminds us that understanding space and landscape requires that we think in terms of zones of influence, connective communities along road arteries. This is similar to how Manuel Castells (2000) sees space as interconnected and flowing in organic ways. With a framework of regionalism set we can now turn our attention to issues of space and movement.

Issues of Space

Space, isn't it great!?

Let us begin with a number of premises that pertain to this section. Space matters. Place matters. The relationship between space and place matters. Ideas of space and place influence ideas of landscape and region (Sauer, 1963; Friesen, 2001b). In an ongoing cycle of meaning-making, landscape influences (and is influenced by) our ideas of photography. Therefore, to fully understand how the prairie region is represented we must understand the functions of place and space as they relate to photography.

As John Pfahl (1997) writes in *Permutations of the Picturesque*, "some people think that the camera steals their soul. Places, I am convinced, are affected in the opposite way. The more they are photographed (or drawn and painted) the more soul they seem to accumulate" (n.p.). Likewise, a myth is not a myth until it is written, shared and ultimately adopted. Places are not places until we create them. As Edward Relph (1976) explores in *Place and Placelessness*, places are the basic elements where ordering of the world takes place, the building blocks of action and intention, where we experience and interpret meaningful events. Relph, writing in a phenomenological nature, goes on to discuss how place is often left out of discussion of landscape (and for our purposes the region as a whole), largely to its detriment.

When we speak of the Canadian Prairies, are we speaking about a space, a place, or both? A place that has a unique identity? A spatial and functional amalgamation of largely

homogenous places? As an exercise, let us liberally define it as both and see how far that gets us in our discussion of the region, operating under the premise that rendering the prairies as both will ensure a better understanding of the region. Let us also be mindful not to downplay the inherent complexity of these concepts. Leading spatial theorist Henri Lefebvre (1991b) concedes that space is often confusing, often without a primary meaning, often empty and neutral (Erickson, 2014). The concept of place has similar misunderstandings. For the prairies to be both a space and place we must be able to define its local features (place-ness), and it must be large enough to be traversed (space-ness), similar to a city where you can move from one place to another without leaving its spatial parameters. The distinction between place and space is often expressed in terms of mobility, the movement from one place to another, all within a space. As Thrift (1983) writes on regions and their relation to space and time, movement is an issue of space and not place but should be discussed in terms of the connections between the two.

Once the prairie region is given operational parameters (geography, economy, social and political structure, etc.), space in its critical and modern consciousness is, according to Edward Soja (1989) and others, fixed and dead (Bantjes, 2000). While others speak about place as unfixed, contested and multiple (Massey, 1994), space is stagnant. Therefore, the prairie region is stagnant, rooted, and established with geographical additions or subtractions to its morphic shape unlikely. That is not to say that space is inorganic or that it carries a fixed meaning, it developed through a complex process of exchange between inhabitants, technology and the natural landscape. As Massey (1994) tells us, space is a

complex system of meaning-making, framed from "the interlocking and the non-interlocking, and the networks of relations at every scale from local to global" (p. 265).

Moving through space allows us to understand a region and allows us to come to terms with its people, the environment they have modified and the places they inhabit. As a result, this chapter is focused on the exploration of this rural region by way of space-based ideas and their relationship to movement as a way of meaning-making. There is also the reciprocal relationship between space/place and narrative/myth, where each can create the other and where "space in turn affects the culture generated by the people who live in a particular area" (Thomas, 2011, p. 3). To name something is to turn it into a place (Wells, 2002), therefore, the prairies become a space by their naming and their representation in both written and visual forms. As Michel de Certeau (1984) writes, "stories thus carry out a labor that constantly transforms places into spaces or spaces into places" (p. 118). Massey (2005) further supports this position when she states that "we are always, inevitably, making spaces and places" (p. 175).

To reiterate, 'Mapping Out' is an exploration of the prairie region, a region with its own unique sense of place and space that is reproduced and critiqued through photography and its relationship to landscape. Space is used in a number of capacities throughout the dissertation, however, for this particular chapter, the definition of space as imagined (Relph, 1976) and which can be traversed, while remaining a largely stagnant body, is fundamental. Similar to de Certeau, Massey (2005) posits that space is made meaningful through the collective histories told. Through history, stories, and media

productions spaces become real (Roberts, 2018). Documentary photography is a way to analyze media content with the goal of producing, disrupting, and challenging ideas of history, representation and identity in Western Canada (Wells, 2012). French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs' assertion that "every collective memory unfolds within a spatial framework" (Opp & Walsh, 2014, p. 5), this chapter focuses on how the camera operates as a tool to visualize prairie space, which dictates living habits, distances, and economic structures at the regional level.

Ruralism and Space

It is a fundamental claim of cultural geographers that geographical regions and cultures experience time and space differently (Harvey, 1996). For instance, the settlement of North America by Europeans imposed alien concepts of space and time upon indigenous populations (Hallowell, 1955; Harvey, 1996). As Alison Calder (2013) writes, "the prairie wasn't always here. It came with Europeans" (p .12). As North American society slips towards late-capitalism, conceptions of space and time are reconstructed to favour alternative material and spatial practices (Harvey, 1996). These spatial practices operate at different 'speeds' in Canada. For instance, the speed of space will be different in metropolitan Toronto than in rural Leader, SK. Geography plays a key role in this process where difference located in the landscape translates to a temporal one (Duncan, 1993, p. 40). If modernity resulted in a speeding up, then supermodernity (Augé, 2008) and those locals experiencing it (urban centres before rural centres), will experience lags "so that the outdated rural will learn from the modern urban" (Stenbacka, 2011, p. 236). This is a

common visual trope of rural space attracting both professional and hobbyist photographers alike (both in towns and the landscape) where depictions of the prairies are often of decay and backwardness and a space that is 'out of time', or 'out of sync' with modernism (Zeleny, 2014).

In a study on symbolic space, Berit Brandth and Marit Haugen (2005) concluded that the rural is subservient to the urban. The process of rural othering creates visual representations of place that are often simplified, incorrect, or biased. This process operates similar to how space and place are social constructions, but with the added factor of a power imbalance. When urban centres cast a visual gaze upon the rural, the rural fulfills the role of heritage generation on the Canadian Prairies. Ideas of space within the region (by those within and outside it) are collectively internalized in an ongoing process to establish ideas of the rural that are overlapping and plural, the great diversity of what Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift (2000) call the "great diversity of 'species of space'" (p. 3). For Relph (1976) space is far more abstract than place, as place is rooted in direct experience (the perceptual), while space is more imaginative, similar to our concept of the region (the conceptual) (Tilley, 1994). The idea of abstract space is closer to the idea of geographical imagination, or mythical regionalism, where space is homogeneous, uniform and neutral (Relph, 1976). To this point, the discussion of the prairies has been classified by geographical and sociological parameters and by the idea of the regional as an imaginative and abstract concept. As Liz Wells (2012) explores in *Land Matters*, the 'wider west', inclusive of the prairie, is a complex geographical imagination, a "socially produced set of manifolds" (Crang & Thrift, 2000, p. 2), and is perhaps the most coded and referenced

region in the world. Furthermore, the rural components of the region are a significant imaginative space (Cloke, 2006a). Like all space, the prairies are a category of thought (Mormont, 1990), a category expressed visually when the material (the physical world) and the ideational (world of the mind) synergize. Paul Cloke (2006a) furthers this position writing that "the idea of rurality seems to be firmly entrenched in popular discourses about space, place and society in the Western world" (p. 18).

Initially fulfilling the role of heritage centre of the region, the rural prairie is now a space to be traversed, a space to ephemerally experience rather than to live within: stop for gas, or visit the second cousins in Rimbey, AB. Rural space is often not the destination but the journey. Using materialistic logic, spaces are resources. If a space is productive it is valuable, if it is not productive, it is not valuable. Space as a resource can have multiple meanings, it can be the landscape that is economically productive, a resource to cultivate, or the landscape can be spiritually productive, a place of heritage or meaning-making, a spiritual place serving different groups. For the rural dweller it is home, for the urbanite and the outsider it may be foreign and whimsical, banal, unremarkable, without flavour and contemporary culture, or suffering from a lag of modernism. To the outsider it is more about absence than presence. A lush wasteland, not that far gone but not yet the setting for 'Mad Max', perhaps just 'Mad Joe', average, boring. Space in Western Canada is not a hindrance, but distance is a variable most prairie dwellers must contend with.

Space is embraceable, space is a virtue, but distance, distance from services, distance from like-minded people, distance has the ability to breed difference (cultural,

economic, and social), distance is an issue and nowhere else is this more observable than in studies of Canadian space (Zeleny, 2016). This arises as a result of a youthful cultural landscape, the vastness and relative topographical uniformity of not only the prairie region but all regions on the continent (Bunce, 1994). The effect is particularly strong amongst the continents most youthful of landscapes and regions—the Canadian Prairies—with its absence of a strong sense of history and culture, its low population density, and its vast geography. As Guy Vanderhaeghe (2012) writes in his novel on the region, *The Englishman's Boy,* "Canada isn't a country at all, it's simply geography" (p. 181), which is similar in tone to Andrew Cohen's (2007) comment that we should "be honest with ourselves. This country is bigger than we are" (p. 243). To that effect, the vastness of the Canadian Prairies and the nation's northern reaches are not only unknown to our neighbours, but also to us. Space is an obstacle to overcome and traverser in the West, but distance has always been the enemy; distance to overcome social isolation, to overcome distance from markets, from goods, from culture, from the source where piano wire and barbed wire is made, distance from summer pastures to winter pastures, and from the farm they occupy in summer to the townhouse they call home in winter.

Transportation, Distance and Space

John Murray Gibbon once remarked that it was the canoe that paved the way for Canadian development (Berland, 2009). The canoe was fundamental in shrinking space and establishing routes of commerce, cultural exchange and tension. It was the canoe that made the fur trade a 'national' industry that would go on to cement Canada's standing as a staples

economy (Innis, 1962; McLuhan, 1964). Waterways were effective in early settlements in the Canadian Shield where rivers abound; however, the west was too vast, cargo too heavy, rivers too few, so a railway was required. Beginning in the 1850s and moving at an incredible speed, the railroad became the great symbol of Canadian prosperity (Owram, 2016) and the conquering of space and distance (Cresswell, 2006). For Hopkins Moorhouse (1918), writing on farming on the Canadian Prairies, as the railway pushed "eagerly in every direction where new lands could be tapped" (p. 36), physical distance became subordinate to speed. As a result, the railway was the fundamental technology that carried North American settlement westward (Berland, 2009). Built on a strict system of scheduling, with predetermined stops and travelling at specific speeds, the railway not only restructured space in North America, it created its own. As Individuals are compartmentalized by train travel they become erased and propelled through space as though they are mere parcels (Massey, 1995). Train mobility becomes a linear practice with places along routes becoming known as simple place-names, or middlescapes, in a sped-up circuit of movement (Urry, 2000; Massey, 1995).

The utility of railway travel diminishes as the automobile gains relevance, a technology irrevocably tied to its autonomy, which Mike Featherstone (2005) argues, has been neglected in sociology, cultural studies and related interdisciplinary fields. Mimi Sheller and John Urry (2006) call the social sciences an often sedentary practice observable "in one very mundane yet obvious example: its failure to examine the significance of the car" (p. 209). Insulated and 'safe', the expeditionary spirit of North America is coupled with a transportation technology that allowed individualized movement and placed greater

emphasis on the process than the destination (Adler, 1989; Massey, 1995). This is a form of freedom beyond the ability to simply be mobile, it is freedom to learn, freedom to stop and to go. The automobile also acts as the dominant restructurer of space and time where the idea of distance is replaced by duration where, "real time is overcoming real space" (Bublot & Di Siena 2012, p. 67; Massey, 2005). A sign of the embedded car culture in the west, it is now common for people to answer the question "how far is that?" with travel time by car rather than physical distance. As a result, a new spatial order has formed around the automobile (Jackson, 1994). On the Canadian Prairies the car is king. It is difficult to understand the prairies without first understanding their relationship to the automobile as a tool of liberation and economic opportunity (Jackson, 1994). This is adopted in rural areas enthusiastically so that by 1947, 90% of farm families had an automobile (Statistics Canada, 1921). Through the automobile, space becomes individualized—the ultimate form of private escapism. From a documentary perspective, this launches a new genre of film, the road genre (Slethaug & Ford, 2012), with its photographic equivalent equally as developed but not as clearly defined. The vastness of the Canadian Prairies and its rural population is matched by a transportation technology that 'fit its needs'. Furthermore, the importance of the automobile in supporting rural lifestyles is clear: continuation of the rural, at least in its current form, requires the continuation of the automobile. Unfortunately, the automobile which has afforded the ruralite much, has also exacerbated rural redundancy. The fate of most rural areas is now to be viewed simultaneously through the windshield and the rear-view mirror of a speeding car. Communities and regional centres become decentralized and spread-out while main-streets are emptied as individuals are willing to travel farther distances for amenities. The automobile, allowing

greater movement, ultimately hinders the capacity of small communities to operate as distinct economic centres (Sandwell, 2012; Dabson, 2001). As a result, the automobile is offered as a solution to the problems of the ruralite and like a careless wish, or the poisoned chalice consumed without the knowledge of its dangers, it has taken much from the prairies.

By the time the commercial airplane gains popularity the prairie region has been settled. The plane is used to bypass regions, is about moving over rather than through space, as Denis Cosgrove (writes, it is the ultimate annihilator of space. This is epitomized in Christine Ramsay and Randal Rogers' (2014) edited collection, *Overlooking Saskatchewan: Minding the Gap* (2014), where the prairie province represents a (cultural) gap to bypass. Similar to the train, the plane locks us into place. The plane also changes our relationship between photography and representations of photography, increasing distance and removing any intimacy, while adding a level of abstractness previously only afforded to man by the highest peaks. Contemporary media scholars (Friedberg, 2006) argue the ultimate annihilator of space is the internet and the technologies associated with its apparatus, (satellites, GPS, smart-phones, 5G networks, etc.). In *Post-Photography*, artist and writer John Fontcuberta (2015) discusses David Thomas's ideas on a new communication program that emerged in the first half of the 19th Century between the telegraph, rail locomotive and the rail system, steamship and navigational routes and then the camera. It is interesting that early communication forms move away from actual distance-conquering technologies (railway, ship) to focus more on space-binding technologies (internet, cellphones, etc.). For rural individuals the physical flows and

pathways are still important ways to communicate and bridge distance. With this exploration of space and transportation and communication technologies, we can now turn our attention to the relationship between landscape and photography on the Canadian Prairies.

Photography, Landscape, and Rurality

Landscapes are complicated. Everyone knows a landscape, lives a landscape. However that ubiquity and its long history of usages (Cosgrove, 1998) coupled with its ambitious overuse (Meinig, 1979a) has left the term fragmented and with little 'operational value' (Cresswell, 2003). In his essay, 'The Beholding Eye', D.W. Meinig (1979b) discusses landscape as an artifact, a system, and as nature, habitat, wealth, history, ideology, place, and my favourite, as a problem. To define landscape we must explore and adopt a reading that is photographically-focused, as opposed to accounts of landscape that are established in the literary tradition or by art history (The Lake District writers for instance). However, photo-historians are equally as vague in producing an operational definition of landscape, a field that has received little attention outside of cultural geography (Jackson, 1984). In *Land Matters*, Liz Wells (2012) defines landscapes as "a social product" (p. 1). In her article 'Of Mother Nature and Marlboro Men' Deborah Bright (1989) discusses landscape as having a metaphysical nature that is unnatural, created and immobile. Landscape is "nothing more than a mental construct of what a society or culture believes at a given time to be the image of the world of nature" (Francis, 2004, p. 29). Virilio (2000) states that a "landscape has no fixed meaning, no privileged vantage point. It is oriented only by the

itinerary of the passerby" (p. xi). What these thinkers are echoing is the capacity of landscape to be an imagined reality (Bender, 1995). This power can be found in the interplay between society and the physical world with photography as an apparatus to establish, sustain, and subvert meaning.

Speaking about landscape photography, Wells (2012) writes that, "…the real, perceptions of the real, the imaginary, the symbolic, memory and experience form a complex tapestry at the heart of our response to our environment, and, by extension, to landscape imagery" (p. 2). J. B. Jackson (2000) viewed landscape as the "totality of natural and built environments that simultaneously surround and infuse all forms of human activity" (p. 162). Landscape is nature that has been sculpted, disturbed, mythologized and distributed. This is also a sequential process of meaning-making where "every landscape is an accumulation" (Meinig, 1979b, p. 44). The axiom of landscape is a slightly simpler matter, the man-made landscape provides "strong evidence of the kind of people we are, and were, and are always in process of becoming. In other words, the culture of any nation is unintentionally reflected in its ordinary vernacular landscape" (Lewis, 1979, p. 15). As Pierce Lewis (1979) writes about American landscapes, "if we want to understand ourselves, we would do well to take a searching look at landscapes" (p. 12). On the Canadian Prairies, the landscape is deployed intentionally as a reflection of culture and as a key feature to understanding the psyche and culture of the region. Understanding this idea and its relationship to the prairies is important as we attempt to move away from historically pastoral and romantic ideas of landscape formed by aristocratic European painters that have never seen the North American prairies. That is not to say that romantic

notions of landscape do not have a place in creating and mythologizing the Canadian Prairies, quite the opposite, but the creation must be prairie-centric and largely disentangled from British or early North American ideas of landscape and place.

So recently 'settled', the prairie landscape operates as a blank canvas ready for modification and meaning, potentially as "the people's canvas" or as a "colonial canvas". Robert Kroetsch, referencing the Canadian Prairies, wrote that "Charles Darwin has explained that life forms evolve from the bottom up, from simple to more complicated. Perhaps the same can be said of our response to landscape" (Calder & Matijcio, 2008, pg. 6). Christian Norberg-Schulz (1971) uses the term flatscape to describe a landscape void of depth and providing limited possibilities for experiences. The prairies operate as a flatscape, as an anti-landscape and have been visualized as such, a space where the mediocre occurs. Relph (1976) calls this categorization the ' simple landscape', a landscape that declares itself openly, presents no problems or surprises, and lacks subtlety. The prairie landscape is a figurative blank on the map of North America. As Canadian writer and longtime expat Wallace Stegner (1962) writes about the Canadian Prairies, "history was something that applied to other places" (p. 28). From the perspective of the colonial settler, a land without history is to be made meaningful through a reading of its landscape. Jackson (1984) describes landscape as a system of classification, a collection of ideas. Cosgrove (1998) defined it as 'an ideological concept', "a way in which certain classes of people have signified themselves and their world through their imagined relationship with nature, and through which they have underlined and communicated their own social role and that of others with respect to external nature" (p. 14).

All landscapes are real and imagined, and we must decide how we wish to perceive them, how we tell others about them, and perhaps most importantly, how we feel about them. This applies equally to ideas of space and place discussed earlier, as well as the idea of the rural. When we view landscapes we undertake a process of both *seeing* and *reading* them. Through this process we modify landscape from a physical location into a place, one created through the internalizations and visions of the land's inhabitants (Creates & Schwartz, 1991). But what is the prairie landscape and how do we go about defining it concisely? What is clear is that we require a new definition (Jackson, 1984), one that is inclusive of postmodernity, the speeding up of space and information, and the uniqueness of the prairie region. Furthermore, landscape is more than the accumulation of rocks, trees and a horizon. For Relph (1976) the "spirit of a place lies in its landscape" (p. 30). Yi-Fu Tuan (1979) writes that landscape is a "clue to a region's human personality" (p. 93), but for the prairies, the landscape *is* the region's human personality—largely inseparable, fused. For Douglas Francis (2004), what is fundamental to understanding a region's identity is understanding and interpreting its landscape. He illustrates this when he writes that landscapes go "beyond the physical realm to have a psychological influence as well, in that it shapes human characteristics, which are seen as uniquely 'prairie' and thus regional in nature" (p. 34). The landscape is both the stage and the actor. As sociologist Charles Tilly (1994) writes, the "landscape is an agent in its own right: an agent that acts upon the journeyer, shapes the journeyer" (p. 11).

Land(scape) Photography

Photography and the western development of the continent share a unique communion, a congruent process where photography (a new technology) mythologizes a newly 'discovered' landscape. In the Canadian West, the camera plays an active process in picturing landscape and investing it with meaning (Schwartz, 2007). What follows is an exploration of how landscape influences regional identities and how this is expressed photographically. This section is not about a traditional conception of landscape photography, rather how photography contributes to the creation of regionalism specific to the prairies. To this end, documentary projects that include landscape photography, along with projects that include either the built environment or interactions between the built environment and people, are the focus.

Similar to myths, a region is an invention, a symbol, and a perception. The landscape as a myth has the ability to be a powerful symbol for identity—for self-identity, regional identity, or national identity (Francis, 2004; Lewis 1979), whether it is a story based in truth or fiction (Herrington, 2008). The myth lives outside of time, in fact it destroys time, similar to how the photograph destroys time by capturing it (Wells, 2012). As a result, myths live until they are either forgotten, wiped from the cultural imaginary, or challenged and replaced. One of the leading questions of 'Mapping Out' has been how do we know place, how do we know we are in the Canadian Prairies? The answer of course is determinant on the question of who is asked and what is their position (cultural framework) relative to the site of study (the prairies).

To generalize, the myth of the prairie region is different for the local than it is for the foreigner. For the local, the familiar landscape becomes an embodiment of the individual's perception, his understanding of community, culture, history, and his lived experience in relationship to the contemporary landscape (Mitchell, 1994a, 1994b). Expressed in different terms, the individual's 'cultural posturing', history and geographical location determine their cultural framework, which will determine how information is filtered and stored (Rigsby, 1999; Said, 1978). Therefore, engagements with the idea of the prairies is different for the insider and the outsider. For the insider it is defined by closeness and embeddedness, while the outsider must rely heavily on wider cultural codes, assumptions and stereotypes to complete their idea of 'rural living on the prairies'. These 'insider landscapes' are not closed systems, and although based in the *perceived* reality of the local, they are undoubtedly influenced by national (and international) ideas of space and culture. For the insider who is embedded in the landscape, the distinction between self-from-scene and subject-from-object is difficult to render (Cosgrove, 1998) as they are embedded within the landscape. As it occurs with othering, the prairie dweller must navigate his position in the world through hegemonic forces and his own lived-experience. As Charles Stagnor and James Lange (1994) discuss in terms of othering, which holds close ties to regional stereotyping, "people reduce their uncertainty about others…by using their previously stored knowledge about people…This process is often unfairly detrimental to the person being judged" (p. 357-358). The psychological and cognitive processes of meaning-making are similar for the insider and the outsider. Experience is filtered through inter-personal interactions and media sources, whether that takes place in the space in

question, or is experienced through secondary sources (photographs, film, literature, internet searches, etc.). Filtering is a key factor in establishing codes and ideas of a region, as well as myths, for the

> "'sender's own cultural framework limits what information and images s/he is able to take in. From this s/he selects what is relevant for the message s/he is trying to convey, which then gets filtered by the 'receiver's' own cultural framework, further narrowing the scope of the image of the region." (Rijnks & Strijker, p. 105)

One issue with this framework is that the sender is the local in a position of power to send messages, which, given the exploration of the othering process from the Diggin In chapter, is a complicated matter. A simplified formula also exists where the farther one is from the site of inquiry, the more diluted the cultural codes of that site will become. Photographically speaking, the farther from a site of inquiry, the more important single images become in rendering space 'observable'. With the vastness of the prairies in mind, distance is once again the enemy. If regions are established through simplified myths (Crang, 1998), then regions must be rendered into consumable packages; as a result, the prairies are only represented by a fraction of what makes them 'real'.

On the Canadian Prairies, meaning is established and continuously remade through lived space (landscape). Following Lynne Manzo & Patrick Devine-Wright's (2014) definition of place attachment, and geographer Yi-Fu Tuan's (1974b) concept of of topophilia which refers to the affective bonds between people and place, Svetlana Boym's

(2016) concept of 'restorative nostalgia' in *Future of Nostalgia* specifies how bonds are established between an individual and a place. Depending on the social group, nostalgia towards an event, period, or landscape can be either productive or destructive. With reference to the deployment of the prairies as a significant embodiment of heritage in the Canadian West, we observe the use of the general representation of a space conceived through its abstraction and neo-colonial codifications (Merrifield, 2000). These codes (prairie landscape as empty, barren and banal), inspired by post-structural theories, such as Hall's 'politics of representation' and Baudrillard's notion of 'simulacrum', can largely be read as symbolic but also functional, by virtue of their wide acceptance (Bunce, 1994; Marsden et al., 1993). Landscape is largely a representation, an imagination conjured up (Ingold, 2012). There is a point worth reiterating, given its importance to this chapter—photographic images (past and present) contribute to how a place is represented to a wider audience. This occurs by allowing images to operate as factual representations of space, which ultimately extends the range of observable space, similar to how the written word carried ideas beyond the reach of the oral story (Hall, 2003; Schwartz & Ryan, 2003). Photography has the ability to create multiple representations of place (landscapes of desire, landscapes of sacrifice, or landscapes of neglect). Images are tools that aid in the construction of place (Rijnks & Strijker, 2013, p. 105). With Harvey's (1990, 2005) extensive writings on the geographical imagination in mind, photography is embedded in the process of making 'imaginative geographies' and shapes our ideas of place in real and profound ways (Schwartz & Ryan, 2003). Discussed in relation to photography and regionalism, landscape is used in this dissertation as the geographical ground that

encompasses aspects of place and space theory to aid in our understanding of how geographic regions are culturally created (Ingold, 2012).

Landscapes and Spaces of Western Canada

No other landscape has been as interpreted through photography as North America's 'West'. In her book *Meaningful Places*, Rachel Sailor (2007) explains that "the stories that follow do more than just shed light on how western settlers used the photographic image as a settlement tool; they also illustrate how local and regional understandings of places have created a lasting impression, and how, taken as a whole, they shape modern concepts of the West" (p. xix-xx). By providing accounts of 'observable space' in the West, photography helps construct imaginative geographies embodied by imaginative people and representing a unique way of life. Photography is not simply for rendering a space in a visual manner but sharing a unique vision—a unique way of seeing. As Wells (2011) writes, "photographs tell stories, contributing to the construction of histories related to particular sites" (p. 262). The next logical step in our discussion is to turn towards the unique stories being (photographically) communicated about the Canadian Prairies. This can be difficult to do given the Canadian West is often overshadowed by the more mythical, 'rough and tough', American West. J. B. Jackson (1984) once wrote, "the best place to find new landscapes is the West" (p. 141). The fact that he is speaking about the American West and makes no mention of the Canadian West makes Jackson's words all the more relevant to our discussion.

The Canadian Prairies is an under-represented space, a landscape that is not young but youthful in visual representations of itself. The landscape of the prairies is absurdly simple (Relph, 1976), so simple that it caused problems for early settlers when they first arrived and who were deprived of an inheritable history of the landscape (Camus, 1955). But who decides the visual narrative of the prairies as simple or banal (or exotically banal)? Alluding to the forces that seize control of a narrative, photographer George A. Tice (2006) writes in his photo-book *Paterson II*, "a place belongs to those who claim it" (p. 8). Landscapes belong to those who take them, who declare ownership over the land (rightfully or not). As we know from the exploitative history of the settler in North America, power is taken, not gifted. But who owns and speaks for a landscape are two different things. Farmers and ranchers may be the owners of the land, of the landscape in the capitalist sense of holding property rights, but it is the storytellers, myth-makers and visual narrators (photographers amongst them) that are responsible for the telling of the land, sharing its voice. It is in these narrations where a spiritual ideal of the land is established alongside one that is economically viable.

It is the belief of some Canadian Aboriginal tribes that the land(scape) holds the spirit of the people. Landscape operates as heritage for specific groups (Lowenthal, 1979); it has a specific cultural value just as it is a cultural construct (Greider & Garkovich, 1994; Gailing & Leibenath, 2015). A common theme in Sailor's *Meaningful Places* (2007) is the process of place-attachment and place-creation through photography. Embedded in this process is the destruction of Aboriginal place-attachments for the place-creation and subsequent attachments of Euro-American settlers. From a phenomenological perspective,

one "unself-consciously and self-consciously accepts and recognizes place as integral to his or her personal and communal identity and self-worth" (Seamon, 2014, p. 17). That is to say, the landscape and place-attachment produces a particular way of seeing and understanding the land based on prolonged interaction. Photography helped write the land as empty and by extension created a culture of ownership, plenitude, and expanse that becomes increasingly interrogated in the later decades of the 20th Century (Wells, 2011; Giblett & Tolonen, 2012).There is a reason those who grow up by the sea yearn for open water, and those who grow up on the prairies yearn for open land with a wide horizon. Engaging in a critique of a photographically-rendered landscape (either natural or built) can have psychotherapeutic qualities, and can help establish, as well as problematize our understanding of the prairie region. Speaking specifically about the prairie region, "rural areas and their landscapes often serve as a medium of collective identity and culture for entire regions—representing an image of *Heimat*" (Carlow, 2016, p. 7). Photography has the representative capacity to either create new prairies or to reproduce old ones. However, we have yet to see the landscape challenge the settler perspective that dominated the account of the region in the 20th Century. Compared to the East, landscape is a poorly developed concept (Bunce, 1994), which occupies the mind of the Westerner in a way that is not consumptive for the Easterner's respective landscape. For the Westerner, the open land is where they draw their strength, their vision, or at least that is the account we write for them; but the truth is the vast majority of prairie dwellers live in cities where photographic explorations of their lives are near non-existent. As a result, simple stereotypes of people (simple, noble, backwards) and landscape (empty, pristine, banal, open) come to occupy the region. What is often shared is a vision of the rural that is banal, a

quality that is expressed photographically in accounts of place, people and community. This banality is not to be thought of as a negative consequence of the space but rather something to celebrate, for it gives the region its distinct character. As J. B. Jackson (1951) stated in the first edition of *Landscape*, "there is really no such thing as a dull landscape or farm or town. None is without character, no habitat of man is without the appeal of the existence which originally created it" (p. 5). The Canadian Prairies are not the American West, nor is it the Far North or Eastern Canada, it is the prairies, a landscape made fantastical through its banal nature. To better understand this process we will now look at the photographers who document the region and create those little prairie-windows that help others discover the region.

Representing Regions Through Photography

Some regions have to try harder to attract attention. Some yearn for the Mojave, others day-dream of the creole coast of the south-east but few spend their evenings desiring the Canadian Prairies. Perhaps it is not much that stirs the imagination, a passing remark from a friend, a film set in a region, a series of images about a landscape, or perhaps it is a very long cultural process, a process of accumulation that creates these associations. Previous sections of 'Mapping Out' have outlined issues of space, place, and landscape as they relate to photography and regionalism in an abstracted sense. The following sections continue to build on these relationships through a grounding in photographic projects produced in the prairie region. But first, let us begin with an exercise. Close your eyes and imagine you are standing in the middle of the American South, what comes to mind? Some

will imagine poverty, Appalachian rednecks, cultural diversity, tropical brush and the feeling of humidity that makes one feel as if they are swimming in air, while others will have strikingly different interpretations. Through a complex and ongoing process of exchange, meaning is established. Instantaneously our brains begin to generate images that are both culturally shared, near universal, and specific to an individual's background. Photography plays a crucial role in rendering complex regions into simple representations and sharing those constructs with wider audiences (Jäger, 2003).

In the past decade there has been a resurgence of regionalism in documentary and conceptual photography, which include "Notes From the Foundry" from *Spaces Corners* (2013), "The Mojave" issue of *The Collective Quarterly* (2017), the Rust Belt Biennial, Lenscratch's ongoing web series "The States Project", *Looking at Appalachia* (2014), and "The American South" issue of *Ain't Bad Magazine* (2014). These widely distributed projects are visual meditations on regionalism, two of which pertain directly to our exercise of imaging the American South. Audrey Goodman's (2016) *Translating Southern Landscapes* accounts for the region by employing a number of cultural texts, from regional magazines to exhibitions, while drawing upon the images of Paul Strand, Ansel Adams, and Alex Harris, among others, to produce a regional narrative. Some may argue against defining the American South as a region, with its long and diverse history making it more difficult to visually code than other parts of the continent. From a photographic perspective, the region is one of the most heavily photographed on the continent, with a deep rooted tradition of documentary photography with work by Doris Ulmann, O. Winston Link, and Walker Evans setting the early stage for a south that features persistent under-

development, and perpetual backwardness and poverty in the early part of the 20th Century. In the 1970s and 1980s Susan Lipper, Rob Amberg and William Gedney built upon this regional narrative by either challenging or complementing the previous one. Contemporary artists, notably those featured in *Ain't Bad Magazine*'s 'The American South' (2014) edition represent how the narrative of the region has changed but poverty, backwardness, and racial tension have all remained (to some degree) as common tropes. Even the accounts that look to diversify visual accounts of the region inadvertently contribute to the master-narrative of poverty—simply by acknowledging and then refuting its existence. What this example of the American South illustrates is that a region's identity is fluid, but once rooted difficult to shake.

Let us continue the exercise but shift our attention to the American West. Made popular through literature, film, and photography (Cosgrove, 2008), the American West is arguably the most recognizable region in the world (it is after all the only region with its own film genre). What images come to mind when you think of the American West? Some will envision the historical American West, the tired tropes of cowboys and Indians, deserts and hardships, flat and brown, tumbleweeds, six shooters, 'Man's Ruin', boots full of sand, searching and soft spoken male protagonists, and determined ranchers. In some ways it may seem easier to visualize the 'West' than it is the 'South'. These tropes, aside from the geographical ones, are not only largely inaccurate, but outdated. Tim Richmond's book, *Last Best Hiding Place* (2015), gives us some indication of how the space is being photographed contemporarily, a description of his book reads:

> "deserted streets with beer cans blowing down the road…a cowboy washing his shirts…a train on its way into million acres of emptiness…A Vietnam vet who lost twenty years of recent memory…a whole town for sale…meth warnings…a tattooed waitress in neon light. All of these inhabit the Last Best Hiding Place" (back-cover).

Richmond, like many contemporary photographers, is building on the western genre, a problematic but quintessentially American region. Ronan Guillou's *Country Limit* (2011), Lucas Foglia's *Frontcountry* (2014), Kalpesh Lathigra's *Lost in the Wilderness* (2015), and Karoliina Paatos's *American Cowboy* (2016), provide similar narratives. It seems few contemporary photobooks break away from the narrative of the masculine-man-of-none, the lonely protagonist, or ruinous men and ruinous space. These exercises of imagining regions are not about settling on 'accurate' tropes, rather about drawing attention to the way symbols, icons, and images codify space and how once set they are difficult to shake. The farther into a discussion of what represents the American West, the farther down the rabbit hole of misinterpretation. This misinterpretation is aided by the vastness of the region and the geography found within it, a geography that differs from the plains of Oklahoma, the deserts of Arizona, the mountains of Colorado, the open ranges of Montana, as well as the coastlines of San Francisco. What we arrive at is the American West, similar to the Canadian West, a set of sub-regions with some sub-regions operating as the de facto representatives of the expansive space that is the West.

Let us continue this exercise for the American Midwest. I have never been to the Midwest, but I imagine it is similar to the Canadian Prairies—flat, sparsely populated and

dotted with farmers and small towns at gridded intervals. The two regions share a number of historical, socio-economic, and visual similarities that contribute to a shared idea of space and common tropes—the decrepit farm yards along the highways, the wide main-streets, and the key aggregate, vast and wide open space. And if we look at the work of Midwest photographers and Canadian Prairie photographers it is often difficult to differentiate subject matter. Comparing Gerry Johansson's Midwest shot *American Winter* (2018) against an equivalent prairie photographer, it becomes very difficult to locate cultural or visual differences. This can be partly attributed to the two regions sharing an economic status of agricultural heartland and breadbasket of each nation (Meyer, 1965). As Bunce (1994) explains, this 'heartland' was once an agricultural frontier, where virtue and prosperity would come through the fortitude of back-breaking labour on the new frontier. There are also counter-narratives based in the region; although rare they are important to muse over. Michael Lesy's *Wisconsin Death Trip* (1973) is a counter-narrative to the Jeffersonian idealist vision of the region as fertile and heavenly. Lesy acts as a curator, selecting images from the archive of early photographer Charles Van Schaick to create photographic 'quotations' similar to Benjamin's ideal of producing work consisting entirely of quotations (Lesy & Susman, 1973, p. 8). As Warren Susman writes in the preface to *Wisconsin Death Trip*,

> "for the very time that the Frontier Myth or the vision of a happier agrarian America was reaching its apogee…there was also a growing awareness of the awesome problems of death, decline, delinquency, and even degeneracy as phenomena

> associated not only with industrial and urban America but with rural and agrarian America as well." (p. 8)

Lesy's *Wisconsin Death Trip* does not change the narrative but proposes a new one: early life on the frontier was hard, tragic and dark. As Susman (1973) writes, it provides us with "a unique opportunity to face not the American Dream but the American Nightmare" (p. 3), a reality established from the collaging of 'fact-based' documents of rural life into a new narrative. It is important to note that photography, even that which critiques, has the ability to become fetishized and can undermine the pursuit and objectives of the photographer. As Wells (2012) writes, "paradoxically, photography, in drawing attention to items or events, always risks fetishising through aestheticisation" (p. 102). Through Lesy's work we return again to the realm of the myth. The myth is the primary device by which a society explains its origins and its value (Stiles, 1990), while grounding the dominant culture of society which enacts them for meaning (Thompson, 2007). Writing specifically about Alberta, Stiles (1990) goes on to say that "in times of uncertainty, such as that in contemporary Alberta, myth can also be an escape, allowing both writers and readers to dwell in an age when life was perceived as simpler and better than it is in their own time" (p. 28). We see this in the photographic accounts of the prairies, particularly in the hegemonic and state-supported narrative of *Keepsake* (1981). The following sections will look at the development of photography on the prairies and how photographers, in sharing their visions of the land and its people, have either enhanced, enacted, or disrupted the dominant narratives and myths of the region.

Photographers on the Prairies - Historical

Who Represents the Prairies?

Ever since Humphry Lloyd Hime first captured the essence of the barren prairies, photography has played an integral role in defining the region and our relationship to it. Hime could have photographed one of the region's parkland forests, its deep-cut river systems, its numerous Aboriginal settlements, its rolling hills, or its biodiversity of flora or fauna. Instead, the image he produced, and which consequently came to be the world's 'first look' at the region, was one of absence with only a bleached animal skull to draw the eye into an otherwise empty frame. But Hime himself is not to blame for he did photograph numerous sites on the expedition but none had the myth-making potential of 'The Prairie Looking West, September-October 1858'. This raises the question, is a landscape of absence still a landscape? How does absence in a space, still constitute a space? Does the landscape of the prairies, as Hime captured it, even exist? From what Hime shows us, Mars seems to have more landscape, more excitement, and more movement than the prairies. It was a challenge to any person who could imagine a house to the right, the fields stretching to the left and onward to the horizon. No natural borders, only one's ambition and fortitude, and of course, as good Christians, they would bury the skull and mark the grave.

Rod Giblett and Juha Tolonen (2012) write about photography's ability to operate as an optical technology of empire where "landscape photography aided the empire by rendering the land 'settleable'. The colonial enterprise, settler societies and landscape photography are mutually reinforcing" (p. 16). Hime's image also affirms Pfahl's (1997)

position that a particular image can come to stand in for a region or place, similar to how Monument Valley often represents the American West. Film-makers and photographers wholly embrace Monument Valley because it provides an immediate and colossal reference point for the American West, a backdrop to build narrative and empire upon. On the prairies and through Hime's image, the absence of geography makes the setting. As a result, the prairies suffer from an inability to build reverence and myth from a geographical landscape. This is problematic for a young region that, lacking history, must depend upon its geography and settler-narrative to produce meaning. Although Hime's image represents the way photographers will document the region, it lacks iconicity and fails to be known beyond a limited audience. As Brock Silversides (1999) discusses in his history of photography in Western Canada, there are no 'classic' image of the prairies. Some landscapes provide us with a centre (like Monument Valley), but often they are without one. As Robert Adam (2005) writes "at their best the photographers accepted limitations and faced space as the antithetical puzzle it is—a stage without a centre" (p. 146). Stage implies a direction, a point of view, a front and a back. A mountain range is very much a point of view, a stage, either to look at or from. Hime's image, and the photographers that followed in his footsteps to represent the Canadian West, show us a prairies with 'tremendous space' and vast panorama's which lacks a point of view (McLuhan & Easterbrook, 1974). With no dominant point-of-view, the eye must settle on the little built environment and natural features that exist (a range of trees, round bales stacked two-high in a field, or a two-story farmhouse).

The inherent banality found in photographic accounts of the prairies is not unique to the region; however, the persistence to which these codes are adopted is. American New Topographic photographers faced similar claims of being overly banal, off-putting, and were charged with producing 'anti-photography' (Jurovics, 2013). The New Topographics were able to overcome these challenges in ways their northern prairie counterparts could not, allowing them to produce a new way of seeing landscape (Wells, 2012), a recognizable and embraced series of photographers engaging with the landscape, making the 'seen unseen' and the 'unfamiliar familiar' (Foster-Rice & Rohrbach, 2013). The initial reception of the New Topographic photographers on show at the George Eastman House was that the images were banal. Robert Adams (2005), one of the topographic photographers featured in the exhibition, wrote about this in *Why We Photograph* stating that the "resulting pictures have an element almost of banality about them, but it is exactly this acknowledgement of the plain surface to things that helps legitimize the photographer's difficult claim that the landscape is coherent" (p. 146). What Adams is laying claim to is approximate to O'Sullivan's 'negative landscapes' (or the images of Evelyn Cameron, Alexander Gardner, and Carleton Watkins), bare (or barren) shots made wonderful by their banality and emptiness rather than their extravagance. What we see in Adam's images and from the accounts of other topographical photographers, is the diminishing of geography as *the* object that makes the landscape. The question percolates, what is the difference between banality on the prairies and the American West? If we can make an argument for viewing the work of the New Topographic photographers of the 1970s as praise-worthy (albeit banal), then it is an argument that can be applied to the whole of prairie photography, from Hime's first exposure to George Webber's most recent work. The real

between the two lies in the stickiness of the idea of banality. While New Topographic photographers were initially classified as banal and anti-aesthetic, prairie photography continues to be defined by these characteristics. In more abstract terms, if banality amongst the New Topographic photographers was a passing era, then the banality on the prairies is an arena, where this condition spans the entire historical account of photography. For the prairies, banality is not the result of the landscape as much as it is a symptom of the viewer and their reading of the landscape. It is likely that the local registers the banal landscape as beautiful through its utility as a productive and unique landscape, however, without the proper historical reference points it is difficult to appreciate or articulate this position. For the average prairie-dweller, the land is for living on and not for pontificating over. This section will focus on how contemporary and historical photographers have used the camera to visualize the region and how this is part of a complex meaning-making process that furthers ideas of the prairies as banal in ways that are unique to the region. This section can be thought of as a continuation of the theme from the 'Digging In' chapter, where we revisit the idea of banality on the prairies with a new focus on how it applies to the work of photographers who bring ideas of landscape, built environment, and the people that dwell there into cohesive narratives and how this contributes to the idea of a landscape that is both underwhelming and grandiose, a grandiose perfection that the native son Wallace Stegner (1962) called "almost frighteningly total" (p. 3) in reference to the emptiness of space on the prairies.

What early writers and photographers found on the prairies was an adolescent landscape. Arriving with European tools (the pen, the camera) and a European tool-kit

(epistemologically speaking), they were challenged to make sense of the land. Part of the difficulty in telling the story of the Canadian West is being authentic to its own quiet narrative without succumbing to American ideals of what the West is and how it should be documented. Being 'authentic' to the region is about accepting prairie landscapes are without glamour, landscapes not often consumed hungrily by others; the belief that the prairie region is uniform and boring, an assumption that is still present today (Silversides, 1999). More glamorous and 'idyll-ized' landscapes are afforded attention while "'ordinary' other places [like the prairies] can become shadowed out by the privileging of special landscapes, with the result that the 'messiness' of rural space is sometimes lost" (Cloke & Little, p. 11). This represents the duality of landscapes, for the local, the prairies is what Andy Grundberg (2002) calls a subtle landscape, where no photograph can capture the totality of experiencing the space. Grundberg (2002) argues that the photograph is an ineffective method for reproducing the feeling of a landscape. The beauty of a prairie landscape is something you have to squint to see, blink and you might just miss it, but keep looking and you may just find it. Banal and lacking vibrancy and afflicted by other issues such as a lack of dense populations to support large creative industries (Knudsen, Florida, Stolarick, & Gates, 2008) and without a violent or extended history, the entire region lacks a strong identity. This is coupled with a lack of artist communities and legitimate post-secondary training opportunities. A journalist from the *Globe and Mail* commented on the state of the arts in early Western Canada remarking that "no wonder young Canadian artists go abroad whenever they can earn passage money" (Francis, 1992, p. 27). These comments were made over a century ago with "regards to the Ontario Government's decision not to extend the commission of the Canadian painter Edmund Morris, however

the phenomena persists today as documentary photographers frequently search elsewhere for community, training and commissions" (Zeleny, 2016, p. 57).There are a number of striking examples of painters and photographers who have chosen to relocate from the prairies in order to further their training, develop their skills, and find a community before returning to immortalize the area in pigment or silver gelatin. Emily Carr trained in San Francisco, London, and Paris (Francis, 1997, p. 31) before returning home to British Columbia. More contemporarily Orest Semchishen, Thomas Gardiner and myself, amongst others, have sought formal education elsewhere. And then there are the artists who depicted Western Canada but who were not born in the region. Paul Kane, a self-taught painter who depicted scenes of Western Canada, was raised in Toronto, and visited Europe in 1841 on the basis of a 'painting study trip'. The painter Frederick Verner was born in Sheridan, Ontario and trained at Heatherley's Art School in London. Verner was renowned for painting images of Western Canada, including striking landscapes that depicted grazing bison. By some accounts Verner had never seen a bison, further problematizing authentic representations of Western Canada.

Pioneer Days: Early Photography on the Prairies

After the Hind expedition that brought Hime and photography to the prairies, it would be some time before the medium found a permanent home in the region. Images produced for utilitarian purposes: surveying, documenting (Charles Horetzky's images of the CPR west survey in 1871-72), boostering (early photographic documentation produced by the Geological Survey of Canada), as well as tourist photography continued to be

prominent. Mystified ideas of space on the open frontier and gargantuan snow-covered mountain peaks played heavily into the public's imagination of the region, as it was written about and sought out. When nothing but space is perceived to exist—uncultured, unsettled, virgin—it is the narrative of the colonial 'keeper' that focuses on the land, interpreting the land as empty (or empty enough). As a result, the plains, bisons, mountain tops, and Aboriginals are mythologized as side characters in a larger narrative of space through early paintings, photographs, novels and journal entries. It would be some time before documentary photographers would come to assert 'authentic' and 'home-grown' (regional in nature) readings of the landscape. However, prior to this, numerous photo studios (Charles Wesley Mathers, Gladys Reeves, and Ernest Brown to name a few) and 'on the street' portrait photographers held profitable operations in larger centres (Edmonton, Calgary and Medicine Hat), offering a window into the lives of early prairie settlers dressed in their 'Sunday's best'.

Some of the region's first documentary photographers settled in Southern Alberta. Between the years of 1893-1905, H.B. Higgs photographs the Springfield Ranch (near Benyon, AB), where he lived and worked to sustain his photographic practice. As a result, Higgs' produced one of the prairie's earliest series on ranching culture, documenting outdoor washing and hair cutting to branding and coyote hunting in winter. R. A. Bird, a commercial photographer in Calgary in the early 20th Century, frequently shot outside of the city, producing an early record of rural life. Bird photographed early oil implements in Turner Valley, obscure towns named Beiseker, Arrowhead, Lille and the Canadian Rockies, but not as stunningly as Ansel Adams when he came in 1924, or as extensively as Byron

Harmon, Alberta's first photographer with an international reputation (Ainslie & Lavoilette, 2007). Bird photographed a few prairie landscapes featuring their economic production (wheat-stocks), as well as the Stampedes of Gleichen, Sundre and Calgary. As a result, the importance of the cowboy and Stampede is purposefully downplayed in this record of prairie photography and prairie development in favour of diverse narratives. The Stampede is the epitome of myth-making on the prairies, where the romantic and hyper-masculine cowboy code exists only in the costumed days of the drink-fuelled festival. The working cowboy has played a relatively minor role in opening up the Canadian West, compared to the banker or farmer (Konrad, 1983). From this point on, photography in the province grows slowly, remaining largely urban and commercial in nature. It would be a number of decades before photographers emerge to document the totality of the region.

Prairie Photography, Environmentalism, and New Topographics

The wave of photography championed by the New Topographic photographers influenced prairie image-makers by helping move photography from a rudimentary documentation of empire to a playful exploration of landscape, place, and people. Early instances of photography as a tool to glorify and catalogue 'western progress' can be found in the work of Benjamin F. Baltzly of the 1871 Geographical Survey (Cavaliere, 2016), as well as the Last Spike at Craigellachie, BC. This continued until the emergence of the New Topographic photographers in the 1970s. Robert Adams, Lewis Baltz, Bernd & Hilla Becker, Frank Gohlke, Nicholas Nixon, and Stephen Shore influence a new generation of critical image-makers looking to challenge runaway modernity. Joel Sternfeld's *American Prospects*

(2004) and *Stranger Passing* (2012), document a damaged America rebuilding itself spiritually, quite the opposite from Walker Evans' spiritually intact, but crumbling American buildings. These New Topographic photographers and their derivatives (or is that disciples?) produce work that re-frames our relationship to the land and the built environment. With the rise of the modern environmental movement and growing awareness of the extractive and detrimental effects of industrial capitalism on the land (and the people that 'cultivate it'), the focus shifted from the idealized rural to the industrial rural with photography used as an apparatus to document this change. Prior to this, the West had largely been thought of as empty of human action and where "photographers previously might have pictured the silence of the space of the West they are now more likely to document the consequences of human invasion" (Wells, 2002, p. 142). It is during this time that the narrative of the prairies pivots from being of the present to being a thing of the past. Canadian documentary photographers begin to focus on the resource industry in ways similar to the United States (Wells, 2002, p. 142). Lawrence Chrismas's *Coal In The Valley* and *Canmore Miners* explore the mining edges of the province. Scotiabank Photography Award winner (2014) Mark Ruwedel's *Westward: The Course of Empire* (American born, and Eastern trained) documents the landforms created by railway tracks, illustrated through pulled rail-lines—a retreat of industry. More recently, Eamon MacMahon and Tim Smith's individual projects (both titled) *Uranium City*, document the once prominent Saskatchewan industrial town. Valerie Zink's *Oxen to Oil* and Aaron Elkaim's *Sleeping with the Devil* are explorations into oil by questioning resources as an economic juggernaut and driver of growth. These industries represent the forward motion of progress, from individualist feats to systematic ones—'look at this nation we built from

the dirt, look at how we can extract and ship minerals'. However, by the 1970s and with the rise of the modern environmental movement, society became critical of these spaces, viewing them as industries and communities in distress or of the past. The narrative of the rural then becomes one born out of being residual, which is then coded as heritage. To illustrate these societal changes we can look at prairie photographers focused on creating wider records of the region.

Post 1970 Prairie Photographers: The 1980s Onward (I: those inactive)

Photography on the prairies is defined by stillness. This is a common feature in both the American West and the Canadian Prairies, as Robert Adams (1983) writes, "western space was mostly quiet, a fact suggested metaphorically by the pictures' visual stillness" (p. 1). Another way to think about prairie space is as an ever present silence, a poetic silence which often accrues as little more than the fetishizing of banality. This section is not meant to be a complete survey of photography on the prairies, but rather a discussion of those photographers working around ideas of the region and the banality inherent in their records. As a result, photographers that make major contributions to photography in Western Canada outside of this focus—John Paskievich (images of urban Winnipeg), Sandra Semchuk (images of home and self), Shelly Sopher (rodeo culture) and Thelma Pepper (images of long term care centre in Saskatoon) are not discussed. In addition, the 1980 Keepsake project will also not be explored as the 'Digging In' chapter discusses the project in great detail. Photographers working around the idea of specific places will also not be discussed; including Amber Bracken and Jason Franson's individual work around

Lac Ste Anne and Geoffrey James' commission on Lethbridge, *Place: Lethbridge, City on the Prairie* (2002), which provides a well-executed albeit surface understanding of the community and its relationship with the surrounding sub-plain landscape. Nor will there be an in-depth discussion of projects looking at aspects of the region's non-places, as present in Calgary photographer Chris Malloy's ongoing series 'Rurban Landscapes'. Malloys conceptual images do offer something interesting to the discussion of representations of the rural and the urban. In Rurban Landscapes' Malloy playfully removes urban buildings and places them in open rural settings, in a field, or along a snow-covered road. These buildings have a distinctly rural feel with their 'Western-style' architecture of false facades and wood-based construction. Malloy is putting these rural-looking buildings 'out to pasture' by re-creating lonely, isolated structures in rural space and unknowingly reproducing the 'tired' rural.

The exploration that follows will be of photographers that have produced one or more significant bodies of work catalogued for perpetuity in the form of an artist monograph or an exhibition catalogue. Let us begin with the father of Canadian Prairie photography—Orest Semchishen. Semchisen's work has been discussed briefly, but given his creative contribution to the region his work requires revisiting. Orest Semchisen (b. 1932) was born in rural Alberta. A radiologist by occupation, he was trained to peer into the bodies of Albertans, and by picking up the camera he began to peer into the soul of Alberta itself. Orest is arguably the prairies most prolific documentary photographer. Gordon Snyder (2005) quoted Terry Fenton in *Through Alberta Eyes* saying that, "my main influences come from…Eugene Atget, Walker Evans, and Orest Semchishen. The first two

are famous, the last—a Canadian from Edmonton—should be" (p. 10). Fenton's quote underlies a common motif of talent in Western Canada, photographers are generally obscured from the academic and art-critic circles present in Canada's VMT (Vancouver, Montreal, Toronto). Semchishen's first contribution to prairie photography came in the form of the documentation of Albertan Byzantine Churches (1976). Semchishen was interested in documenting the changing reality of the rural church with the disappearance and neglect of these religious artefacts and their characteristically eastern onion-shaped domes. Between 1973-75 he produced 250 black and white images of churches with 'head-on views' of church exteriors and internal shots depicting ornate rituals and rites, fake flowers, orthodox crosses, and Greek symbols. These structures were essential institutions for early settlers. Once the car became ubiquitous and churches became centralized in towns, these country churches failed to function as anything more than country-side relics. Although well received when it was first produced, the book today, like the structures it reproduced, operates as a largely forgotten relic.

Semchishen would go on to expand his photographic scope by creating portraits and exploring townscapes in *Keepsake* (1980), and two dedicated monographs *In Plain View* (1994), and *Through Alberta Eyes: The Photographs of Orest Semchisen* (2005). Semchishen's *In Plain View* (1994) was published by the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography (CMCP) as an exhibition catalogue. The exhibition was a retrospective on his career as a prairie photographer who documented its buildings, landscape and people. Alongside Byzantine churches the exhibition featured a host of atypical Albertan residents (Russian Orthodox monks, northern trappers and Japanese

Buddhists). Because of its Alberta-focus, the book is a retrospective on the prairies, although a couple of images of other places sneak into the narrative, like Montreal's Holy Ghost Ukrainian Church. As Martha Hanna (1994) writes *In Plain View*, "wherever his photographic projects have taken him, his focus of attention remains solidly rooted in his cultural heritage and in his experience of the small towns and communities of Alberta" (p. 30). Produced in a 'traditional' documentary style, the work carries on from the American-centric New Topographics, and expresses a clear form, that is both highly structured, coded and aesthetic. The images show us a banal prairie-wonderland; an image titled 'Bruce Hotel' (1977) depicts the typical 'football-field-wide' main-street, the hotel-bar combo and a sky that pushes down on the land in every direction. The scene has slight motion but remains largely inactive. Everything is banal, everything is important, and recalls our earlier discussion of the prairies as a stage with no centre. A similar image is found of Arrowwood (1977), Alberta's main-street, two cars, two stores and some bulk-storage gas-tanks in the background of this flat horizon, where the sky is as important in this image as the building that the camera focuses on. Other images show us the 'developed/underdeveloped' relationship of this area; an image from Enilda (1986) depicts a Post Office in a remote shack, a simple 8 foot by 8 foot building with a new heater. In another image, Glen & Hilda Cole (Near Coronation, 1980) are seated, repetitively and quietly shelling peas to be preserved for future consumption. One of the themes of this project has been to question, and if possible demarcate, what makes this region unique, and how we can define its difference to other parts of the continent. To achieve this, 'Mapping Out' focuses on the regional declaration that photography in this region operates largely in defiance of provincial and international boundaries. The prairie is a place and space but

also an idea, a *presence*. As Semchishen (2005) writes in *Through Alberta Eyes*, "it is the presence of prairie and it permeates the architecture, the towns, the choice of colours. It is the vastness, the skies and the space. It is something that one does not see in the East or West Coast. It is subtle, palpable, but here" (p. 3). Saskatchewan's Thelma Pepper (1996) produced a relevant project titled *Spaces of Belonging: A Journey Along Highway 41*. Similar to her photographic male counterparts, Thelma's work is largely obscure despite her recent institutional praise as a recipient of the Saskatchewan Order of Merit and the Lieutenant Governor's Arts Award. The exhibition catalogue is difficult to source, no images exist online and numerous libraries in Toronto and Western Canada seem to be without a copy. This is an important topic that requires further discussion (but is too deep a conceptual well to adequately address here), the inaccessibility of Canadian Prairie photography and the images-makers who call the region their home and playground. This also begs the question as to how we praise and acknowledge prairie photographers (Pepper and Semchishen among them) when the work is not accessible to a general audience and little is being done by regional institutions to ensure a space for this work? The second honourable mention is the work of Harry Palmer, a prairie photographer similar in style to the black and white photographers featured in Keepsake. Palmer photographed the prairies in his self-published work titled *Places and People 1979-87* (2011), a print-on-demand book priced at an inaccessible amount (roughly $250 for a hundred-page book). Although the photographer has received national attention (notably the first solo exhibition at the Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography in 1992), he has not been as well represented in traditional print as his prairie colleagues. Nonetheless, *Places and People*, with its survey of communities and buildings across Western Canada, is worth

mentioning as it produces a number of motifs (and visual chapters) relevant to our framing of the region.

Post 1970 Prairie Photographers: The 1980s Onward (II: those still active)

John Conway

John Conway's *Uncommon Landscapes* (2005), a direct play on Stephen Shore's *Uncommon Places*, operates as a well articulated vision of rural space in Saskatchewan. Conway, a traditional documentary photographer, is still active, recently contributing to the 'North By West' special edition of *Imaginations: Journal of Cross Cultural Image Studies.* Conway, a provincial import, a stranger who came to know the space through his camera, became one of its biggest advocates. But what does this adoptive son show us? What are we seeing through his lens? His focus is on the prairie landscape and not the direct representation of people or rural towns, leaving the viewer only an impression of individuals. "Experimental Canola No.1, near Rosthern" (p. 28) is an example of this, canola plants wrapped in plastic, nothing natural about this operation, flip the page, we see 'grain tarp, rural municipality of hoodoo', a serene prairie landscape, flat, expansive, earthy, but with a foreground of plastic and tarps, slinking like a snake, a tarp ready to be put away (p. 31), a grain truck ready to be moved, p. 46 (rural municipality of fish creek), and an empty ball diamond (near Bruno, p. 50). Conway captures a number of views that even the locals are often aware of but unable to see. Conway's vision is unique but also affirming, showing us new ways of seeing the same landscape as those before him—the land as an exploitive commodity. It is arguable that the prairies Conway captures are part of a post-pastoral

(demanding and uncompromising) rural landscape. The work re-affirms as it charts the land as a commodity and also post-pastoral in its unearthing of the industrialized pastoral and by way of making the invisible familiar, the historical present (Marzolf, 2005). In some ways Conway picks up where the New Topographics left off by providing a reading of landscape that is both pastoral and post-pastoral and wholly unique to the prairies. There is a hint of Edward Burtynsky's *Manufactured Landscapes* (2003) in Conway's work, but not the elevated and grandiose scale closely associated with the Burtynsky-esque images of the 'Tar Sands' in Northern Alberta, or open pit mines in Silver City, NM, but rather on the flat scale we would expect from rural Saskatchewan, a humble scale fitting the region's operational myth of the prairies as flat, dull, and lacking beauty (Butala, 2005). Exemplar of Conway's work, and present in the early formations of space in Western Canada, is a common motif of the prairies as a landscape in which no one appears (Berland, 2009). With absence as a common motif of the prairies, let us now turn to a photographer who documents presence on the prairies through the people that inhabit the region.

George Webber

If Semchishen is the father of prairie photography than George Webber is its prodigal son. Having produced in-depth works on Alberta's Hutterites (*A World Within* - 2005), Aboriginals (*People of the Blood* - 2006), specific locations like Drumheller (*Badlands*- 2015) and Calgary (*Last Call* - 2010,& *In This Place* - 2011), as well as larger studies of prairie culture (*Requiem: The Vanishing Face of the Canadian Prairies* - 1995, *Prairie Gothic* - 2014, & *Alberta Book* - 2018), Webber has propelled himself into an elite

category of documentary photographers in Canada. Webber's (2013) projects are often meditations on the idea of place where, in his own words, he is occupied by the "transitions, spirituality and possibilities of this [prairie] place" (p. 17). This is most notable in his magnum opus *Prairie Gothic,* a unique collection of images cataloguing the prairies with a mixture of mysticism and dark undertones added for good measure, creating a narrative of place that is not simply banal but sublimely so. The buildings and environs that Webber depicts is one of decline. The viewer can reminisce with each consecutive window the strength of these towns and lands, before decade after decade of decline reduced their economic and cultural potency. Webber shows us the slow pace of the prairie landscape, a place where "nothing has ever happened here. Nothing will happen this afternoon. Nothing will happen tomorrow. Nothing but nothing and nothing, but everything and everything" (van Herk, 2013, p. 7). Webber's prairie is one we are not used to seeing narrated. The narrative that Webber puts forth is still one of prairie banality, but with a uniquely gothic style, a perspective that is not easily observable in other regions of North America, perhaps making *Prairie Gothic* one of the few unique accounts of representing place on the prairies. But the concept, the 'regional gothic' nature of the project, is borrowed from the canon of the Southern Gothic genre present in 19th Century literature. The book is filled with gothic tropes from transgressive spectacles of awe to the aesthetically grotesque, dark humour, sad portraits and the merger of alienation and warmth in the way of familiarity. A photograph of Thorvald Skaalid and his disabled daughter Margaret Anne is reminiscent of Diane Arbus's "A Jewish Giant at Home With His Parents, in the Bronx, N.Y., 1970". Webber shows us gloomy pastures flanked by encroaching prairie storms, as lightning signals its approach. There is a darkness implied in these spaces, like the portraits of Joseph Privé, a

man from Forget, SK and his religious statues. Fifteen years later Webber returns to photograph Privé in an old-age home in Fillmore, SK; nothing much happens in this image, and most of the humour and darkness gives way to banality and a reminder of the passage of time. In another image, a house sits upon blocking awaiting placement, the ground is flat and the sky is near-bleached, nothing tells us where we are, no landmarks, no references and it is through this we realize we are on the Canadian Prairies. Webber's *Gothic*, similar to Semchishen's and my own work in *Out West* (2014), depicts a prairies of empty landscapes and buildings (New Dayton, AB, 1993 & Michichi, AB, 1987). The more time spent with *Prairie Gothic*, the more one realizes that this is a resounding version of prairie life, a unique vision expressing the complexity of the region. We see boys with B.B. guns shooting at pigeons, open fields cut by steel ribbons that allowed for prairie migration and movement and the ribbons of pavement that followed. We see death and destruction, very little focuses on the renewal aspect of the cycle of life. The common tropes are present as no prairie story is complete without a carcass and a few skeletons, either of buildings or animals, a smashed out car, or a few graveyards. We can observe common building tropes represented, a country church with a bell tower in the shape of a castle keep—a fortress, another church in Scotsguard, SK sitting on the edge of town, destroyed save its front facade, the crushed exoskeleton of a grain elevator. The newness of these places has been washed away. In an image of Dollard SK's (1996) fading main-street, the paint is worn, the tar of the shingles has cracked, and the wood of the phone-line poles is splitting. Our association with these images is often ruin, ruin of place, of community, of the individual, a trope drawn from the classical genre of the American Western. But as Jackson (1984) writes, "not all ruins mean sudden disaster; many represent a long series of decisions,

choices between alternatives that we have no inkling of" (p. 68). Ruins in the form of an old barn, sunk down on its spine, or a house with exposed beams bleached by the sun remind us that in eternity everything finds its end. Through *Prairie Gothic* we are confronted with the region's temporality and the temporary nature of the prairies.

Webber's later work switches from a traditional black and white documentary approach to one that embraces colour photography. His latest work, rather unremarkably titled *Alberta Book* (2018), is a prairie retrospective (of largely unpublished work) spanning forty years. Webber's *Alberta Book* is a rural portrait of its small towns. When a city is included, in the instance of a photo from Calgary, it is in the form of abstracted and aging gas or car wash signage set against a blue sky. Unlike his earlier projects, traditional landscape and portraiture are absent from *Alberta Book*'s account of the province. If Webber's *Prairie Gothic* was a counter-narrative than *Alberta Book* is the dominant-narrative of the province—not challenging, simply reinforcing. In this regard the work is not break-through but rather status-quo, a photographer looking through his archives to piece together a narrative. Another way to phrase this opposition is that if *Prairie Gothic* was a challenge to the rural then *Alberta Book* would be its poem. In towns with names like Carbon, Big Valley, Milk River, Picture Butte, Delia and Rosedale, we see the same tropes of earlier prairie photographers: elevators in the distance, boarded up buildings off main-street, deadpan images of buildings shot from the far side of main, near empty community boards, faded paint and tin abound, the ESSO sign, the Gulf sign, rusted out cars, and a few active businesses that are rarely the focus of the documentarian's camera. These are outdated and largely borrowed tropes from other (often American) spaces produced by

Stephen Shore and William Christenberry, amongst others. This recycling, or homaging to put it more politely, is common of image-makers in Western Canada but prevalent in America as well, where contemporary photographers Rob Hann and Jason Lee have a tendency to recycle and evoke ideas of decay ('ruin porn') as a theme or visual subject to make a social comment.

Contemporary Photographers

'Mapping Out' began by charting out and making an argument for photographic regionalism as a framework to understand the Canadian Prairies both as an imagined and real entity. This final section returns to this topic by discussing Thomas Gardiner's project "Western Canada", as a series partly published in his artistic monograph *Untitled USA and Western Canada* (2015) and my prairie photo-books exploring the region: *Out West* (2014) and *Crown Ditch & The Prairie Castle* (2019). In addition, a collaborative project—'North by West'—as an experimental inquiry into the region will also be discussed. However, before continuing the discussion a few key points need reiteration. Firstly, as discussed earlier (but in different terms) the Canadian Prairies are the cultural bastard of the American West and Midwest iconicity applied to a foreign landscape. Secondly, these historical conditions have resulted in a complex Canadian region that is both a rudimentary and a banal space of thought. Thirdly, the progression of the region is a quiet happening and seems to have largely developed 'under the radar' of popular history. Fourthly, few projects adopting a regional framework exist. And fifthly, for all their astute observations, prairie photographers like Semchishen and Webber are not widely known outside of Alberta and

require explanation to tenured professors and art historians as to what their contributions to Canadian photography have been. From an institutional perspective, art historians, cultural geographers and critical Canadian studies scholars have yet to address the shortage of examples of long-term space-orientated artistic projects on the prairies—projects that are viable and declare an intent to come to terms with the region by exploring, understanding or challenging its existence. This makes the discussion of Gardiner and my own work all the more pertinent as it represents a new frontier ripe for exploration.

Gardiner in the West

The following prairie-based projects were conceived with a general mandate to explore Western Canada. Expressed throughout Gardiner's work are questions of space, perceived normalcy, and built environment. Photographed in the southern regions of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan, Gardiner's 'Western Canada' (similar to *Out West*) evokes notions of the delicate relationship between landscape, heritage and built environment balanced by the premise of a proud rural history and an uncertain future. In this sense, these works are as much about the past as they are about the future, and certainly they are as much about understanding these temporalities as they are about understanding our own place within them as photographers local to the region. To the local photographer, the perseverance of fundamental philosophies and ideas occurs through their visual documentation. Through documentation, an avenue for critique and reflection emerges, a critique for the self and the regional community. Gardiner's work raises a broad set of questions: What is Western Canada? Who resides there? And echoing Northrop

Frye's famous "where is here" inquiry, where is Western Canada and how do we know when we are looking at it? Geographically speaking, we know the lines that demarcate Western Canada, we can identify them on a map and for most of us those very lines are the limits of our probing. Yet the question remains, how is the region visually represented, or in other words, what elements are used to embody it?

Gardiner's narrative of place is similar to Webber's in that it is relatively normative, and what we see is what we expect to see. This is not a criticism but a classification, one that alludes to the power of common tropes and a shared understanding of the space by its inhabitants (at least those that wield cameras). This is based on the idea that culture is a reiterative process and replicated in sequence. For the purposes of our inquiry, only the objects and tropes present in Gardiner's images are discussed. Gardiner's images are subtly cinematic, either as establishing shots or character stills for us to ponder, perhaps the result of his background in Vancouver's film industry. In Gardiner's own words, 'Western Canada' is about reflecting on the region's impact and the

> "geographic relationships of hinterland regions to major metropolitan centres— as well as the social & economic aspects within these relationships—through the lens of how the camera could interpret them visually. My photographic project aims to render visually the cumulative aggregate of these changes and influences that have both shaped me as well as affected the people and places where I grew up."
> (Gardiner, personal communication, April 2, 2016)

Gardiner is inviting us to see the ubiquity of the prairie sky as a background for the unfolding of scenes. He provides us with a number of exterior and interior settings populated by single characters. He shows us simple houses with dated crushed-glass stucco and rusted-out clunkers, indicative of the utility and reverence placed upon the automobile. Gardiner's images capture how industry cuts into the land, power-plants and dams nestled into paradises of tree-covered hills and simple river beaches, signalling to the viewer they are no longer on the prairies. Gardiner shows us the bizarre but not the gothic—an image of youthful men grabbing the breasts of a passively grinning female set at a music festival in the middle of a field, likely Big Valley Jamboree or Craven, juxtaposed next to one of two hooded figures dressed in Klan outfits in a community hall. Without context, we are left to wonder. We see grain elevators, more transportation, and paintings of grain elevators, and even more transportation, the connectivity of the region shining through. We encounter abandoned homes and homes on their way to abandonment. Examining Gardiner's provocative large-format images, we can begin to problematize the region's photographic identity and the common tropes associated with it, while also providing a record of an under-developed documentary form—contemporary colour photography in Western Canada.

Zeleny in the Landscape

Out West (2014) is a visual 'travelogue' and work of visual ethnography documenting rural communities in the Canadian West. Over a hundred and forty communities of between six and 1,000 inhabitants were documented. The project offers a

version of the current state of affairs in rural Western Canada, exploring how rural spaces experience an urban-rural time lag. As a result, a number of the images conjure up a Vonnegut-like idea of being 'unstuck in time', where objects and townscapes deceive the viewer as to what period they belong. The impetus of the project was simple and akin to the operational foundation of the Keepsake project: to document small towns at a point of transition before they disappear, the result of which is a document focused on recording the present, as well as an excavation of the past as a way to interrogate and depict the region's future (Coverley, 2006). The photographs of *Out West* are self-reflexive, detailing perceived fears and appreciations of the rural haunted by its past, manifested in aged signage, rusted cars and the generally outdated. A square-format camera, a Yashica 124G, was used to document these spaces. A camera commonly used by urban photographers and not landscape work, it was adopted as a way to render the region in different terms, as a challenge, as well as a way to exaggerate both the immediate foreground and the region's expansive sky. This was also a common approach for Webber (seen in images of a prairie landscape from Vantage, SK, Levern, AB, Near Standoff, AB, the floating house of Craigmyle, AB, and Skiff, AB) in the 1980s and in Robert Adam's American West work in the 1970s. By visiting over 160 small communities on the Canadian Prairies, *Out West* provides a large sample size to think through rurality in the West in regional terms. Given these specific parameters, the project had limitations, which are indirectly addressed in this chapter by adopting a regional lens and by the chapter's visual contribution—*Crown Ditch & The Prairie Castle* (*Crown Ditch* hereafter). Although exhibiting remarkable similarities across Western Canada, these small towns are transformed by particular economic and geographic forces to produce specific relationships between the land, its inhabitants and

forms of community. In order to understand these relationships in greater detail, the geographical scope of *Crown Ditch* shrank from Western Canada to the prairie region, while also expanding outside of the small town to include: individual's stories and their portraits, the landscape and communities of 10,000 or less inhabitants, as a way to make a more detailed and cohesive visual exploration of the region. In an organic sense, *Crown Ditch* becomes the subsequent 'next step' to the broad-survey of *Out West*. We can glean what this means from the project's description, which alludes to how myth and the imaginary are re-introduced into the telling of region,

> "gone are the early remnants of the Canadian Prairies but its legacy and a series of myths still endure. *Crown Ditch* documents the spaces and people of the last great 'proving out'. The project presents the space as an understudied region, a beast upon itself, a unique meeting of landscape, industry, and most importantly, people, who are a resilient breed created by generational lessons in fortitude and fortuned circumstance." (Zeleny, 2019, September 23)

Similar to Gardiner and Webber, the work focuses on the importance of the automobile as not only an object and an artifact but also a (communicative and facilitative) method. From Robert Frank's setting out to produce *The Americans* (1958), to Robert Adam's *The New West* (1974), to the host of contemporary image-producers' (Justine Kurland amongst others) work focusing on 'automotive space', there is a long history of the automobile acting as a performative element to aid photographic accounts. The region's auto-dependency is a common theme in the narrative of *Crown Ditch* as we see automobiles as

sites of abandonment, as sites of meeting and conversation, housing for the sacred object in the form of garages and as housing for individuals in the form of truck campers, demolition derbies as arenas of sacrifice, road-side attractions to gawk at, a lady who stands on the highway as an intruder of automotive-space, fields of tires and tire tracks in fields, wide streets for spacious driving and angle parking on main. The automobile is about moving through space but is also about stops and starts. We either go or we see others go; we are part of the process or we watch it. The movement of ourselves or others is integral to understanding this region. So common on the prairies (and this makes its way into photographic accounts of the region) is either stillness or movement, often moments of movement break the stillness of a rural scene, a deer runs across a barren field in Spring, or a car barrels down a gravel road kicking up temporary dust. These are spaces of quiet happenings, infrequent, secluded, slowed, a result of the region's space and translated into distance by low population density. These happenings contribute to how community is built and ultimately how a regional heritage comes to be established. By moving outside the town, *Crown Ditch* provides insight along nodal connections (town-to-town, farm-to-town, farm-to-farm); it also brings individual voices into the narrative of the region as a form of empowerment (Smith, 1990). *Crown Ditch* also problematizes national borders and actively appropriates American space as a form of resistance to the dominant telling of the region by external forces. This is an international affair and speaks to the complex transnational relationship we have with film, photography and disjointed imagery, or what the diaspora theorist Nicholas Mirzoeff calls Intervisuality (Straw, 2011). Similar to the appraisal of Webber and Gardiner's work based on contextual attributes rather than pure aestheticism, these projects empower a narrative of expansiveness, banality, and pastoralism that is

particular to the Canadian West. This idea of understanding landscape echoes Jacques Derrida's (1993) concept of ontopology: "a way of thinking about claims to belonging that posit a connection between behaviour and landscape" (p. 17). Similar to other work that explores Canadian identity and environs, these projects raise questions about the relationship between the land and its inhabitants. In other words, the lens through which the work is viewed operates as a conduit, allowing us to question our conceptions of landscape, place, and identity in the region.

North By West

So far this section has examined projects by single image-makers produced in the region. These projects are documentary in nature but are also biased, told by a single author and are not peer-reviewed; as such their ideas go largely unchallenged. Surprisingly, there have been few conversations amongst image-makers and academics in the region representing another under-developed bridge in the literature of prairie photography. This is a gap that Dr. Andriko Lozowy and I addressed in 'North by West', a special edition of *Imaginations: Journal of Cross-Cultural Image Studies*. 'North by West' (NxW hereafter) asked many of the same questions as this study— what are the dominant representations of Western Canada, what are the prairies and how do we know and sense them? Photographers and academics were invited to work collaboratively as a way to playfully create and explore ideas of place, and to ask ontological and epistemological questions of the region (Sontag, 1977; Barthes, 2000). Scholars were invited to "write about these images from their own disciplinary perspective. In some cases the photographer-

researcher—an embodiment of methodology and considered practice—appears in action throughout the collection. The photographer-researcher undertakes hybrid ways of doing scholarly, creative, and collaborative inquiry" (Andriko, 2016, p. 7). NxW was organized into three sections—histories, places and visions—which is also indicative of how this study is structured. The resulting special edition is an academic undertaking of regionalism, visuality and place-creation. As Lozowy (2016) writes in the edition's introduction, "we invite the readers of NxW to engage in the imaginative work of locating their own spatial assemblages—mentally, physically, topographically, and geographically" (p. 6). As discussed in the previous section, Canada suffers from a 'failure of place' (Kalant, 2004); NxW represents a unique collaboration between image-makers and academics to make sense of the prairie region. As a result, NxW occupies "a space of serious and critical inquiry between the known and unknown boundaries of real and imagined space" (Lozowy, 2016, p. 8). NxW furthered our understanding of prairie place by facilitating a conversation that was largely absent in the region as well as provides a document that other scholars and photographers can build upon. Similarly, this chapter defines the regional voices and characteristics that are quintessential to understanding the prairies as opposed to explaining the conditions by which it operates.

Conclusion

This chapter embraces a framework of regionalism to explore the prairie region's unique sense of space, time, and landscape. Furthermore, this chapter also provides a much needed overview of the photographic history of the region from Hime's first exposures of

the open prairie to the contemporary images of Webber, Gardiner, and myself, as well as the collective project 'North by West'. The accompanying textual and visual narratives build upon the practice of documentary photography on the prairies; however they are often self-replicating and somewhat stale tropes of the prairies. With the exception of Webber's *Prairie Gothic*, these accounts seem to advance a specific (some would say dominant) narrative of prairie life. What is evident in the exploration of these image-makers, is the continuous deployment of worn tropes of the rural as a slow moving place of the past, a source of heritage, and as a 'spent space' defined by its banality. There is a persistent need to document the prairies before more change occurs—a fear that which will come is not as grand as that which was.

This study is critical of prior works about the prairies but also of itself, with each chapter a critique and an opportunity to refine accompanying (visual and textual) arguments. As Doreen Massey (2005) writes in *For Space*, space is always under construction and what we imagine space to be is only the 'stories-so-far'. With this in mind, this project does not attempt to draw conclusions that one might call 'conclusive'; rather the conclusions are speculative and are meant to be built upon through challenge or agreement. Therefore, I will reiterate that our quest is not for definitive answers as much as it is for searching and understanding.

'Digging In' provided both a context of ruralism and its position as a place of decline through the lens of ten photographers in 1980. 'Mapping Out' builds upon that discussion by providing an in-depth study of prairie photography from Hime to contemporary

practitioners, while also laying the groundwork in prairie concepts of space, distance and banality. 'Returning To' responds to the other two chapters by adopting a post-photographic and post-prairie framework to create work that will further our understanding of the complexities of rural living and rural representation on the Canadian Prairies. Adopting a post-prairie framework allows us to leave our idea of the prairies behind by arguing it is no longer a sustainable and representative model for understanding place. Paul Fiorentino and Robert Kroetsch (2005) first used the word 'post-prairie' in the context of the Canada prairies, in the book *Post-Prairie: An Anthology of New Poetry*, where Kroetsch writes on post-prairie art, "imagination itself must be re-imagined. Where does the eye dwell? What does the hand know that the brain does not?" (p. 7). Similar to Massey's sentiment of space as always under construction, the creation of the prairies is an active process, a process where space can be re-imaged as plural.

Mapping Out - Narrative: Roaming the Prairies

Introduction

Let me start with an apology. On behalf of my geography, on behalf of my prairie landscape, I apologize. I am sorry that the Prairies are not as enticing to the imagination as the American South, not as mythical as the American West. I apologize profusely that the Prairies are of no great interest to others. Perhaps there is some allure, but it's surely not magnetic enough to attract the interest of those from afar. I know the region is not unwanted. It has its place and it should not be viewed as too destitute, but don't confuse this with wanting, as this is not a landscape that yearns to be something else. The Prairies are not romantic, but if they were it would be because of their banality, because there are few other options here.

I apologize for the apologies, which are customary here. If we want to be a different landscape, that which we are not, we will have to change, to dig holes for great lakes and pile the dirt high to make mountain peaks. The highest hills get the most eyes after all. Or those outside the region will have to change the way they perceive the pleasantries of our landscape. They will have to come to understand it in the simple terms of a local who appreciates its subdued beauty, a landscape that makes you work to understand it. I tend to think that the latter is more worthwhile, but perhaps not as likely to occur.

The text that follows is a cross-selection of my thoughts from field journals I kept over a series of Prairie journeys between 2015 and 2017 in Alberta, Saskatchewan and Montana. These cultural ramblings, a montage of feelings, experiences and moments, represent both the anecdotal characteristics and universal nature of the region. The observations are not chronological and are only loosely categorized. However unsensational, these cultural snippets are crucial to understanding the prairies. So let us begin with the simple notion that every journey begins by moving.

The Country and the Landscape

Setting out on the road, criss-crossing rural counties with a full tank of gas and unrefrigerated supplies, I have come to know this landscape. Stops and starts, the town of Faust is charming, Smith is pleasant, and Driftpile is tragic. There are quiet towns with quaint names, from "Waterhole" to "Red Water" and "Golden Prairie" dotting the prairies. At times I am dodging evening rains and highway deer and at others I'm chasing light, all while nestled into the region's horizontal embrace. The concepts of space widely adopted in Western society were not developed for landscapes such as these. The enemy of the prairie is not the unknown lying behind the tree line but distance, made real by a sky so large it can be found reflected in the sloughs, ponds, and dugouts throughout the land.

The trope of the big sky as a psychological and spiritual boundary is common. It is also an assertion that can be applied with authority north and south of the 49th parallel that divides the region into the western American States and the western Canadian Provinces.

Canadian prairie space is perceived in similar terms, big and open, but is not often discussed as a uniform region. Saskatchewan is “Land of the Living Skies” and Montana is “Big Sky Country”. No need to fight boys, the title can be regionally shared for its deep blue and blazing skies can be found across the entire region. This is a holy landscape, a holy sky which pushes down on the land eternally.

I found Judy on Alberta’s ‘Cowboy Trail’ (Highway 22); she was picking up roadside garbage, her “contribution to the next generation” as she put it. Rain, snow or searing heat, she is in the ditch picking up Pepsi cans, McDonald's wrappers and oil tins. Her husband, Larry, sits in the truck on the highway’s shoulder, driving ahead every once in a while to keep pace. Judy tells me she once found two one-hundred-dollar bills. She said it was around the same time oil was trading at $100 a barrel; today it trades at $51. She said she could talk to God here. Although an agnostic, I told her I agreed that this was God’s country. I wager, if there is a higher power they are not a city dweller, they are a Westerner, an open-space-loving being. They wouldn’t want to be in a high-rise hearing sirens screeching when crickets and the red-eyed vireo and the American dipper song birds are alternatives. If the western skies are indicative of when God came to the prairies, he came when he was tired. I imagine that when God rested on the seventh-day in Genesis he rested on the prairies, and perhaps that is why it looks so “incomplete”. The prairies claim the sunset over the sunrise. It is of the end and not the beginning. It is where the cowboy rides off into the sunset to die, not to live.

For every Judy and Larry beautifying the landscape and speaking to God there are teenagers setting it ablaze, if only metaphorically. These youth are trying to understand their place on the prairies while battling remoteness, distance and the boredom that comes from inhabiting such a place. I know the feeling because I too was once a rural teenager, driving late at night, searching out abandoned farmhouses, schools and churches to entertain myself and friends. The gravel roads where these country structures once thrived are now empty, a lonely and dark landscape, giving one the sense of ownership by virtue of presence alone. It is so quiet you forget people call these places home. We threw molotov cocktails on gravel roads and searched out places to make our own. You can find these artifacts of destruction throughout the province. Mudd Butts is a natural geographic attraction where kids go to drink and shoot stuff. Here you can roll an old car or water-heater off one of the shallow canyon ledges and make a car fire to drink Bush or Molson around. Killing time, smashing cans, burning light and postponing boredom. These places exist all over the prairies, some well hidden and others in plain sight with names like Ranfurly, Dead End and Cavalier. Driving onward to remote clearings you will find littered shotgun shells, an 8x10 of Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau pot-marked by 12-gauge shot. As Susan Sontag told us about the rag-picker and Wallace Stegner about garbage piles, these are not cites to ignore, this is where history can be found in the present.

The Towns

I've found that most prairie towns feel the same, a result of the uniformity in how they were built, what they were built with, and who built them. To put things in

perspective, Paris and London were going through a cultural revolution when prairie farmers were living in one-room sod houses and relieving themselves in the holes they dug out back. Even American towns are rather indistinguishable from one-another and from towns on the Canadian prairies, with a similar layout, morphology, and architecture, with small differences: the increased size of water towers, more brick, more neon, and first crack at town names (Conrad, Sunburst, Great Falls, etc.). Old Chevs and Fords are still on the roads in the American West, pulverized by UV rays but not 'rusted out' and turned to powder by winter salt.

The predominant industries on the prairies are oil, grain or cattle production. However, all early towns would have been agrarian in nature, and as a result, housing and the main-street stores are often very uniform across the region. This was done strategically, to entice settlers through a common form and to provide investors with a stable setting. However, as time passes, more unique economic forms emerge. For instance, in Manville, AB, you can find a combination bank and liquor store nestled near the highway. In other towns churches look like houses and houses look like churches, sometimes churches become houses, other times they become bars like Sunburst, Montana's Mint Bar—the trading of one saviour for another. There are a list of buildings that are universal to a functioning small town: a local bar, grocery store, bank, post office, and a Chinese Western restaurant. Often set against the backdrop of mediocre service and decor, these Chinese Westerns are quintessential small-town spaces where locals meet for coffee, ginger beef, or a hamburger. These restaurants specialize in 'fusion cuisine' without using those words. I once saw a Chinese Western advertising Texas Fried Chicken and "aily pecials" in

Northern Alberta. Food tastes of other food; the coffee is often burnt. I've witnessed flies and ants running amuck in these spaces. Some are well-kept but not all, and the rural population, with simple food standards, do not seem to mind. Fortune cookies that taste like sacrament are customary. My fortune from the well-serviced Boyle Burger Bar reads: "you tend to be practical and analytical". Many places boast about their ginger beef, but few can deliver on it, a delicate balance of gingery sauce, fresh vegetables lightly pan fried and precisely 'cooked' beef on a bed of white rice. No one ever fucks up the rice. Alberta Cafe in Westlock, AB excels at making ginger beef but has received mixed reviews. One Google review described their dining experience as "pretty awesome but the food… it's just weird". I was seated by an eight year old boy, the bathroom was out of paper-towels, and the hand soap was hand lotion but the ginger beef was among the top five in the province. Sometimes there is no logic to these places. The most ornate Chinese Western I have ever dined at was in Fairview, AB where the waitress told me it was once packed when the gas and oil boom was going. With high ceilings and seldom-seen Chinese decor, it is one of the few Chinese Westerns that embody oriental architecture or design. However, this place is slowly turning into a relic with the highway adjacent A&W and KFC seeing more traffic; few seem interested in venturing off the highway to find this main-street gem. In other communities you'll find corner stores selling 'fresh sushi' next to Chinese Westerns with signs reading 'staff holiday' that expired a month ago. You'll find concession stands at local arenas selling cheese burgers and hot dogs to raise funds for the facility, or a Bannock burger and Indian Taco at regional pow-wows. Health-conscious food options are hard to find in rural areas. Food is rarely fresh, often deep-fried and requiring little skill for preparation (more cooks than chefs). When you find 'mixed vegetables' in your garden

salad it is worth noting. Although a few communities offer unique dining experiences, particularly those in Turner Valley, AB, or Nanton, AB, catering to the day-tourism from Calgary's metropolitan area.

One thing that is ubiquitous to the Canadian West are large artefacts; oversized objects used to signal difference. These are especially important in differentiating a community from other regional settlements that share a similar history and form. These objects are used as a way to create identity and as a form of community peacocking. Each town has a unique catch phrase, slogan, or claim to fame: "Trochu is "the Finest Town on the Prairies", Mundare's is "Small Town Big Heart", Manville's is "All Trails Lead to Mannville". Every once in awhile you'll come across a quality small town museum. Trochu's is well stocked and offers 25-cent postcards. Mundare's offers a history of the Basilian Fathers, a religious order that settled the region. The real 'serious' towns will take this a step further and procure a town monument. This is done by mythologizing their recent history, focusing on a specific event or character of the community, or by conjuring one up. The result is a perplexing homage to a real and dreamed-up past, sometimes banal and bizarre, made visible through oversized novelty architecture. These objects, cultural-totems-made-marketing-elements, are used in the contemporary process of rural boosterism. These totemic emblems are also to be found in North America but found in the highest concentration in Western Canada, allowing small communities to make pitches for secular pilgrimages and tourism where historical events and geographical attractions are in short supply. Only in a small rural community could a water tank be a point of interest (Harris, SK). Take a day trip east of Edmonton and you can survey a hearty settler's meal:

Duck (Andrew, AB), Perogy (Glendon, AB), Sausage (Mundare, AB), and Egg (Vegreville, AB). Then, there is the downright bizarre, The Gopher Museum of Torrington, AB being a strong candidate in this category. This museum, housed in two repurposed and joined buildings (old single-room schoolhouse and a granary), holds a surprising number of stuffed gophers in dioramas. Stop by for a sun-faded postcard and, like 6,000 patrons annually, take in the RCMP diorama, or the Vancouver 2008 Olympic diorama. Have you ever seen a gopher curling? Well let me show you something…

It seems rather antithetical to focus on these emblems and I wonder if by doing so we actively contribute to the loss of the region's other forms of history, such as the Aboriginal populations and their unique way of living and seeing, or the settler's grain elevator, oil derricks, or the rancher on his horse in the foothills. The importance of these emblems seems to be shifting. This is the inevitable power of progress at work, the unstoppable force of change. This creates an interesting relationship between the past and the present and how history is recorded and represented. In time we may come to romanticize the oilman and his 'roughneck-ery', or gaze upon the landscape and get nostalgic about abandoned northern oil camps. Oil well pumps are already looking pretty romantic. When we think of a community, we are drawn to its written history or its lived history, but do we really *listen* and *record*, or do we simply *read* the community. In my travels, prairie dwellers have put forth the argument that the rural is changing and its 'lived' history is being lost. Few old-timers remember a time when threshing teams roamed the plains every autumn, where you'd take your grain to the local terminal in an open wagon pulled by a team of horses. The oral histories of these stories are fading, history is

changing, the narrative of prairie life is being modified. The prairie Hutterites are adapting, stopping for fast food, sheepishly drinking beers on their way back to the colony and chucking the empties into ditches. Mennonites are wearing blue Beats Headphones, using cellphones and moving with greater frequency into prairie towns. Even the ideas of individuals are changing. Jim, a gentleman archetype with good intentions, is in danger of being redefined by evolving concepts of western masculinity. What we can observe in these characters is a form of masculinity that once dominated the rural, which in turn formed the dominant ideas of what it means to be 'of the west', at least when labour was key to understanding Canadianness. These spaces are not well equipped to handle changing ideas of masculinity. Jim, his wife and their shitzu moved to Rimbey, AB a year ago from a nearby farm. Jim is 71 but doesn't consider himself an 'old timer'. He tells me, "a fence takes three days to mend now. Used to only take one". We talk about aging and the recent loss of his "last best friend" in the empty parking lot where, in a previous year, an old man told me to "fuck off" as I attempted to take his picture. We talk about how the history that is being lost is not that old, how stories from the 60s, 70s, and 80s about growing up in rural Canada are being forgotten.

During this time, and even up until the early 2000s, town and country halls were busy on weekends with community dances. Now there's no more cruising up and down 'main', and no more youth to share these experiences with, at least not in the smallest of small towns. These towns are now quiet on a Friday night and even quieter during the week. It has become a common trope to see the vacated main-street building closed or for sale. Businesses that look closed but are only rundown show hints of life when a patron

exits out the front door, the barbershop with water-damaged 90's haircuts advertised in the window comes alive with the glow of incandescent bulbs inside. The people who own these establishments struggle in ways that are not directly apparent. I spoke with Grant, the owner of an army supply store in Radway, AB. Grant's store is one of these questionable buildings where you feel uncomfortable knocking, not knowing if it's a private residence, a relic, or a functioning business. The air inside his 'store' is damp, the interior smells of mold and rodent piss and it should probably be condemned. Grant is a quintessential rural character, a dreamer who lives a different reality. He has aspirations of establishing a military motorcycle museum. I look around, and behind walls of black combat boots and outdated military jackets I make out six bikes. I hear a set of screams from the back. He tells me he has two sons with severe disabilities and struggles to "make it all work". Grant tells me their mother had a "whatever-she-could-get-her-hands-on" kind of drug problem that burnt through their savings. Alone now, Grant makes $5,000 a year from the store to support himself and his two kids. He takes pride in being debt-free although he has little to show for it. Grant criticizes the government for removing services from small towns while ignoring the basic economic conundrum of servicing depopulated areas. Grant says we are being turned into slaves—he uses the word often. Feels 'they' are allowing Western Canada to return to wilderness, citing defunding and the destruction of agrarian infrastructure as his evidence. Radway has entered a one-way process towards disrepair where it is unlikely anyone will open a business or build a new home. When this occurs the community is on a slow trajectory towards disintegration. Not everyone wishes to see or acknowledge this. Grant is one of those individuals. He holds out hope for better days ahead; to him the fate of

the town has not yet been determined. The rural is many things. It can be modern but often its dominant reading is as a place of the past.

Photographers, writers, and storytellers are quick to search out the rust, the decrepit, the leaning and shuttered buildings. Myself included. Vintage signs, run-down store fronts and barns do not always reflect the actual changes taking place in rural areas. These changes are also present in prairie economies, the myths of hard-work, perseverance, and skilled labour is being increasingly shelved for ideas of the competent worker—the entrepreneurial farmer who knows how to invest in technology and predict future markets. A measure of a good farmer was once how straight his lines were, but GPS technology makes that measure irrelevant, makes the farmer's steady hand a redundant marker. He is no longer a farmer integrated into the land but a businessman. $800,000 for a new seeder, a device you use for one month a year, $400,000 tractor to pull the entire unit, $450,000 for a new combine, $100,000 for a semi-truck and trailer to move grain and I haven't even mentioned the cost of support materials (the farm truck, the seed, fertilizer, water, gas, oh, and the multi-million dollar cost of land). Farming is for rich men or old men. The death of the family farm is rumoured to be right around the corner with costs too high and a lifestyle not enticing enough for millennials, a generation marching off to cities for kale and kombucha. Why put all that equity into farming when one can work in oil and gas.

The rural can still surprise you. I've seen a youth driving a $300,000 John Deer tractor to grab a Slurpee at the local 7/11 and a 1950s Massey Ferguson Tractor pull up to

a restaurant for lunch, but these are standout highlights, outliers and no longer the norm. The situation for ranch culture in the province is no better. Men with sandy blond hair dressed in denim, and with faces formed to tell stories, now lay fibre optic cable for the digital frontier. The romanticism of the cowboy and (his less sexy half brother - the farmer) are diminishing, good for the silver screen, but not as a lifestyle, or an adequate measure of hegemonic manliness. But the myth prevails, supported by, amongst other things, The Stampede, and leveraged by elites for reasons of public interest and economic benefit.

The Small Town Bar

After years of documenting the prairies I've found the soul of most towns to be found in the local bar. Dingy small town bars are something special and each one has its own rural Socrates. This is where the characters of the town come alive, where they share 'communal secrets' without hesitation over highball glasses of rye and coke. It is here you will be told the hearty stories of the prairies—the dirt not as easily found at the local museum or out-front the post office. The old men 'politely' harass female patrons and servers. It seems playfully subtle and tolerated here. Perhaps they would say it is all in "good fun" or that they are just "giving them a hard time". Patrons sit quietly at slot machines, transfixed, absent, they are sitting with a purpose, looking for lucky 7s. No skill, no problem. No luck, big problem. A television runs during the day, sometimes it's sports, perhaps darts, and at other times it's a familiar episode of Family Feud. In Forestburg, AB, outside the bar, I photograph "Crash", he tells me about how the bar celebrated its centennial the night before with free hotdogs, potato salad, live music, karaoke and a

magician. In the running for best small town bar in Alberta. Spacious and rustic, it's playing the part. The cook from nearby Daysland buys me my second drink ($3.75 Caesar), the bartender the first ($2.75 Margarita in a can). This is during the day and I call the table I sit with the "day-shift". Some stories they share are light and airy, others are darker – those come out after a few more rounds. Crash tells me about "that native man", someone he had to fight or thought of with disdain. The story makes little sense and descends into a pseudo-racist rant about Aboriginals eating thick grease and rubbing it on their faces. It is time to move on. In Milk River, AB, one lady with glazed over eyes sits next to me with her change purse clutched in her crow-like hands. She tells me that when she gets bored she starts rumours about herself and gets mad when they make their way back to her. She waits ten minutes and repeats the story. It is not as funny the second time. She tells me about her IQ of 181, and twice about how she wants to pan for gold. It is proper bar etiquette to spend time discussing nothing to learn something; what you learn might not be directly told to you but it's nonetheless conveyed. You must allow time for an introduction, talk about the weather and the community before you can ask the questions you really want: How did you end up here? What do you do now? What are your views on x, y and z?

The inside of bars is not the only place you'll find rural characters. Walk around a town's streets and they'll find you, or rather you'll find each other. Simply by walking you will find a number of archetypal characters, new and old, those that have defined and will come to define the rural spaces of the prairies. I found Ernie by walking in Eastend, SK. He sells used books from a small corner house with the overflow set out on a table on the lawn. The bleached spines of the books and his dark leathery skin indicate he has been at this for

awhile. We drank the beer he had in the house as we were violated by the early summer mosquitos. He waves to people but they don't often wave back. Ernie is unique in that not only does he tell stories but he asks questions. In another town I find twenty-something Jordan, who goes by Romus, wearing cowboy boots. He offers me a cigarette and tells me he has trouble sleeping. He walks the streets in the middle of the night, wearing these "comfortable" boots but has foot problems and takes codeine daily to help relieve his pain. On Fridays he dresses up as a pirate and is working towards completing "all his degrees". Says he was doing well until he stole a doctor's "special books". He doesn't believe in evolution, citing that crocodiles have yet to evolve. He's happy to let me take his image as he now has a new profile picture. He poses and starts speaking German, a demonstration of his self-taught language skills. Towns are made up of these characters, some are like Ernie, others are like Romus, and more often than not they are rather unremarkable but also extraordinary in their own way.

Events

My grandparents' photo albums are full of people dancing, in fields, in halls, in living rooms. Changing entertainment habits and an aging population means that certain events are not as popular as they once were. Dances and parades seem to be suffering while perogy dinners, bingos, and demolition derbies manage to sustain themselves. One form of dance that still seems to be thriving are the region's pow-wows. It is at the Driftpile pow-wow that I experience tee-pees being erected, and regalia (not costumes) being adorned. There is an interesting mix of tradition and modernity where traditional dress mixes with

contemporary artefacts such as a pair of Oakley sunglasses or a Fox hat. A Sioux dancer named Steve explains how most regalia itself is not traditional and how it has evolved. According to Steve, the Sioux started pow-wows and used specific patterns to explain their background, patterns now used by other nations in their regalia. Steve is well-humoured. As I approach he asks if I want a photo, whips his pants down and sticks his thumb in his mouth. He invites me to sit and tells me stories. He asks that I listen but not record. He educates me on the issues facing Aboriginal communities. Steve talks about pow-wows and how they have become less about spirituality and more about prize money, or what he would call the 'wai-see-chu' (he who takes for himself) or "white-man's way". This is an alcohol-free event enforced by a rag-tag set of security personnel, one pushing a baby carriage. The master of ceremonies spends a significant amount of time announcing the importance of giving thanks, and setting the tone and atmosphere of the event – "when we are ready, we go forward". A visual cacophony of colours mixed with drums, chanting and the unspecified sounds of laughter, chatter, and footfall enters the arena. As the dancers continue their circular march inside the arena, the announcer reminds us that "as we endure hardship, we will always have prayers, drums and song". The people are neither friendly nor hostile but indifferent. Hesitant and perhaps cautious, they are polite, engage with me when I ask questions, and oblige when I request a photo, but express little interest in knowing why I'm here or what I'm doing. The murky space between welcome and unwelcome, I feel uncomfortable. Two aboriginal youth go around playing 'Cowboys and Indians' with cap guns. I am shot. We must all play a role here and I must experience death.

The demolition derbies are a uniquely rural event. I attended one in Lamont, AB, with both car and combine heats. I chatted with Jim who has been involved in demolition derbies for over forty years. His wife also "ran for thirty", and his family has over 100 years of experience combined. I found him working on his son's car. The grease and dirt on his hands is so caked on it doesn't transfer when we shake. Those that entered a combine are automatically awarded $300. As a result, thirteen warrior machines painted in different colours rally to compete. There is a deep affection for the automobile in this area and by making these steel gladiators into sacrificial lambs, soon to meet their violent end in the muddy arena, the love affair is made performative. The rounds of carnage are broken up by a sausage eating contest. The sounds and smells of the derby return. The smell of fresh welding and burning brakes carried by the wind. The sounds of steel on steel is followed by cheers. Sand and dust is kicked up and carried over to the stands layering the spectator's faces and hair. A mom approaches her truck, finishes her beer, drains the suds, smashes the can and throws the empty in the back. She then gets into the truck filled with unbelted toddlers and drives off. This is as rural as rural gets. These events usually take place around the communities' 'heritage days' and are preceded by a town parade. The common denominator of these events—the pow-wows, the rodeos, the demolition derbies—is about remembering and paying homage to a particular version of the past.

The People: in Towns and on the Land

The rural is a place to hide out in, a place to fizzle out. There are good folk here for sure, but I find it more interesting to focus on the friendly but solitary characters, the low

incomers struggling from week to week and the old farmers in their twilight. It is these people, with perverse experiences, who know the prairie's dark history. It is these people who have so well stamped themselves into the landscape. I met Mr. Fox in Harlem, MT, where I am told cattle and guns outnumber people. Mr. Fox, a man with the tight skin of an old rancher, is part of the Blackfoot Nation with little regard for the US-Canadian border. Marty, who I photographed in Craig, MT, held a similar conviction that this region was unified, or in other words, that this region was not unified with the rest of the United States. Marty walks with his dog, a large beast that he claims saved his life twelve times (against wolves, bears, and once a moose) while he was doing bush craft in Alaska. The dog exhibits a limp, the result of a severe kick from the moose and inflamed by cancer. He says he likes to bring him out here before its 'time'. He told me "Montana is not America, we have nothing to do with Washington", followed up by "Montana is God's country" and something about moisture. He spoke highly of people from the Canadian prairies, registering them almost as brothers. Mr. Fox and Marty are the region's nomads like Cecile from Whitecourt, AB. She posed at the back of her brother's camper truck with shopping bags in hand. She said she'd call me and show me how to make smudge. I didn't expect to hear from her. Larry from Boyle, AB, was similar, he said he would call and tell me more stories but never did. Larry donned a 'Canadian Tuxedo' and asks me if I'm going on a hike as I exited my vehicle. Larry uses this as an opening. He tells me he is on social security and has a pension but it's not enough to cover rent—he asks for change and offers a cigarette in exchange. I tell him he has a voice like a poet and a face that could tell stories. He's heard both before. Larry was a long-haul truck driver until cancer made him retire. He reminds me that the highways of North America belong to the truck driver; we simply borrow them.

Throughout his life, Larry has largely been a loner—he mentions this three times—with the exception of his two cats that joined him on the road. He tells me a story where his roommate and he got in an alcohol-fuelled fight with the roommate threatening to kill Larry. Larry went to sleep and woke up in a burning house. He found an entire wall of flames as he opened his bedroom door. The cats got out and the roommate, who was wrestled to the ground by two police at the scene, received two months for mischief. This left Larry homeless, all his clothes and pictures albums now ash, years of memories gone. A clean slate he didn't ask for.

Sometimes these people have interesting stories, others have interesting beliefs and perhaps it is the distance and open-space that allows the mind to fill with ideas 'less sanitary' than others. I found Carl in St. Marie, MT, a largely abandoned community established to support an air force base of 10,000. I found Carl on his red 80cc Honda driving around the empty and overgrown streets. He is curious as to why I have stopped and gives me the rundown of the community. He drives his red Honda to show me his yellow house, his orange car and the greying town centre. Carl is a self-educated man and in his retirement he enjoys reading Plato, Adam Smith, Huxley, Orwell and Machiavelli, and our conversation covers significant ground. A Trump supporter, he believes in the republic and dislikes Obama immensely. We agree on the failure of a two-party system and we share a lack of faith in today's youth. We disagree on the function of the social-welfare state and gun ownership laws. He believes that the world is controlled by a global government with puppets all around. We each speak and listen to one another. We enter into a dialogue and in the end, with the light fading, we shake hands and go our separate ways. Carl is a

character type I have come across in the dark corners of the web. Carl still had a strong command of reality, however Gary from Donalda, AB is different. Gary is an anti-government, anti-church, and anti-establishment thinker. He is a God fearing man who believes that the Bible's scripture is the voice of God. His good book is meticulously highlighted, worked and reworked. He lives on 'free land' as a 'freeman on the land', by declaring his farm to be outside of Canadian jurisdiction. He doesn't remember the last time he paid taxes and is proud of it. My conversation with him took place over four hours and as the hours continued Gary became evermore cynical. To summarize some of Gary's finer beliefs: a New World Order will emerge soon, followed (or accompanied) by a nuclear war. Chemtrails are real, aliens and the moon-landing are fake, I have fluoride poisoning. Homosexuals are evil, ten percent of Muslim immigrants are terrorists, believes only "true Christians" are the good guys. Gary is not happy with this world. He finds it to be a perversion of God's true home. Gary is a preacher-man, he will ask you a question just so he can preach the answer to you. Preacher men do not care for dialogue or debate, they are only interested in sharing their doctrine, their truth. They are grounded to the earth but unhinged from humanity. They want to sell you something and profit in self-satisfaction or the promise of eternal salvation.

Not all rural inhabitants are the wild character that Gary is and although he represents a specific rural archetype, that archetype is rare. Most often ruralites are rational, moderate folks. Jerry is one of those rational rural retirees with a pleasant disposition. I found him riding a Honda in Brownvale, AB, an agricultural pocket in Northern Alberta. Jerry and his family once owned a tractor dealership and "did well",

although he says if he could do it over again he would've stayed in the military and avoided the farms, avoided the ups and downs, avoided the bust and booms. He's battled cancer three times and says "eating is hell" on account of his extracted saliva gland. Jerry knows the town well. He remembers when the National Grain elevator burnt down, how the hall used to play films in the 1950s until the projector room caught on fire. He tells me about other setbacks the town has endured, how the town had a distillate-fueled generator but it exploded in 1952 sending barrels of distillate 100ft into the air, and how the bank burnt down the day after a tractor-driving WWI vet was denied a GI loan. Jerry has witnessed how this community has moved from prosperity to slow disrepair, with no businesses operating in town. Jerry also mentions how there has been social engineering to drain rural communities of their prosperity, an idea that is growing in popularity. Whether founded in truth or not, this belief has the ability to create resentment and distrust of the government. Donald from Torrington, AB is another rural dweller who shares the sentiment that the rural is being systematically defunded. He cites the changes occurring on railways as evidence of this. He claims to be an 'industry-insider', having worked on trains all his life. Donald is now a train collector, and tells me stories of days gone past. Stories about tragedy on the prairie rail lines, from the time an Aboriginal man was moving a house and the train blew right through it, to the time a train hit a gasoline truck and thirty-to-forty people died in the passenger cars on the Lethbridge to Calgary line. He tells the story of how a Ponoka hospital patient was hit by a train and how his head rolled out from underneath the train to land at his feet. Tragedy seems to rise in these conversations, and tragedy seems to be the easy response to my question, "what is interesting about this town?", or "what is your story?". But that is not universal and there are quieter, less violent encounters. There is

Rachel from Grimshaw, AB, holding a large garage sale, a hodge-podge list of items that were once her moms: multiple unwrapped Princess Diana calendars, a Pong hockey set from 1998, and leather braided leashes. Rachel was born in a farmhouse near Peace River, AB, her birth weight recorded on a fish scale that she points to in the corner. She has an infectious laugh that comes out when she tells stories of growing up as a Metis tomboy beating up older boys. Her energy makes her youthful, and her demeanour hides the wrinkles my eyes don't see but the camera captures. Johnny from Athabasca, AB is another ruralite who is just trying to make a daily buck. He works for Buy-Low Foods. In cowboy boots, a black cowboy hat, his arms bearing old ink, he looks like Marlboro Man's cousin and cautions me when I take a photo that doing so may break the camera. This comment is common. He looks like someone who should be on the road, not stocking shelves and driving groceries to the elderly. Johnny is on the clock, so our encounter is genuine but brief. I found Shannon outside of Breton, AB with her rescued pit-bull Luscious taking a break on a gravel road. Luscious was swimming in a nearby swamp and Shannon was reading a book in a folding campaign chair. She rescued him from a "meth-head" who had moved from a fighting ring in Edmonton to Breton. Shannon operates as the informal D.D. for the town's drunks. She smokes weed (to help her bone dysplasia) but is against "hard weed". Another roadside encounter occurs outside of Valleyview, AB when, fearing I was committing a crime in an abandoned tire-laden paintball course, Susan stopped to investigate. Susan has a mixture of moderate and progressive beliefs that do not fit the stereotype of the ruralite as uneducated, racist, or backward. We talk about the issues facing local reservations, the importance of animal corridors on her land (near a major highway). We talk about what it is like to live with and near animals and how PETA's

portrayal of animal treatment practices are constructed narratives that misrepresent animal welfare on the prairies. The conversation is cordial and we are often in agreement, but a book sitting in her cab strikes me as odd, a book about why we should be skeptical of academics. This reaffirms why I believe the work I do is important, because it supports creating a dialogue, furthering a discussion and putting "boots on the ground" to not only create but simply to understand. I keep using the word dialogue because I believe in it as a tool that can bridge people, foster understanding and help us push against our assumptions by coming face to face with others, a task that is difficult to accomplish at a distance. Too often these areas are thought of in negative terms or in decline and at times I am at fault for furthering that narrative. But the prairies are also one of the few places where a stranger will see you walking and out of kindness alone ask you to join them and their friends for pie and ice-cream, or ask you if you need a place to stay and invite you into their home. I've never been offered a pie, a beer, or a place to stay in the city. It's hard enough to get a smile in the city. In the country, however, a smile is customary.

Crown Ditch and the Prairie Castle (2015 – 2018)

"Armour made the knight, the crown the king…what are we?"

At the turn of the 20th Century North America's last great land rush took place in the Canadian West. It was on the prairies that the soil made the farmer, the herd the rancher. A lingering question for the sons and daughters of the 'last great west' is what, or who, are we? Overshadowed and often visually conflated with its neighbour to the south, we forget to turn our gaze to the Canadian prairies. Essential to understanding this region involves forgetting the American Frontier and forging a new account of space.

The area was settled by a unique brand of hardened frontiersmen—cowboys, ranch hands, miners, farmers, and outlaws—the dirty and determined, the persistent sludge at the bottom of every gas tank. These good ol' boys were chasing the exalted allure of a grand landscape defined by its apparent nothingness, a landscape mystical by its inadequate representation, mystery, and whisper of being the last 'Promised Land'.

Gone are the early remnants of the Canadian prairies but its legacy still endures. Crown Ditch and the Prairie Castle documents the places and people of the last great 'proving out'. The project presents the space as an understudied region: a beast upon itself, a unique meeting of landscape, industry, and most importantly a breed of resilient people created by generational lessons in fortitude and fortuned circumstance.


ROSEDALE




ertsons
Home of the Brave


I WOULD LIVE IN A HOUSE BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD
AND BE A FRIEND TO MAN.
OLIVER W. HOLMES












YHWH IS GOD
I am Yhwh your God, you shall have no other Gods before Me
You shall not make any graven images, nor shall you bow down to them, nor serve them
You shall not take the name of Yhwh, your God, in vain
Keep the sabbath day, to sanctify it
You shall not murder
You shall not commit adultery
You shall not steal
You shall not bear falsewitness against thy neighbour
You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, nor anything that is thy


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AUCTIONS


TRIUMPH




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TANOOS
7
YAMAHA








Come in, we're
OPEN
Out Let
BOOK


WRONG WAY
WRONG WAY


Treasury
Branch
Alberta
Agency


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AND LIQUOR
306


MODERN
T.V. & ELECTRONICS
Panasonic Technics
FOR SALE
ELECTRONICS
SERVICE




4233


Calvin Klein




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STOP


STOP
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WESTOR
WESTOR
WESTOR

Returning To - Analysis: New Narratives of Prairie Place

Introducing the Community

Imagine a town that is equal parts banal and absorbing, ordinary yet extraordinary in its everydayness. 'Returning To' explores Mundare, AB, a community that is equal parts distinctive and universal, a community that represents the larger socioeconomic geography of the prairies—a unique community amongst many that *look* and *feel* the same. Similar to John W. Bennet's *Northern Plainsmen* (1969), the findings of this chapter are particular to understanding a specific community but not without a broad generality that allows one to draw conclusions for other communities in the region. In this sense, Mundare operates as a unique entity but also as a 'nuclear' prairie town. The particular and universal of the community can be expressed in its formation history, settled in a similar manner to most prairie communities, but by a specific ethnic group of Ukrainians (along with other Slavic communities in minority numbers) who brought with them the religious order of the Basilian Fathers. Seeing both the universal and the particular comes with time, as true places reveal themselves slowly. As Luc Pauwels (2015) writes, "the abyss of time, space and culture that lies between the world of the depicted and the world of the researcher may prove quite arduous to overcome" (p. 48). It is one thing to study a community from a distant academic 'arm-chair' and another to make direct observations, to have boots on the ground, to walk the country roads, hear the gravel crunch underneath one's feet, and to experience the brightness of the prairie sun in summer and the smell of harvest wheat on a cool autumn day. 'Returning To' is about excavating the past in relation to the present and as a way to cast ideas of the future; it is also about evaluating and coming to terms with that which is close, to borrow Arthur Machen's words from *Things Near and Far* (1988), to

explore those wonders near to home, the relics and stories that are a 'Stone's-throw away'. Furthermore, the camera acts as a tool to record-making, or inquiry and scrutiny, where "the lure of the foreign [is] to be rendered redundant by the promise of experiences to be found closer to home" (Coverley 2006), an idea reminiscent of the Jamaican proverb that states you must first dance in your own backyard before the yards of others.

More than the exploration of a prairie town, 'Returning To' is about saying goodbye to a place once lived and wholly familiar. This is done on the premise that sometimes one must go back to move forward, one step back, and two steps forward. What results is a study of rural place that relies on the existing literature from numerous fields (sociology, Canadian studies, cultural geography, visual studies), but also on an artistic practice informed directly by long term experience that synergistically creates a dutifully complex rendering of a community. In this chapter, the subjective is reintroduced into the conversation as it provides invaluable insight into the local perspective. The result is a project that engages with the sociology of the self and the familiar to rediscover that which is closest and to find visual pleasure in routine. A project that focuses on the idea of returning with a fresh mind and a fresh eye as a way to challenge place and to break away from common ideas cemented by memory with the hopes of seeing the place anew; while also seeing return not necessarily as a regression but as a renewal of seeing. To find the strange in the familiar. As T.S. Eliot wrote in *Little Gidding* (1971), "we shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for the first time" (p. 240). This approach supports the creation of a postmodern conception of place, a process that requires the remixing of local history both past and present. Focusing on the present and the past affords different temporal reference points, allowing us to move back and forth through time for reasons of comparison and inquiry. In

order to successfully enact this, historical research and creative processes (photography, ink, drawings, cartography, objects, and modified images) are utilized to create what Pauwels terms the 'preferred meaning' (2015). This process results in a complex and corrosive analysis. Corrosive is not used as a form of destruction, but as a way to break-down, reflect, critique, challenge, and create counter-narratives of place. Corrosion here is about unearthing the layers in a complex system of place and meaning-making. Other ways to describe this chapter are as experimental, (historical) revisionism, expanded history, or as community re-imagining. While the chapters 'Digging In' and 'Mapping Out' were centred around space and movement and how they relate to presentation and landscapes, 'Returning To' diverges by enacting a pause, studying a single community and coming to terms with its complexity. When everything flows, stopping and finding stillness has its value.

Joan Fontcuberta (2014) uses the idea of Pandora's Box to describe what photography has become in a digital era; however, the metaphor can be used to explain the duality of meaning experienced in every complex community. In Greek mythology, Pandora is the woman who defied the Gods and unleashed all the pains and evils into the world only to combat them by unleashing hope. Underpinning this chapter is the journey of exploring place in all its complexity, those pains and hopes made expressive. The duality of banal peacefulness and deviance is a common rural dichotomy, often existing in harmony with one another. As American author Ursula K. Le Guin wrote in *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1984) "to light a candle is to cast a shadow" (p. 51). Like the unveiling of Pandora's Box, there is no going back, only forward and with hope.

To enact this narrative of prairie place, this chapter will use a mixed-methods approach that is informed by arts-based research methods and conceptualizations of post-photography. This chapter does not use photovoice, community-based photo-elicitation or participatory research (Lopez, Robinson, & Wang, 2005) or collaborative participant-based research (Pink, 2001; Rose, 2001) as a way to understand place. As well, this chapter does not decode the meaning of imagery and stories shared within the community but rather re-contextualizes and reuses them as a way to engage with place and community. There are many terms that can be used to describe the aim of this chapter, but in its simplest fashion it is about creating 'informed storytelling' of the prairie town Mundare. History is continuously revisited; as such, the narrative put forth can be thought of as a palimpsest, continuously re-written, layered, and endlessly modified; one document of community amongst many layered histories that create our idea of place. Another way to think about 'Returning To' (particularly the visual section) is that it operates as an alternative community album, one that is aware of the contrived, socially normative, and boring nature of albums to represent history, actively seeking to disrupt this form. Photography is useful in this exploration by acting as a social tool while also being a time-machine, which allows us to revisit and critique the past that has led to the present. Evoking the idea of the rear-view mirror, we move forward into the future with an eye on the past. In doing so, we challenge dated ideals long associated with the rural, the idea of open space, the banality of the landscape, the exotic other and tell a story of an under-represented place.

A Brief History of Mundare

Mundare as History

"Most of us think that history is the past. It's not. History is the stories we tell about the past. That's all it is. Stories." (King, 2013, p. 3)

Most narratives of prairie communities begin with the arrival of a railroad shuttling resilient settlers west to live in mud-huts as they attempted to locate Chernozem soils and 'prove the land'. For the first settlers arriving in the region around 1891, it would be decades before running water, power and proper sanitation would find them, yet they persisted. This is the metanarrative of the colonial-settler that developed across the prairies, and the community of Mundare is no different. Early in the introduction to *Memories of Mundare* (1980), following the geological accounts of the region, we find a vaguely sociological, but detailed description of the importance of the community as it enters a new phase of progress with the introduction of the railway. This is followed by historical sections of the community and region (cultural elements, groups and institutions - music, churches, community living, schools, organizations) recounted through a number of short historical essays, with the importance of the railroad continuing to weave itself in and out of these narratives. The final section and bulk of the book, is comprised of submitted family biographies. The community members in these black and white images, who have penned their stories have largely passed, so pressed to write the town's history they have ultimately become it. This is reminiscent of a line from Ecclesiastes (31:8), "there is a time to die and a time to be born". There is a time for material, people and ideas to be born, to surface and for a time to command and there is a time for these elements (ideas especially) to die. Death is evoked as a challenge to the normative accounts of history in

prairie towns and as a metaphor for rebirth. Through this we can diversify, expand, recalculate and challenge our ideas of small towns on the prairies. The telling of Mundare through *Memories* is no different than the myriad other towns that took advantage of the province's 75th anniversary and government-assisted funding for the production of these historical books. These records, often titled with equal levels of grandeur and cliche (*Oxen to Oil, From Then Until Now, Pages of the Past, Heritage of the Wheatland, A Stake in the West, Heritage of Hope, Sodbusters, Trails of Promise,* etc.), highlight the pastoral romanticism in which rural heritage was being discussed at this time, a dominant narrative that still permeates these communities and contributes to their position as places of the past. Mundare as a grain and cattle based rural economy, settled and formed by the improvements of the railway and the highway, operates as a simulacra for understanding and representing other rural communities. This is similar to how J.B. Jackson (1970) created Optimo City, an imaginary community to represent not one but hundreds of small towns across the United States. It is in both cases that we use the particular to provide universal insight into a region and perhaps more ambitiously the rural condition across the continent.

Mundare, a seemingly peaceful and banal community, boasted a population of 832 in 1932. The community now sits at a stable (but aging) population of 852 (Stats Canada). Predominantly a farming community built on a slough in the parkland region of Alberta (central-east Alberta), during harvest and seeding half of the classrooms would empty as youthful help was needed to attend to matters of the land. Mundare developed similar to other communities in the region, with the community established once a railroad siding and station were built. The community is located at the cross-roads of three major roadways, the Provincial highways 855 and 15, as well as, the Trans-Canada Yellowhead

Highway 16. Forty-five minutes east of Edmonton and twenty minutes west of Vegreville (population of 6,000), Mundare is pulled between the socio-economic and cultural orbits of the province's capital city and a dominant rural hub. Their region is culturally unique, but not dissimilar to other prairie communities defined by transnationalism and settled by specific ethnic groups. Mundare is a vibrant Ukrainian settlement and in some regards the prairie mecca for 'Ukrainian-ness' in the region. This settlement block is called 'Kalyna Country' an ethic settlement block (Katz & Lehr, 1999) and by some measures is the largest settlement of Ukrainians outside of Ukraine and Russia. As a result, the community retains what Phillip Cooke (1990) would call a 'residual nature' where Canadian-Ukrainian identity is still a significant cultural factor in the community. This is a community heavily rooted in the idea of ethnic kinship. The telling of a community member is often regaled in this way: "Person 'x' is a cousin of person 'y', who is related to us through a marriage with 'z'". It was not uncommon for one family member to make the transatlantic journey, purchase land, 'prove it out' for a year and send word back to his family and friends of the quality of land available in the region. As a result of these transcontinental ties the community shared a strong collective sense and a positive appreciation for collective responsibility was fostered in these country towns (Bantjes, 1997).

A Ukrainian community without a Ukrainian community name, Mundare was named after the train station attendant Mr. W. Mundare. Some community members suggest that Mundare is the bastardization of the Ukrainian word for monastery, however even the official community history book states the prior. The railway came through the area in 1905 and brought with it daily passenger service. At this time Mundare was considered a village but grew rapidly due to the emigration of Eastern-Europeans over the following decades. Prior to this, in 1902 the Basilian Fathers, a branch of the Ukrainian (Greek)

Catholic religious order, arrived in the region looking to establish a religious community. The order homesteaded near Mundare and the following year two more Basilian missionaries arrived from Galicia (Halychyna) in Western Ukraine. Around this time the Sisters Servants of Mary Immaculate arrived in Canada and began to perform a number of essential tasks for early settlers by operating hospitals, orphanages and schools, as well as the handling of tragedies and epidemics (Spanish Flu 1918-20).

Sections of *Memories* continue on by recounting the history of the community and the region in what reads as a formulaic, banal, and at times humorous, history-focused sermon on the growth and changes faced by the community—its successes and triumphs, its trials and tribulations. It seems rather pointed to suggest that a whole lot of things happen, but nothing really happens, at least worth mythologizing. The years are recorded by grain harvest, early frosts and severe snowstorms, the markers of history on the newly settled prairies, a series of banal events and non-events. Parishioners started to send their children to the Sister's school and not the public school, in another instance there was a court-case and in the end the Fathers' vacated the monastery and lived in a nearby granary. In 1910 a church was built, 1912: J. S. McCallum owns one of the two automobiles, 1918: coal oil lamps were used to light street lamps, 1930: Fire Hall built but burns down in 1932, 1933: Grotto Shrine built by Basilian Fathers, 1950: Mundare becomes a town, the 'old church' catches on fire, 1951: Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent visits Mundare, 1954: Running water established, 1957: Ukrainian Museum and Archives opens, 1978: railway station demolished to make way for the Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip's visit. *Memories* is more than a multi-authored collection of public and private stories melded together and labelled, and more than oral history writ. The community chroniclers spoke for the community but also provided a space for each family to speak for themselves, to

self-represent, to write their victories in the community. The book is the de facto telling of community and today is a sought after cultural artefact. *Memories* operates as a history from below, the history of the community told by the community and for the community. But the book is also a form of self-censorship. Exaggerations and out-right lies would be scrutinized and social stigma and scorn would be dealt. Boredom allowed secrets to surface but community civility ensured they were not openly advertised. Community secrets never found their way into *Memories* but often transmitted in other ways. As Janice Dickin (2004) writes on the subject,

> "no matter how uncontroversial unwed pregnancy, interracial relationships, and homosexuality may have become to urban university students in the new millennium, trust me, their absence from local histories demonstrates neither their non-existence nor their acceptability. Such secrets were known and gossiped over." (p. 104)

This is the problematic nature of remembering, where the 'good' is recounted over the 'bad'. As novelist and critic Marcel Proust wrote *In Search of Lost Time: Swann's Way* (1992), the remembrance of things in the past is not necessarily the remembrance of things as they have occurred. The accounts in *Memories* are not false, they are undoubtedly true, the criticism lies with their inclusion in the history book of the community at the expense of other events. As such, the book lacks balance and is a form of community boostering, the universal thesis of local histories, the telling of the ancients as heroes, who 'do good' and persevere to collect their reward in the end (Dickin, 2004). Natalie Shostak (2001) identifies this as a common theme in the book, where the individual stories,

> "revolve around several topics that structure the narrative: the miserable life in the old country; the pain of departure; rooting themselves in Canada (and in this locality), early pioneer hardships; successes yielded by hard work and strong faith; the family growth; children's leaving this locality into the world; and finally the prosperity earned through hard work." (p. 41)

The creation of place and the banal recounting of community events continues today, although not in any official history book. More recently the community has made collective efforts to improve the town and were rewarded in 2003 when the town received the Communities in Bloom National Award (an award for environmental stewardship and natural heritage conservation). Prior to that the town had adopted the slogan: "A Small Town With a Big Heart". The creation of slogans for each small town is as ubiquitous as an attempt for each to create a local monument with both acts being indicative of modern boosterism. More recently the town, in conjunction with a local business (Stawnichy's Mundare Sausage) an established Alberta brand, collaborated to construct a forty-two foot Ukrainian Sausage (Kielbasa) to pay homage to the region's sausage-makers and history of Eastern-European food. Other buildings, public murals, signage, and monuments are Ukrainian in nature and communicate to the community and others the community's valued history. J.B. Jackson (1984) writes on the subject, "every traditional public space, whether religious or political or ethnic in character, displays a variety of symbols, inscriptions, images, monuments…to remind people of their civil duties—and tacitly to exclude the outsider" (p. 18). The place-branding that is enacted by building a totemic monument and by creating a town slogan are examples of how Mundare is attempting to compete with larger centres for intrigue and mystery. This may be a misstep by

overemphasizing a historical account of the community that is unbalanced and may disservice the community by putting forth an inauthentic or incomplete idea of place.

Localism as a Framework for Interrogating Place

Idea of Localism

Explored in other chapters, provincialism and regionalism have provided a framework for understanding how places are formed on a larger scale. Through the lens of localism this 'Returning To' explores a small rural community on the prairies, or what British cultural geographers may refer to as locality research and what sociologists might term site-specific field-research. The area that constitutes the local in this chapter is the area within a 10km radius of the community and includes the farmlands, country houses and conservation lands, and of course, the town itself, as a way to understand place and imagine community. Localism here is not used in its traditional sense as a political construct concerned with institutional and economic devolution of power away from central controls (Evans, Marsh & Stoker, 2013). For our purposes, localism is the study of a particular site of interest with a focus on understanding how local dynamics and transactions influence the community, as opposed to external structures (globalization, national and regional governmental forces). As Arturo Escobar argues, understanding place (and place-creation) can be achieved from an approach to the local and not only from the perspective of the global (Opp & Walsh, 2014). Localism challenges nationalists or global-centrist narratives and frames of thinking as a way to study place. To focus on the local is to emphasize the local while minimizing the role of global processes. This is not to discount the effects of global hyper-connectivity, rather to focus attention on the importance of the people, the streets, the forests and fields next to the communities, and

their processes and their histories as a way to think about how they create and interpret their community. It is the idea of the local place as defined by the local. Prior understanding of the community and group membership will aid in this process. This knowledge can be gained in two ways, a surface reading (associated with the community outsider/ short term engagements) and an in-depth reading (associated with a community member or insider/ long-term field research). 'Returning To' is interested in the latter by utilizing the researcher's long-standing group-membership in the community and the deep understanding of local knowledge that comes with that membership. Localism is often the study of the specifics of a particular place. The challenge of this chapter will be to assert convincingly that Mundare, as a unique prairie community, also has the ability to be a 'stand-in' for other small towns in the region, while simultaneously creating a responsive interpretation of the community that challenges and expands our understanding of the particular (Mundare) and the universal (prairie region). To understand a rural community from the perspective of localism we must review the idea of place and place-attachment, essential to understanding how places are created and maintained.

Matters of Place or Place Matters

Defining Place

"Place provides a template for practice - an unstable stage for performance. Thinking of place as performed and practiced can help us think of place in radically open and non-essentialized ways, where place is constantly struggled over and reimagined in practical ways…Place provides the conditions of possibility for creative social practice." (Cresswell, 2004, p. 71)

Continuously contested, rewritten and evolving, place is a complicated matter. But what do we mean by place? For David Harvey (1993), place is one of the most multi-purposed words in the English language. For Walter Brueggemann (1977), "place is space in which vows have been exchanged, promises have been made, and demands have been issued" (p. 3). Galliano and Loeffler (1999) view it in similar terms and see place simply as "a geographical area that has meaning to people" (p. 1) where human interaction turns an objective space into a subjective place. If space is defined by movement then place is defined by pause (Tilley, 1994). Place to geographers Yi-Fu Tuan (1974a, 1977), Edward Relph (1976) and Anne Buttimer, and David Seamon (1980) emphasizes subjective experience over classical 'science-based' explorations of place. This is a position that is settled in an approach that is phenomenological and constructionist as opposed to positivistic in its epistemology. For Massey (2005) place is a process, a site where multiple identities and histories, defined by unique interactions, contribute to a particular idea of place. Another way to think about place is as fluid, always becoming (Pred, 1984). This idea of place is defined by unique interactions (Massey, 2005) and internalized identities (Ashworth & Graham, 2017), those within and outside of a particular site, a position supported by Cresswell (2004) when he writes that "the 'outside' plays a crucial role in the definition of the 'inside'" (p. 163). In other words, place is created through the individual and collective interpretations of events and interactions. This is the 'consensus concept' of place where place is an individual construct (micro), while also being a social construction (macro) accepted through consensus. There are two ways a consensus of place is established: through 'public identity', where consensus is derived from individual or group experiences of a specified geographical area, and 'mass identity', developed from opinion-makers who disseminate ready-made ideas of a place through advertising and mass-media (Mills, 1956). Early campaigns designed to attract settlers to the prairies on the promise of

open and fertile land would be an example of mass identity. Mass identities have the ability to be misleading and contrived or superficial. As Relph (1976) writes, this is because "mass identities are based not on symbols and significances, and agreed on values, but on glib and contrived stereotypes created arbitrarily and even synthetically" (p. 58). Regardless of if places are the accumulations of individual ideas, or the productions of marketers (or a combination of the two), the meanings of places are in flux, a creation of different people, at different times and for different reasons. As G.J. Ashworth and Brian Graham write in Sense of Place: Sense of Time (2017), "place images are thus user determined, polysemic and unstable through time" (p. 3). Therefore, if place is a social construct under late-capitalism (Harvey, 1993) and fluid over time and across population bodies, then the way places are consumed is infinitely contestable and as such, all narratives of place are equally valid and flawed.

Arriving at a definition of place is further hindered by its ubiquitous usage in everyday life (Cresswell, 2004), which is further complicated by its contentious standing within academia. As a result, the definition of place is "a problem that no one quite knows what they are talking about when they are talking about place" (Cresswell, 2004, p. 6). A problem not defined by squabble over a specific definition but of coming to terms with the multiple meanings of place. Cresswell (2004) argues that place is fundamental to our being; it is not only a phenomenon to observe, research and write about but is also fundamental to how we observe, research and interpret the world. Place is not only the site of study but also determines the conditions in which we study. In other words, place is both the "site and a subject of struggle, a 'conjunction of many histories and many spaces'" (Massey, 1995, p. 184-185). This is an abstraction but places are abstractions, they have no inherent meaning, only the meaning we assign them (Rose, 1995). The formation of place, not

dissimilar to the writing of history, is a slow and accumulative process. Paradoxically, places can also be defined by a lack of interaction with a specific site, the outsiderness with a place, similar to how the prairie region collectively views Mennonite and Hutterite communities where access is limited and determined by specific sociocultural and socioeconomic interactions.

Despite the confusion in its defining, understanding place is still important, the operative word 'still' to imply past conflict or threats, the result of technological changes and the restructuring of society towards an increasingly connected, compressed, and uniform order. These threats have been expressed and explored in numerous ways by scholars: placelessness (Relph, 1980), the space of flows (Castells, 2000), and non-place (Auge, 2008). The same technological conditions that have given rise to these explorations of place have also provided the basis for the argument as to why places matter more than ever. As Gieryn (2000) writes, "in spite of (and perhaps because of) the jet, the 'Net', and the fast-food outlet, place persists as a constituent element of social life and historical change" (p. 463). Drawing on the ideas of the cultural geographer Harvey (1996), Cresswell (2004) writes that "the significance of place increased under the conditions of flexible accumulation, postmodernity, and time-space compression" (p. 41), the very conditions others have argued destroy place. Place is not being made redundant by technological innovation and change, rather the opposite is occurring (Lippard, 1997). As place-attachment theorist Maria Lewika (2011) writes, place and our attachment to places are still a strong marker for understanding. Edward Casey (2009) argues that place is often subordinated to space and time, when the real focus should be on place. Casey's writings underpin the importance of the individual and their interaction (lived meaning) with a place, which in turn, produces meaning. This is in opposition to the idea of space as largely

empty and objective, as opposed to place which is active, embodied, and infused with meaning and feeling (Rose, 1995). Underlying this relationship is space and place as a continuum of meaning making—from abstraction (space) to experience (place) (Cresswell, 2015). Framed differently, "space defines landscape, where space combined with memory defines place" (Lippard, 1997, p. 9). Landscape is space, landscape with memory or cultural activity is place. This assertion is at the heart of understanding studies of place and localism by contributing to the re-evaluation of place as an important concept. This understanding of place does not negate the interconnectivity of information and the global flows of people and goods, but seizes upon it to strengthen its argument. In *Space, Places and Gender*, Massey (1994) discusses this idea when writing that,

> "one of the results of this is an increasing uncertainty about what we mean by 'places' and how we relate to them. How, in the face of all this movement and intermixing, can we retain any set for local place and its particularity? An (idealized) notion of an era when places were (supposedly) inhabited by coherent and homogeneous communicates is set against the current fragmentation and disruption." (Pg. 146)

Massey (1994) furthers this position by writing, "the global is in the local in the very process of the formation of the local" (p. 120). The global allows physical places to gain importance as the annihilation of space and time draw attention to the differences within the system. The creation of place is at the nexus of the local and the global and the individual's interpretation of both for the purpose of subjective meaning-making (Rose, 1995). In other words, place is created through the interactions between individuals and other places (something discussed in the 'Mapping Out' chapter with regards to regions

and connectivity between communities). At the individual level this process is internalized and creates meaning. As Cliff Hague writes (2005), "a place is a geographical space that is defined by meanings, sentiments and stories rather than by a set of co-ordinates" (p. 4). Places make people and the stories people tell about place inturn makes place "through the stories [people] tell about themselves and others" (Friedman, 1998, p. 8). Geographical spaces have their own names (Prairies, Appalachians, the Sahara, etc.) and are full of significance, but only become places when individual experience is accounted for. The experiences accumulate and along with representations (Massey, 1995) create a dominant image of a community ready for reaffirming acts or a re-articulation of place. Community or home can then be celebrated as existing in multiples (Massey, 1994) — the community as pristine and welcoming, or the community as lonely and violent. This also supports a post-photographic approach to understanding communities that utilizes elements of photography, found imagery, oral history, and objects to create a nuanced narrative of a complex community.

A common ideation of prairie communities (as specific places) are as spaces of transition, a slow form of degradation inflicted upon the rural condition where communities are gradually drained of their socioeconomic vitality. A more optimistic reading defines communities as a stable form of place, with the region not experiencing events that would cause acute upheaval. However, as discussed earlier, ideas of places are in competition with one another and so even stable environments are always in flux (Harvey, 1993). As space and time are annihilated new forms of place emerge. Technological progress is embraced and rural communities undergo change. For instance, the mechanization of farming, through scaled economies, and task-simplifying technology (GPS, cameras, hydraulic tools, etc.), modify our conceptualizations of rural places in a

number of ways—from how the landscape is viewed as a source of economic vitality to how rural communities function. Here we are discussing not only the idea of place but also place-identity. This process of how people see themselves in their communities (the community version of the 'looking-glass self' developed through the opinions of others) is the result of primary (peer-to-peer) and secondary (media-to-peer) interactions between group members and outsiders. This process is also one that occurs in the present but makes reference to the past (Massey, 1994). Formulations of place are always seeking to fix and stabilize the dominant identity of a place, based on prior knowledge of the community as identity is only ever modified once an initial meaning is established. Place and place-identities are defined by both insider-outsider and past-present relationships. In certain instances, places without a written history will draw their history from a far off place, an occurrence that was common for early rural communities on the prairies; this is exemplified in Mundare's (and other communities') attachment to the concept of the 'old country' for a sense of self and place. As Arjun Appadurai suggests, "territorial identity such as locality should be understood as 'primarily relational and contextual rather than as scalar or spatial" (Friesen, 2001, p. 7). As long as a group asserts and chooses to 'see difference', the lived reality of place (and the approach to localism it embodies) will sustain the relevance of both local and regional perspectives within the nation (Friesen, 2001).

A nuanced meaning of the definition of place as a stage where meaning is performed, struggled over, and remade through interaction, is paramount to the dissertation (Cresswell, 2004). To reiterate this idea, place is simply a stage or a site where multiple identities and histories collide (Massey, 2005) to produce meaning for individuals. This chapter embodies a social constructionist approach to understand place where the specific location is used to express larger underlying social processes (Cresswell, 2004, p.

56). Therefore, Mundare is utilized as a particular location that illustrates social processes across the prairie region. Revisiting an earlier point crucial to our exploration of place, all places are contested and fluid. This chapter is about exploring and contesting place by relying on my knowledge as an outsider-insider to produce meaning through creative, exploratory and performative ways, which place, as a concept that is based in practice (production) and theory (thought), seems to subtly invite. Through this process and a study of that which is close, the 'sociology of the near' is performed where "the foreign traveller often saw more, the home-based traveller often understood more" (Mulvey, 2009, p. 59). If the 'Digging In' and 'Mapping Out' chapters are about Edward Soja's (1999) 'firstspace' (mappable, empirical space) and 'secondspace' (subjective - the domain of images and representations), then 'Returning To' is about thirdspace, space as a lived construction, the result of which is a layered practice of 'place-writing', a term Cresswell (2004) uses to describe how writers undertook the task of explaining place in all its diversity and complexity. However, we often underestimate the role photography plays in creating place and the way places are consumed visually (Schmidt & Faisst, 2019; Urry, 2002). Therefore, the term is modified here to include the place-writing that photographers (writing with light) and other creatives contribute to the discussion.

Picturing Place

'Digging In' provides us with insight into the rural community from the historical and photographic account of *Keepsake* (1980), which functioned as a discussion of the history of photography on the prairies and issues of the urban/rural divide. 'Mapping Out'

provides a more developed discussion of documentary prairie photography as it relates to ideas of regionalism, landscape, time and space. 'Returning To' is about focusing on a specific rural community as a site of in-depth exploration of ruralism and how, through a post-photographic approach, it can be expressed anew. We return to the idea of the small town because the town is an emblem of settler heritage, a symbol of ruralism, as well as the de facto cultural and economic hub of rural space. Recalling the brief discussion on connectivity, studying the rural community is to study the community and the surrounding region it interacts with. As Pahl (1966) writes, "rural communities can be isolated as separate systems for the purpose of academic study, but this is an increasingly unreal exercise" (p. 316). Globalization, omnipresent communication technologies, the speeding up of life, the global village, space-time compression (Massey, 2005), collapsing of space-time (Brunn & Leinbach, 1991), late-capitalism (Massey, 1994), have destabilized the idea of place. Therefore, the intent is not to see Mundare as a closed and sanitary system but as one node in regional, national and global networks. Mundare can also provide a rather unique function under these circumstances, standing in for other rural communities. This position is further supported by the general perception that rural communities, across the region, are near duplicates of one-another. This is also key to understanding the dominant history of the prairies, which often employs an uncritical and sanitized form of the rural as heritage. Therefore, an in-depth study of Mundare will allow us to challenge these ideas by picturing place, as well as holding a mirror to the community and to ourselves in a way that has yet to be done.

Photographers in Their Rural Communities

A number of projects provide a historical analysis of rural communities on the prairies: Paul Voisey's *The Making of a Prairie Community* (1998) is an in-depth exploration of the rural Alberta community Vulcan, P. James Giffen's *Rural Life* (2004) about three rural communities in the 1940s, Donald G. Wetherell and Irene R. A. Kmet's *Town Life* (1995), and the wider study of the Palliser's Triangle in *Northern Plainsman* by John W. Bennett (2007), as well as a dissertation on Mundare by Natalia V. Shostak titled *Local Ukrainianness in Transnational Context: An Ethnographic Study of a Canadian Prairie Community* (2001). This section draws upon these sources to explore the contributions made by documentary photographers in Western Canada, and given the lack of pertinent examples (particularly those that related to the use of post-photographic methods of creation), will discuss American-based projects where photographers document their rural homes. Firstly, let us reiterate what a project looks like that uses post-photography as a way to create. The common denominator amongst these projects is that they insert, remix and build upon existing ideas and narratives using alternative methods, multiple sources, or mixed-media (for example, found imagery incorporated into a narrative with one's now photographs). Often these projects are adoptive rather than predatory or malicious in their collection and use of sourced materials. They are not to be thought of as visual predators bent on economic gain, but as activists for the recycling of images and the adoption of inventive ways of storytelling—often reappraising a narrative of place or of a group (marginalized or dominant). A few of the more well known examples of this practice express power differences manifesting in situations where hegemonic powers silence marginal voices, when documents and testimonials have been silenced or destroyed, and/or where conflict is present and numerous histories of events exist (the Atlas Group &

Walid Raad's *The Truth Will be Known When the Last Witness is Dead* (2004) and Simon Norfolk & John Burkes' *Photographs from the War in Afghanistan* (2011) as examples). What we see on the prairies is not a militarized conflict but a spiritual one, a conflict more existential than one draped in blood or violence. To emphasize the theme of this chapter (alternative narratives of the rural), we will discuss photographers who have returned to their home communities to reinterpret the place that was formative in their lives. Similar to the other chapters, only projects that have been shared in exhibition or book form will be discussed.

As I have argued in other parts of this dissertation and elsewhere (Zeleny, 2016), documentary prairie photography is an underdeveloped practice and as such is lagging in representation within the region and beyond. The prairies are behind the VMT (Vancouver, Montreal, Toronto) of Canada, behind the Eastern and Western seaboards, behind the American West, American South, and the Midwest (although they share some feelings of disinterest). This makes an exploration of Canadian Prairie photography all the more pertinent but no less difficult an undertaking. Given the imposed parameters, documentative in nature, pertaining to prairie communities, and based upon accounts produced by locals and past residents, the subject matter is admittedly slim. The names and projects that follow are likely to be obscure to all but the most erudite researchers, thus making their discussion all the more prudent.

Let us begin in Rosebud, AB. Harry Palmer is an Alberta-based photographer with an extensive exhibition record. In his project *A Portrait of Rosebud: Then and Now,* Palmer documents Rosebud, a town in the Badlands region of central Alberta, where his maternal grandparents homesteaded. Drawn to how Rosebud has become a near ghost town, Palmer

began to document the community in 1982 and revisited in 2010/2011. The two intervals operate as not only part of what could be classified a longitudinal case-study, but more informally as a visual conversation from one era (or generation) to another. Palmer is a hobbyist and although the overall quality of the project is good, its execution and virtual presentation lack professionalism. Another prairie-born photographer coming back to his roots is Jerome Martin who documents *Golden Prairie* (project of the same name), a small town near Maple Creek, Saskatchewan. Martin has photographed the community over sixty-five years. As he writes in the introduction of his self-published e-book, "I've photographed in Golden Prairie most of my life, although I lived there for only eleven years (1949-60). I continue to visit and photograph the town and the surrounding area regularly" (2007, p. 1). Martin's book, the only prairie source documenting a rural community in Saskatchewan in a traditional style, is interesting for a number of reasons. Firstly, it provides a multi-media experience with hyperlinks and embedded audio files alongside images. Secondly, and similar to Palmer's *Rosebud*, the town is visited in sequences and provides us with visual chapters of the community (1955, 1970-79, 1979-1999, and 2001-onward). This allows us to see progression of time in the community and somewhat ironically, we see the photographer develop his practice while the town disappears. Similar to Palmer, he is also a hobbyist, a straight-forward documentary photographer. This is mentioned not as a criticism of their work but as a way to bring attention to the difficulty in progressing one's photographic practice on the prairies. Born in Drumheller, George Webber returns to produce a series of images in response to prairie novelist Robert Kroetsch *Badlands* (1975) set in the area. His stark black and white landscape images provide no direct story of a community or its people, but do provide glimpses of both that further develop Kroetsch's fiction of the region and the hunt for dinosaur bones. The visual depiction of the region by Webber is interesting but it fails to provide us a direct account of

the community, nor do the images provide us with a working example of how post-photographic ideas can be incorporated into projects about place. The idea of longing to return for understanding is common in journeys of self-discovery by photographers and writers alike. This is also an integral position within this project—the idea of return as a form of social inquiry and cultural commentary. But given that relevant examples of these narratives are limited on the Canadian Prairies, we must look beyond the region. Comprised of twenty years of photographing his home of Lambton County, Ontario, Larry Towell's *The World From My Front Porch* (2008) is at times a personal album and at others an account of rural living. A deeply personal and universal telling of home, as described on the back cover, "the sections before and after this photo-essay are meditations on land, home and belonging", further complicated by the inclusion of some of Towell's photojournalistic work from abroad. Through this juxtaposition, the book enacts a quiet mediation on the ordinary and extraordinary, the local and the global (the 'glocal') packaged in one narrative. Towell is showing us the injustice and violence that plays itself out daily while also sharing with us the ideal which we should strive towards, a peaceful place, a safe place to call home. The book includes drawings, maps, collected items, pins, still lifes and crusty old album images, and as such provides us with a unique narrative of the rural through the use of post-photographic elements. Embracing his inner Sontag, Towells writes,

> "an anthropologist never collects Persian carpets or jade heads with beady eyes. He goes straight to the garbage piles of past cultures, because that which is thrown away tells him everything. I'm a rag picker myself, a collector of debris, abandoned objects, and the art of children and refugees." (2008, p. 5)

Towells calls the abandoned barns and farmhouses he visits 'unofficial museums' and his bucolic images of rural Ontario speak to this position. These are the limits of what *The World From My Front Porch* (2008) depicts of rural living with Towell's essay in the book spending the majority of its words discussing the role of photojournalism, on feeling, recording, and his ignorant application to Magnum. The book is more a retrospective of an intense photo-journalist residing in a country with high social stability than it is an exploration of the rural condition. The book then becomes the amalgamation of his distraction by events abroad and the non-events that take place at home—a juxtaposition of violence of the far and the banality of living at peace in a rural area.

Exhausting Canadian examples, we must pivot our discussion to post-photographic projects depicting rural America. Christian Patterson's *Bottom of the Lake* (2015) is about a return to his Wisconsin hometown. The community of Fond Du Lac has a population of over 42,000, which is significantly larger than the demographic parameters of what constitutes the rural (10,000 as the upper limit). However the project has a distinctly rural feel with the narrative reading as if it is a community of perhaps 800 or 1,500 inhabitants. Patterson uses a post-photographic approach to produce a project that blurs conceptual and documentary photography by re-creating elements from the community and through the performative modification of a dial phone with pre-recorded dialogues of what appears to be community members and spaces. Similar to Patterson, Sarah Christianson returned to her rural home from New York and felt a renewed sense of place. She began to work on her project *Homeplace* (2013) and was able to tap into a perspective that leaving had afforded her:

> "I saw my home with a fresh perspective. It was suddenly clear to me that our family heritage was crumbling: my grandmother had sold her farmhouse and moved to town, my siblings had also moved away for jobs, and my parents were the only ones left out there." (Christianson, personal communication, September 20, 2016)

To make a simple bifurcation, explorations of rural communities by artists are executed in one of two ways, projects about communities and projects about a personal family (their family) embedded in a community. Similar to Towell, Sarah enacts the latter, focusing on her family and the intergenerational, as well as international lineage that has led them to their current home. What makes Christianson's project worth discussing is its use of post-photographic concepts by building a narrative that explores ideas of journey, distance, time, and place as she makes a transatlantic journey back to where her family emigrated from. In this sense Christianson makes a number of returns, a return to her hometown, her spiritual home, and then a further journey across the Atlantic back to her historical home, all the while using pictures (her pictures as well as others) to understand her family and their place within a number of rural communities. As Robert Adams writes in *Why People Photograph* (2005), "every photographer who has lasted has depended on other people's pictures too—photographs that may be public or private, serious or funny, but that carry with them a reminder of community" (p. 13). Relying on a combination of archives and creative practice, Christianson's *Homeplace* is a deeply sentimental work produced from the perspective of a long-time insider. *Homeplace* provides a series of unique conversations situated between both temporal and physical distance, as a result, the work allows for a conversation that pairs the past with the present and the here with the there. Kurt Simonson's *Northwoods Journal* (2015) is similar to Christianson's work in that it documents a series of returns to the rural home(stead). To tell his narrative of home

Simonson employs iconography, religiosity through bible passages and scribbles, old images and embedded letters bundled in with his own photography (an old polaroid, images of the family tree, an old school year picture) to express ideas of home. This concept of collage spills over into the design of the book itself, with the faux wood cover and multi-coloured carpet on the interior—a symbolic visiting of the basements of our youths. In these books the lines between fact and fiction, between documentation and artistic observation become blurred resulting in the importance of the work shifting from tools and mechanizations to storytelling and meaning. It is not singular elements that allow us to arrive 'here' but the overall impression and feeling we are left with. Morgan Ashcom's recent *What the Living Carry* (2017) is an exemplar of how the artist is the creator of place. *What the Living Carry* unveils the small town of Hoy's Fork nestled in the heart of the American South. Combining his own photographic practice with the placement and collection of type-written letters, and hand-drawn maps, Ashcom builds a foreboding and complex narrative of place. Not dissimilar, Daniel W. Coburn's *The Hereditary Estate* (2015) is about creating a new history, a history told through his own images of powerful portraits and sweeping landscapes, but also by excavating, re-working and rewriting old histories. Coburn is interested in unravelling the relationships in his family and their troubled past. This speaks to the trauma often experienced in the home and in the community, but as Jo Spence has taught us, trauma often exists outside the official narratives we tell ourselves and others. The found images used by Coburn are placeholders, real people in real moments filling in his memories when no corresponding image exists. Similar to the other American photographers discussed above, Coburn's narrative is focused on the home and the dynamics present within the close family unit, as opposed to a portrait of the wider community. In other words, these projects appear to be of a place that is defined by the family home rather than by the community.

By incorporating the past (by way of the archived image) into their projects about the present, these photographers are creating a dialogue and providing a space for the stabilizing of the past and the present. Canadian photographers, both historically and contemporarily, seem uninterested in facilitating a conversation between the past and the present through the use of archival images. It is true that the American photographers discussed use elements of the archive as supplemental information, however, these narratives are often not positioned in a wider dialogue or metanarrative of rurality (with perhaps the exception of Christianson). As Faulkner (1951) famously wrote, "the past is never dead, in fact, it's not even past" (p. 92); the representations of the past through images, objects, videos and recordings are not of the past but of the present and of the future. What we think of as the 'photographic past' continuously carries itself over into the present. Bill Jay (1982) in *Past Perfect* observed that, "every photographer is Janus, the two-headed Roman god who could not look forward without looking back". We can modify Jay's idea and suggest that every photograph is Janus a conflation of the past and present and the creation of each Janus by the photographer creates a useful beast for understanding place.

Evolving Forms of Academia and Photographic Practice

Post-Photography

The emergence of a post-photographic condition is the result of growing skepticism towards photographic realism, abundance in image-making and sharing and the turn within creative communities to embrace alternative practices as a way to problematize how we consume images contemporarily. This is a significant departure from the traditional understanding of photography as an objective, truth-giving medium (Edwards,

1992). In the first half of the twentieth century, Walter Benjamin (2008) theorized how "mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual" (p. 23), a process where images are produced to infinity and emptied of their ability to create a unique bond with an individual. Images become ubiquitous, not sacred. This is exacerbated in a digital world where reproduction has moved from the mechanical to the digital and has resulted in a condition of (digital) freedom focused on fluidity, dissemination and rampant appropriation. As Fontcuberta (2015) writes on the emergence of digital photography and its relationship to objectivism, "truth was an opinion, not an obstinate obsession…In effect, the discourse on visual truth, which monopolized much of the initial debate" has disappeared (p. 10). Universal digital creation and sharing creates conditions for images not only to become unglued from their authors, but also their location and context. Images lose their material nature but also their place, their context, and in the process become orphan and flexible—potential puzzle pieces to be re-appropriated. The rise of Web 2.0, social media platforms, smartphones with high-quality digital cameras, and editing software have altered our perception of photography as a truth-telling medium. Commenting on the fact-based nature of photography in relation to newsprint, Fred Ritchin (2013) writes, "the photograph as societal arbiter has lost its most persuasive platforms" (p. 11-12). Changes in technology and a culture of visual overabundance and saturation has resulted in the idea of the post-photographic. The literal nature of photography is trumped by its appropriative usages and the contexts they become associated with so that "the document retreats into autobiographical inscription. Narrative and conversational gestures oust description…the desire of immanence and immorality is replaced for transience and simultaneity" (Fontcuberta, 2015, p. 6). Through this process, objective realism and the faith in images to accurately represent reality, give way to subjectivity in an increasing fashion. The limits of photography as objective or as

'evidence' has been explored earlier by a host of image theorists (Sontag, 1977; Berger, 1977; Sekula, 1986; Tagg, 1993). The concept of photography as 'real' continues to persist rather naively both within and outside of the academy, suggesting that part of the problem is our cultural acceptance of images for what they can and cannot be. Barry Goldstein (2007) zealously writes that "photography is not objective; it never was objective. It has never held the truth any more than any other form of artistic communication" (p. 63). For Goldstein all images lie. What we take for granted as objective is an impression of an impression taken in the past and often by sometime else, as Lageria (2010) writes, "when I look at a photograph, I immediately have a representation of a representation of the thing it represents. This perceptual relationship is inevitably temporalized" (p. 22). Images are not only less fact than fiction but they can also be used as poetic forces by operating as visual analogies. In this scenario, an image's context and meaning are footnoted in favour of new creative usages, where the emphasis is placed on how the image can be used and (re)appropriated. The sign gives way to the signified and the "visual form is then problematized and the image no longer seen as an unproblematic window to the depicted world" (Pauwels, 2015, p. 26). The image, whether it is used by its original author or appropriated, is nonetheless a gateway or window into understanding the social condition. The conclusion this draws is that we can no longer sustain an argument that establishes photography as a fact-based projector, and by "gradually abandoning the persistent mental image of the objective scientist, contemporary scientific writings and visual productions have come to focus more on the notion of *reflexivity"* (Pauwels, 2015, p. 180). Embracing our own reflexivity means embracing and not diminishing the subjective nature of doing research, of being human. Rather than ignoring our subjectivity, we are able to confront our agendas and to be critical of our productions and our scholarship, often protected under the guise of pure objectivism. As the objective lens is shed an amalgamation of roles

emerges where the "artist merges with the curator, with the historian, and with the theorist…all of these facets appear to be chameleonically authorial" (Fontcuberta, 2015, p. 6). This calls for an expanded vocabulary for visual research, where the "artist and academic must emphasize the role of interpretation rather than that of transcription" (Ritchin, 2013, p. 49). This is a conclusion similar to the one drawn by photographer Robert Shore in his book *Post-Photography: The Artist with a Camera* (2014) where Shore concludes that through photography the world is hyper-documented and that there is no point in creating pictures. For Shore the focus becomes post-photographic in that meaning is made through curation and editing of the abundance of resources at one's disposal. This is a model of production that is centred around images being both a record but more importantly a constructed narrative, a fragment with complex and multiple meanings.

Let us explore the post in post-photography in more detail. The etymology of 'post' implies a linear progression or the abandonment of some condition or idea in favour of a revised adaptation. Writer Fredric Jameson (1991) writes elegantly about how all sense of narrative and linearity usually found in ideas of the past has wavered under postmodernism. In this sense, post-photography is explicitly postmodern although with hints of 20th Century pictorialism. In *Of Other Spaces,* Foucault (1997) writes that we are in the "age of the simultaneous, of juxtaposition, the near and the far, the side by side, and the scattered" (p. 330). Post-photography is the idea of undoing and re-inventing modernistic ideas of representation. Under the post-photographic condition photography is understood as a medium that is ubiquitous, omnipresent and open to various interpretations. Through the massification of photography, the single image, the image of the banal subject, or the image of the spectacular become unhinged—emptied of its 'weightiness'. As Wright Morris (1999) writes, "if there is a common photographic dilemma, it lies in the fact that so much

has been seen, so much has been 'taken,' there appears to be less to find. The visible world, vast as it is, through overexposure has been devalued" (p. 8). The more images we interact with, the more meaning and attention is spread out as visual abundance leads to visual fatigue. Fontcuberta (2015) termed this the bedevilling of representation by an unprecedented glut of images, citing that this inflation and its subsequent devaluing is "not due to the excrescence of hypertechnologized society, rather is a symptom of a cultural and political pathway, within which the post-photographic phenomenon has irrupted" (p. 6). What Fontcuberta fails to account for is a technological deterministic argument where technology does not exist in a vacuum and where the emergence of the concept of post-photography in the early 1990s and the proliferation of image-capturing technologies such as digital cameras and scanners, home computers and photographic editing software is expressed as a positive correlation. The post-photographic phenomenon does not interrupt our hyper-techno society but is partly the result of it. The early 1990s were an interesting time, the last decade before the omnipresence of the digital image. During this decade we witness the defining of the visual turn (Mitchell, 1992; Prosser, 1998) and archival turns (Simon, 2002) that support the massification of both our images, access to the images of others (past and present), and our interest in making sense of these packets of information found within post-photography theory. As Melissa Miles argues in *The Drive to Archive* (2010), technology becomes the driving force behind the 'archival impulse' and the major contributing force to the increase in conceptual photography pervading contemporary culture.

With no indications that the conditions that gave rise to the post-photographic condition will waver or slow, what is the future of photography? Perhaps a symbolic sacrifice is required. As Fontcuberta explores in his prodigious work *Pandora's Camera*

(2014), “we may well be witnessing the death of photography, or, to pursue the biblical analogy, it might be more fitting to speak of its crucifixion. Because here, too, we are dealing with a painful but essential prerequisite of a resurrection” (p. 8). Fontcuberta is writing about the evolution of the medium, from its adolescence to adulthood, a phoenix rising from the ashes where, through a rebirth, the medium can emerge once again—photography reincarnate. We have to premise this discussion by acknowledging that the post-photographic condition is a relatively new way of thinking about visual representations and will continue to offer a challenge to the disciplines that rely on the ease of use and the realism offered by the medium. It will also serve us well to reflect upon the meaning of being an artist, documenter, researcher in a time when billions of people have camera phones. As Fred Ritchin inquisitively asks in *Bending the Frame* (2013), what is really the role of the documenter, is it primarily to create or does the onus become curation, a way of making sense of the mass, making sense of the *metaphotography*? Ritchin (2010) defines the metaphotographer as “capable of sorting through some billions of images now available, adding their own, and contextualizing all of them so that they become more useful, more complex, and more visible” (p. 6). The metaphotographer is the postmodern version of Sontag’s (1977) ragpicker. Ritchin’s critique is positioned around the premise that photo-journalism is a dated field, its devices for storytelling, which were widely adopted in the 1930s, have been slow to adapt to changes in the use of images in society. This is a crisis of visual representation not dissimilar to the one faced by traditional documentary photography, or the use of inventive methods of utilizing photography in academia. The basic premise that unites these two fields is the drive to inform, to educate and humanistically, to tell stories, to prize knowledge and to share ideas. However, as Ritchin and others would argue, their devices and delivery system and the way that the audience interprets this data (their visual vocabulary), has failed to progress. This raises

the question that if postmodernism has created a condition for the post-photographic, do we also require a 'post-sociology' or the 'post-academic'? Or perhaps a 'new sociology' or 'new academia' similar to Ritchin's (2013) 'new journalism' which he defines as the "traditional nonfictional strategies combined with modes that are more subjective, interior, and borrowed from fiction" (p. 31).

Post-Photography as Montage and Collage

What can advocates of 'new journalism' or 'post photography' offer the social sciences? Should we brush aside the tenets of truth and objectivism in favour of connectivity and an expanded version of communication? What is the danger of the fallacy that reaches many because it employs modern techniques of storytelling? What is the value of a truth that fails to have any reach? In this sense, the literal nature of photography is trumped by its appropriations and the contexts it can be associated with. The social sciences have a way to go before fully embracing arts-based and experimental research practices that may have significant reach outside of academia. Although change is occurring, it is slow and there is pushback from more traditional scholars. However, reviewing recent research applications, Pauwels (2015) remains optimistic, writing that,

> "visual social and cultural science is fortunately becoming more inclusive in terms of visual and visualized 'referents' (including now also concepts, abstracts processes, visualizations of the invisible), media (not just photography and film, but also drawings, maps, artifacts, new media) and fields of interest." (p. 314)

Pauwels, a social scientist and photographer, may unknowingly be applying post-photographic theory to the social sciences. This is evident when he writes that "the blending of fact and fiction and the blurring of the boundaries between the private and public spheres would appear to be two characteristic traits of postmodern society" (2015, pg. 193). There is also a loss of ownership and authority that is exacerbated under these conditions, as evidenced in the increase in post-internet art made by (appropriation) artists adopting multimedia and intermedia processes that include but are not limited to: the collaging and montage of elements, the incorporation of archival/historical images, found imagery, vernacular photography, as ways to create layers, modify history and create counter-hegemonic narratives of the representation of place and people. These artists are taking advantage of hybridization and layering that can be considered a form of mimicry, homage, transformation, or at the other end of the spectrum, a form of theft. How photo-theorists will come to judge the post-photographic era remains to be seen, however we can speculate that the new age of photography will be defined by a sustained presence, where the image embraces a continuous presence that is projected towards the future rather than at the past (Fontcuberta, 2015, p. 54).

Remixing Through Montage and Collage

The creation of montage and collage media elements through photo-collage, photomontage and the readymade have been widely adopted by activists and artists throughout the 20th Century. However, their use by documentary photographers and within academia has been limited. With the growth of arts-based research in academia and post-photographic ideas within traditional documentary practice, it is prudent we spend time unpacking these concepts and their relationship to contemporary photographic

practice, asking what it means to remix ideas, objects and images to produce nuanced and complex ideas of place and people. This section will focus on the changes that have occurred since the post-photographic condition. As a result, a detailed historical overview of how photographers have used techniques of collage and montage (terms I use interchangeably henceforth) will not be discussed. The use of photography as a tool to montage, to take that which is old and remix it for a new meaning, is a key principle of understanding post-photography. Montage is not a novel concept; since the birth of the medium early adopters Oscar Gustave Rejlander and John Heartfelt have been using montage to create complex narratives. Later in the 20th Century, conceptual artist John Stezaker ,who collected his images in the 1940s and 1950s and authored the *The 3rd Person Archive* (2009), asserted his generation was the generation of appropriationists. Following Stezaker, artists like German born Hans-Peter Feldmann produce a vast archive of images by amassing newspaper clippings, family photographs, postcards, commercial advertisements, stickers with his own images of perishables, sunsets, airports and the knees of women to produce a layered meaning (Kihm, 2012).

More recently, new technological advances have disrupted our relationship with imagery resulting in the post-photographic condition where ease of technology to connect with others, to modify images, and access to endless content via the internet has resulted in an explosion in the archive. In *Archive Fever* (1995) Jacques Derrida positions the figure of the *archon*, as a sentry and guardian of important documents (Azoulay, 2015). It is the *archon*, (akin to the institutional archivist), the gatekeeper of archives, who prevents an outbreak of archive frenzy (fever). With the collapse of the archivist as sole gatekeeper, we are now witnessing what the *archon* would fear the most—the unfettered and democratic

use of images. Examples of Canadian photographic collage are often associated with the Vancouver School (Jeff Wall, Ian Wallace, Christos Dikeakos, Roy Arden, Stan Douglas, and Rodney Graham), defined by its conceptual photographic work. Christos Dikeakos for instance, layers text over images as an Aboriginal engagement with place, and creates a bold and incisive ethnographically oriented view of the world, emphasizing the need for a deep-running social but also aesthetic sensibility. These practitioners are joined by a long list of modern and postmodern conceptual American artists (Maud Sulter, Romare Bearden, Daniel Gordon, Lorna Simpson, Hannah Hoch, David Hockney, Mickalene Thomas, and Robert Heinecken). Contemporary photo-based examples include Adam Broomberg & Oliver Chanarin's *Holy Bible* (2013), Christian Patterson's Bottom of the Lake (2015), and Cristina De Middel's *Party* (2013). Each one of these projects takes a common textual form—The gospels of The Holy Bible and Mao's Red book, and a Wisconsin phone book—and remixes their meanings, upending our contextual understanding of the source material while also indirectly challenging what it means to be a photographer (or curator). Broomberg and Chanarin's *Holy Bible* (2013) is a critical examination of calamity, catastrophe and the perception of God's hand (or absence) in these acts. By forcing image and text into an uncomfortable dialogue and by mixing unseemly pictures of violence and destruction with the obscene and the everyday, centuries of history and sacred ideals of biblical doctrine are intertwined with the modern universality of photography. The use of photography in *Holy Bible* is both an apt commentary and a form of cultural revisionism. *Holy Bible* relied upon the vast collect of the Archive of Modern Conflict (AMC) to remix and montage images of conflict, however the contemporary AMC can as easily be found through a simple google search or in the exhibited work of conceptual photographic artists like

Roberto Pellegrinuzzi and Erik Kessels. Roberto Pellegrinuzzi's nebula-like cloud of 280,000 images hangs overhead of gallery goers. Pellegrinuzzi visualizes the cloud and brings us in contact with today's rampant image creation. Pellegrinuzzi's work brings to mind Erik Kessels' "24 Hours in Photos" FOAM exhibition. Through the playful visualization of photographic abundance the instillations by Pellegrinuzzi and Kessels allow us to confront the impossibility of coming to terms with the proliferation of digital imagery produced daily, where mass production of images is more of an asphyxiation than emancipation (the post-photographic condition). Through the juxtaposition and sensory overload afforded by image abundance, these works become a collaged mediation that is equal parts artist representation, archival/topical continuation, and critique of the past (as representation) and present (as prevailing conditions). Through the use of montage these projects allow us to envision loss and change in a powerfully visceral and visual way, which helps us challenge and extend the ideas of collective memory found within a community or region.

Hegemony and Conflict in the Archive

Archive as Power

George Steiner (1971) wrote in *In Bluebeard's Castle* that "it is not the literal past that rules us...it is images of the past" (p. 3). Speaking in an Orwellian manner, Steiner is drawing attention not to the importance of history but to its control—the control of images, documents and archives. As James Opp and John C. Walsh (2014) write in their introduction to *Placing Memory and Remembering Place in Canada*, "for scholars interested

in the history of memory and in the history of power-knowledge relations, the archive is perhaps modernity's purest architectural expression" (p. 12). Opp and Walsh are speaking about the communicative power of the archive and its ability to reinforce hegemonic narratives. As Derrida (1995) reminds us, "there is no political power without control of the archive" (pg. 11). This is common with examples existing at numerous levels of governance within the nation: *The Canadians* (2016), a curated book and play on Robert Frank's *The Americans* (1958) draws on the archive of *The Globe and Mail* to provide a stately picture of the nation, in Alberta there is *Keepsake* (1980) as a form of archive creation and dissemination drawn out to provide a favourable representation of a province's rural communities, and in Mundare there is the Basilian Father's archive. Produced by the religious brotherhood, this early photographic archive depicts the importance of religion within the community and the central role the brothers played in establishing and supporting the growing community. As Terry Cook and Joan. M Schwartz (2002) explore in their article, *Archives, Records, and Power: From (postmodern) Theory to (archival) Performance*, archives function as as a tool of hegemony and reflect and constitute power relationships where the collection has a latent ability to privilege and to marginalize, while also operating as a tool of resistance. In this context, latency refers to the archive as a set of value-less documents where meaning is only granted after negotiation. Archives are more than the "dustbin of history". Writing on Auschwitz and the role of the archive and the witness, Giorgio Agamben suggests they are places of testimony, and 'enunciation' (DiCarlo, 2016). This is only the case if the archive has been created and can operate as a 'witness' to events. If the records are either destroyed or never compiled we must rely on other means to evoke an alternative history (a history from below). These

sentiments are in line with postcolonial scholarship, which stresses the need to be aware of the process of self-censorship and community censorship, as opposed to censorship placed upon us by a dominant entity or institution (whether that entity be governmental, educational, or religious). The postcolonial perspective embraces the undoing of the exclusive authority of the institutionalized archive in favour of a plurality of meaning (similar to post-modern or post-photographic ideals). Building on this position, Michel-Ralph Trouillot (2015) writes in *Silencing the Past* that the "production of historical narratives involves the uneven contribution of competing groups and individuals who have unequal access to the means for such production" (p. xix). History is a production, a process, an interpretation. This is what Arjun Appadurai (1981) terms the 'debatability of the past', which operates in all societies. This applies to both the archive and the counter-archive; Brett Kashmere (2010) writes these spaces are, "an incomplete and unstable repository, an entity to be contested and expanded through clandestine acts, a space of impermanence and play', while in practice, the counter-archive 'entails mischief and imagination, challenging the record of official history" (para. 2). Engagement and play with the archive to create a counter-archive (or simply another archival telling) is common. To create a counter-narrative is not to invalidate its predecessor, but to devalue or add plurality to the meaning of a community or an idea, to remove the de facto power from one entity and share it with another. Kashmere (2010) sees the counter-archive as growing out of the digital era where archival practices and the playful production of counter-archives order unique elements together as a way to modify or undermine an archive (Amad, 2010; Eichhorn, 2013; Taylor, 2003). The performative element of playing in the archive, as opposed to the reproduction of anhedonia (the solemn + the boring), is also present in the

concept of post-photography where ”we are witnessing not the invention of a process but the inventing of a culture - the dismantling of the visual language that photography has hegemonically ingrained in us over a century and a half” (Fontcuberta, 2015, p. 8). The counter-narrative operates as a site for research creation and creative practice so that critical analysis of the archive, coupled with creative production, can facilitate a unique exploration of representations of place (Alphen, 2014; Ashcom, 2017; Brugner, 2018; Christianson, 2013; Daniels, 2019; Lowe & Norfolk, 2006; Lubben & Meiselas, 2008; Schuman, 2019). Related to this is Domietta Torlasco's (2013) notion of the 'impossible archive', which posits archiving as intervention; this approach allows for the creation of a specific visual language of blended archival work with the researcher's visual output. The project operates as a deconstruction and subsequent continuation of the archive. The approach takes the archive not only for its ability to be a signifier, but also as a method to locate and map inconsistent narratives of place (de Certeau, 1984) and to offer a dynamic medium where textual, visual and multimodal narratives are both stored and generated (Bourdieu, 1979). Simon Menner's *Images from the Secret Stasi Archives* (2014) is an example of the hegemonic use of photography and how through re-appropriation or redeployment, the archive's content can be used to (comically) critique a hegemonic government and surveillance apparatus. Menner (2014) appropriated work created by the Stasi that was observationist in nature and detailed surveillance techniques (for example, how to blend in as a tourist). The counter-archive does not necessarily need to be rooted in any specific archive or collection, it can combine a prevalent idea through the use of the montage of seemingly 'archival practices' such as images, text, sound, fabric, or natural material to modify and create meaning. In this chapter, this is accomplished by blending

archival images from the community with new production of images into an alternative narrative of place. In this space there is an obvious relationship between creativity and its relationship to the re-telling and remixing of material and as a way to counter-hegemony, produce alternative narratives, and tell stories.

Oops! I Made an Archive

Defining Archive in the Mundare Project

By adopting a post-photographic approach that borrows from arts-based research, documentary photography and visual sociology, an accidental archive was formed. Archive is used here in a broad sense, akin to Derrida (1995) who understood the concept as a place where symbols gather. The accidental archive described here is made-up of 4,000 images as well as numerous other pieces of data (oral interviews, sound recordings, visual clips, found objects, natural material—dirt, bee hives, etc.) to create a repository of what it means to understand a prairie town. The term 'accidental archivist' is borrowed from Peter C. Amsden's (2009) book of the same title and exemplifies the situation where an individual unknowingly or inadvertently creates an archive. This process occurs when an individual or group, initially holding no interest in collecting a repository of images, objects or stories, becomes an amateur archivist (Zeleny, 2016). The institutional archivist, trained and situated within an established system, must now contend with the amateur who looks to share the power of meaning-making. This is the power of archive fever. Azoulay (2015) writes on the change in archival practices and the introduction of non-state elements that, "through the founding of new sorts of archives—archives that would no longer allow the dominant type of archive, the one founded by the sovereign state to go on determining what an archive is" (p. 196). Derrida (1995) provides a historical overview of

the concept of archives beginning with a discussion of the idea of Arkhē, as the *commencement* and the *commandment*. The archive embodies an occurrence but also a commandment, an order, a record in an ontological sense. Derrida (1995) goes on to discuss the Greek concept of archive as *arkheion*, "initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of a superior magistrates, the *archons,* those who commanded" (p. 2). The *arkheion* is a place of power, the holder of documents and the weilder of words. By the 1600s the term archive arrived in the English language by way of the French *archif*, a derivative of the late Latin *archivum*. The meaning carried by these terms is similar to our current understanding of the archive as a "place in which public record or historical documents are preserved as well as the collection of material preserved therein and, when used as a verb (to archive), the act of collecting, storing and arranging materials for later use" (Ghani, 2015, p. 57). The archive is undoubtedly about preservation, but it is also about power (Sekula, 2003) as Innis has demonstrated in his writings on how media and communication technologies give great empires monopolies on knowledge. As Cook (n.d) discusses in relationship to Innis,

> "archives were very much part of those monopolies; monarchs, churches, and other elites discerned that whoever controlled the archives also controlled the past and would thus be able to legitimize their power in the present. The societal process of archiving involved a stark exercise of power over who and what was remembered and venerated, and, equally, who or what was marginalized and forgotten." (para. 2)

If knowledge is power then the archive is one of its sources. The archive often holds a quasi-legal authority that is granted by its position as a state repository which may be activated and used to strengthen the position of the state at any time (Merewether, 2012, p.

514-515). Furthermore, that which is stored is automatically given importance by the act of saving itself. Congruent with more recent post-modern ideas of knowledge, the archive has simply become a "place, that takes things, keeps them, and hands them out again. The place may be a physical location or just a file with its address as URL" (Heidenreich, 2012, p. 387). Concordant with the rise of globalization and in a post-nationalistic context, we observe the decline of both the nation-state and the state-sponsored archive as an apparatus of power. As Stefan Heidenreich (2012) accounts, "in recent decades the museum, along with its funding institution the nation-state has lost its power, and other modes of indexing started to appear" (p. 388). In this section we discuss briefly the private archive of the religious order of the Basilian Fathers who settled in Mundare to provide basic services and spiritual guidance. In their respective contexts, both Keepsake and the Basilian Fathers archive represent a potential space for critique and the redistribution of power, of the democratization of a community's images and a move away institutions of power, whether national, regional, or local.

Why an Archive?

Returning to the Idea of an Accidental Archive

Perhaps we can dispel with the verbiage of the 'archive' and adopt the more informal 'collection'. Archive is an institutional word and although artists and academics playfully appropriate the term to undermine its meaning, it nonetheless carries gravitas. As the collective Pad.ma (Public Access Digital Media Archive) writes in *Dissonant Archives* (2015), "they need not imply that every collection or assembly be named an archive, or that all of art's mnemonic practices be, once again, cast into an archival mould" (p. 353). The concept of the accidental archive is pertinent here in that it was never the intention of this

study to ask the community for images or to compile an informal digital archive of the area. The collection was the result of a lack of access to Basilian Fathers' photographic archives stored at their private museum. The closest equivalent to a public repository of community history can be found at the town hall, the entire manifest of which includes: four miscellaneous boxes of prints, negatives and newspaper clippings, a series of boxes kept in random locations, a collection operating more as a scrapbook of the town than a purposeful archive. The boxes, full of visual trinkets and newspaper cutouts, are more akin to what you would find in a mismatched collection under one's bed than in a municipal building. There are images folded between pieces of paper without captions—historical amnesia already settling in the community. In another box there are captions without images: "Looking north down mainstream from R.R. Tracks", "Ukrainian bookstore stood on the site where the bank is today", and "Farmer's day 1985?". There is no manifest or detailed document suggesting why certain images were saved and which images may have been removed. The images are interesting but incomplete, collectively operating as interrelated documents rather than as a comprehensive record of the prairie town.

The record of the community and the closest collection to a community archive, is secreted away at the Basilian Fathers' Museum. This archive represents one of the most complete and extensive archives of settlement on the prairies (and includes the original glass negatives produced by the Brothers in their early monastic darkroom). The archive of Mundare authored by the Basilican Fathers is an archive of power, of experience, of meaning shared reluctantly, coveted, and stored for posterity. I found it difficult to gain access to this collection. Emails went unanswered, no phone-numbers were provided. After four months I was able to establish a face-to-face meeting with the curator, Dr. Karen Lemiski. By being persistent I was able to view part of the collection (1,800 images of the

entire collection of 8,000 prints) over two days. Although I see numerous empty offices, the curator tells me, because of a lack of space, I must review the images in the museum kitchen, a small cove off the side of a hallway. The experience is off-putting and is interpreted as cold indifference. Of the images I have been granted access, their historicity and pedigree are immediate, however, I question how accurately they represent the everyday-life of early prairie settlers. The bulk of the images depict the banality of an emerging community, and seldom is the viewer confronted with the harsh realities of prairie living. Authorship and perspective is critical to understanding all archives; the community depicted in the Brothers' archive is one told by a religious order documenting the world unfolding around them. What the Brothers show us is the Grotto they built, its construction and its usage, a space now used once a year for a pilgrimage. They document the great events and the town's response to them: the VE parade, the crowds walking to Ukraina Park for festivities, the day a Prime Minister was greeted by a sign reading 'Welcome to Mundare Your Honour' and hundreds of smiling faces, as well as images of town buildings, a monastery being built in an open and barren fields reminiscent of Hime's 1858 image of 'The Prairie Looking West'. The images document the interiors of social functions, hall dances, community weddings, Ukrainian dancers on stage, the U.C.Y Rally, or the U.C.Y. Carnival, people sitting at tables listening to speakers. They also depict the complexity of monastic living where tradition meets modernity by showing us the Brothers hard at work in their cabbage fields, hoe in hand, in their wood-shop, on their printing press and operating a bulldozer. Interpreted through a contemporary lens, what we experience is the loss of impactful photography as the banality of simple documentary photography becomes apparent. As Fontcuberta (2015) writes, "extraordinary experiences (decisive moments) are overwhelmed by banal experiences (indecisive moments)" (p. 6). The images are stark documents depicting slices of social unity through the lens of the

Brothers. We seldom see the individual and the truly personal, it is only through marriage (re-birth) or a funeral (death) that we experience the individual in this collection. As a result, the collection has the feel of a story of the community told by its elders who leave out the tragedy, deviance, and mischief found in all emerging rural communities of the prairies—the moonshining, alcohol abuse, recluses, economic downturn, or the toll on a community that results from the death of a child. To the extent to which we can, we must rely on private albums for records of living rooms alive with laughs, beers, music and dance, or the fires that plagued early prairie towns, such as the 1941 church fire, or the fires that ironically destroyed the fire department not once (1932) but twice (1935). These two limitations, lack of access and the lack of diversity in the Brothers' archive determined the process of this chapter. If access to the Brothers' collection was difficult to obtain, if it took four months to have a five minute conversation, I would have to build my own.

In 2014 Pad.ma produced a set of ten thesis during a symposium at New York University on the ethics of the archive. These have been paramount to this process, with none perhaps as profound as its first treatise - "don't wait for the archive". As the Pad.ma (2015) organizers write, "to not wait for the archive is often a practical response to the absence of archives or organized collections in many parts of the world" (p. 353). If the archive was incomplete or difficult to access I would go out and build my own, I would determine the vernacular and visual language that would represent the community in my capacity as a participant-observer—a community member and trained researcher. This position afforded me access to the living rooms and photo-albums of community members and the expertise to understand the significance of images and stories in a way that would be difficult for an outside researcher. Furthermore, although the images I collect are not from my own time, dating back to the foundations of the community, they are often

conventional, focused around specific events long associated with family albums (weddings, birthdays, holidays, etc.), it is in conjunction with conversations that oral stories emerge to challenge and contextualize the celebrations, yearnings, and fears of the community. This process ultimately creates an accidental archive, where the collection of material is not an initial goal of the project but its result. With the limits of an archive in mind, this chapter adopts what Terry Cook (2013) discusses as a transition from modern archiving (historian-archivist selects the archive) to postmodern archiving (the mediator-archivist shapes the societal archive). The chapter also incorporates postmodern ideas of engagement with the archive, as well as an arts-based approach to creation where the collected images are then riffed upon, modified and montaged to create a complex and nuanced narrative of community and place—a community album. This community album has the ability to represent the region in the same way the family album has historically represented the family and wider photographic conventions found within society. Similar to family albums, the community album provides an interrogation function and depicts, albeit constructed, narratives of social cohesion. As Bourdieu writes in *Photography a Middle-brow Art* (1996) "the most trivial photograph expresses, part from the explicit intentions of the photographer, the system of scheme of perception, thought and appreciation common to a whole group" (p. 6). Bourdieu's words speak to the fluidity of images as symbols and historical representations that live at the nexus of the past and present, where they are created in one period and interpreted in multiples thereafter until they are either destroyed, or made redundant. Archives are not simply a series of dead letters but become active documents as a gaze is placed upon them (Ghani, 2015, p. 58). The importance of the images as active becomes more imperative once my own images are montaged with the collected community images to create a dialogue. A conversation occurs through the blending of my images and those from the community, past and present co-

mingling in the same document. This helps to activate not only the aged images but also the actual site (the community) under study and facilitates a move from rural as a source of heritage, to communities that continue to operate today— from communities of the past to communities of the present and perhaps the future. Guy Mannes-Abbott (2015) writes about how archives are about generating futures, as the act of archiving is to influence the future as much as it is about encapsulating the past. And Derrida (1995) writes, "the question of the archive is not […] a question of the past…It is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and of responsibility for tomorrow" (p. 36). It is not enough to enlist the images of the community, nor is it enough to create my own, as there are limits to each of these repositories. As a result, in addition to collecting sound-clips, videos and objects, I also collect images, from the community and beyond, repurposing them for use within the project to create a make-shift community album. There are drawbacks to this process as the practitioner who embraces post-photographic ideals and experiments with creating a counter-narrative runs the risk of creating something truly anomalous (perhaps even ugly). In the digital age we make trips to the digital graveyard to dig up buried images. As a result, projects adopting this methodology must be wary not to create a gestalt-like 'Frankenstein's Monster' where disparate elements coalesce to create a disconnected whole. Akin to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (2002), the remixer and counter-narrative creator looks to take from others in intimate ways, only to find that the projection they create, albeit marvellous, is a derangement and a transgression to someone or something out there. Although distinct, this approach is not unique; other practitioners have sought to create meaning through similar processes and by challenging the traditional ontology of what it means to archive. As Anthony Downey (2015) writes,

> "The archive as a haunted, disturbed space that re-emerges in the present and regenerates historical lineages is a feature of Ania Dabrowska's project, *Drift/ Resolution (from a Lebanese Archive)* (2013-2014). A series of photographic grids, triptychs, diptychs and collages, all sourced from the archival collection of Diab Alkarssifi, *Drift/ Resolution* presents personal work alongside found family albums and studio prints collected from across the Middle East." (p. 37)

Ronald Barthes (2000) might argue that all photography is about haunting and all memory is haunted in the sense that it is of the past and will not leave us. The visual narrative portion of this chapter builds directly on these ideas of hauntings and our engagement with the visual occult or what we could extend as a bastardized version of archive fever. As Azoulay (2015) writes, "archive fever challenges the traditional protocols by which official archives have functioned and continue to do so" (p. 197). Works like Alkarssifi's *Drift/ Resolution* or *Bury Me* challenge the idea of who the archive exists for through a redefinition of the archive itself. These archives become a challenge to the old way of creating, storing and sharing knowledge. As Azoulay (2015) writes,

> "It is the result of numerous individual initiatives of creating new archives and depositories, and of claiming the right to rearrange and use existing ones. Radical changes brought about by the new (civil) media have turned these initiatives into a contagious and irreversible trend, whereby archival processes, such as collecting, extracting and cataloging, can be practiced through these new media in a way that contest the monopoly, let alone the authority or prerogative, of official archival agents and institutions." (p. 197)

These changes, the prevalence of new media forms, in addition to changing conditions of production, circulation, and storage of images (McQuire 2013), the omnipresence of digital technology (Lister 2007), and photographic abundance (or saturation), have empowered the individual by reconfiguring centuries old power dynamics. There are also undertones of challenge and perhaps even egalitarianism present here—the idea that no archive is invalid, but all archives (or collections) are incomplete, biased and unstable. The artist, like any other agent of change, has the ability to renegotiate and rewrite the visuality of a place. Bury Me is one of the numerous accounts of place and community that exits on the Canadian Prairies. Bury Me is a project made not from the perspective of the archivist or the traditional social scientist, but by the insider and the creative, the result of which is something utterly unique, equal parts process and performance (end of process), a fugitive narrative of place both real and imagined. It is through this counter-archive standing against the established history of the community, of the small town on the prairies, that a fugitive narrative of place it put forth and a new text on the rural forged.

Conclusion

By using the framework of localism and by studying place as an imagined entity and an emotionally-charged locality, this chapter explores a prairie town that is both particular and universal to the region. The aim is to continue the project's larger exploration of the myths of banality and the pristine nature of rural spaces and how these concepts have been represented, idealized and challenged through the practice of documentary photography. While other chapters have focused on the frameworks of provincialism (an extension of Canadian nationalism) and regionalism (a focus on the prairie region within North

America), 'Returning To' continues that set of critiques by providing an in-depth study of the prairie town Mundare. Furthermore, as a way to understand prairie place, 'Returning To' uses a mixed-methods approach informed by arts-based research methods and recent conceptualizations of post-photography. For further contextualization, a number of photographers in the region with substantial projects documenting rural communities are discussed, and finding no examples of post-photographic explorations of rural communities, pertinent North American examples are discussed.

Similar to the 'Digging In' chapter, which uses *Keepsake* as an institutional archive providing a specific dominant narrative of rural place in Alberta, 'Returning To' discusses the local archive of the Basilian Fathers, as well as the community history book *Memories of Mundare* as texts worth interrogating. As a result, 'Returning To' devoted sections to discussing the inherent problems of institutional archives and their (in)ability to accurately depict place. Building upon this critique, the narrative and visual sections of this chapter challenge the dominant hegemonic narrative of the prairie town by developing a multi-dimensional and layered history of place through the use of creative montage. The visual section (titled *Bury Me*) of 'Returning To', diverges from the creative approach used in other chapters of this study by adopting a post-photographic documentary approach to critique the community's existing archives (images and text), to question ideas of deviance and banality and to produce an intimate reading of a rural place. Beyond creating a photographic account of a rural place, *Bury Me* utilizes an expanded mix-methods approach by including the use of sound, found images, video, object creation, drawings and oral history as a way to montage and to challenge the idea of a prairie community. Together these documents, these private objects and souvenirs tangle to tell an intimate story of rurality. As a result, the project is both a document, an inquiry, a performance and a

transgression. It is a cartographic illusion, a community album that contains not only the roses but also the numerous thorns attached to each stem, the collective virtues and vices found at the heart of any complex place. More importantly, it is simply a story being recorded, recollected and reconfigured—a layered portrait of rurality that is both unique and universal. What remains is the stoicism of place, a lived existence, which roars at times and suffers quietly at others. This is not a straightforward document, but one that is meant to excite, awe, confuse, bore and most of all, is meant to be revisited. An in-depth exploration of Mundare does more than simply register an account of a prairie town, it provides us with an understanding of the complexities operating at the heart of any rural community. It is a document of place that is particular to the history of Mundare but also universal to the prairie region in its formation history and many of its social practices and codes. As Jackson (1970) wrote about his fictitious American rural community Optimo City, "it is in no danger of dying out quite yet. As we said to begin with, there is another [one] fifty miles farther on. The country is covered with them" (p. 131). Similar to other sections of this project, this chapter highlights the fluidity of the construction of a place; whether it is a region or a community, places are in flux, never complete, always in process, always constituted and reconstituted by those within and those without. Places are malleable ideas and by thinking about them and by challenging them we can provide a more accurate, more nuanced interpretation of their history, their current state and their future conditions. As a result, the nature of this chapter is exploratory—to turn over rocks and to make accounts of what lies beneath, to prioritize practice and process as the aim and the outcome with the unintended result being a re-envisioning of place. To these ends it is appropriate to conclude with the words of Heat Moon (1982), who writes: "the people who built the British Stonehenge used it as a time machine whereby starlight—the light of the past—could show them a future of equinoxes, solstices, eclipses" (p. 250). The community of

Mundare is not a vessel to predict the future, but perhaps it can function as a guide to understanding a potential future the rural may face.

Returning To - Narrative: Revisiting Home and Finding Place

Introduction

A repetitive exercise of this study has been to imagine place. So once again, let us continue imagining. Here is the scenario. You awake on a park-bench on what appears to be the main-street of a small town. Confused and disorientated you do not know where you are or how you got there. You look around for markers that may give away your location. When you look around, what do you see? What makes this town distinguishable from other prairie communities built on the legacy of settler-agrarianism? From the position of an outsider looking in, this prairie town may seem unremarkable, it may be quaintly banal or indecipherable, but stay a bit longer, dig a bit deeper and this particular prairie town, like any place or landscape, will tell you something. Listen to the old codger at the bar or the silence of the open prairie landscape and you will soon find that this town holds many stories; official stories but also stories omitted from official history books, stories told triumphantly, shared in good faith and whispered in confidence. These stories span the history of the community, from a murder-suicide in 1952, where a husband shot his wife, daughter and son and then himself, to the more recently unstable husband and father broken from the knowledge of his wife's infidelity, who walks to the outskirts of the town and takes his life amongst the adolescent wheat stocks. Or Bodner, the old barber and pool hall owner who was found dead in the river, the official account being he had fallen, possibly drunk, while others speculate that he was into other 'activities' that challenges the official narrative. The pool hall was taken over by Shorty, who had a black wife, a

relationship that stands out in a homogenized Ukrainian community. Shorty himself disappeared not long after he arrived. The 'old-timers' will explain, "he was into drugs", they say "he is not part of the town's history". The official history of the community would prefer not to immortalize these stories, although they did occur and the scars they leave on the community are no less real because of their official omission. What these stories illustrate is that if you stick around long enough you will learn at the heart of any small prairie town is the dichotomy of what it is and what it wants to be. The outsider can learn these stories, but grow up there and they are innate, often overheard while parents socialize on mainstreet, or shared over a rum and coke with men who spill stories of days past at the curling rink.

Not all events are tragic, the idea of general deviance and 'Tom-Foolery' has a way of mixing with the quaint or even the banal for historical or entertainment value. Sometimes unhappy historical events have a way of being quite quirky or droll. The wording of an article on a motorcycle accident found in the short-lived *Mundare Monitor* is exemplary of this, it reads: "we were so shocked to hear that he was hurt so terribly because everybody loves him in Mundare". Other stories seem to hold humour and deviance in equal measure, like the story of the alcoholic couple in the pink corner house who would throw empty beer cans at the kids as they passed by; a couple who would simply hide inside and laugh when the cops came to investigate. Every small town is full of stories like this. My grandfather, before he was of legal drinking age, would loiter around the liquor store with his friends until an unsuspecting drunk bachelor would stumble out with a case of beer. The bachelor would place the beer in the back of his flatbed and drive away. With their headlights off

they would follow him on the highway, pull up close and jump from the hood of their car into the flatbed, once the beer and thirsty youth made their way back to the vehicle, they would slow down and head back to town. These were the days you would risk your life for a case of short necks. Good ole stories. Like the time Grandpa went outside to scare away the coyotes with his shotgun only to send a warning blast into the air that severed the power line to the house. Comical and playful, these stories do become more serious, like when a local bar owner would fire a .22 rifle into the air after closing hours to scurry his late-hour patrons, or the time that without warning buckshot mangled the back of Leonard Dziweinka's car and lodged pellets in his friend, all because they were drinking on a farmer's property without permission. Not all small towns are sleepy communities where everyone bakes each other pies and leaves their doors unlocked, although that has occurred in the past but with less frequency today. One resident recalled to me, "we used to leave our doors open, we weren't scared of our neighbours or if they'd break into our homes. We didn't even own a key. Granted back then, everyone had very little worth stealing". More recently crime and deviance has become a growing topic of conversation discussed in rural communities. This is something I've observed by people asking me what I'm doing in their towns, following me in their cars until I leave town, or calling the cops on me. Today's prairie ruralites are suspicious and with an increase in thefts, they have a right to be. In 2017, almost half of crime in Canada's rural areas occurred in the prairie three provinces, which only accounts for about a quarter of Canada's population served by rural police services. Property crime across the province of Alberta is also increasing according to local RCMP statistics. Deviance and crime have always been present in rural communities, deviance and crime are cultural universals after all. Rural civility and rural

banality work in tandem with a narrative of hardened frontierism and the deviance and crime that accompany an entire region of settler communities trying to navigate a new land and new social norms—the collective consciousness attempting to merge heritage with the particularities of a new environment.

What People Will Tell You?

Listening to long-term community members provides a sense of change that is near universal to all prairie towns. Towns are 'quieter' now. You may hear the idling of a parked car (winter or summer), the sound of a train off in the distance, but most often you hear silence. People also maintain you used to *know* more people, you used to *know* everyone. People are moving onward, and upwards, or to the grave. In the past everyone had more time. Yes, you were always busy, but you always made time for a coffee or a 'shot', always time to make small chat at the bank or the post office. There was always some weather or event to discuss, harvest, seeding, impending horror frost, a new breed of dwarf wheat the Lesniks are testing that looks promising. It was a farming town. Progress or rather change is a constant. Farmers once relied on the advice of elders to predict the weather, slowly they are forgetting the local's advice and the Farmer's Almanac in favour of the iPhone.

The 'old-timers' and the local history book (*Memories of Mundare*) are quick to recount how packed the town and country dances were with multiple halls full on a single night—Starline Lodge had one every weekend and Old Ukrina School, which turned into a dance hall on weekends, always ran out of parking. As the colloquial phrase goes, 'back in the day'

you'd sneak in your own booze, and everyone was drunk, dancing away to the bands and orchestras of the day. As people and booze mixed fights would ensue, as one community elder recounted to me, "of course certain families were more 'active' when drinking than others". I am told my family was one of them. I am told Mike Stawnichy was almost always drunk and the Stawnichys in general were the most respectable gentlemen when sober, but when impaired they became ill-mannered often budding heads with the Firmaniuks—"hey you ask my girl to dance, now let's fight". I am told it was biological, but it was also a cultural act. To drink was to abandon all self-control. Families did not only square off, but towns. Mundare and Vegreville were friendly, Holden and Ryley were not. One dance a local of Mundare said, "send out your toughest guy", one stepped forward and two minutes later the Mundare local was drowning the guy in a puddle with a boot on his neck. These social functions provided opportunities for social unity while continuously redefining social expectations to tease out what deserved praise and scorn. The demands of the early prairie pioneer meant alienation from everyone but immediate family was a daily reality making events (dances, concerts, weddings, meetings) all the more important. Today all the country halls are decaying relics and the town halls have gone quiet, no longer fulfilling a social function for rural youth, no longer providing a venue for unique stories that sustain and extend the notion of an active place.

If I'm picturing the community as a fading ghost town then I have created a false portrayal, I am merely emphasizing certain long-term changes in the community. Changes that can be witnessed in numerous other small towns in the region. Mundare still has an active community and hosts a number of major community events: the Winter Carnival, the

Canada Day Street Festival, the religious pilgrimage of Vidpust, the late May garage sale, and the town's annual celebration of community called Agri-Daze complete with parade, ball tournament, bench show and beach party (with truck-loads of real sand). The garage sale may be an atypical (even humorous) addition, however, it illustrates the importance of informal community relationships. If the weather is good the day will draw hundreds. In 2017, the firehall sold out of hot dogs and the thirty-two Baba's set up in The National Hall practising the ancient art of pinching dough sold out of perogies. The Canada Day Street Festival is a recent addition to the town's portfolio of events. Canada's 150th was celebrated by Ukrainian Dancers, street performers with an attendance of 250 (up from 125 the previous year). Cupcakes adorned with little Canadian flags were handed out and the make-shift beer gardens were steady, even though drink options were limited. Overall the event seems to be a success, however, a few missing demographics stick out, the lack of community members between the age of 20-35, any ball tournament players, and the individuals who have been socially coded as 'deviant characters' by the majority of the town.

Let's Have a Shot - Substance Abuse in the Community

Ideas of rural crime have long been associated with the abuse of substances and Mundare is no exception. But illicit and addictive substances also have a long history of normalization within the community. As a historically Ukrainian community, growing poppies for medicinal reasons was not uncommon. Also known as 'Baba's Poppies', these opiates would be grown in gardens and used to make a form of Laudanum, a pain-reducing

remedy used in the community until the 1950s. An act that would be deemed deviant by today's standards, the use of Baba's Poppies as a pain medication speaks to the difficulty to procure pharmaceuticals for pain management and the inventiveness, 'old world knowledge' and 'make-do' spirit of the settler. Hemp was also harvested and used in the region as a source of linen, rope and oil. This speaks to the industriousness of early settlers to rely on themselves and their communities to produce the goods they needed for survival, similar to how mushroom foraging (pecherechi, morels, chanterelle), berry picking (saskatoons, pincherries, low-bush cranberries, raspberries, gooseberries, blackberries, choke-cherries, strawberries) and hunting and trapping (deer, elk, prairie chickens, grouse, moose) were also common in the area. Sometimes a deer would be shot in the off-season, but everyone kept quiet as they might receive a share of the meat. A poacher isn't a poacher if he's sharing. More recently issues of opioid abuse in the form of prescribed painkillers and the introduction of methamphetamines into the community have become a common concern of local residents who draw a connection between the use of these drugs and the recent increase in property crime. A decade ago I didn't even know what meth was. But substance abuse in rural communities goes farther back than this. Before 'hard drugs' were a problem on the prairies there was the drink and the drink was kin.

Alcohol abuse in rural communities is a concern while also holding a socially acceptable position, not demonized the same way as the use of opioids or methamphetamines. Drinking in the region is rooted in established cultural practices and is exasperated by boredom, the result of which is the masking of addiction as tradition or a socially accepted behaviour. This is a phenomena that is largely present in the region itself

and is not specific to Ukrainian culture, operating as a long-routed aspect of Canadian culture. The idea of deviance and conformity may be partially conflated in these small towns where the idea of drinking to excess is not thought of as deviant, but rather, as socially acceptable and even a sign of conformity and social cohesiveness. As a result, a fine line between the celebration of the drink and social and personal breakdown exists—the sliver between jovial and fun drinking and destructive alcoholism. Furthermore, alcohol consumption in rural communities can be both a sign of a functioning and non-functioning society with the difference between the two being the frequency in which people drink, how dependency is viewed, and if a differentiation between the act of solitary or social drinking is made.

Mundare was not simply a drinking town, it was a moonshining town. My own grandfather is rumoured to have been a moonshiner. He owned a general store before specializing in sausage making. The smoke houses, used in the sausage process were a perfect place to hide a still so whenever members from the Vegreville RCMP detachment would check the area for stills they would never find it. It also helped that the police were friendly, often having coffee with my grandfather. It was rumoured they quit 'shining' after they almost burnt down the house. All of these are rumours passed down like hushed folklore. Moonshine may be an illicit act, but viewed culturally its acceptance is debatable, especially if the moonshiner made good shine. The practice was widespread, another moonshiner was Marshall Shewchuk, more colourfully known was 'Yankee' and everyone in the community knew Yankee moonshined. The police knew as well. One day when he was emptying his buried still, he looks to his left, he looks to right, and he sees two pairs of

shiny high leather Mountie boots. Yankee had an ingenious system of never having liquor with him but always knowing where you could get it. Upon purchase he'd say "ok, go one quarter of land east and two west and check near the culvert for a bottle". As a result, finding moonshine in unexpected places was not uncommon. My grandfather found a gallon of moonshine behind the old firehall (near the present-day post office). He was thirteen. For his fourteenth birthday he had 5/8th of a gallon of moonshine and a whole lot of friends. You were always going to be popular if you supplied the alcohol. There was a moonshiner with a wooden leg who lived north of town a mile or two, lived without power and water. This fellow is not to be confused with the local shoemaker with a wooden leg who also 'shined'. His house was raided but the police were unable to locate the moonshine hidden in the washing machine. In the early days of the community the police were overly strict about two things, moonshine and the use of purple gas (tax exempt gas for farmers). Most of the shine was produced for personal or local consumption, however some shiners were large enough to supply demand in Edmonton. Mike Kowall would fill a truck with wheat to hide the moonshine underneath, selling the illicit booze to nightclubs in the 1960s. I am told it was 'good shine'. Another local tells me that the 1960s were particularly tough that many people considered making shine to make ends meet. Another local told me that "every family had one [still], buying it was too expensive, everyone had their own moonshine operation" to feed their personal enjoyment. They called Mundare 'Little Chicago', but they also called other towns in the area 'Little Chicago'. It is unclear if this was a badge of humour or shame but it does illustrate the social embeddedness of drinking. The drink as a social activity would invade other aspects of everyday-life in in-ordinary ways. A local resident named Erwin Ashmore once walked into Jerry's Grocery to purchase

groceries and to 'have a shot', he brought his own bottle and so he and the proprietor went to the back of the store to have a midday shot. This was not an uncommon practice at other businesses including Stawnichy's Meat Processing and White Farm Garage. Rural keggers, the predecessor to the more contemporary bush party, were common every weekend and if it was your birthday social convention dictated you buy a keg. The social abstention to drinking was not always an option. These keg parties would move from place to place, from pasture to pasture, occurring anywhere you could find semi-secluded land. One party resulted in a bulldozer being turned on and running blindly for half a mile in the dark of night. The larger of these keg parties started on Friday and continued until Sunday, or until all the kegs were empty. In other instances, it wasn't uncommon to buy 'a mickey' (375ml) and drive into the country to enjoy it or to uncap a bottle at 11am on main-street. Many parties would go through the night, if it was a Saturday night some people would attempt to make church, most would not. As a line from local poet Harvey Spak goes,

> "drive me to the church, I want to go to communion"
> you were so drunk you fell asleep in the river

Elements of the social practice of drinking carry on today but the widespread engagement of collective drinking is largely gone. As a social lubricant, alcohol is the elixir of life, the body of Christ. As a solitary practice it is man's ruin, the devil incarnate. The relationship between alcohol consumption and socialization is key, to drink in excess is a socially acceptable practice, to drink alone and in excess was to run the risk of being labelled an 'al-cee'. Stories of alcoholic debauchery that occur in a group setting can be recounted with

fondness and laughter, a man who drinks alone finds it difficult to share his stories. When my sister was born, my grandfather, a respected businessman and local politician, disappeared for a couple of days on a celebratory drinking spree moving from house to house to share the good news of 'grandfather-hood'. This seems rather unique, a story that may only occur under auspicious circumstances, however I am told of others who have celebrated births in similar ways. Characters and stories like this don't exist anymore. Stories of hush-hush moonshining go hand in hand with weekend booze-cruising. My four grandparents were 'touring the country' on a booze-cruise, going from house to house, making stops, having vodkas, visiting friends. Late into the night they return to the family farm where one of my grandfathers pulls out his accordion and starts to play for the pigs. For an hour in the dark he played for those pigs. Gravel roads at night with blind corners are always dangerous, adding booze only makes them more so. Gravel roads were often empty and untraversed, the danger was always the intersection, or a wild deer on the periphery. Sometimes it was simpler just to drive in the fields to get where you needed to go, this would allow you to avoid 'hitting the rhubarb'. Although sometimes the rhubarb was hit. Twenty years ago, my grandma was alone on the farm. A man shows up at the front door, hollering and banging. He starts to break in. Grandma runs into the garage and takes off in the Lincoln. She goes to Mundare to get grandpa, who is attending a local farming meeting. They race back with a few others and find a stranger in the bedroom, he's sitting with a towel wrapped around a bloody hand, the other holding a telephone. Drunk, he hit the ditch near the house. The car rests flipped in the willows, booze the culprit. His friend is still in the car. Drunk? Hurt? Dead? They don't know, neither does this drunk dialer. This booze hound, this plastered lush, he's busy talking to his girlfriend trying to bum a ride.

Booze-cruise culture has been a part of rural culture and continues today, one officer did twenty-two impairments last year alone. I myself have more than one cousin with a DUI case, have sought safety in a snowy ditch from a drunkard driving in the wrong lane and we all have that friend who was more sober than us who hid the keys.

Today the town is full of solitary drinkers, drinking from bottles that empty them. Past Mayor Peter Polischuck Sr. recounts when The Corner Pub remained full on weekends, once the anti-home, a timeout from the real world, a space of escape, it now sits empty. There is some life at the pub, busy on Wing Wednesday and the monthly Karaoke night, some drunks go in, have a high ball and pull on one of the three VLT machines in the corner, losing slightly more than they win, pockets slightly less full at the end of every week. Other local drunks roam the streets. I stumble across Ron and Dwayne one evening, Ron is pushing a makeshift stroller rattling of 'Busch' empties, coherently he tells me about living in the bush, sleeping outside and eating fish in Ontario. Along comes Dwayne on a rusted mountain bike dawning weathered construction gloves. He is heavily inebriated and has difficulty not only slowing his bike but also standing. He is verbally abusive to Ron and I, and asks if I'm recording him with an "8-track device". He talks at Ron about the forty dollars someone owes him and the stolen beers he drank. These individuals roam the quiet streets and stick to themselves. Similar to how 'upstanding' community members stick to their own spaces. Often you will find locals socially drinking in their own homes or their machine shops, too often having to drive too far to get home after too many. During the long winter or on rainy harvest days these men can be found drinking Lamb's white rum,

grey goose bottles filled with Smirnoff and diluted by Clamato bottles filled with water, snacking on peanuts and popcorn telling stories of old. Dirty old men in the making.

New Substance Abuse in the Community

The abuse of alcohol in rural communities is an issue that is both present and prevalent but certainly not novel. However, the recent increase (real or imagined) in opioid and methamphetamine abuse causes concern with a number of factors suggesting an exasperation in the issue: growing rural alienation, social isolationism, changes to the economic base of the region, and a diminishment of local services. Addiction drives rational people to do irrational acts. To steal from a longtime friend or to torch a vehicle on the highway for the insurance money. There is a common belief in the community that there is a positive correlation between drug use and the increase in property crime. Reading the headlines from the local newspapers (*The Vegreville Observer*, *The Vegreville Advertiser*, *Hi-way 16 News*), we can gleam perceptions of deviancy in the area: 'Drug Bust in Mundare', 'Youth Crime Spree ends in Mundare', 'Positive Identification Obtained on Murder Victim', 'Body Found Near Mundare', Thieves Rob Mundare Pharmacy', 'Fires Near Mundare', 'ATM Robbed in Mundare'. These headlines sit next to banal ones like 'Innisfree's Annual Slip and Slide a Success', and 'Storm Brings Down Tree'. The statistical correlation between an increase in drug abuse in the community and criminality is difficult to determine, less difficult to glimpse is the local perception that the relationship exists. Community members make the argument that rural areas are easy targets for criminal activity. Historically, smaller towns would appoint their own deputies, early in its history Mundare had its own

small jail. My grandfather was deputized at one point ensuring kids would not rip up and down main-street in their trucks. This was the same grandfather who disappeared on a two-day celebratory bender when his first grandchild was born and who was rumoured to moonshine. Today the closest RCMP detachment is in Vegreville besting a response time of fifteen minutes. Fifteen minutes is a long time. A counter-argument is that everyone knows everyone and people look out for one another and this is true, I can attest to this as people have called the cops on me, inquired what I was doing in their communities, why I was walking around with a camera. Townspeople are vigilant but it is difficult to be vigilant in the country where houses are miles apart. And if everyone knows everyone they also know when someone is not home. As a result, people install cameras, build fences, buy thick steel locks, hide keys in obscure locations, and invest in guard dogs. I haven't been able to determine if people feel less safe but their actions speak to a belief that their stuff sure is. I can count a dozen people who have experienced break-ins, or property theft including my parents, my grandparents and my two aunts. When I asked a local if they felt crime was on the rise, they said yes, citing the recent front end loader that attempted to pull the ATM machine out of the bank or how the liquor store has been recently 'hit' three times. Another local tells me how he started his car to "warm it up" and within five minutes it was stolen and torched a few hundred metres from his farm yard. These occurrences do not seem to be slowing but rather intensifying, suggesting that the community will continue to face issues of addiction and crime and that its dark and whispered history of deviance will also continue indefinitely.

Bury Me in the Back Forty (2014-2019)

From the Dakotas to Alberta, small towns on the prairies are a dime a dozen; peaceful and congenial sleepy towns that can often be substituted for another. Bury Me in the Back Forty is a long-term multi-media project that documents Mundare, Alberta, a seemingly typical rural community. Through photographs, collected objects, community archives, audio recordings, oral histories, drawings and sketches, the idea of a prairie-town is performed. Together these documents, these private objects and souvenirs tangle to tell an intimate story of rurality. The project is both a document, an inquiry, a performance, and a transgression. It is a cartographic illusion, a community album that contains not only the roses but also the numerous thorns attached to each stem. The collective virtues and vices found at the heart of any complex place. More importantly, it is simply a story being recorded, recollected, and reconfigured—a layered portrait of rurality that is both unique and universal. The result of which is the stoicism of place, a lived existence, which roars at times and suffers so quietly at others. This is not a straightforward document, it is meant to excite, awe, confuse, bore and most of all, it is meant to be revisited.

The narrative that follows is somewhat of a fugitive storyline. A place where folklore and alchemy mixes with the academy to create a collective, albeit paradoxically disjoined, narrative of life on the prairies. The fugitive narrative we are left with is made up of organic components synthetically placed to create a gestalt-like feeling of community past and present. A narrative of stories that have been told to me by community members and the stories I have told myself by way of empty fields, the sway of the trees and the howl of the coyotes. A form of community particle collider, forcing narratives together, merging them, grinding them against one another until something derivative emerges, something new and indistinguishable from one another—real and imagined. These collisions inhabit an in-betweenness, an imagined community. This in-betweenness is not a place to shy away from, it allows us the opportunity to gleam a possible future. Like Stonehenge built in the past, but guiding future solstices, Bury Me is equal parts time-machine and time-capsule guiding us towards one of the many fates awaiting the rural, marking its constellations, telling us when it is time for growth and more importantly when it is time for dormancy and death.

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Anglo-Saxon farmers who settled during the late 1800's near Beaverhill Lake (Kings, McCallums) the tools on the other hand, were Janko's responsibilities. As a result, he quickly learned basic English, the monetary







ing from neighbours only added to her difficulties. "Advice" which was sometimes received was often a practical joke which was viewed as humorous only much later in her life. One such piece of advice was received from a neighbour on a cold winter evening when the northern lights were very bright and low. It was an omen, he said, that by midnight it would become so cold that no creature would survive upon entering outdoors. Heeding his

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Anna Kubin Kurashevich had lived to see her new house built, her children grow, marry and have children as well as to see some of her close ones pass away. Her husband Victor passed away in 1943 from cancer and her dependable son, Joseph, passed away in 1949 from an incurable skin disease resulting from poisoning due to contact of grain treatment on an infested sore.

In her late years, Anna often remarked that she had lived a full life which had its disappointments, sorrow and happiness. Her greatest happiness was to see her children do well. Two sons Peter and Frank left home as young lads, served with the Canadian Armed Forces and later became excellent mechanics with the Ford and Chrysler companies in Eastern Canada. As was customary, the daughters, Pauline, Mary, Antoinette, Evangeline and Rose one-by-one married young farm boys. Joseph, too, married and farmed near the homestead. However, he was gifted with an insight for economic, educational, and political progress for the area of Borshchiw (it was later renamed Moscow after a nickname given to the farmer who owned the land on which the residing "Moscow

family, Anna had to overcome many fears and much grief particularly during the winter months. Ridicule and teas-


TOWNSHIP 59
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15 W.4.M.
M.D. OF EAGLE No. 81
RANGE 19 W.4.M.
RANGE 20 W.4.M.
MICHAEL SLEPANKI
MUNDARE, ALBERTA
LEGEND
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SECONDARY ROADS
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NEW LAKE SHORE
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CREEKS
DITCHES
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INCORPORATED AREA
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BEAVERHILL
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NORTH SASKATCHEWAN RIVER



GRAND FATHER
ED STAWNICHY
GRAND SON
KYLER ZELENY

M.D. OF STRATHCONA No. 83

M.D. OF BEAVER No. 73

MICHAEL SLEPANKO
MUNDARE, ALBERTA T0B 3H0

DIAGRAM OF TOWNSHIP SHOWING SECTION NUMBERING

DIAGRAM OF SECTION SHOWING LEGAL SUBDIVISIONS

COMPILED UP TO APRIL 30, 1949 BY M. T. NEMIRSKY
SECRETARY-TREASURER M.D. 82

DESIGNED AND DRAWN BY W. HORBAY, EDMONTON, 1949

TOWNSHIP 54
TOWNSHIP 53
TOWNSHIP 52
TOWNSHIP 51

RANGE 17 W.4.M.
RANGE 16 W.4.M.
RANGE 15 W.4.M.

Town of

Being Mayor and . .

by Michael H. Tomyn

Although Mundare ha
no early municipal reco
documents were lost in t
older citizens recall the
such as J. D. McAllister
Bahry. No doubt, the Vi
crew were a hardy lot ca
pioneering, poverty, priva

Since 1928 the Village
with long terms in office:
1928 to 1939, and Dr. N
1940 to 1946. Others w
Lesnik for one year - 19
and J. Swekla who serve
village status three cou
amongst themselves they

In 1950, M. Tomyn be
the Village of Mundare
be governed by a council
cillors. The ratepayers, a
town status, by an una
town elections in Februa
as the first Mayor of the Town of Mundare. The names of the six councillors and their assigned departments were as follows: M. Wilinski, Public Works; N. Lysakowski, Health and Welfare; I. Harlock, Parks and Playgrounds; J. Diduch, Fire Protection; R. Feniak, Public Utilities; and G. Dushinski, Finance.

Joe Souchuk was the Secretary-Treasurer, an appointed position he held for many years. His meticulous records were of tremendous help to the Council.

The Public Works Department looked after all aspects in relation to streets, sidewalks, and culverts. Two ratepayers were hired to clean snow off public walks.

The Health and Welfare Department's job was garbage and sewage disposal, nuisance grounds, and indigents. (Quite a mixture). At the time, Mundare had no sewage disposal system; outhouses or privies were the answer. Indigent relief was always a very touchy problem.

The Parks and Playgrounds Department included the skating rink, curling rink, and parks.



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Peter Polischuk - Present Mayor.

Cocoa made in a big boiler over the kitchen range in the basement provided a hot drink, especially in wintertime.

The doctor and the health nurse would visit the school periodically to give the "needle" and check up on health

In summer the
horse and buggy;
cutter. Sometimes
caboose which affc

Since the roads
teacher would wall
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A rare but haj
perience of the tea
tending Plain Lake
William Tomyn, to
while posing for t
shield was award
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M. Tomyn, who
School, was award
ment.

In 1947, Boris Fodchuk, a Kolomea School student, was awarded the Governor-General Medal for achieving the highest scholastic standing on the grade nine departmental examinations in the Vegreville Inspectorate.

vyer in Vancouver. Helen Ferguson
ction in 1939.

d Park on the last day of school for
ways a big treat. Transporation was
truck.

students have gone on to notable
sh sons, all with degrees and in top
orayko, teacher; Walter Salaman-
Fodchuk, lawyer; Walter Wyn-
orge Spak, teacher; Mary Spak,
co, teacher; Bill Procyk, R.C.M.P.;
, teacher; Annabelle Ashmore,
chuk, teacher; and Elizabeth Bed-
riter apologizes for any omissions).

most of the country schools were
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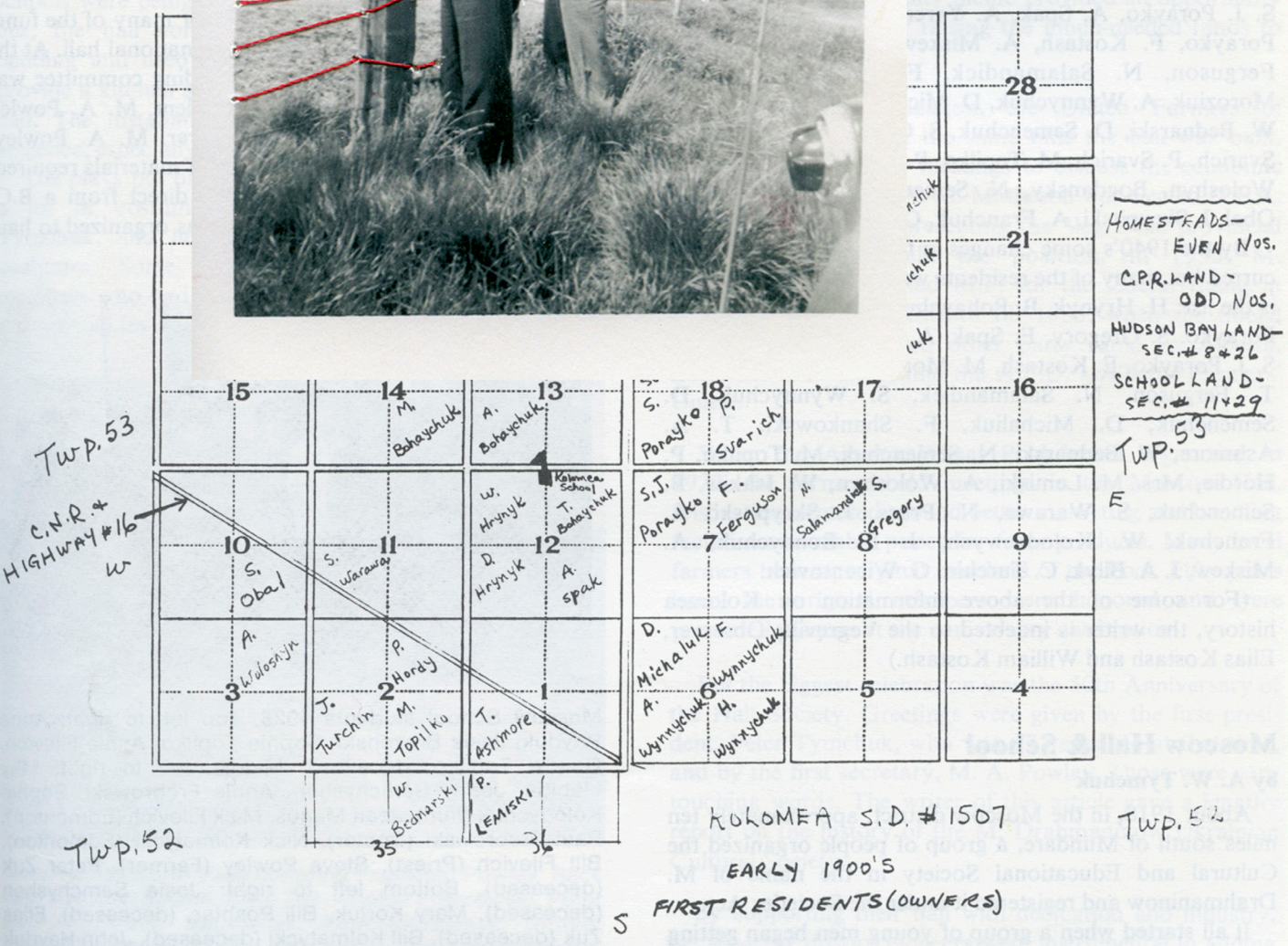
ze and sophistication. A similar fate
l since the enrolment went down to





Map 1943.

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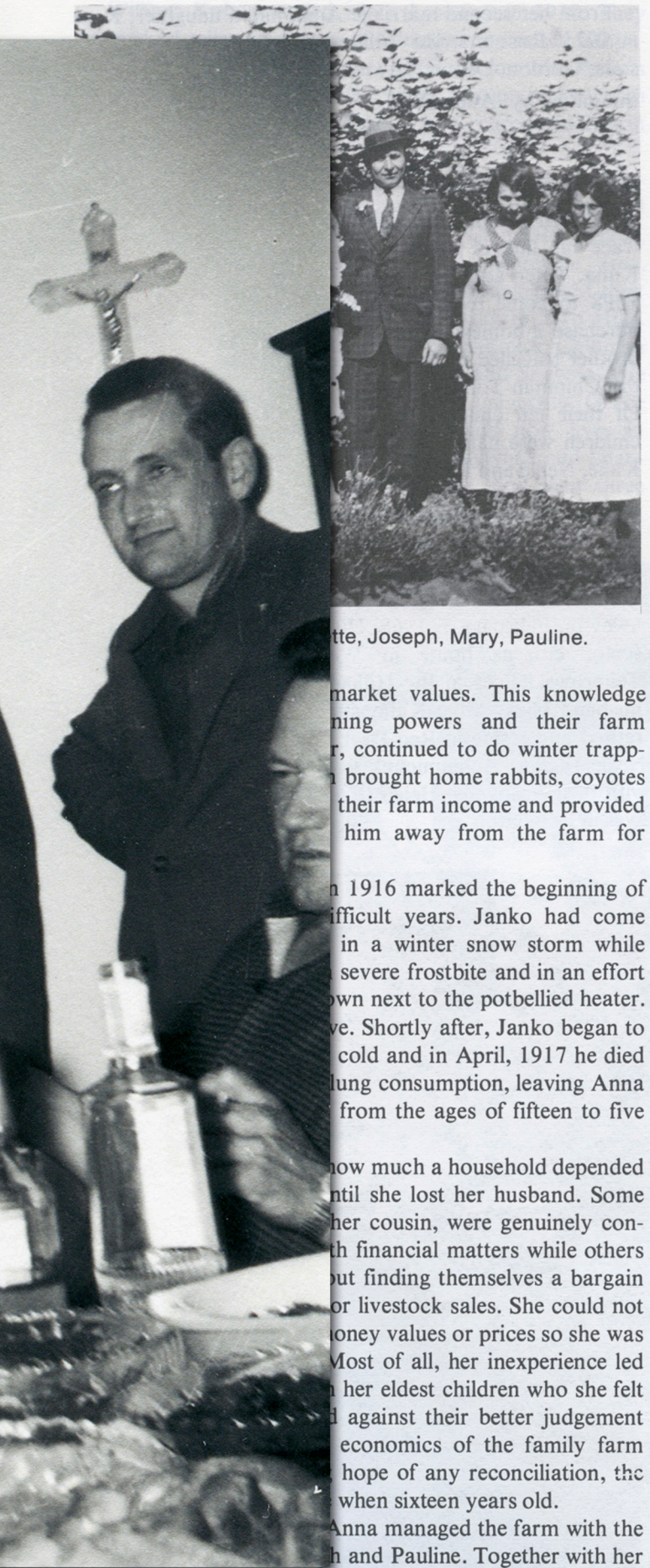
Anglo-Saxon farmers who settled during the late 1800's near Beaverhill Lake (Kings, McCallums) the tools

on the other hand, were Janko's responsibilities. As a result, he quickly learned basic English, the monetary



tte, Joseph, Mary, Pauline.

market values. This knowledge
ning powers and their farm
r, continued to do winter trapp-
brought home rabbits, coyotes
their farm income and provided
him away from the farm for

n 1916 marked the beginning of
ifficult years. Janko had come
in a winter snow storm while
severe frostbite and in an effort
own next to the potbellied heater.
ve. Shortly after, Janko began to
cold and in April, 1917 he died
lung consumption, leaving Anna
from the ages of fifteen to five

ow much a household depended
ntil she lost her husband. Some
her cousin, were genuinely con-
th financial matters while others
ut finding themselves a bargain
or livestock sales. She could not
oney values or prices so she was
Most of all, her inexperience led
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d against their better judgement
economics of the family farm
hope of any reconciliation, the
when sixteen years old.

Anna managed the farm with the
h and Pauline. Together with her family, Anna had to overcome many fears and much grief particularly during the winter months. Ridicule and teasing from neighbours only added to her difficulties. "Advice" which was sometimes received was often a practical joke which was viewed as humorous only much later in her life. One such piece of advice was received from a neighbour on a cold winter evening when the northern lights were very bright and low. It was an omen, he said, that by midnight it would become so cold that no creature would survive upon entering outdoors. Heeding his cautionary advice, Anna and her children dragged into the house as much firewood as was possible for the short notice. There was no time to cut or chop wood thus whole branches and tree trunks were dragged in with the hope that the firewood could be chopped as it was needed. Having hauled in enough wood to last several days, she bundled up her children and sent them all to sleep in one bed for warmth. The eldest children lay awake and listened with Anna. In awhile a strong wind was heard and they shuddered as they felt the drafts through the cracks in the walls. A few hours later the wind ceased and Anna could hear knocks and taps outside. Upon gaining enough courage to open the door, Anna discovered that it was the dripping from the roof — they were experiencing a chinook!

In 1920 the Janko Kubin house burned down leaving the family to fend for themselves under a clear sky. Shortly after, neighbours managed to re-roof and repair the house for temporary use. Later a two storey house with five rooms and a porch was built by men whom Anna hired from Mundare.

Anna resolved to do something about her situation of being a widow with six children. In 1922 she married a bachelor, a railway worker from Calgary, Victor Kurashevich who had initially come to court her with two of his matchmaker friends (Onyschuk and Lemiskiw) from the Andrew vicinity. The marriage created adjustment difficulties for the children but were eased somewhat with the arrival of a new sister, Rose.

Anna Kubin Kurashevich had lived to see her new house built, her children grow, marry and have children as well as to see some of her close ones pass away. Her husband Victor passed away in 1943 from cancer and her dependable son, Joseph, passed away in 1949 from an incurable skin disease resulting from poisoning due to contact of grain treatment on an infested sore.

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civic and religious organizations. Nellie toured Alberta organizing branches of the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League and addressing branches already organized. She also wrote a number of articles for use on festive occasions, including "From Pioneering to Organization", "U.C.W.L. in Step with Organized Ukrainian Women", and "The Apostolate of Christian Citizenship".

Of their two children, Laurine graduated in Foods and Nutrition and in Education. She is teaching Home Economics at Amityville, New York. Borden attended the University of Alberta, majoring in Physical Education. He is in the real estate business in Edmonton.

John was born in 1908. Not only was he the son who started serious farming at the age of nine, but he also continued to help his parents during school vacations while attending the local Mundare school and the University of Alberta. He interned in the General Hospital in Edmonton but opened his medical practice in Windsor, Ontario. He continued his medical practice until his death in 1979 at the age of 70. John learned to trap, shoot, and loved hunting, both wild fowl and big game.

He married Kathleen Budnick from Edmonton and raised three children: Cathy, John Jr., and Donald. Cathy graduated with a B.Sc. in Nursing and was married to Dr. Robert England. Cathy and her two sons live in Mercedes, California. John Jr. was a practising lawyer in Windsor, Ontario. He died at an early age in 1975, survived by his wife Martha and two children. Donald graduated in Medicine, took post-graduate work in plastic surgery in London, Ontario and is now practising and teaching medicine in Chicago. He has two children.

Paul was born in 1910. He attended the local school in Mundare but quit school after completing grade ten. Someone had to manage the farm and to care for the aging parents. He married Jean Zaozirny and they lived with the parents until both parents died. After farming for a number of years, Paul and Jean moved to Edmonton where Paul was employed by the General Hospital in the Pharmacy Department until his death in 1978 at the age of 67. Jean was an office clerk in the Acme Novelty Company. She now works in the Transport Department, Alberta Government. They have two children, Terrance and Marcia.

Terrance graduated with an M. Ed. degree and is principal in the St. Philips separate school in Edmonton where he and his wife, Judy and their 3 children reside.

Marcia completed high school in Mundare and was employed for some years by the Bank of Commerce as an accountant. She is now married to Ernie Palichuk and finds all her time occupied as a housewife and caring for her two children.

The above is a brief story of Wasyl and Tekla, pioneer settlers who came to Canada with faith in the future, love of freedom, and trust in God. Though they had many setbacks, they persevered and left their mark in their adopted country. Their descendants are seven children, twenty-four grand-children, fifty two great-grandchildren, and 8 great-great-grandchildren.

Miskew, Paul and Jean

Paul, the youngest son of Wasyl and Tekla Miskew (nee Woytovich) was born in the Village of Mundare on November 4, 1910. Paul attended school in Mundare until the end of grade ten, when he left to take over his parents homestead which was located one-half mile south of Mundare. During the depression years he cared for his parents and helped supplement his brother's university education.

On October 29, 1938 he married Jean Zaozirny in St. Peter and Paul Church in Mundare, Alberta. Jean, the youngest child of Theodore (Fred) and Anna Zaozirny was born September 7, 1921, in Mundare, Alberta. She completed grade ten and after her marriage to Paul they settled on the farm with Paul's parents where they lived until 1945 when they moved into Mundare.

Paul operated the Imperial Oil Bulk Station; then he went into partnership in the Mundare Food Lockers business. Jean worked in the egg grading station and for the Mundare Co-op.

Paul and Jean were active in community affairs: Paul was an ardent hunter, and curler. He was President of the Mundare Curling Club for many years. He was an active member of the National Film Board, the Hog Marketing Board, the United Farmer's of Alberta, the Elks and the Baseball club in Mundare. Jean belonged to Catholic Women's League, the Mundare Charity Club, the Mundare Home and School Association, the Red Cross and the Handicraft Guild. In 1966 they moved to Edmonton where Paul worked for the General Hospital until his retirement in November 1976. Jean worked for Acme Novelty Merchandising, the General Hospital, and now works for Alberta Transportation.

Paul passed away June 15, 1978.

Terrace, their eldest, was born March 23, 1942. He attended Mundare School. He was an active member of the Air Cadets. He was very active in athletics, and played all sports for Mundare teams. He graduated from the University of Alberta with a Bachelor of Education degree and began his teaching career with the Edmonton School Board System. Presently he is a school principal at St. Philip School. He married Judy Kozdrowski in 1964 in Mundare's St. Peter and Paul Church. Judy worked for the Bank until their children were born. They now have two boys, Lee and Stacy, and one daughter, Dawn Gaye.

Marica, the younger, was born February 4, 1944. She graduated from Mundare High School and was active in school clubs, athletics and the Mundare Ukrainian Catholic Youth. She married Ernest Palichuk in 1962. They have two children, Craig, and Cheryl Lynn. Marcia works for the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, and Ernest works for Alberta Government Services.

Miskew, Catherine and Andrew

by Jennie Sachkiw

My mother, Katherine, was a daughter of John and Nancy Wolonik. She and her sister Eva, came to Canada with their parents from Halychyna, Austria in the early

after we were married before we could buy our own house, and it took every penny we could raise to buy one for $2,500.00. We were so happy to own our own house as we had already moved six times. The doctor, too, was happy to work in a comfortable 24-bed hospital. He was now able to provide medical, surgical and obstetrical care with a very competent and co-operative staff of Sister nurses. By 1970 he delivered over 2500 babies, and was always thrilled when occasionally they were twins.

Our life settled into a routine, and the people and their families of Mundare and surrounding districts became an integral



very proud of their parents, and this was a very rewarding and memorable time in our family's life. We were and are deeply appreciative of this show of friendship.

We had the honor to be presented to Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II and her husband Prince Philip by our Mayor Mr. Polischuk on their visit to Alberta in August, 1978. In 1976 the Alberta Medical Association honored the 1926 graduating class in Medicine which was their golden anniversary. Doctor was one of the two doctors present. That same summer of 1976, we were asked to host the Vegreville Ukrainian Festival - three busy days, but very interesting ones.

On November 18th, 1979 at the opening of our new hospital, a tribute was paid to the doctor for his "outstanding contribution to the community in the field of Healing" by the Rev. Sisters of our hospital, who for 45 years worked with him and said "I pay tribute to one who gave of himself. He had touched many of our lives, and we are the richer for it."

We also found great satisfaction in being members of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. We are grateful to be part

monton. He received his B. Sc. degree in Zoology at the University of Alberta and his Law degree from the University of British Columbia in 1962. He received the Governor-General's medal in grade nine in Mundare. He is practising law in Calgary, and is married to Gladys Thielen, B. Ed. They have two children, Kathryn and Michael.

Our second daughter, Nicole Anne (Nikki), received her B. Sc. in Home Economics from the University of Alberta. She also has a Professional Certificate in Education. She

chose to live with Mr. Joseph Frebrowski and his family (on the present home place of Mr. Walter Frebrowski). The rest of the original family members lived with the Semchyshen Family until they could afford their own homestead.

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Anglo-Saxon farmers who settled during the late 1800's near Beaverhill Lake (Kings, McCallums) the tools

on the other hand, were Janko's responsibilities. As a result, he quickly learned basic English, the monetary



family, Anna had to overcome many fears and much grief particularly during the winter months. Ridicule and teas-

ing from neighbours only added to her difficulties. "Advice" which was sometimes received was often a practical joke which was viewed as humorous only much later in

e was received from a
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was an omen, he said,
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nk left home as young
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arm boys. Joseph, too,
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mic, educational, and
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renamed Moscow after a nickname given to the farmer who owned the land on which the residing "Moscow

The boys, during their teens, were actively engaged in sports. The family pretty well stayed together until the outbreak of the war. The family in total contributed 20 years to the defence of Canada. While the boys were in the service Matuska Ann joined the Red Cross and knitted socks and sewed up parcels in canvas to send to the boys overseas.

The Ewachniuk family will be forever grateful to the people of Mundare for their compassion, generosity, understanding and co-operation. They have left an indelible mark on them and the many pleasant memories which forever will be cherished. Although numerically it was a small town, it had a heart of gold. We are extremely grateful and proud to have contributed in a small measure to the past history whose young people have contributed so greatly to the cause of Canada. God Bless You All and Many Thanks.

Ewaskiw, Harry and Ma y

by Joe Ewaskiw

In 1897 my parents, H ry and Mary Ewaskiw emigrated from their native vi ge of Pawushewka in the County of Chorkiw, Western kraine to that land of opportunity - Canada! Fearless d eager they packed their meagre personal belongings a readily responded to the call of land of their own. My si ers Eva (then 3 years old) and Anne, an infant, and m mother's young brother Joseph Pehowich boarded a ip for Canada Win- nipeg my father filed his appli tion for Then continued by train to Strat

Locating the homestead or finding the NE-14-54-17-W4 i different matter. It happened t trict which was later called the father built a shack for shelte railway for some years to ear land was cleared and broken b den. Eventually my father a another. He made a plow ou mechanized farmer. The neigh The government office at Regi its taxes and for the year 1903 my father paid a $2.00 tax for his farm.

My uncle, Joe Pehowich, kept my mother company at the homestead while father was away at work. He continued to live with my parents until he was old enough to work on the railway.

After marrying Mary Ruzycki, he continued to live at Mundare for a few years before moving to Battenburg, and finally to Waskatenau, where he raised three children, Mike, Anne and Paul. He continued to be a section foreman until his early death of a heart attack. As the members of our family increased and grew up they helped with the work on the farm. Steve was born in 1900, then Nick, Julia, Katie, John, Joe, Bill and Paul. More land was cleared and broken as we acquired better machinery. Just as our lot was improving economically a tragedy struck. Father dropped to the ground, paralyzed. He had suffered a stroke while preparing feed for the horses. He was bedridden for four years before he died in 1928 at the age of 64.

Steve being the eldest son found himself saddled with the responsibility of operating the farm. He bought a new Rumly Oil-Pull tractor in 1928 to make it easier. He had acquired a little schooling in the Ukrainian language by attending lessons given by the Sisters Service Immaculate Order at the Convent at Mundare. His marriage broke up, but he continued to live at home and carry out my late father's role. In his later years he retired at the Town of Mundare where he lived alone in his little house suffering from sugar diabetes which resulted in the amputation of one of his legs, finally death in his 65th year, in 1965. He was predeceased by mother on April 28, 1948, also a diabetic, in her 73rd year, by sister Annie Pawlowski in 1931, sister ulia Palylyk in 1941 and sister Eva Kozdrowski, in 1945

I, Joe, was born on th 28th day of August, 1908, the 8th child in a family of n children. Older brothers and sisters helped with the far work; therefore I was the first child that had the oppo unity of going to school. Our home farm was in the Sv School District and I attended the Svit School, where Marie Dressler was the teacher. When I was in gr le 9 I had undergone surgery on r goiter and had los a lot of time from school. On re om the hospit I changed to the Paraskevia two eeks I had had enough and My parents took no objection d always use more help on the

a Hewko's daughter, Anne, of 932. I trained at Hilliard as a e job of a grain buyer for the Hilliard. Four years later the and my first job came to an er, John, had a small store at the hospital and he found the wife and I and our two year old daughter, Geraldine, moved to Mundare and took over John's business. By 1940 we went broke running the store for credit customers.

On the 24th day of April, 1940, we moved to Vancouver, B.C. After finding a place to live at my brother-in-law's I went down to the docks to look for work only to find more men looking for work. There were no jobs to be had. Near the docks, however, was a junk dealer whom my brother-in-law, Mike Bezubiak knew. Eventually I was able to get various jobs and my wife found work also.

After the war Canada Packers were opening their plant at Vancouver and they were hiring employees. I decided to quit my shipwright job to go to Canada Packers. I started as a sausage maker's helper at 45¢ per hour. Eventually I

away. In 1973 they sold their farm and retired in the Beverly Heights area of Edmonton.

I, Lillian, was born in 1931 and in 1948 completed my training at the Marvel Beauty School in Edmonton. While I was working there, I met Nick Kobzey. Nick was born at Arbakka, Manitoba on February 17, 1926 and later, with his parents John and Verna, they moved to Vita, Manitoba and finally settled on a farm in Guernsey, Saskatchewan. They had 15 children: two died in infancy;







Robert and Susan Motiuk, Darren, Chandra and Dean.

School.

I Dorothy (Doris) was born in 1938 and after graduating from the Mundare high school have been employed by the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. I married my high school boyfriend, Archie Ewaskiw in 1958. Besides helping his widowed mother Ann Cherniawski on the farm, he went north with a seismograph crew on an oil rig. In the city he worked for Dominion Sound, putting up Acoustic tiles. Now he is a plant supervisor for Rheem of Canada.

Our children are Deborah, Darrell, Darlene and Michael. I, Susan was born in 1947 and have been working towards a B. Ed. at the University of Alberta. In 1967 I married Robert Motiuk, B. Ed., the son of Joe and Ann Motiuk. He taught in Lamont and now is on the St. Joseph's High School staff in Edmonton. Our children are Darren, Chandra and Dean.

civic and religious organizations. Nellie toured Alberta organizing branches of the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League and addressing branches already organized. She also wrote a number of articles for use on festive occasions, including "From Pioneering to Organization", "U.C.W.L. in Step with Organized Ukrainian Women", and "The Apostolate of Christian Citizenship".

Of their two children, Laurine graduated in Foods and Nutrition and in Education. She is teaching Home Economics at Amityville, New York. Borden attended the University of Alberta, majoring in Physical Education. He is in the real estate business in Edmonton.

John was born in 1908. Not only was he the son who started serious farming at the age of nine, but he also continued to help his parents during school vacations while attending the local Mundare school and the University of Alberta. He interned in the General Hospital in Edmonton but opened his medical practice in Windsor, Ontario. He continued his medical practice until his death in 1979 at the
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settlers who came to Canada with faith in the future, love of freedom, and trust in God. Though they had many setbacks, they persevered and left their mark in their adopted country. Their descendants are seven children, twenty-four grand-children, fifty two great-grandchildren, and 8 great-great-grandchildren.

Miskew, Paul and Jean

Paul, the youngest son of Wasyl and Tekla Miskew (nee Woytovich) was born in the Village of Mundare on November 4, 1910. Paul attended school in Mundare until the end of grade ten, when he left to take over his parents homestead which was located one-half mile south of Mundare. During the depression years he cared for his parents and helped supplement his brother's university education.

On October 29, 1938 he married Jean Zaozirny in St. Peter and Paul Church in Mundare, Alberta. Jean, the youngest child of Theodore (Fred) and Anna Zaozirny was born September 7, 1921, in Mundare, Alberta. She completed grade ten and after her marriage to Paul they settled on the farm with Paul's parents where they lived until 1945 when they moved into Mundare.

Paul operated the Imperial Oil Bulk Station; then he went into partnership in the Mundare Food Lockers business. Jean worked in the egg grading station and for the Mundare Co-op.

re active in community affairs: Paul
r, and curler. He was President of the
ub for many years. He was an active
onal Film Board, the Hog Marketing
armer's of Alberta, the Elks and the
undare. Jean belonged to Catholic
e Mundare Charity Club, the Mun-
ool Association, the Red Cross and
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June 15, 1978.
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ian Imperial Bank of Commerce, and
erta Government Services.

Miskew, Catherine and Andrew

by Jennie Sachkiw

My mother, Katherine, was a daughter of John and Nancy Wolonik. She and her sister Eva, came to Canada with their parents from Halychyna, Austria in the early

had a great fondness for the area in which he grew up and visited Mac's family often. They retired to Victoria where Donald passed away Oct. 30, 1961 of cancer. Eveline now resides in a nursing home in St. Albert.

Margaret, the youngest, taught music in Ryley and Edmonton until her marriage to Dave Emberg, a brakeman from the C.N. They had four children, Wally, David Roderick, Donald and Irene. Dave, Sr. passed away suddenly in a car accident when the children were young and Margaret married again a few years later. She married 'Red' Johnstone, who also worked for the C.N. as an engineer. He pa
still resides in E

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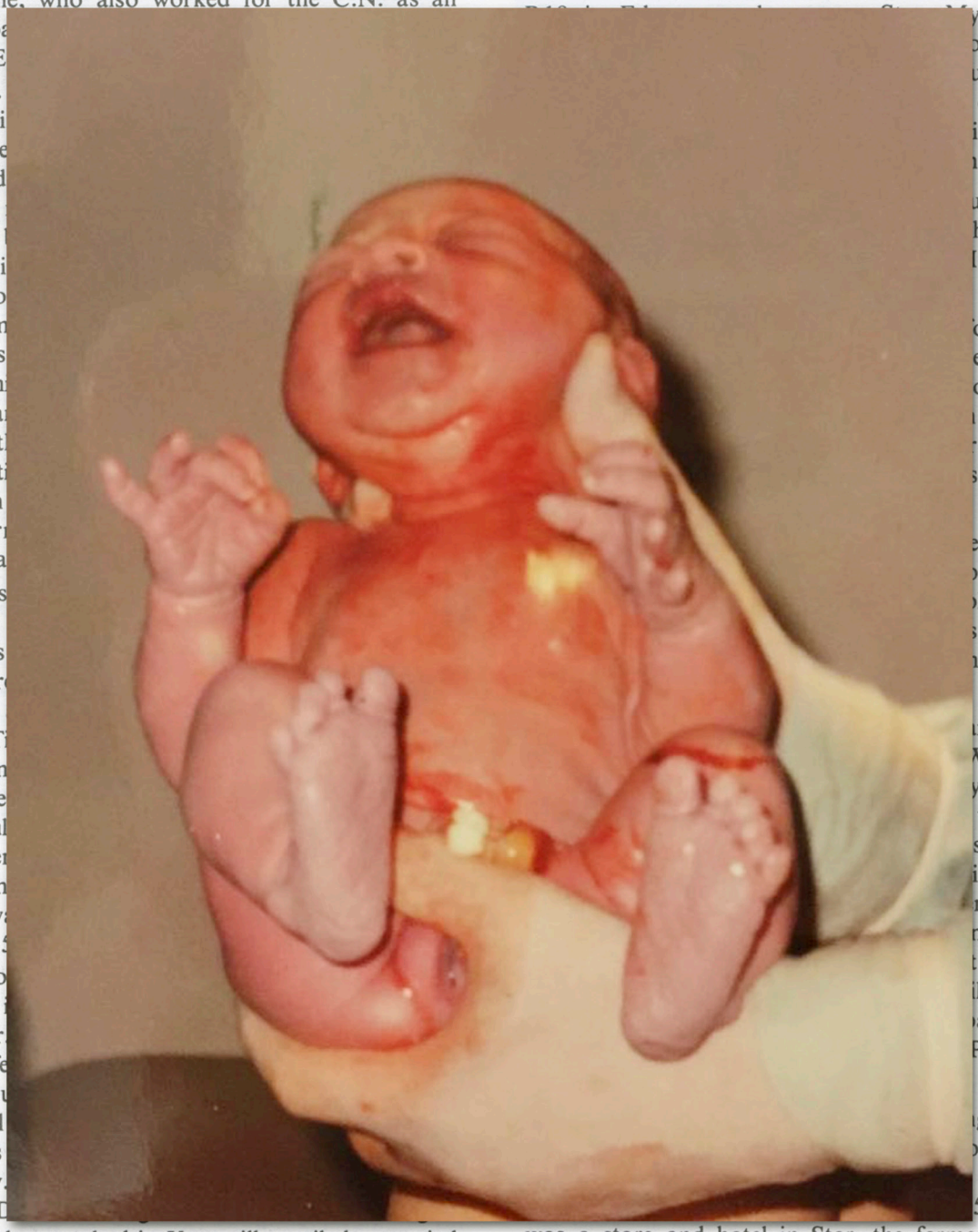
Malcolm and D
Mundare and then worked in Vegreville until she married John Arthur Nicholson of Vegreville. They have three children, Brian, Shelley and Clifford. The family resides in Calgary where Art is the manager of the Calgary Power Credit Union. Maxine took all of her schooling at Mundare and then went on to take a secretarial course at Vermillion, after which she took a job with the Treasury Branch in Camrose. She married Allan Cole of New Norway and they have four children — Barry, Patrick, Colleen and Phillip. They now reside on a farm at New Norway. Mac sold the farm in approximately 1970 to John Nakonechny and he now resides with Allan and Maxine at New Norway.



Melnyk, Peter F.

I was born in 1903 on a homestead located on S3-T57-
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5. Before there was a store and hotel in Star, the farmers travelled by horse and wagon to get their supplies from Edmonton.

I married in 1934 and have two daughters, Mary and Elizabeth. My family is of hardy stock as my father lived to age 89, my mother to age 92, sister Annie to 86 and William to age 80.

My Heritage - My Home

My heart lies in my homeland
Forever thus will be
Though destiny may carry me
Far across the sea.

My heritage lies buried there
Its roots are firmly planted
I'm deeply proud of and I love
The birthplace that God granted.

My hopes and dreams were born there
The values I live by
My conscience was formed there
T'will be until I die.

When I'm in need of courage
My path through life obscured
I think of my dear ancestors
The hardships they endured.

My heart lies in my homeland
Wherever I may roam
My memories cause me to reflect
And wend my way back home.

Written in honour of my birthplace, Mundare.

by Venita (Hewko) Defraine.

Diduch, John and Sophie

Many generations of the Diduch family lived in the foo
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given a year leave, to operate the family business. During this time, in August 1941, John married Sophie, whose

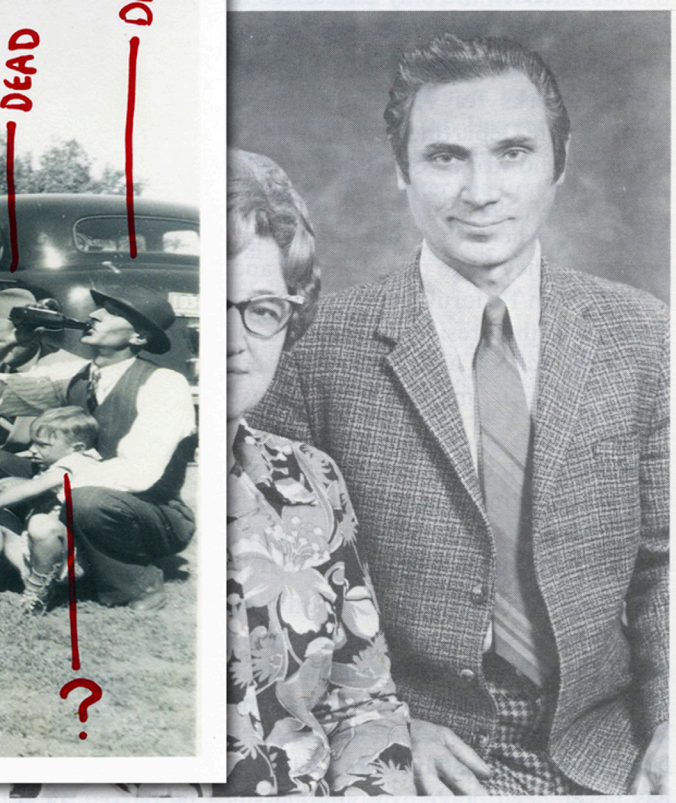


Katherine and Nick Diduch.

parents were John and Katherine (nee Prystash) Dashkevich. They came to Canada in 1912, from the county of Lesko. The father was born in Biberka and mother in Hrudenka. This area was in northwestern Halychyna.

Sophie was one of seven children, all of whom went to Beaver Lake school, southwest of Mundare, where the parents were farming. Their neighbors were McCallum, Allison, Whitlam, Koss, Yakubow and Fane.

From 1942 to 1945 John and Sophie lived in Calgary, t Mewata barracks, then later at Ex- in Suffield, near Medicine Hat. After



John and Sophie Diduch.

Ashmore, Elmer
Ashmore, Robert
Babiy, Nick
Baron, Paul
Basaraba, Bill
Choma, Mike
Davis, Gordon
Dembicki, Frank
Dembicki, Steve
Dutka, Paul
Ewachniuk, Alexander
Fane, Frank
Flasha, Mike
Flasha, Victor
Gach, Peter
Gavinchuk, George
Gulevich, Stanley
Holowaychuk, Leon
Hrehirchuk, Fred
Hrehirchuk, George J.
Hrehirchuk, John W.
Hrehirchuk, Kost J.
Hrehirchuk, Michell W.
Hrehirchuk, Nick J.
Hrehirchuk, Peter S.
Huley, Bill
Huley, Fred
Kalawsky, Peter
Kiehlbauch, Aaron
King, Herb
King, Wm. Grant
Kleparchuk, Mike
Kleparchuk, Peter
Korbel, Paul

Motiuk, Fred
Motiuk, Joe
Motiuk, Lawrence
O'Neil, Raymond
Motuz, John
Motuz, Nadie
Nychka, Paul
O'Neil, P.J. Sr.
O'Neil, Pat Jr.
O'Neil, Thomas
Warawa, Steve and Peter
Kryskow, Edward
Kulba, Stephen
Lesoway, Peter
Lysak, Mike
McAllister, John A.
McCallum, Brian
McCallum. Donald



civic and religious organizations. Nellie toured Alberta organizing branches of the Ukrainian Catholic Women's Lea She also cca- sion on", "U. en", and O and Nutr ome Eco the Univ He is in Jo who start con- tinu e at- tend y of Albe nton but He cont 9 at the ved hunt H and raise thy grad Dr. Rob des, Cali sor, Onta his wife in Medicine, took post-graduate work in plastic surgery in London, Ontario and is now practising and teaching medicine in Chicago. He has two children.



Paul was born in 1910. He attended the local school in Mundare but quit school after completing grade ten. Someone had to manage the farm and to care for the aging parents. He married Jean Zaozirny and they lived with the parents until both parents died. After farming for a number of years, Paul and Jean moved to Edmonton where Paul was employed by the General Hospital in the Pharmacy Department until his death in 1978 at the age of 67. Jean was an office clerk in the Acme Novelty Company. She now works in the Transport Department, Alberta Government. They have two children, Terrance and Marcia.

Terrance graduated with an M. Ed. degree and is principal in the St. Philips separate school in Edmonton where he and his wife, Judy and their 3 children reside.

Marcia completed high school in Mundare and was employed for some years by the Bank of Commerce as an accountant. She is now married to Ernie Palichuk and finds all her time occupied as a housewife and caring for her two children.

The above is a brief story of Wasyl and Tekla, pioneer settlers who came to Canada with faith in the future, love of freedom, and trust in God. Though they had many setbacks, they persevered and left their mark in their adopted country. Their descendants are seven children, twenty-four grand-children, fifty two great-grandchildren, and 8 great-great-grandchildren.

Miskew, Paul and Jean

Paul, the youngest son of Wasyl and Tekla Miskew (nee Wo on No until the ents hon Mun- dar ents and on. St. Pet the you irny was She con they sett ived unt n he wer kers bus l for the Paul was the Mu ctive mer ting Boa the Bas olic Wo Mun- dare and the nton



where Paul worked for the General Hospital until his retirement in November 1976. Jean worked for Acme Novelty Merchandising, the General Hospital, and now works for Alberta Transportation.

Paul passed away June 15, 1978.

Terrace, their eldest, was born March 23, 1942. He attended Mundare School. He was an active member of the Air Cadets. He was very active in athletics, and played all sports for Mundare teams. He graduated from the University of Alberta with a Bachelor of Education degree and began his teaching career with the Edmonton School Board System. Presently he is a school principal at St. Philip School. He married Judy Kozdrowski in 1964 in Mundare's St. Peter and Paul Church. Judy worked for the Bank until their children were born. They now have two boys, Lee and Stacy, and one daughter, Dawn Gaye.

Marica, the younger, was born February 4, 1944. She graduated from Mundare High School and was active in school clubs, athletics and the Mundare Ukrainian Catholic Youth. She married Ernest Palichuk in 1962. They have two children, Craig, and Cheryl Lynn. Marcia works for the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, and Ernest works for Alberta Government Services.

Miskew, Catherine and Andrew

by Jennie Sachkiw

My mother, Katherine, was a daughter of John and Nancy Wolonik. She and her sister Eva, came to Canada with their parents from Halychyna, Austria in the early



Anne and Nellie Miskew.

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Harry was born in 18
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Harry's first wife di
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Harry lived to see his w
He died in November, 19
cemetery.

Michael was born in 1896. Farming for only one year, he left home to run a poolroom in Smoky Lake for two years and then went into business as a John Deere Machinery agent in Mundare. Since he was mechanically inclined, he was successful in his business and stayed with the agency until his death in 1952. His chief interests outside his agency were fishing and hunting.

Michael and Eva had three children: Joseph, Borden, and Adlynn. The two sons attended high school in Mun-
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Attorney-General's Department. They were both active in

after we were married before we could buy our own house, and it took every penny we could raise to buy one for $2,500.00. We were so happy to own our own house as we had already moved six times. The doctor, too, was happy to work in a comfortable 24-bed hospital. He was now able to provide medical, surgical and obstetrical care with a very competent and co-operative staff of Sister nurses. By 1970 he delivered over 2500 babies, and was always thrilled when occasionally they were twins.

Our life settled into a routine, and the people and their families of Mundare and surrounding districts became an integral part of our lives. They were not only patients - they were our friends; we shared their problems, their good times and their sad times. Their children were our children's friends, and we helped each other to try to bring them all up to be good citizens. Many a time doctor was their counselor, and we always got help when we needed it. I guess this is what it means to live in a small town.

It is difficult to live in a community and not take an active part. We tried to do our share, even though our own life was a busy one. During the war years doctor was



We had the honor to be presented to Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II and her husband Prince Philip by our Mayor Mr. Polischuk on their visit to Alberta in August, 1978. In 1976 the Alberta Medical Association honored the 1926 graduating class in Medicine which was their golden anniversary. Doctor was one of the two doctors present. That same summer of 1976, we were asked to host the Vegreville Ukrainian Festival - three busy days, but very interesting ones.

On November 18th, 1979 at the opening of our new hospital, a tribute was paid to the doctor for his "outstanding contribution to the community in the field of Healing" by the Rev. Sisters of our hospital, who for 45 years worked with him and said "I pay tribute to one who gave of himself. He had touched many of our lives, and we are the richer for it."

We also found great satisfaction in being members of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. We are grateful to be part of such a big family, who gather together every Sunday to worship and thank our Almighty Father for the daily blessings that he bestows upon us and on our families.

We raised five children, all born in the Mundare hospital. Every birth, graduation and marriage in our family was a very special event in our life. We had a few extra special ones too. When the head of our family was 75 years old on Christmas day in 1975, we had a special celebration when all his family of 33 gathered together to honor him. On September 29, 1979 we celebrated our

Governor-General's medal in grade nine in Mundare. He is practising law in Calgary, and is married to Gladys Thielen, B. Ed. They have two children, Kathryn and Michael.

Our second daughter, Nicole Anne (Nikki), received her B. Sc. in Home Economics from the University of Alberta. She also has a Professional Certificate in Education. She

As time went by there was a disastrous fire. The fine home had burnt down. Shortly after, more serious accidents occurred. One of the most serious was the accidental blinding of daughter Lydia at the age of 17. Son Henry lost one hand in a well-drilling accident. One day in 1910 grandfather Leonard was discussing the repayment of some loans with a local merchant G. Deering of Tyndal, S.D. who told grandfather that he owned 6 quarters of land in Canada and offered to trade this land for the land grandfather owned in the area. The price was $25.00 per acre. As a result of this encounter, it was decided to make the trade and start life anew in Canada — maybe life would be better there.



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had settled on SE-2-54-18-W4 in 1899 when Sir Wilfred Laurier was prime minister. The families became good friends and many pleasant days were spent working and visiting together. My aunt Lydia, now 86 years old, the

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The ladies of the family had no easy time either for they had to work just as hard as the men. They helped with farm chores, cooked the meals, washed the clothes by hand and did the gardening. Food had to be processed and

benches of planks. New wings were added and by 1966 the 8 room, two-storey brick school was emptied and all the grades moved to the new school. It was a sad day for us old timers when the old school was torn down in 1969

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First high school class in the new school. Teachers: Mr. Korpan, Miss McGee, Sister Marian, Principal E. G. Hale and Mr. Hupka. (195).

With the encouragement of my parents, my early adult years were marked with study and career planning. I settled on the Education faculty and completed a Home Economics degree at the University of Alberta in 1967. My interests grew in psychology and I proceeded toward and achieved a Masters Degree in Education majoring in Counselling and Psychology. I am presently a certified psychologist and am counselling kindergarten to grade 12 students with the Edmonton Catholic School System.

I married Garry Lee Burt, son of Mr. & Mrs. Earl Burt of Craigmyle, Alberta. Garry is an air traffic controller at the Edmonton International Airport and is farming part-time in Craigmyle. He is an avid Glider pilot and private pilot and we spend our leisure time in summer with the Edmonton Soaring Club stationed at Chipman, Alberta. Our family, at present, consists of Shannon Tara, our daughter, who is engaged in the Ukrainian Bilingual Program in the Edmonton Catholic School System. We are happily awaiting our second child.

Bernice Hewko Browne

I was third in a family of four girls, and loved to be a tomboy helping my Dad with roofing and other things, preferring to leave baking and the like to Venita and Mom. Florence was an experienced hand and was usually farther "afield", handling horses or tractor expertly.

When I was too small to handle "stooking" with my bigger sisters and parents, I was left in charge of meals and housework. I suppose I was about eight when I prepared my first chicken dinner, first catching the hen in the coop, performing the necessary rituals, and finally placing it in the oven. That chicken didn't taste nearly as good as Mom's for several reasons!

Abbott and Costello movies were my favourites, enjoyed occasionally on Saturdays in the old Mundare National Hall, although I have a vague recollection of seeing some scary war movies in an older hall which used to be across from the old post office.

Florence, Venita and I rode to school in a two-wheeled cart pulled by a little black Shetland pony, Prince. He had a "trick" knee which by accident or design without notice would collapse, causing all cart contents, including us, to go spilling over his head onto the road. With bruised knees and pride, we would pick up hay, seat, lunch pails, etc. and continue on our way - if the mood hit Prince! Occasionally, he appeared to exhibit part-donkey tendencies, and choose not to move, which presented a challenge even to the most experienced males in the school who were confident in their ability to budge the reluctant Prince.

My memories of early years also include:

- the crackling and spitting of wet, snow-covered wood in the stove - when we had forgotten to bring it in to dry off,
- the red hot Quebec heater in the living-room, before the furnace came on the scene,
- the beautiful technicolour glow of burning straw piles, against the dark night sky,
- peeking from behind the bedroom door at 4 a.m. as the threshing crew ate breakfast, then watching them harness the steaming horses in the crisp morning air painted a hazy pink by the sunrise,
- watching the "belt" of the thresher flashing by, and touching it with a branch which would go splintering off in every direction,
- riding with my Topilko cousins and my sisters at the rear of the binder, when Dad felt the horses could take the added load for a little while, the sheaves parading methodically before us up the canvas to be tied and dropped by this fascinating machine with a giant "propeller",
- running home the last quarter mile because we could smell Mom's terrific bread baking,
- the fascinating experience of soap-making in the komeerchuna by the aunties, grandmother and Mom, and later watching them fill barrels with layers of cabbage leaves and salt,
- helping at a "plastering bee", where the horses mixed the clay and straw with which we plastered the buildings,
- falling asleep under a bench while Mom participated in a quilting bee or feather-plucking bee,
- the excitement of riding in a Model T. Ford with my Aunt Pauline, and wondering each time she cranked it if she would make it into the car before we took off without a driver,
- the haunting sound of a coyote at full moon, and my surprise when our dog imitated the call,

Along the way I also discovered that:

- testing of "rubber-ice" must be done before the sun has ruined it,
- boys do things like putting snakes in the teacher's quart of milk if she doesn't find it first,
- those branch "whips" students helped to peel were used on their backsides if they accidentally lapsed into Ukrainain instead of using the King's English in school,
- you shouldn't fall asleep when listening to a battery-operated radio or the battery will also go to sleep - forever - and your car won't run without it!
- one should not be last in a line-up of kids who are touching an electric fence, especially when everyone else has rubber soled shoes on,
- pigs love to eat clothing left hanging on their fence, including your sister's favourite red sweater,
- it's fun to hunt for turkey, chicken and goose eggs in the bushes when the fowl have the freedom of the range (I haven't seen a large brown spotted turkey egg in years),
- milking can be accomplished only with the aid of a good "smudge pot" during mosquito season, and milking goes a lot faster when you are singing with your Mom and sisters,
- at chicken-canning time you really know where that saying comes from - "running around like a chicken with its head off",

chose to live with Mr. Joseph Frebrowski and his family (on the present home place of Mr. Walter Frebrowski). The rest o
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Anglo-Saxon farmers who settled during the late 1800's near Beaverhill Lake (Kings, McCallums) the tools

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My Heritage - My Home

My heart lies in my homeland
Forever thus will be
Though destiny may carry me
Far across the sea.

My heritage lies buried there
Its roots are firmly planted
I'm deeply proud of and I love
The birthplace that God granted.

My hopes and dreams were born there
The values I live by
My conscience was formed there
T'will be until I die.

When I'm in need of courage
My path through life obscured
I think of my dear ancestors
The hardships they endured.

My heart lies in my homeland
Wherever I may roam
My memories cause me to reflect
And wend my way back home.

Written in honour of my birthplace, Mundare.
by Venita (Hewko) Defraine.





Katherine and Nick Diduch.

parents were John and Katherine (nee Prystash) Dashkevich. They came to Canada in 1912, from the county of Lesko. The father was born in Biberka and mother in Hrudenka. This area was in northwestern Halychyna.

Sophie was one of seven children, all of whom went to Beaver Lake school, southwest of Mundare, where the parents were farming. Their neighbors were McCallum, Allison, Whitlam, Koss, Yakubow and Fane.

From 1942 to 1945 John and Sophie lived in Calgary, where John was at Mewata barracks, then later at Experimental Station in Suffield, near Medicine Hat. After



John and Sophie Diduch.

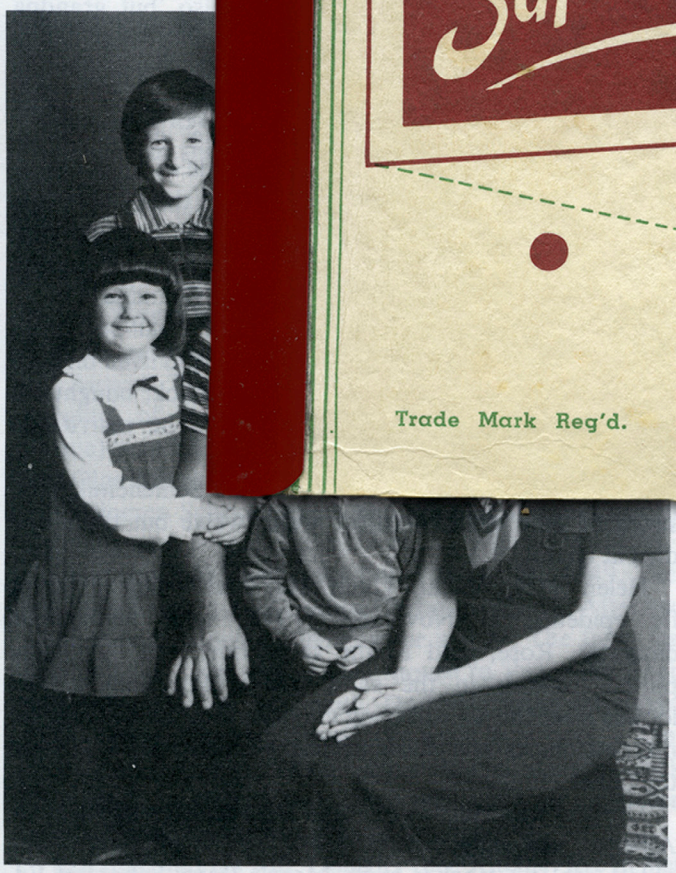
away. In 1973 they sold their farm and retired in the Beverly Heights area of Edmonton.

I, Lillian, was born in 1931 and in 1948 completed my training at the Marvel Beauty School in Edmonton. While I was working there, I met Nick Kobzey. Nick was born at Arbakka, Manitoba on February 17, 1926 and later, with his parents John and Verna, they moved to Vita, Manitoba and finally settled on a farm in Guernsey, Saskatchewan. They had 15 children: two died in infancy;



Kobzey Family: Cla





Robert and Susan Motiuk, Darren, Chandra and Dean.

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k of Commerce. I married my high school boyfriend, Archie Ewaskiw in 1958. Besides helping his widowed mother Ann Cherniawski on the farm, he went north with a seismograph crew on an oil rig. In the city he worked for Dominion Sound, putting up Acoustic tiles. Now he is a plant supervisor for Rheem of Canada.

Our children are Deborah, Darrell, Darlene and Michael. I, Susan was born in 1947 and have been working towards a B. Ed. at the University of Alberta. In 1967 I married Robert Motiuk, B. Ed., the son of Joe and Ann Motiuk. He taught in Lamont and now is on the St. Joseph's High School staff in Edmonton. Our children are Darren, Chandra and Dean.



Rev. Msgr. Basil Filevich.

Below is a brief history of each of the nine children.

Mary was born at Stry, Alberta, March 18, 1908. Being the oldest one she spent very little time in school as she had to work. She got married at age 16 to Stanley Wicentowich October 6, 1924 and they farmed in the vicinity of Royal Park until their retirement when they moved to Mundare, where they are living at present. They have two children. Josephine, who married Stanley Wenger and are now farming near Camrose, Alberta. They have three boys. Eddie, the son, is a bachelor and is employed by Air Canada and lives in Vancouver, B.C.

Mike, second child, was born at Stry, Alberta August 20, 1910. He had eight years of school. He married Jean Magus July 15, 1939, and had a farm ten miles south of Mundare. He sold it and moved to Edmonton in 1950, where he was employed by the city. They have two sons, Lawrence and John, both married and four grandchildren. Mike died May 24, 1978 in Edmonton and rests at Mundare Cemetery.

Kassie, third child, was born at Stry, November 29, 1911. She married Mike Boyko November 21, 1930, lived on a rented farm near Mundare owned by Peter Sachkiw, then moved to a farm at Borschiw where they are now retired, but still living on the farm and renting it. They have no children.

Annie the fourth child, was born at Stry, Alberta, June 1, 1914. She married Frank Kropilnicki November 27, 1932, farmed near Haight, Alberta, now retired and living in Vegreville. They have six children, all married and twenty-one grandchildren.

Nellie the fifth child, was born at Stry, Alberta August 1, 1916. Married Lester Lekky October 27, 1936, a coal miner. They lived for a number of years at Drumheller and then moved to Camrose, Alberta. They are retired and have three daughters and two grandchildren.

Basil, sixth child, was born at Stry, Alberta January 13, 1918. At age 6 months we moved to the farm near Mundare. Attended Moscow School and Mundare High School and then in 1936 began studies for priesthood at St. Joseph's Seminary in Edmonton. Was ordained in Mundare April 12, 1942 by Archbishop Ladyka, and had a pastorship for one year at Dauphin and Ethelbert, Manitoba; Kitchener July 1943 to August 1948, St. Catharines, Ontario, from August 1948 to March 1951; became Rector of St. Josephat's Cathedral in March 1951 until July 1978. Was appointed Chancellor Eparchy of Toronto in 1951, was honoured by Pope John XXIII, as Household Prelate January 20, 1959, was made a Mitred Archpriest by Cardinal Slipyj February 2, 1969, was appointed Vicar General (Syncellus) in 1965. As of July 1978 he is pastor of Holy Cross Church in Thunder Bay, Ontario with two Mission churches - Atikokan and Fort Frances, Ontario.

Nick the seventh child, was born at Mundare March 6, 1920. Married Helen Balko October 26, 1946, farmed near Borschiw until 1952, moved to Edmonton, where he is at present employed with the maintenance Department, Edmonton Board of Education. They have two daughters Audrey and Patricia.

Jennie, the eighth child, born April 12, 1922 at Mundare, married Joseph Wenger October 22, 1946 and farmed near Camrose, Alberta. They have a daughter and son, both married. Jennie died June 14, 1977 at Camrose.

Stella, the ninth and last child was born at Mundare August 9, 1925. Graduated as a Registered Nurse from Edmonton General Hospital in 1947, nursed at Kitchener, St.Catherines and Toronto, Ontario. Married Russel Woloshinski May 12, 1951. Had one daughter. Russell died of a heart attack in October 1952. Stella remarried Edward Hrycyk February 18, 1956. They have three more children. The oldest daughter is married and has two girls. Robert is in University of Waterloo, Janet works for the Public Health Department. Ronald is in High School. Stella is Superintendent at St. Mary's Hospital Kitchener, Ontario. They live at Waterloo, Ontario.

Fill, Andrew and Pauline

by Josephine Lesoway

Andrew was born in Sokil, Lviw, Ukraine, June 11, 1888, the youngest of eight children of Martin and Josephine (Opulski) Fill. At the age of fifteen, after the sudden death of his parents, he decided to look for greener fields. In 1903 he emigrated to Winnipeg with his brother-in-law, Frank Benashevich, After three years Frank was


HAVE A
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civic and religious organizations. Nellie toured Alberta

Miskew, Paul and Jean



great-great-grandchildren.

with their parents from Halychyna, Austria in the early

Michael was born in 1896. Farming for only one year,
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Damian and Docia Lazarenko 1923.

In this village on the 24th day of March, 1900, their relatives and friends held a heart-breaking party, farewelling Damian and Docia Lazarenko with their two and a half year old son Wasyl, among the many on that day emigrating to Canada (then known to them as Kanada) so distant and so mysterious. They acted on hearsay information that every adult applicant would be granted, free of charge, a parcel of virgin land some eighty morgs in area. They concluded that an immediate gamble on its truth was well worth taking.

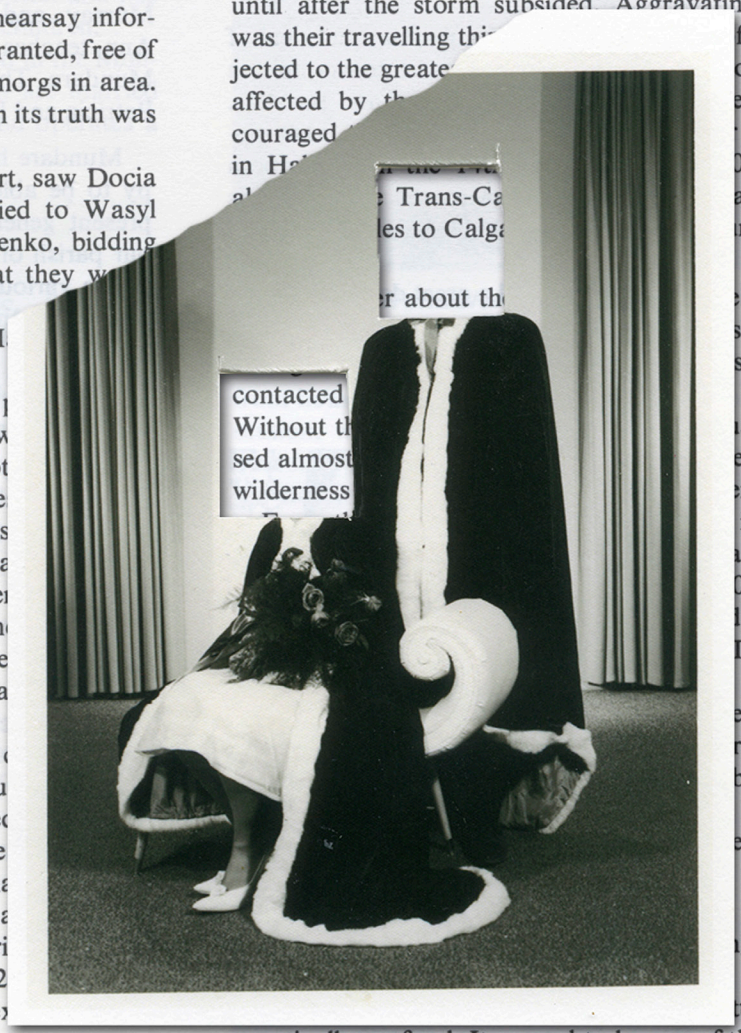
Achteme Kosmenko, with a grieving heart, saw Docia and his two other daughters, Hafia married to Wasyl Lucyk and Anna married to Metro Lazarenko, bidding him good-bye with all of them sensing that they w never meet him again.

Disembarking from S. S. Tunisia in H Scotia, on the 14th day of April, 1900, toward the setting sun until they reached the of Beaver Lake, North-West Territories, now Hilliard, Alberta. There among the rot skeletons, the roaming coyotes, wide expanse wild prairie fires, they settled on the promis called their own; there they could remain ma own destinies. A payment of $10.00 gave the to the SE-30-53-17-W4. On it they spent th years in Canada, and on it they both passe mian on the 28th August, 1947, and Docia day of September, 1947.

There they were blessed with eight more nie (1900-1960) married to William K. Didu deceased; Nicholas (1902-1974) marrie Gregoraschuk a retired C.N.R. employee (February 22, 1905) married to Helen Triska Solicitor; John (1907-1932); Katie (1910) ma Kozak now deceased; Alec (1912) marri Topilko, farmer at Hilliard; Mary (1914-192 (1916) married to Stanley N. Ruzycki an e now a high school teacher in the City of Edmonton.

They were transported from the village to Karliw, a station where they boarded a train on the way to Rotterdam. Travelling was difficult and long. Very few people spoke Ukrainian and communication beween the trainmen and passengers was very close to zero. Their strange clothing and strange language evoked considerable scorn from the crew. From this point in time it is hard to comprehend the hardships which they endured. A further difficulty arose from the fact that many of their wives were pregnant. Docia was seven months pregnant, expecting her daughter, Jennie. But they were people young in spirit in heart and age. Most of them were in their late twenties, thirties, or early forties.

From Rotterdam they went on board a small ship and headed across the English Channel to England, crossed that country from east to west and came to the Port of Liverpool where they waited three days for their Trans-Atlantic Liner, Tunisia. They boarded that ship and sailed to Canada with great enthusiasm. Since it was early spring, they encountered many ocean storms on the North Atlantic, and the consequent rocking of the ship up and down, and from side to side. Both Damian and Docia became violently seasick resulting in their being confined to bed most of the trip. It was an experience that was never forgotten. They were unable to eat or drink anything until after the storm subsided. Aggravating their plight was their travelling thi f the liner subjected to the greate on, Wasyl, not affected by th eered and encouraged two. Landing in H 0, they jogged a Trans-Ca ay some three les to Calg ndred miles to



r about th s, and tribula- strangers in a somehow they contacted Beaver Lake. Without th age they crossed almost eir home in the wilderness r cultivated.

it was difficult amian went to 00 in a whole went home to That was all he main concern found it, with re important it built himself a provided the chickens and

every year he g for work. In walked all the ttle money and practically no food. It proved to be one of the most trying experiences of his life. His wife stayed on the homestead taking care of the children, their garden and possessions.

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Choma, Mike
Davis, Gordon
Dembicki, Frank
Dembicki, Steve
Dutka, Paul
Ewachniuk, Alexander
Fane, Frank
Flasha, Mike
Flasha, Victor
Gach, Peter
Gavinchuk, George

Motiuk, Fred
Motiuk, Joe
Motiuk, Lawrence
O'Neil, Raymond
Motuz, John
Motuz, Nadie
Nychka, Paul
O'Neil, P.J. Sr.
O'Neil, Pat Jr.
O'Neil, Thomas
Warawa, Steve and Peter
Kryskow, Edward
Kulba, Stephen
Lesoway, Peter
Lysak, Mike
McAllister, John A.



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Miskew, Paul and Jean

Paul, the youngest son of Wasyl and Tekla Miskew (nee



with their parents from Halychyna, Austria in the early



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Mrs. June Melnych
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Peter was widowe
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on.

He died in November, 1956, and is buried in the Viking cemetery.

My sister Nadia and Vera married and were living south of Mundare in the Haight district.

We were in the great depression now. What little money I made I always made sure that mother got it to buy food and clothes for my brother and sister. In 1932 mother married Bill Lazor.

I stayed on the farm for a short time. Fred Zacharkiw and I took employment in northern Saskatchewan. I'm very grate
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Mayor Polischuk paying tribute to Lloyd Maslak for service in town.

and shaking the hand of the then Prime Minister of Canada Mr. Louis St. Laurent, who was on a visit to Mundare. I also met his son Paul in Quebec City. I had very fine co-operation with the Basilian Fathers and was treated royally by the Sister Servants whenever I was ill in the hospital.

My son Joe and my daughters Patsy and Margaret are on their own. Joe is in Mt. Lehman, B.C. with a rental
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l. It took
about a month to return. They bought their first cow from Indians who were driving some cattle north past their homestead. Before the Mundare flour mill was built, they had a stone flour mill that was powered by a windmill. There were bears in the woods and one day Cassie went to bring the black cow home to milk. She came to a black animal lying in the bush and she said, "Get up blacky, time for milking". The black bear growled and went running into the woods. Cassie went home crying. It was hard work to make a home in the woods and to clear enough for grain growing. They had 3 more children born in Canada, Pearl, Mary and Justina.

In 1914 Ann Matiwi married Tom Lewicky of Vilna, Alberta. They farmed south of Vilna. Tom died in 1953. They have two children Mary and Tommy. Tommy is



with the Navy. They have four children, Steven, Susan, Malcolm and Duncan. Margaret finished her schooling at Mundare and then worked in Vegreville until she married John Arthur Nicholson of Vegreville. They have three children, Brian, Shelley and Clifford. The family resides in Calgary where Art is the manager of the Calgary Power Credit Union. Maxine took all of her schooling at Mundare and then went on to take a secretarial course at Ver-

million, after which she took a job with the Treasury

plow $16.00. The price of meat per pound was pork $.08, chickens $.10, turkeys $.15 and beef $.05. Before there was a store and hotel in Star, the farmers travelled by horse and wagon to get their supplies from Edmonton.

I married in 1934 and have two daughters, Mary and Elizabeth. My family is of hardy stock as my father lived to age 89, my mother to age 92, sister Annie to 86 and William to age 80.

civic and religious organizations. Nellie toured Alberta organizing branches of the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League and addressing branches already organized. She also wrote a number of articles for use on festive occasions, including "From Pioneering to Organization", "U.C.W.L. in Step with Organized Ukrainian Women", and "The Apostolate of Christian Citizenship".

Of their two children, Laurine graduated in Foods and Nutrition and in Education. She is teaching Home Economics at Amityville, New York. Borden attended the University of Alberta, [illegible] Education. He is in the real estate [illegible] dmonto[illegible]

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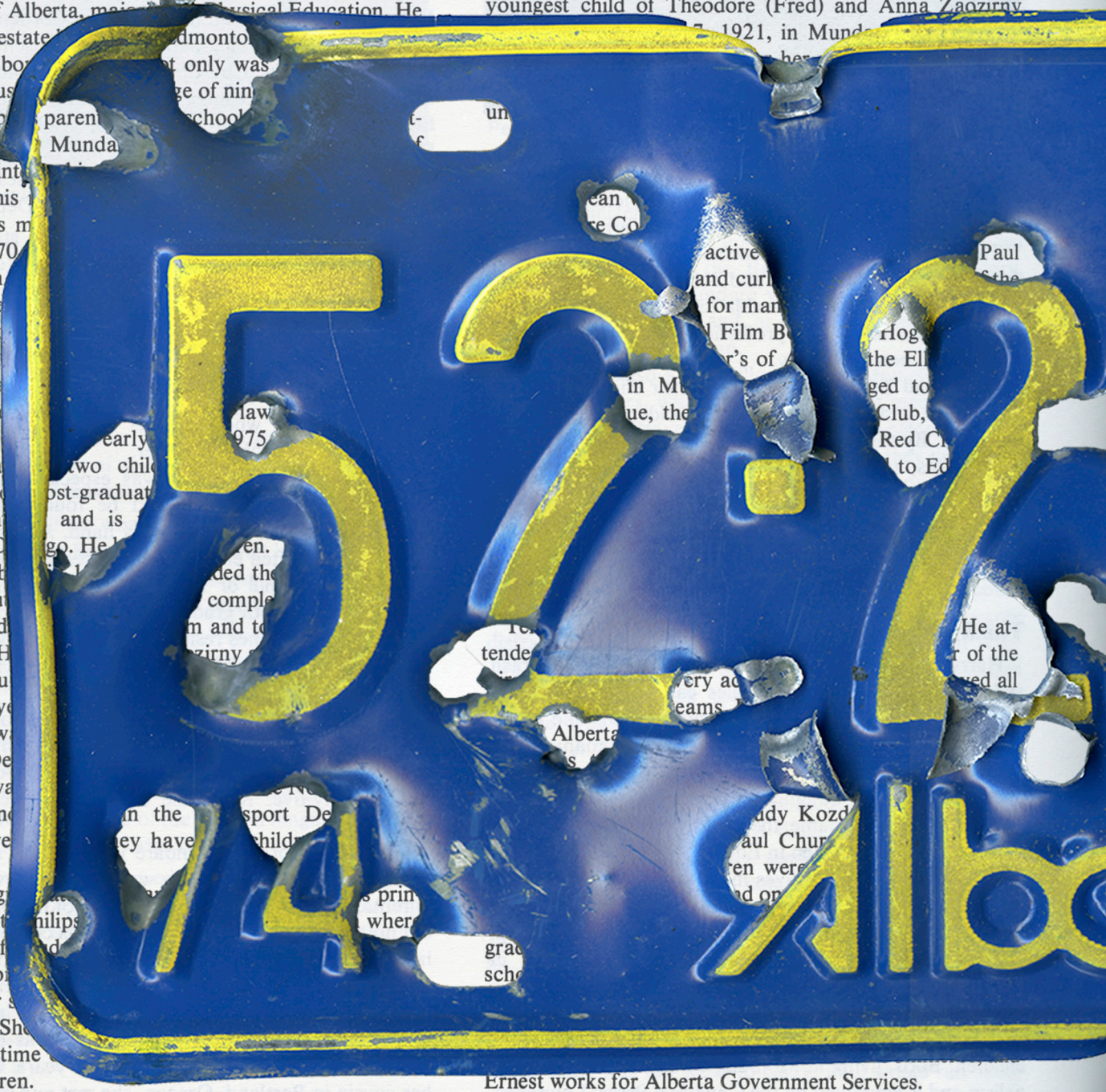
The above is a brief story of Wasyl and Tekla, pioneer settlers who came to Canada with faith in the future, love of freedom, and trust in God. Though they had many setbacks, they persevered and left their mark in their adopted country. Their descendants are seven children, twenty-four grand-children, fifty two great-grandchildren, and 8 great-great-grandchildren.

Miskew, Paul and Jean

Paul, the youngest son of Wasyl and Tekla Miskew (nee Woytovich) was born in the Village of Mundare on November 4, 1910. Paul attended school in Mundare until the end of grade ten, when he left to take over his parents homestead which was located one-half mile south of Mundare. During the depression years he cared for his parents and helped supplement his brother's university education.

On October 29, 1938 he married Jean Zaozirny in St. Peter and Paul Church in Mundare, Alberta. Jean, the youngest child of Theodore (Fred) and Anna Zaozirny [illegible] 7, 1921, in Mund[illegible]



Ernest works for Alberta Government Services.

Miskew, Catherine and Andrew

by Jennie Sachkiw

My mother, Katherine, was a daughter of John and Nancy Wolonik. She and her sister Eva, came to Canada with their parents from Halychyna, Austria in the early

healthy, confident and secure in their conviction that they had already played the part of men on the farm.

The parents got into financial difficulties during the depression just when Peter and John were attending university. The two sons were able to complete their studies and graduate into their professions only because their father could borrow money.

Wasyl and Tekla lived to see all their children married and settled and to celebrate their Golden Wedding Anniversary. By this time they had two quarters clear of en-



children. Boris, living in Montreal, who graduated in Journalism and is employed by the Canadian Press; Lawrence, who graduated in Chemical Engineering and is employed by an oil company in Calgary; Ronald, who died as a child; and Mrs. Margaret Keast, who is a homemaker in Calgary.

Harry lived to see his whole family married and settled. He died in November, 1956, and is buried in the Viking cemetery.

Michael was born in 1896. Farming for only one year, he left home to run a poolroom in Smoky Lake for two years and then went into business as a John Deere Machinery agent in Mundare. Since he was mechanically inclined, he was successful in his business and stayed with the agency until his death in 1952. His chief interests outside his agency were fishing and hunting.

Michael and Eva had three children: Joseph, Borden, and Adlynn. The two sons attended high school in Mun- the Second World orden injured his scharged. Both ment, one in he other as a ted from the . She is mar- es law. She is epartment.

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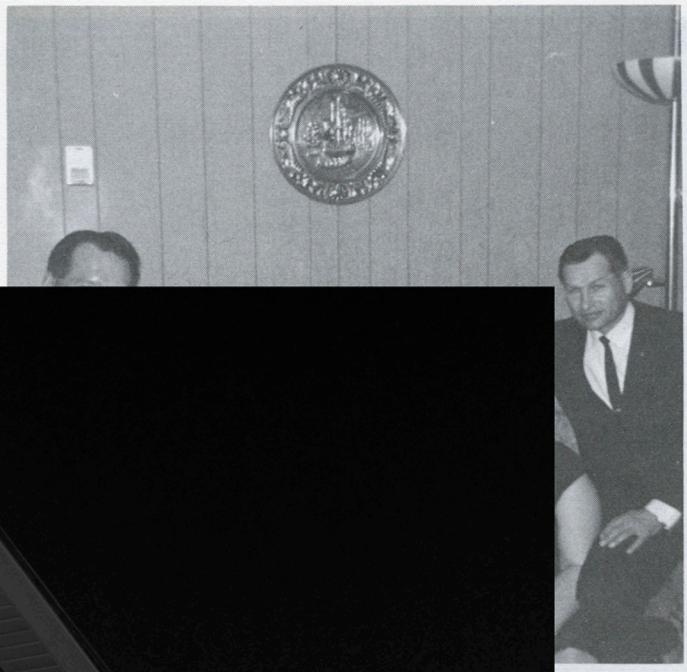
she was the vorite of her rothers. She elled to help wever, she undare Peo- n plays, and as employed at years. On a visit to her cousin in Portland, Oregon, she met and married Troy Shuey. The couple made their home in Redlands, California, where they raised three children: Troy Jr., Joanne, and Charlene, the last graduating in Education.

Nellie was born in 1905. She was a very diligent student and became a school teacher. She moved to Edmonton after marrying George Woytkiw, an employee in the Attorney-General's Department. They were both active in





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Victoria, B.C., Lily Fundytus and husband Orest of Mundare, George and wife Anne of Edmonton, Phyllis Shandley and husband Lorne of Victoria, B.C., and Roman and wife Anne Louise of Squamish, B.C.

Irene also has ten grandchildren - Faye Wouterlood (Prystash), Darryl Leswick, Brenda, Bonnie, Bryan, Bob

Wasilianske, powit Sokal. Accompanying her were her parents, brothers Nick, Steve and Michael, and sister Mary. They arrived in Canada in 1905 and moved to Winnipeg, Manitoba. Nick was a farmer and settled at Hamlin, Alberta. Steve was a school teacher at Stry, Alberta. Mary married Peter Wynnyk and settled at Stry,

after we were married before we could buy our own house, and it took every penny we could raise to buy one for $2,500.00. We were so happy to own our own house as we had already moved six times. The doctor, too, was happy to work in a comfortable 24-bed hospital. He was now able to provide medical, surgical and obstetrical care with a very competent and co-operative staff of Sister nurses. By 1970 he delivered over 2500 babies, and was always thrilled when occasionally they were twins.

Our life settled into a routine, and the people and their families of Mundare and surrounding districts became an integral part of our lives. They were not only patients - they were our friends; we shared their problems, their good times and their sad times. Their children were our children's friends, and we helped each other to try to bring them all up to be good citizens. Many a time doctor was their counselor, and we always got help when we needed it. I guess this is what it means to live in a small town.

It is difficult to live in a community and not take an active part. We tried to do our share, even though our own life was a busy one. During the war years doctor was chairman of the committee selling war bonds. He belongs to the Knights of Columbus - is a member of the Local Elks, the Fish and Game Association, and the local Firemen's group. He was on the Civilian Committee for the Air Cadets for many years, and was also the Mayor of the Town for two terms - six years. We curled and golfed, hunted and fished in the Northern lakes.

I enjoyed working with our local Home and School Association and found it most interesting. When I was nominated to be a Regional Director of the Alberta Parent-Teacher Association for two years, it was interesting to visit local Associations in surrounding towns. I also worked with the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League, and was privileged to teach religion in our school for a few years. I sang in our church choir for 40 years.

Like most families, we too had problems, but we also had many rewarding times in our lives. We celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary by attending a Medical Convention in Edmonton, but when we came home we were surprised by a big party in our honor in the National Hall. It was a nice warm feeling to know your friends and neighbors cared.

Another highlight of our life here was a Testimonial dinner on August 19, 1967 in the National Hall to commemorate 40 years of service to our community. We were deeply moved by this honor. This was organized by the town and the organized groups here. Our children were very proud of their parents, and this was a very rewarding and memorable time in our family's life. We were and are deeply appreciative of this show of friendship.

We had the honor to be presented to Her Royal Highness Queen Elizabeth II and her husband Prince Philip by our Mayor Mr. Polischuk on their visit to Alberta in August, 1978. In 1976 the Alberta Medical Association honored the 1926 graduating class in Medicine which was their golden anniversary. Doctor was one of the two doctors present. That same summer of 1976, we were asked to host the Vegreville Ukrainian Festival - three busy days, but very interesting ones.

On November 18th, 1979 at the opening of our new hospital, a tribute was paid to the doctor for his "outstanding contribution to the community in the field of Healing" by the Rev. Sisters of our hospital, who for 45 years worked with him and said "I pay tribute to one who gave of himself. He had touched many of our lives, and we are the richer for it."

We also found great satisfaction in being members of the Ukrainian Catholic Church. We are grateful to be part of such a big family, who gather together every Sunday to worship and thank our Almighty Father for the daily blessings that he bestows upon us and on our families.

We raised five children, all born in the Mundare hospital. Every birth, graduation and marriage in our family was a very special event in our life. We had a few extra special ones too. When the head of our family was 75 years old on Christmas day in 1975, we had a special celebration when all his family of 33 gathered together to honor him. On September 29, 1979 we celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary with our children and their families.

All our children attended Mundare school. Mary Louise (Mary Lou) our eldest daughter graduated in Nursing in May 1951. On November 5th the same year she married Philip Gibeau, a Civil servant and school Board administrator. They live in Edmonton, and their children are: Cozette Marie, graduated with a B. Ed. degree from the University of Alberta. She married Gary Gylander, B. A. & B. Commerce, University of Alberta. They are living in Drayton Valley, and have two children: Keltie and Hartley. Jacques Philip is Mary Lou's oldest son. After five years in the University of Alberta, he is a research scientist and is working in cancer research at the University of Alberta. He is married to Cynthia Currie. Monique Anne Marie, has her Bachelor of Arts degree in Classics from the University of Alberta. She manages the "Classics Book Store" in St. Albert. Jean Marc is Mary Lou's second son. After three years of University he joined the R.C.M.P. and is now stationed in Burnaby, B.C. He married Verna Pelletier, and has one son Lee.

The two youngest daughters, Danielle Marie and Lise Angele, are still living at home. Danielle completed her high school and is now an Instructress in a school for retarded children. Lise is in grade ten.

Our eldest son, Joachim Nicholas Michael (Jim) finished his high school in St. Anthony's College in Edmonton. He received his B. Sc. degree in Zoology at the University of Alberta and his Law degree from the University of British Columbia in 1962. He received the Governor-General's medal in grade nine in Mundare. He is practising law in Calgary, and is married to Gladys Thielen, B. Ed. They have two children, Kathryn and Michael.

Our second daughter, Nicole Anne (Nikki), received her B. Sc. in Home Economics from the University of Alberta. She also has a Professional Certificate in Education. She

civic and religious organizations. Nellie toured Alberta organizing branches of the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League and addressing branches already organized. She also wrote a number of articles for use on festive occasions, including "From Pioneering to Organization", "U.C.W.L. in Step with Organized Ukrainian Women", and "The Apostolate of Christian Citizenship".

Of their two children, Laurine graduated in Foods and Nutrition and in Education. She is teaching Home Economics at Amityville, New York. Borden attended the University of Alberta, majoring in Physical Education. He is in the real estate business in Edmonton.

John was born in 1908. Not only was he the son who started serious farming at the age of nine, but he also continued to help his parents during school vacations while attending the local Munda
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Marcia completed high school in Mundare and was employed for some years by the Bank of Commerce as an accountant. She is now married to Ernie Palichuk and finds all her time occupied as a housewife and caring for her two children.

The above is a brief story of Wasyl and Tekla, pioneer settlers who came to Canada with faith in the future, love of freedom, and trust in God. Though they had many setbacks, they persevered and left their mark in their adopted country. Their descendants are seven children, twenty-four grand-children, fifty two great-grandchildren, and 8 great-great-grandchildren.



Miskew, Paul and Jean

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On October 29, 1938 he married Jean Zaozirny in St. Peter and Paul Church in Mundare, Alberta. Jean, the youngest child of Theodore (Fred) and Anna Zaozirny was born September 7, 1921, in Mundare, Alberta. She completed grade ten and after her marriage to Paul they settled on the farm with Paul's parents where they lived until 1945 when they moved into Mundare.

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e daughter, Dawn Gaye.
rn February 4, 1944. She graduated from Mundare High School and was active in school clubs, athletics and the Mundare Ukrainian Catholic Youth. She married Ernest Palichuk in 1962. They have two children, Craig, and Cheryl Lynn. Marcia works for the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, and Ernest works for Alberta Government Services.

Miskew, Catherine and Andrew

by Jennie Sachkiw

My mother, Katherine, was a daughter of John and Nancy Wolonik. She and her sister Eva, came to Canada with their parents from Halychyna, Austria in the early



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Miskew, Paul and Jean

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Nancy Wolonik. She and her sister Eva, came to Canada with their parents from Halychyna, Austria in the early

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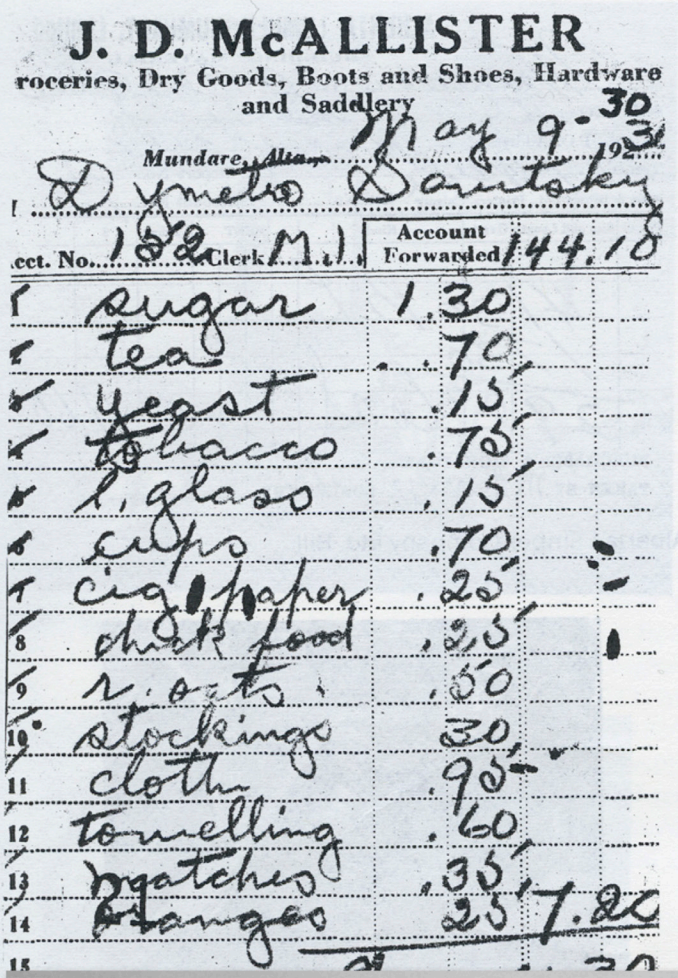

J. D. McALLISTER

roceries, Dry Goods, Boots and Shoes, Hardware and Saddlery

Mundare, Alta., May 9-30 1930

Dymetro Sawtsky

Acct. No. 152 Clerk M.J. Account Forwarded 144.10

1	sugar	1.30	
2	tea	.70	
3	yeast	.15	
4	tobacco	.75	
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6	cups	.70	
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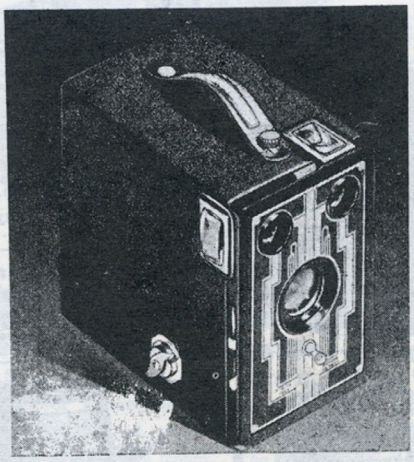

FOR EASY PIC

Brownie Cameras

Popular with young and old alike for a good many years. Picture taking reduced to its simplest and easiest form—just sight through the viewfinder and click! —the snapshot is yours to cherish for years to come. Here are some Brownie features: Fixed Focus Lens—everything beyond 8 feet in focus at all times; sturdy modernistic design; uses standard, easy-to-get **EATON** or Kodak film. Inexpensive—built for long service. Makes a handy gift for any member of the family.

4.35
6-H955

6-H955—Six-16 Target Brownie—the new Brownie Camera, takes pictures 2 ½ by 4 ¼ inches. Price delivered..... **4.35**

6-H956—Brownie Jr., Six-16, takes pictures 2 ½ by 4 ¼ ins. Price del... **3.50**

6-H957—Six-20 Target Brownie, a new model, takes pictures 2 ¼ by 3 ¼ ins. Price delivered..... **3.85**



With the encouragement of my parents, my early adult years were marked with study and career planning. I settled on the Education faculty and completed a Home Economics degree at the University of Alberta in 1967. My interests grew in psychology and I proceeded toward and achieved a Masters Degree in Education majoring in Counselling and Psychology. I am presently a certified psychologist and
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National Hall, although I have a vague recollection of seeing some scary war movies in an older hall which used to be across from the old post office.

Florence, Venita and I rode to school in a two-wheeled cart pulled by a little black Shetland pony, Prince. He had a "trick" knee which by accident or design without notice would collapse, causing all cart contents, including us, to go spilling over his head onto the road. With bruised knees and pride, we would pick up hay, seat, lunch pails, etc. and continue on our way - if the mood hit Prince! Occasionally, he appeared to exhibit part-donkey tendencies, and choose not to move, which presented a challenge even to the most experienced males in the school who were confident in their ability to budge the reluctant Prince.

My memories of early years also include:

- the crackling and spitting of wet, snow-covered wood in the stove - when we had forgotten to bring it in to dry off,
- the red hot Quebec heater in the living-room, before the furnace came on the scene,
- the beautiful technicolour glow of burning straw piles, against the dark night sky,
- peeking from behind the bedroom door at 4 a.m. as the threshing crew ate breakfast, then watching them harness the steaming horses in the crisp morning air painted a hazy pink by the sunrise,
- watching the "belt" of the thresher flashing by, and touching it with a branch which would go splintering off in every direction,

used on their backsides if they accidentally lapsed into Ukrainain instead of using the King's English in school,

- you shouldn't fall asleep when listening to a battery-operated radio or the battery will also go to sleep - forever - and your car won't run without it!
- one should not be last in a line-up of kids who are touching an electric fence, especially when everyone else has rubber soled shoes on,
- pigs love to eat clothing left hanging on their fence, including your sister's favourite red sweater,
- it's fun to hunt for turkey, chicken and goose eggs in the bushes when the fowl have the freedom of the range (I haven't seen a large brown spotted turkey egg in years),
- milking can be accomplished only with the aid of a good "smudge pot" during mosquito season, and milking goes a lot faster when you are singing with your Mom and sisters,
- at chicken-canning time you really know where that saying comes from - "running around like a chicken with its head off",

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Miskew, Paul and Jean

Paul, the youngest son of Wasyl and Tekla Miskew (nee



with their parents from Halychyna, Austria in the early

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Semchyshen, Anton and Annie

by Lil, Doris and Susan

Prokip Semchyshyn (1865) and his wife Michalena (1872) came to Canada in 1900 with their two sons, Dmytro (1891) and Mike (1896) from the Borschiw area in Western Ukraine. They settled on their homestead in the Moscow area. More children were born to them: Anton (1904), Annie (1906), and John (1913). They eventually moved from their log and clay home to a big two-storey house which was their home until their passing.

Dmytro married Lena Kaminsky. They had three children but only Jennie Svihun survives. Mike married Mary Bohaychuk. Their children are Orest, and Venita Mengus. Annie married Mike Poseniuk. Their children are Harry, Mary Paskowski and Lily Vitck. John married Nellie Chomiak. Their children are Phyllis Frebrowski, Marcella Babyn and Linda (Mrs. Gerald) Hawryluk.

Our father, Anton Semchyshen, married Annie Powley, the daughter of Anton and Sofia Powley on June 29, 1929. It was a merry house wedding with the Nozak orchestra providing the music. The wedding gifts consisted of two chickens, a small dinner set, a pitcher, a pot, a pair of scissors, a little cash and a bride's dowry of four head of cattle, two pigs and 12 chickens. The young bridegroom had purchased a $7,000 quarter section of land and cleared 10 acres of bush and broke the soil and built a clay house on a hill over a coyote hole that later became a cellar. He also bought an Erskin car to impress his bride-to-be but just before they were married, he sold it and bought a Hart Par tractor. They faced all the difficulties of making their farm a paying proposition. To pay off the second mortgage, dad did custom threshing at $3.00 an acre while mom did all the chores at home.

Dad was active in the community. He served on the School Board of Togo for 10 years, as secretary of St. John Baptist Parish for 20 years, as Municipal councillor in the County of Beaver for 14 years, and he was on the Municipal Hospital Board for 8 years. He did more than his share in road building and grading.

Dad and mother lost a son William in 1930 in infancy. We three girls went to school at Togo, only 1½ miles



Dean Motiuk (baby) Chandra and Darren Motiuk.



Canadian Ukrainian Farmers Association, Oleskow Hall.

STANISLOWOW



Stanislawow students and teacher Anthony Savich after winning an award for Choral singing at the School Festival in Vegreville late 1920's. Their school orchestra won with distinction.

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Miskew, Paul and Jean

Paul, the youngest son of Wasyl and Tekla Miskew (nee



with their parents from Halychyna, Austria in the early

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STARKO MOTORS

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українсьу тижнуву часо-
пись „Поступ."

1917

Виходить третий рік



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Ice Cream, Confectionery,
Fruits and Vegetables

MUNDARE ALBERTA



Come and hear this Portable in our store. Ask for Catalog.

Portable Victrola Model 2-55
$48.50

J. S. FERBEY
MUNDARE ALTA.

One page of early town advertisement.

had a great fondness for the area in which he grew up and visited Mac's family often. They retired to Victoria where Donald passed away Oct. 30, 1961 of cancer. Eveline now resides in a nursing home in St. Albert.

Margaret, the youngest, taught music in Ryley and Edmonton until her marriage to Dave Emberg, a brakeman from the C.N. They had four children, Wally, David Roderick, Donald and Irene. Dave, Sr. passed away suddenly in a car accident when the children were young and Margaret married again a few years later. She married 'Red' Johnstone, who also worked for the C.N. as an engineer. He passed away a few years ago and Margaret still resides in Edmonton.

Malcolm Jr. or 'Mac' was an enthusiastic ball player. He played third base but was better known for his catching abilities. He, along with Bob Watson, and Happy Oslund, played for many teams — Mundare, Vegreville, Mannville and mostly for Ryley. Bob Watson pitched and played second base and Happy Osland had played for the Texas League in the States and was a well-known pitcher. One of the more interesting things that happened during one of the games Mac and Bob played for Mundare was when Bob was up to bat. Mac says Bob hit the longest home run in history — four miles. What happened was that the ball landed in a passing farmers wagon box and rode home with him — four miles! Mac carried on the farming operations and married Dorothy Elizabeth Pugh a teacher from Warwick. They had three children. James Bruce was born Dec. 13, 1931; Margaret Elizabeth born July 16, 1935 and Maxine Dorothy, born Sept. 12, 1445.

The Depression was upon Mac and Dorothy early in their marriage and two or three times a week Dorothy prepared meals for men who had ridden the freight cars to Ryley and were walking from Ryley to Mundare looking for a meal and a job. Farmers at that time used to sell eggs for 5¢ a doz. Times were hard, but people still had fun and box socials and dances were popular. Dorothy passed away when she was only 42 years old from a heart condition that resulted from an early childhood bout with rheumatic fever. Mac went through difficult times raising his family alone and keeping the farm going. His father had passed away a few years earlier and his mother passed away in 1951.

Bruce, the oldest son, had a great interest in hunting and developed into an excellent marksman. He also was a keen ballplayer. He was a catcher like his father and most of the social life of the family in those days centred around ball games. Bruce stayed on the farm for a time after he finished school and then joined the Navy. He is married and he and his wife live in Victoria where he is an officer with the Navy. They have four children, Steven, Susan, Malcolm and Duncan. Margaret finished her schooling at Mundare and then worked in Vegreville until she married John Arthur Nicholson of Vegreville. They have three children, Brian, Shelley and Clifford. The family resides in Calgary where Art is the manager of the Calgary Power Credit Union. Maxine took all of her schooling at Mundare and then went on to take a secretarial course at Vermillion, after which she took a job with the Treasury Branch in Camrose. She married Allan Cole of New Norway and they have four children — Barry, Patrick, Colleen and Phillip. They now reside on a farm at New Norway. Mac sold the farm in approximately 1970 to John Nakonechny and he now resides with Allan and Maxine at New Norway.

Melnyk, Peter F.

I was born in 1903 on a homestead located on S3-T57-R19 in Edna, now known as Star. My father Fedor Melnyk and Mary (Wahilewych) came to Canada from the village of Nebyliw in the county of Kalush, close to the Carpathian Mountains in the province of Halychyna, Ukraine, in 1900 with their children, William, Annie and George. Mike, Nick, Helen and I were born in Canada.

In 1905 a bush fire burnt all of our buildings. Father was away working in Calgary so my mother stayed with her children at a neighbor's home, Matt Malica's, until he returned.

Dr. Archer lived on a farm at Edna before the Lamont hospital was built. When a hay mower cut brother George's leg, Dr. Archer came with his horse and buggy and did surgery on the leg right in our farm home. We also had the services of two midwives, Mrs. Purschke and Mrs. Winsentailo, as well as a bone-setting specialist, Mike Krysko.

The first school in Edna was Limestone Lake. When I was ten years old, I started attending school but I was able to go for four summers only as the school was closed in winter. The first teacher was Mr. Fred Tilson, an Englishman from Manitoba, but he soon quit teaching and farmed in the area until his death at age 71.

In 1897 my father and other Ukrainian pioneers like John Pylypiw, Nick and Mike Melnyk, William Feniak, Mike Pullishy, Pasemko, Letawsky, Paish, N. Malowaney, Borys and others organized the first Greek Catholic Church. In 1900 a quarrel arose between the Orthodox and the Catholics which necessitated court action. As a result the Catholics built another church on the farm of N. Tichkowski; however, it burnt in 1922. By 1926 the 13 families of the parish rebuilt the Star-Peno Church of the Resurrection. I am still one of the parishioners and, like the others from the parish, frequently come to special services in the Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Mundare.

I well remember that the Kirat threshing machine was $150.00, the grain binder $160.00, wagon $60.00, and plow $16.00. The price of meat per pound was pork $.08, chickens $.10, turkeys $.15 and beef $.05. Before there was a store and hotel in Star, the farmers travelled by horse and wagon to get their supplies from Edmonton.

I married in 1934 and have two daughters, Mary and Elizabeth. My family is of hardy stock as my father lived to age 89, my mother to age 92, sister Annie to 86 and William to age 80.

civic and religious organizations. Nellie toured Alberta organizing branches of the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League and addressing branches already organized. She also wrote a number of articles for use on festive occasions, including "From Pioneering to Organization", "U.C.W.L. in Step with Organized Ukrainian Women", and "The Apostolate of Christian Citizenship".

Of their two children, Laurine graduated in Foods and Nutrition and in Education. She is teaching Home Economics at Amityville, New York. Borden attended the University of Alberta, majoring in Physical Education. He is in the real estate business in Edmonton.

John was born in 1908. Not only was he the son who started serious farming at the age of nine, but he also continued to help his parents during school vacations while attending the local Mundare school and the University of Alberta. He interned in the General Hospital in Edmonton but opened his medical practice in Windsor, Ontario. He continued his medical practice until his death in 1979 at the age of 70. John learned to trap, shoot, and loved hunting, both wild fowl and big game.

He married Kathleen Budnick from Edmonton and raised three children: Cathy, John Jr., and Donald. Cathy graduated with a B.Sc. in Nursing and was married to Dr. Robert England. Cathy and her two sons live in Mercedes, California. John Jr. was a practising lawyer in Windsor, Ontario. He died at an early age in 1975, survived by his wife Martha and two children. Donald graduated in Medicine, took post-graduate work in plastic surgery in London, Ontario and is now practising and teaching medicine in Chicago. He has two children.

Paul was born in 1910. He attended the local school in Mundare but quit school after completing grade ten. Someone had to manage the farm and to care for the aging parents. He married Jean Zaozirny and they lived with the parents until both parents died. After farming for a number of years, Paul and Jean moved to Edmonton where Paul was employed by the General Hospital in the Pharmacy Department until his death in 1978 at the age of 67. Jean was an office clerk in the Acme Novelty Company. She now works in the Transport Department, Alberta Government. They have two children, Terrance and Marcia.

Terrance graduated with an M. Ed. degree and is principal in the St. Philips separate school in Edmonton where he and his wife, Judy and their 3 children reside.

Marcia completed high school in Mundare and was employed for some years by the Bank of Commerce as an accountant. She is now married to Ernie Palichuk and finds all her time occupied as a housewife and caring for her two children.

The above is a brief story of Wasyl and Tekla, pioneer settlers who came to Canada with faith in the future, love of freedom, and trust in God. Though they had many setbacks, they persevered and left their mark in their adopted country. Their descendants are seven children, twenty-four grand-children, fifty two great-grandchildren, and 8 great-great-grandchildren.

Miskew, Paul and Jean

Paul, the youngest son of Wasyl and Tekla Miskew (nee



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Attorney-General's Department. They were both active in

and ran second. Presently, Ken is President of the B.C. Social Studies Teachers' Association, Vice-President of the Debate and Speech Association of B.C., and is a member of the Representative Assembly of the B.C. Teachers' Federation. Ken is also a general ed Macmillan of Canada for a series of five Socia textbooks.

Ken married Marina Kristjanson on February and is presently living in Langley with his daugh Gwyn Novakowski who was born on August Durin childr

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Pe Hole Cana in Halychyna. Three daughters Lena, Pearl and Julia passed away in Austria. Two sons John (1906) and Harry (1908) were born to the family in Canada.

For ten years the family farmed near Bellis. During this period their son Onufrey passed away at the age of 14. The family moved across the river to a farm 4 miles north of Mundare in 1919.

The oldest son John married Mary Dziwenka in 1936. After several years, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Nowak together with his son John and wife Mary moved to another farm south of Mundare by Beaver Lake, where they lived their remaining years. Mr. and Mrs. John Nowak are now residing in Vegreville. They raised three children: Joe, Emily and Lawrence.

Joe married Teresa Kozak, and are presently residing in Vegreville where he is employed as an electrician. They







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across the road from our farmyard. Ken continued helping me with the farm work; sometimes working till midnight or later after an eight-hour day in the office. In July, 1979, he was transferred from Alberta Agriculture to Ottawa to be Special Assistant to the Honorable Don Mazankowski, Minister of Transport and Minister Responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board.

On September 24, 1979, a beautiful day with soft winds and beautiful autumn sunshine, symbolic of the rich, gold harvest, our first grandchild, Erin was born. Erin was Ken and



and graduated from Mundare High School in 1979 with honors. Yvonne started working with Government Temporary Employment until the end of August. Inspired by her sister-in-law, Wendy, Yvonne decided to be a nurse and started her classes in U. of A. in September 1979 for a career in nursing. She finds her studies very interesting and I am sure that in the years to come, her work will prove to be gratifying and rewarding.

Our third daughter, Donna, was born on June 5, 1964. Donna has a unique personality with a remarkable sense of humor. She is a very good student, likes reading, bike-riding, and is active in volleyball and floor-hockey. She also enjoys babysitting. Because there are few farm chores now, Donna likes to work in the garden and cuts the grass around our yard (with the garden tractor, of course). Donna, a U.C.Y. member, is in Grade Ten this year in the matriculation program and has not yet made up her mind what career she will choose. When asked what she would

again, be alone. Looking back at our lives, we thank God for his goodness and for providing us with a full and fruitful life. And, we also thank our pioneer parents who left their homeland and loved ones in the old country, giving us the opportunity to be born in Canada, a land where freedom and peace prevail; a land where there is no prejudice and each and every citizen can speak his own language, worship in his own church, and practice his own culture and traditions; a land where any nation can live

civic and religious organizations. Nellie toured Alberta organizing branches of the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League and addressing branches already organized. She also wrote a number of articles for use on festive occasions, including "From Pioneering to Organization", "U.C.W.L. in Step with Organized Ukrainian Women", and "The Apostolate of Christian Citizenship".

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Miskew, Paul and Jean

Paul, the youngest son of Wasyl and Tekla Miskew (nee Woytovich) was born in the Village of Mundare on November 4, 1910. Paul attended school in Mundare until the end of grade ten, when he left to take over his parents homestead which was located one-half mile south of Mundare. During the depression years he cared for his parents and helped supplement his brother's university education.

On October 29, 1938 he married Jean Zaozirny in St. Peter and Paul Church in Mundare, Alberta. Jean, the youngest child of Theodore (Fred) and Anna Zaozirny was born September 7, 1921, in Mundare, Alberta. She completed grade ten and after her marriage to Paul they settled on the farm with Paul's parents where they lived until 1945 when they moved into Mundare.

Paul operated the Imperial Oil Bulk Station; then he went into partnership in the Mundare Food Lockers business. Jean worked in the egg grading station and for the Mundare Co-op.

Paul and Jean were active in community affairs: Paul was an ardent hunter, and curler. He was President of the Mundare Curling Club for many years. He was an active member of the National Film Board, the Hog Marketing Board, the United Farmer's of Alberta, the Elks and the Baseball club in Mundare. Jean belonged to Catholic Women's League, the Mundare Charity Club, the Mundare Home and School Association, the Red Cross and the Handicraft Guild. In 1966 they moved to Edmonton where Paul worked for the General Hospital until his retirement in November 1976. Jean worked for Acme Novelty Merchandising, the General Hospital, and now works for Alberta Transportation.

Paul passed away June 15, 1978.

Terrace, their eldest, was born March 23, 1942. He attended Mundare School. He was an active member of the Air Cadets. He was very active in athletics, and played all sports for Mundare teams. He graduated from the University of Alberta with a Bachelor of Education degree and began his teaching career with the Edmonton School Board System. Presently he is a school principal at St. Philip School. He married Judy Kozdrowski in 1964 in Mundare's St. Peter and Paul Church. Judy worked for the Bank until their children were born. They now have two boys, Lee and Stacy, and one daughter, Dawn Gaye.

Marica, the younger, was born February 4, 1944. She graduated from Mundare High School and was active in





Michael was born in 1896. Farming for only one year, he left home to run a poolroom in Smoky Lake for two years and then went into business as a John Deere Machinery agent in Mundare. Since he was mechanically inclined, he was successful in his business and stayed with the agency until his death in 1952. His chief interests out-

Harry was born in 1893. He married Anne Prystash and settled on a farm two miles east of Mundare. He played a prominent part in farm organizations and was a school trustee of Mundare School District for many years. They had five children: Olga, Jean, Mary, Marshall, and Harry Junior. The daughters attended high school but, when the depression came, they left home, and found work first in Mundare and then in Edmonton. They are all married: Mrs. Olga Carlson lives in Salmon Arm, B.C., Mrs. Jean Graham in Edmonton, and Mrs. Mary Olsen in Powell River, B.C. Marshall Miskew farms in Viking, Alberta. The sons are prosperous farmers and live in modern homes.

Harry's first wife died and he remarried, taking Anastasia Woloshyn as his second wife. They had four children: Boris, living in Monreal, who graduated in Journalism and is employed by the Canadian Press; Lawrence, who graduated in Chemical Engineering and is employed by an oil company in Calgary; Ronald, who died as a child; and Mrs. Margaret Keast, who is a homemaker in Calgary.

Harry lived to see his whole family married and settled. He died in November, 1956, and is buried in the Viking cemetery.

Mrs. Victoria Hughes resides in Edmonton and her sister, Mrs. June Melnychuk, after some years in Calgary, now lives in Edmonton.

Peter was widowed and remarried, taking for his second wife, Katherine Pukish. They had one son and lived in Edmonton where Peter practised law until his death at the age of sixty-five. Katherine continues to reside in Edmonton.

Anna was born at Mundare in 1903. As she was the first daughter to survive, she was a special favorite of her parents, sometimes arousing the envy of her brothers. She did not complete high school as she was compelled to help her aging mother with house duties. However, she belonged to the cultural association at the Mundare People's Home, sang in the church choir, acted in plays, and helped to raise funds for charities. She was employed at the local telephone toll office for many years. On a visit to her cousin in Portland, Oregon, she met and married Troy Shuey. The couple made their home in Redlands, California, where they raised three children: Troy Jr., Joanne, and Charlene, the last graduating in Education.

Nellie was born in 1905. She was a very diligent student and became a school teacher. She moved to Edmonton after marrying George Woytkiw, an employee in the Attorney-General's Department. They were both active in



Basic tools such as a pick shovel, hoe and scythe were purchased. Other tools such as wooden rakes, flail and a grind stone were made. Since Janko continued to work for Anglo-Saxon farmers who settled during the late 1800's near Beaverhill Lake (Kings, McCallums) the tools

The illustrated change of the farm also switched Anna's role as part bread earner to a full-time mother and homemaker. The financial or economic aspects of farming on the other hand, were Janko's responsibilities. As a result, he quickly learned basic English, the monetary

My sister Nadia and Vera married and were living south of Mundare in the Haight district.

We were in the great depression now. What little money I made I always made sure that mother got it to buy food



with them for thirty-one years.

Grandma Kowtun passed away in 1954. Mother passed away in 1967 and my brother Peter returned from overseas but passed away in 1970. While employed as a peace officer for the Town, I had many experiences, some humorous, some frightening. I had the pleasure of meeting and shaking the hand of the then Prime Minister of Canada Mr. Louis St. Laurent, who was on a visit to Mundare. I also met his son Paul in Quebec City. I had very fine co-operation with the Basilian Fathers and was



Mayor Polischuk paying tribute to Lloyd Maslak for service in town.

Cassie (1861 - 1938)

by Joe Mazurek

In the spring of 1900 John and Cassie Matiwi with their children Bill, Peter, Ann and Nancy, moved from the Brody, Austria area in Europe to Canada and took a homestead of 160 acres NW-16-54-16-W4 north of Mundare. John and Cassie came to Canada for the land that was opened for homesteads. They built their own house out of logs and a thatched roof using wood pins to hold the logs in place. Nails were not used much then. After building a small house, John Matiwi walked south to Calgary looking for work but wasn't successful. It took about a month to return. They bought their first cow from Indians who were driving some cattle north past their homestead. Before the Mundare flour mill was built, they had a stone flour mill that was powered by a windmill. There were bears in the woods and one day Cassie went to bring the black cow home to milk. She came to a black animal lying in the bush and she said, "Get up blacky, time for milking". The black bear growled and went running into the woods. Cassie went home crying. It was hard work to make a home in the woods and to clear enough for grain growing. They had 3 more children born in Canada, Pearl, Mary and Justina.

In 1914 Ann Matiwi married Tom Lewicky of Vilna, Alberta. They farmed south of Vilna. Tom died in 1953. They have two children Mary and Tommy. Tommy is

civic and religious organizations. Nellie toured Alberta







Damian and Docia Lazarenko 1923.

In this village on the 24th day of March, 1900, their relatives and friends held a heart-breaking party, farewelling Damian and Docia Lazarenko with their two and a half year old son Wasyl, among the many on that day emigrating to Canada (then known to them as Kanada) so distant and so mysterious. They acted on hearsay information that every adult applicant would be granted, free of charge, a parcel of virgin land some eighty morgs in area. They concluded that an immediate gamble on its truth was well worth taking.

Achteme Kosmenko, with a grieving heart, saw Docia and his two other daughters, Hafia married to Wasyl Lucyk and Anna married to Metro Lazarenko, bidding him good-bye with all of them sensing that they would never meet him again.

Disembarking from S. S. Tunisia in Halifax, Nova Scotia, on the 14th day of April, 1900, they headed toward the setting sun until they reached the postal district of Beaver Lake, North-West Territories, now neighboring Hilliard, Alberta. There among the rotting buffalo skeletons, the roaming coyotes, wide expanses of bush and wild prairie fires, they settled on the promised land they called their own; there they could remain masters of their own destinies. A payment of $10.00 gave them a clear title to the SE-30-53-17-W4. On it they spent their remaining years in Canada, and on it they both passed away, Damian on the 28th August, 1947, and Docia on the 16th day of September, 1947.

There they were blessed with eight more children, Jennie (1900-1960) married to William K. Diduck, both now deceased; Nicholas (1902-1974) married to Helen Gregoraschuk a retired C.N.R. employee; Joseph M. (February 22, 1905) married to Helen Triska, Barrister & Solicitor; John (1907-1932); Katie (1910) married to Fred Kozak now deceased; Alec (1912) married to Helen Topilko, farmer at Hilliard; Mary (1914-1926); and Anne (1916) married to Stanley N. Ruzycki an ex-M.L.A. and now a high school teacher in the City of Edmonton.

They were transported from the village to Karliw, a station where they boarded a train on the way to Rotterdam. Travelling was difficult and long. Very few people spoke Ukrainian and communication beween the trainmen and passengers was very close to zero. Their strange clothing and strange language evoked considerable scorn from the crew. From this point in time it is hard to comprehend the hardships which they endured. A further difficulty arose from the fact that many of their wives were pregnant. Docia was seven months pregnant, expecting her daughter, Jennie. But they were people young in spirit in heart and age. Most of them were in their late twenties, thirties, or early forties.

From Rotterdam they went on board a small ship and headed across the English Channel to England, crossed that country from east to west and came to the Port of Liverpool where they waited three days for their Trans-Atlantic Liner, Tunisia. They boarded that ship and sailed to Canada with great enthusiasm. Since it was early spring, they encountered many ocean storms on the North Atlantic, and the consequent rocking of the ship up and down, and from side to side. Both Damian and Docia became violently seasick resulting in their being confined to bed most of the trip. It was an experience that was never forgotten. They were unable to eat or drink anything until after the storm subsided. Aggravating their plight was their travelling third-class in that part of the liner subjected to the greatest roll and heave. Their son, Wasyl, not affected by the sea, romped around, cheered and encouraged them and brought them a bun or two. Landing in Halifax on the 14th day of April, 1900, they jogged along on the Trans-Canada C.P.R. Railway some three thousand miles to Calgary, and then two hundred miles to Edmonton.

We wonder about their concerns, troubles, and tribulations on their arrival in Edmonton, all strangers in a strange land. But the City was small and somehow they contacted the proper parties and reached Beaver Lake. Without the knowledge of the English language they crossed almost one-half of the world to make their home in the wilderness where not a sliver of land was ever cultivated.

From the beginning, times were hard and it was difficult to earn any money. In the year 1900 Damian went to work for a farmer where he earned $17.00 in a whole month. With it he bought a sack of flour and went home to his wife, his son and baby daughter Jennie. That was all he got by way of wages in that year. But his main concern was getting that homestead of 160 acres. He found it, with very little bush and much pasture. But more important it was removed from the wild animals. He built himself a house between the two bushes which provided the coverage for the coyotes as they stalked the chickens and other fowl.

His first ten years were very difficult as every year he had to go to Edmonton and beyond, looking for work. In the year 1902, when a strike was called, he walked all the way from Calgary to his home with very little money and practically no food. It proved to be one of the most trying experiences of his life. His wife stayed on the homestead taking care of the children, their garden and possessions.

N. Romaniuk married Sophie Hewko, daughter of blacksmith Hewko of Mundare. He used to borrow the Bogdansky violin to entertain the children in school.

Teachers moved around a lot in the early days. In Kolomea School there were twelve teachers in the period 1



the ink wells, and during the morning, lunches would freeze in the cloakroom. The classroom equipment and supplies included a globe, a water pail and dipper (later a water crock fountain and cups were considered more hygienic), maps in a box above the blackboard, flag, picture of the King, yardsticks (used for various purposes), blackboard, chalk, chalk liner, blackboard brushes, teacher's desk, some library books, huge Webster dictionary, pencil sharpener, double desks with inkwells (later, single desks, either anchored to the floor or bolted onto skids), coal and wood pail and boxes, broom and dustpan. (The regulation strap was kept in the desk). Most of the items were purchased at the beginning of school, not because somebody in the district so decreed, but because the department specified these as essentials, and provided a grant for purchasing them.

The schoolyard was approximately two acres in area. There was a water pump, barn, ball backstop, two privies (outhouses) and later the teacherage.

S. J. Porayko, once chairman and later Secretary-Treasurer of the school, was instrumental in getting a new school. The two-room school, built in 1929, had a full basement for playing areas, furnace room, coal bin and storage room. The front had a wide entrance and two big cloakrooms. Grades taught most of the time were - grades one to five in the junior room, and six to ten in the senior room.

Track Meet, and Softball Tournaments.

The Christmas concert program consisted of songs, carols, plays, recitations, drills and pantomimes. The school festival featured choral speech, drama, singing, and recitations. The track meet events were dashes; running high jump; running broad jump; standing broad jump; running, hop, step and jump; and softball.

Years back, schools were encouraged to grow gardens. This was supposed to be good training for boys and girls. But one problem persisted - the garden became very weedy during the summer holidays, and sometimes somebody's cow helped herself.

School was governed by a strict code. Speaking Ukrainian in early schools was strictly taboo. Some teachers even strapped children for talking in Ukrainian; or some would have them write "lines" or stay in during intermissions. Talking in class, turning around, and not doing homework were considered serious school-rule infractions, and the offenders were summarily punished. Note the reverse: today Ukrainian is taught from kindergarten to University.

civic and religious organizations. Nellie toured Alberta organizing branches of the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League and addressing branches already organized. She also wrote
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Miskew, Paul and Jean

Paul, the youngest son of Wasyl and Tekla Miskew (nee Woytovich) was born in the Village of Mundare on
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My mother, Katherine, was a daughter of John and Nancy Wolonik. She and her sister Eva, came to Canada with their parents from Halychyna, Austria in the early



Anne and Nellie Miskew.

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Wasyl and Tekla lived to
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The Miskew Children

Harry was born in 1893
and settled on a farm two
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They had five children: Olg
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first in Mundare and then in
ried: Mrs. Olga Carlson live
Jean Graham in Edmonto
Powell River, B.C. Marsha
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Harry's first wife died
Anastasia Woloshyn as his second wife. They had four children: Boris, living in Monreal, who graduated in Journalism and is employed by the Canadian Press; Lawrence, who graduated in Chemical Engineering and is employed by an oil company in Calgary; Ronald, who died as a child; and Mrs. Margaret Keast, who is a homemaker in Calgary.

Harry lived to see his whole family married and settled. He died in November, 1956, and is buried in the Viking cemetery.

Michael was born in 1896. Farming for only one year, he left home to run a poolroom in Smoky Lake for two years and then went into business as a John Deere Machinery agent in Mundare. Since he was mechanically inclined, he was successful in his business and stayed with the agency until his death in 1952. His chief interests outside his agency were fishing and hunting.

Michael and Eva had three children: Joseph, Borden, and Adlynn. The two sons attended high school in Mundare and joined the R.C.A.F. during the Second World War. Joseph became an instructor but Borden injured his spine during his training period and was discharged. Both



helped to raise funds for charities. She was employed at the local telephone toll office for many years. On a visit to her cousin in Portland, Oregon, she met and married Troy Shuey. The couple made their home in Redlands, California, where they raised three children: Troy Jr., Joanne, and Charlene, the last graduating in Education.

Nellie was born in 1905. She was a very diligent student and became a school teacher. She moved to Edmonton after marrying George Woytkiw, an employee in the Attorney-General's Department. They were both active in

across the road from our farmyard. Ken continued helping me with the farm work; sometimes working till midnight or later after an eight-hour day in the office. In July, 1979, he was transferred from Alberta Agriculture to Ottawa to be Special Assistant to the Honorable Don Mazankowski, Minister of Transport and Minister Responsible for the Canadian Wheat Board.

On September 24, 1979, a beautiful day with soft winds and beautiful autumn sunshine, symbolic of the rich, gold harvest, our first grandchild, Erin, was born. Erin was Ken and Wendy's first child, a beautiful little daughter whom we all learned to love and were very proud of. Ken started his work in Ottawa on November 13, 1979. Shortly after the new year, 1980, Ken, Wendy, and Erin moved to Ottawa where they made their new home and Ken finds his job very challenging, and a great experience.

Our second child and eldest daughter, Karen was born on January 20, 1961. Karen started school in 1967 and was a good student being active in sports and an all-round friendly youngster. Besides babysitting her three younger sisters, Karen also helped with farm chores such as milking cows, feeding calves and chickens. Her hobbies were reading and handicrafts. She liked children and babysat for extra spending money. Karen loved playing volleyball and was on the team that went to play in the provincials in 1978 at Eaglesham, Alberta. Karen was secretary for the U.C.Y. organization and in 1977 she worked for the Town of Mundare in the Students Temporary Employment Program during the summer months. In July and August of 1978 she worked for A.G.T. as telephone operator in Vegreville. She graduated from Mundare High School in the Senior Matriculation Program in January, 1979, and immediately
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Our third daughter, Donna, was born on June 5, 1964. Donna has a unique personality with a remarkable sense of humor. She is a very good student, likes reading, bike-riding, and is active in volleyball and floor-hockey. She also enjoys babysitting. Because there are few farm chores now, Donna likes to work in the garden and cuts the grass around our yard (with the garden tractor, of course). Donna, a U.C.Y. member, is in Grade Ten this year in the matriculation program and has not yet made up her mind what career she will choose. When asked what she would like to do when she graduates from high school, Donna says, "Go to university, of course".

Last but not least, is our daughter Colette who was born on January 13, 1966. Colette is a quiet friendly girl, a good student who likes reading and often when not around can be found in her room working on some school assignment. She is also active in sports such as volleyball and softball with the Junior High School Team. Her favorite handicraft is macrame. Colette likes babysitting for extra spending money, helps with chores such as cutting grass and working in the garden. Like all her sisters, Colette is also a U.C.Y. member. Colette, in Grade Nine, has not yet chosen a career, but is thinking of Senior Matriculation in high school and university as a post-secondary education.

My wife and I have lived in this community all our lives and have many friends, relatives, and neighbors. We have raised our family in a peaceful country life working closely with our church, Sts. Peter & Paul Parish, school, town, and community. We have been through good times and bad, happy days, and sad events. Our children do not have any grandparents, as their paternal grandparents died before they were born and they may slightly remember



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With the encouragement of my parents, my early adult years were marked with study and career planning. I settled on the Education faculty and completed a Home Economics degree at the University of Alberta in 1967. My interests grew in psychology and I proceeded toward and achieved a Masters Degree in Education majoring in Counselling and Psychology. I am presently a certified psychologist and am counselling kindergarten to grade 12 students with the Edmonton Catholic School System.

I married Garry Lee Burt, son of Mr. & Mrs. Earl Burt of Craigmyle, Alberta. Garry is an air traffic controller at the Edmonton International Airport and is farming part-time in Craigmyle. He is an avid Glider pilot and private pilot and we spend our leisure time in summer with the Edmonton Soaring Club stationed at Chipman, Alberta. Our family, at present, consists of Shannon Tara, our daughter, who is engaged in the Ukrainian Bilingual Program in the Edmonton Catholic School System. We are happily awaiting our second child.

Bernice Hewko Browne

I was third in a family of four girls, and loved to be a tomboy helping my Dad with roofing and other things, preferring to leave baking and the like to Venita and Mom. Florence was an experienced hand and was usually farther "afield", handling horses or tractor expertly.

When I was too small to handle "stooking" with my bigger sisters and parents, I was left in charge of meals and housework. I suppose I was about eight when I prepared my first chicken dinner, first catching the hen in the coop, per
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dry off,
- the red hot Quebec heater in the living-room, before the furnace came on the scene,
- the beautiful technicolour glow of burning straw piles, against the dark night sky,
- peeking from behind the bedroom door at 4 a.m. as the threshing crew ate breakfast, then watching them harness the steaming horses in the crisp morning air painted a hazy pink by the sunrise,
- watching the "belt" of the thresher flashing by, and touching it with a branch which would go splintering off in every direction,





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Six Generations on Maternal and Paternal Side.

civic and religious organizations. Nellie toured Alberta organizing branches of the Ukrainian Catholic Women's League and addressing branches already organized. She also wrote a number of articles for use on sions, including "From Pioneering to O "U.C.W.L. in Step with Organized Ukraini and "The Apostolate of Christian Citizenship

Of their two children, Laurine graduated i Nutrition and in Education. She is tea Economics at Amityville, New York. Borden University of Alberta, majoring in Physical E is in the real estate business in Edmonton.

John was born in 1908. Not only was he started serious farming at the age of nine, bu tinued to help his parents during school vacat tending the local Mundare school and the Alberta. He interned in the General Hospital but opened his medical practice in Windsor, continued his medical practice until his deat



settlers who came to Canada with faith in the future, love of freedom, and trust in God. Though they had many setbacks, they persevered and left their mark in their adopted country. Their descendants are seven children, twenty-four grand-children, fifty two great-grandchildren, and 8 great-great-grandchildren.

Miskew, Paul and Jean

Paul, the youngest son of Wasyl and Tekla Miskew (nee Woytovich) was born in the Village of Mundare on



o boys, Lee and Stacy, and one daughter, Dawn Gaye.

Marica, the younger, was born February 4, 1944. She raduated from Mundare High School and was active in chool clubs, athletics and the Mundare Ukrainian atholic Youth. She married Ernest Palichuk in 1962. hey have two children, Craig, and Cheryl Lynn. Marcia orks for the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, and rnest works for Alberta Government Services.

Miskew, Catherine and Andrew

by Jennie Sachkiw

My mother, Katherine, was a daughter of John and Nancy Wolonik. She and her sister Eva, came to Canada with their parents from Halychyna, Austria in the early

healthy, confident and secure in their conviction that they had already played the part of men on the farm.



Michael was born in 1896. Farming for only one year, he left home to run a poolroom in Smoky Lake for two ...then went into business as a John Deere ...gent in Mundare. Since he was mechanically ...was successful in his business and stayed with ...ntil his death in 1952. His chief interests out-...cy were fishing and hunting.

...nd Eva had three children: Joseph, Borden, ... The two sons attended high school in Mun-...ned the R.C.A.F. during the Second World ...became an instructor but Borden injured his ...his training period and was discharged. Both ...ployed by the Federal Government, one in ...nd Measures Department and the other as a ...Namao Airport. Adlynn graduated from the



...ied: Mrs. Olga Carlson lives in Salmon Arm, ... Jean Graham in Edmonton, and Mrs. Mary ... Powell River, B.C. Marshall Miskew farms i... Alberta. The sons are prosperous farmers a... modern homes.

Harry's first wife died and he remarrie... Anastasia Woloshyn as his second wife. They ... children: Boris, living in Monreal, who graduated in Journalism and is employed by the Canadian Press; Lawrence, who graduated in Chemical Engineering and is employed by an oil company in Calgary; Ronald, who died as a child; and Mrs. Margaret Keast, who is a homemaker in Calgary.

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Mike and Anne Siracky and family. Phyllis Gulevich, Josephine Procyk, Henry, Leonard and Ladimer.



November 19, 1927 Mike married Annie, the daughter of John M. and Nancy (Struchinski) Ruzycki. She was born in 19[illegible] that time. where Ann Sister's sch to Mundar few doors she clerked parents for own farm children s Josephine Siracky an

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of Michael and Annie (nee Ruzycki) s born on February 8, 1938 on a farm two of Mundare. He received his elementary educa- in Brody, a country school. In September, 1950, ntralization took place and all the country schools were closed. All the students from Brody School came by

time members of the Sts. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church Choir and were members of the Ukrainian Catholic Youth Organization before their marriage.

Christine and Louise attended Mundare School and were on the Student's Union executive, Chris as Treasurer and Louise as President. Both were members of the U.C.Y. Chris had also been a choir member. Carmen is in the fourth grade and goes to school in Mundare.



Home built in 1901.



Lysyk House.



1914 Hom

Kings Home.

Browarny Hand Painted Home.

chose to live with Mr. Joseph Frebrowski and his family (on the present home place of Mr. Walter Frebrowski). The rest of the original family members lived with the Semchyshen Family until they could afford their own homestead.

During the following years Anna often found herself alone with her cousin's family as Janko would be out seeking any employment that was available; harvest hands, railway and mining (coal) were usually the predominate forms but when those lacked, Janko resorted to winter trapping and hunting. Frequently, young wives attempted to assist and supplement their husbands' earnings so that a home could be made quickly. Anna was no exception.

In the fall of 1901 Anna Kubin and her sister-in-law, Mrs. Prokief Semchyshen, took their sickles and walked eighteen miles to Mr. Petric's farm (near Krakow) which he





rooms was built. The roof, however, had to be made in spring as straw was not available. In spring, while Janko was out at work, Anna would walk two miles to the homestead with her four month old son Peter and assign herself to the task of cutting tall grass and tying it into sheaves for the roof. When that was completed, she mixed clay and straw by hand in a manner similar to that of preparing bread dough and plastered the walls of her new home. The late spring rains, however, washed off the plaster and the job had to be redone. In the late fall of 1903, Janko assisted Anna with the final tasks of roofing the house with the dry sheaves of grass and straw. Following these tasks Anna and Janko resorted to clearing the homestead.

Basic tools such as a pick shovel, hoe and scythe were purchased. Other tools such as wooden rakes, flail and a grind stone were made. Since Janko continued to work for Anglo-Saxon farmers who settled during the late 1800's near Beaverhill Lake (Kings, McCallums) the tools

ticular, horses which were sold in surrounding areas and used for breeding, transportation and domestic purposes.

The illustrated change of the farm also switched Anna's role as part bread earner to a full-time mother and homemaker. The financial or economic aspects of farming on the other hand, were Janko's responsibilities. As a result, he quickly learned basic English, the monetary



ing from neighbours only added to her difficulties. "Advice" which was sometimes received was often a practical joke which was viewed as humorous only much later in her life. One such piece of advice was received from a neighbour on a cold winter evening when the northern lights were very bright and low. It was an omen, he said, that by midnight it would become so cold that no creature would survive upon entering outdoors. Heeding his cautionary advice, Anna and her children dragged into the house as much firewood as was possible for the short



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eldest son, Peter left home when sixteen years old.

In the following years Anna managed the farm
help of her children Joseph and Pauline. Together
family, Anna had to overcome many fears and m
particularly during the winter months. Ridicule and teas-

who owned the land on which the residing "Moscow

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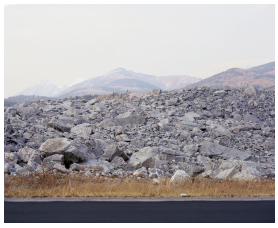
	Open road, HWY 570, AB		Abandoned farmhouse, HWY, 872, AB
	Open prairie, image one, HWY 872, AB		Open prairie, image two, HWY 872, AB
	Transmission tower in the landscape, HWY 36, AB		Old rubber at a tire shop, Coronation, AB
	House on mainstreet, Coronation, AB		Edge of town, Coronation, AB
	Frontier Hotel signage, Coronation, AB		Ginger beef with vegetables, Coronation, AB
	Jack's Shoe Store abandoned, Coronation, AB		Trash piles, HWY 36, AB
	A submerged power line, HWY 14, AB		Prairie dust storm in the distance, HWY 56, AB

	Railway crossing, HWY 570, AB		Grass fire near highway, HWY 570, AB
	Aging grain elevator, Dorothy, AB		Car for sale, Hussar, AB
	Storage tank near train tracks, Hussar, AB		Dead coyote, Hussar, AB
	Raised house near Deadhorse Lake, Hussar, AB		Overgrown entrance, Hussar, AB
	Extension cord used in house renovations, Hussar, AB		Vacant lot and back alley, Hussar, AB
	Glacial erratic, outside of Okotoks, AB		Sign to Bar U Ranch, HWY 22, AB
	Scenery along the Cowboy Trail, HWY 22, AB		Pickup truck, Coleman, AB

	Back to God chapel, Bellevue, AB		New condominium development, Coleman, AB
	Street of old miner homes, Coleman, AB		Remnants of Coleman's mining operation, Coleman, AB
	Tire shop, Blairmore, AB		Miner house, Colman, AB
	Franks Slide looking north, Frank, AB		Old Man River, HWY 22, AB

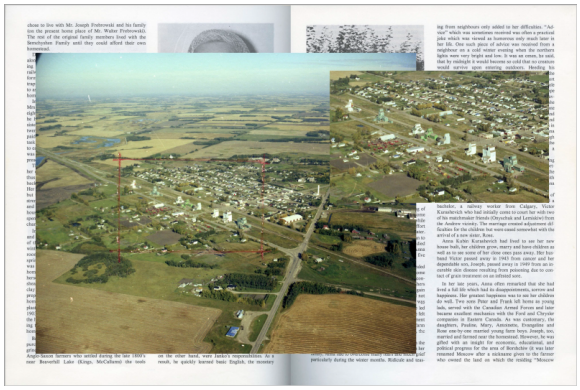
	Grain elevator, Rosedale, AB 2015		Tall weeds growing in an unkept yard, Rosedale, AB 2015
	Mr. Fox hitchhiking, Harlem, MT 2015		Garage on side of highway, Saco, MT 2017
	Old farmer, Leader, SK 2015		Miniature church on the outskirts of town, Drumheller, AB 2016
	Amateur archaeologist looking for dinosaur bones, Wayne, AB 2015		Field after harvest, highway 21 near Fox Creek, SK 2017
	Freeman on the land, Donalda, AB 2016		Church converted to a bar, Sunburst, MT 2015
	Abandoned house, Sexsmith, AB 2017		Prairie sidestreet, Terry, MT 2017
	Farmer outside the bar, Manville, AB 2015		Farm with Llamas, Highway 13 near Eastend, SK 2015

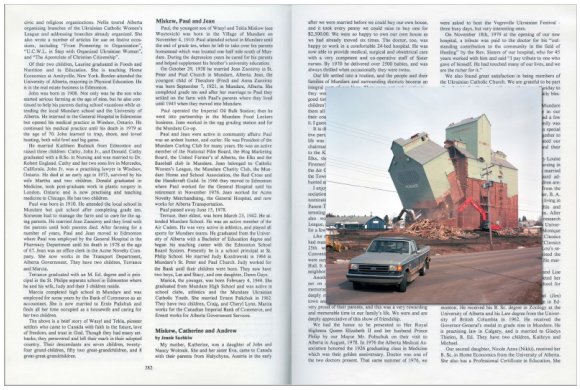
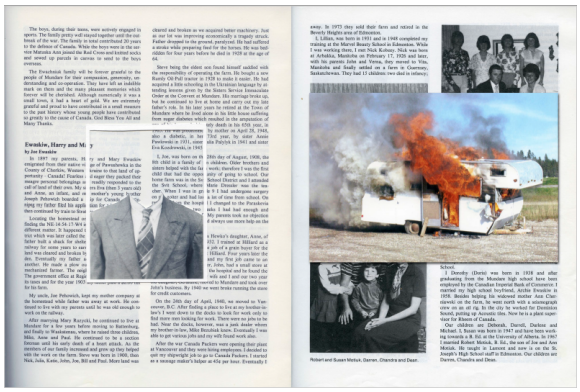
	Chinese-Western restaurant, Westlock, AB 2016		Sign commemorating deaths of seven motorists, Highway 2 near Wagner, MT 2017
	Retired woman picking up garbage, Highway 22 near Lundbreck, AB 2017		Backyard shed, Three Hills, AB 2015
	Classic Red Truck, Flaxville, MT 2017		Retired trucker, Boyle, AB 2017
	New Grain Terminal, Outside Gull Lake, SK 2015		Train passing by car graveyard, Rosebud, MT 2017
	Retired oil and gas worker walking his dog, Rimbey, AB 2016		Delipidated house, Metiskow, AB 2017
	Aging pick-up truck, Shelby, MT 2015		Industrial area of town, Drumheller, AB 2015
	Jehovah Witness spreading the word, Athabasca, AB 2016		Retired Farmer at a Demolition Derby, Smoky Lake, AB 2016

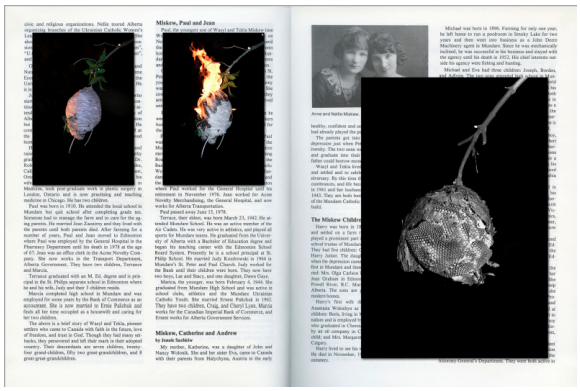
	Grocery store worker, Athabasca, AB 2016		Dancer in Regalia, Driftpile Powwow near highway 2, AB 2017
	Prairie badlands in the evening, Drumheller, AB 2016		Replica T-Rex, Drumheller, AB 2017
	Land mural, highway 94 near Rosebud, MT 2017		Prairie Catholic church, Marsden, SK 2016
	Prairie nomad after grocery shopping, Whitecourt, AB 2017		Long-haul trucker at a reststop, Gull Lake, SK 2015
	List of local cowbrands, Arrowwood, AB 2017		Quiet main street on a Sunday, Chauvin, AB 2016
	Edge of a prairie town looking south, Consort, AB 2017		Edge of a prairie looking east, Clyde, AB 2016
	Woman running errands uptown, Bretton, AB 2017		Man working in his yard, Legal, AB 2017

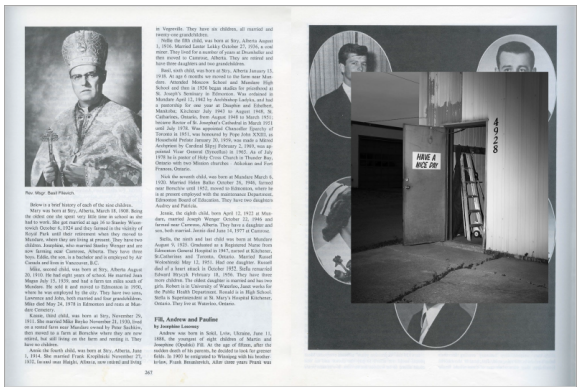
	Rail siding, Mannville, AB 2016		Demolition derby, Smoky Lake, AB 2016
	Man doing yard work, Glendon, AB 2016		Bull in a prairie field, highway 570 near Dorothy, AB 2017
	Empty cattle trading station, Veteran, AB 2017		Book salesman, Eastend, SK 2015
	Abandoned Car, Highway 2, near Claresholm, AB 2016		Local Credit Union, Amisk, AB 2017
	Liquor Store, Veteran, AB 2017		Vacant commercial building, Vegreville, AB 2013
	Prairie mural on grain bins, Highway 16 near Medicine Lake, MT 2017		Junk collector outside his home, Ashmont, AB 2016
	Side view of a house turned business, Nanton, AB 2015		Resting car, Milk River, AB 2015

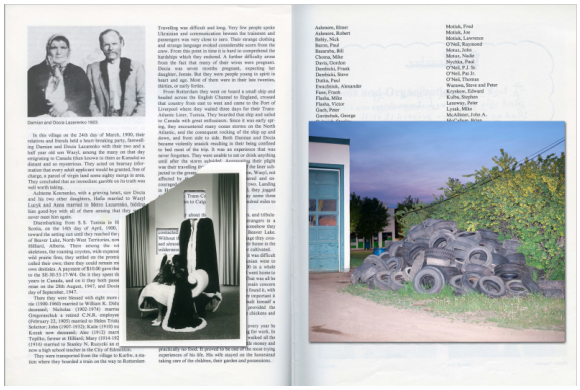
	Old grain terminal, Cut Bank, MT 2017		Lonely phone booth, Highway 13, AB 2013
	Spruce tree on a side street, Macklin, AB 2017		

	(L) Aerial image of Mundare with hand-drawn crop marks, Found Negatives Batch #1, date unknown. (R) Cropped image of aerial view of Mundare, from 'Found Negatives Batch #1' Archive, date unknown.
	(L) A community member videotaping Vidpust events, 2018. (R) Exterior of the abandoned Podola Hall, 2km outside of Mundare, 2017.
	(L) Portrait of community member and ex Mayor of Mundare Peter Polischuk, 2017. (R) Two men looking past a fence modified with red thread, image provided by Sylvia Zaharkiw, date unknown.
	(L) Community Members celebrating an event, image modified with red pastel, found image, date unknown.

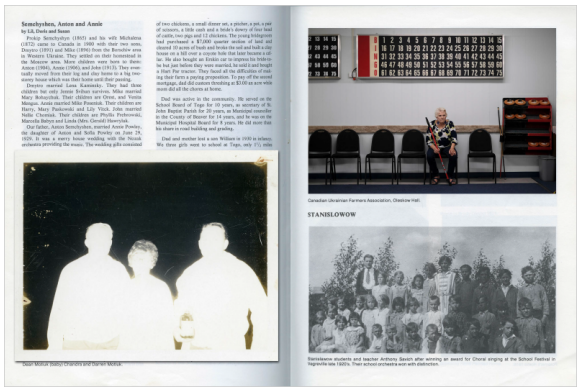
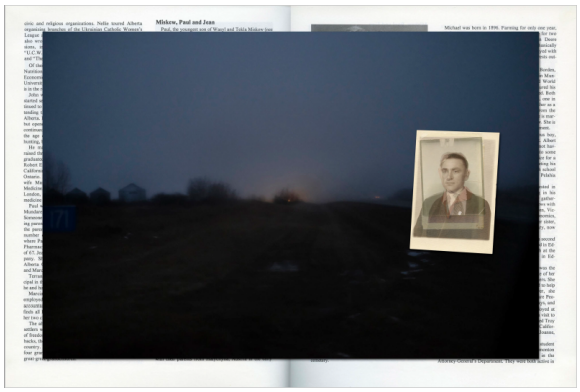
	(R) The last grain elevator in Mundare being demolished. At its height the community boasted nine grain elevators, 2013.
	Community members posing for a photo before dinner, image modified with a lightweight knife, image provided by Jane Stawnichy, date unknown.
	(L) Studio portrait of a community member modified by a lightweight knife, image provided by the Town of Mundare, date unknown. (R) Burning camping trailer used in a local fire exercise by the fire department, image provided by the Mundare Fire Department, date unknown.
	(L) A prairie road illuminated by headlights near the community at dusk, 2017. (R) An image of a baby being born, image provided by Colette Hennig, 1994.

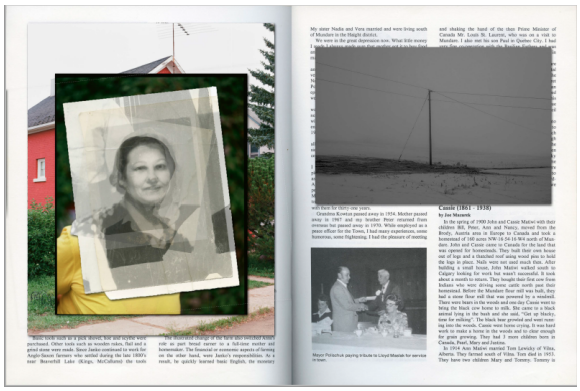
	(L) Community members enjoying alcoholic beverages outside, modified by a red marker, image provided by Katherine Lesoway, date unknown. (R) Portrait of a community member holding freshly picked vegetables from her garden, 2017.
	Sequence of images of a hornet's nest being burnt on a farm outside the community, 2018.
	(L- bottom image) Foggy field after the fall harvest, 2017. (L - top image) Community youths enjoying a keg party during the day, image provided by Jane Stawnichy, date unknown. (R) Image of a couple in a field outside of the community, modified by lightweight knife, image provided by Jenny Siracky, date unknown.
	(L) Studio image of locally made Co-op donuts, 2018.

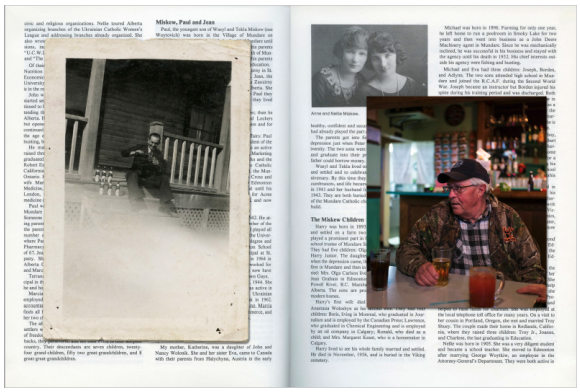
	(R) Group of community members enjoying a prairie picnic outside of the community, modified by a lightweight knife, image provided by Nadia Wasnea, date unknown.
	(L) A power pole line in the community illuminated by a flash at night, 2018. (R) Superior Album Prints holder, booklet provided by Jenny Siracky, date unknown.
	(R) Entrance to a storage building in the community, 2019.
	(Bottom image) Photograph of a hand-colour image from the community nursing home, original date of photograph unknown, photograph of image from 2017. (Top Image - R) A community member posing with beer, image provided by Sylvia Zaharkiw, date unknown.

	(L) King and Queen of a community event modified by a lightweight knife, image provided by Jane Stawnichy, date unknown. (R) Pile of tires illuminated by a flash outside one of the automotive centres in the community, 2019.
	Farmer's field outside of the community modified by a lightweight knife into the shape of the province of Alberta, 2018.
	(L) Family portrait of community members modified with red thread, image provided by Nadia Wasnea, date unknown. (R) Community member descending a ladder after setting up security cameras on a farm outside of the community, 2018.
	Alberta license plate found in the community and modified with a semi-automatic .22 calibre rifle, 2019.

	(L) A house in the community at night illuminated by a porch light, 2018.
	(L) Image of a nun in the community modified by a red pastel marker, image provided by Katherine Lesoway, date unknown. (R) Cropped image of a nun in the community, original image provided by Katherine Lesoway, date unknown.
	(Back image) A curtain covering in the community's old General Hospital, 2014. (Top - L) Two community members sharing a beer near a body of water, from 'Found Negatives Batch #1' Archive, date unknown. (Top - R) Image of a truck on an abandoned farm outside the community, 2019.
	(L) A community member standing in one of his fields during harvest, 2014. (R) A train passing RR 171 as it approaches the town at dusk, 2017.

	(Back image) Glow of a train passing through the community at night, 2017. (Second from back image) A dead cat found in the spring thaw on a farm outside of the community, 2018. (Top image - R) Three community members in a warm embrace, image provided by Norma Zeleny, date unknown.
	(L) Overexposed image of three community members at a bush party, image provided by Jane Stawnichy, date unknown. (R) A community member waiting for her turn in floor curling, 2018.
	(Back image) Glow of a train passing through the community at night, 2017. (R) three image composite of community member portraits, images provided by Isodore Patrie (one image), and Jenny Siracky (two images), dates unknown.
	An abandoned farm house outside of the community that is thought to be haunted, 2018.

	(Back image) Community greenhouse in the spring, 2019. (Top image - R) two community members taking a break during harvest, image provided by Jenny Siracky, date unknown.
	(Bottom image - L) Foliage in a back alley of the community with the shadow of a powerline, 2017. (Top image - R) A community member standing atop a 10-foot pole, image provided by Jenny Siracky, date unknown. (R) The remnants of a Ford truck after it and its driver were struck by a train outside the community on RR 171 and modified by blood, image provided by Norma Zeleny, date unknown.
	(L) Strip of wallet prints of a community member, image provided by Norma Zeleny, date unknown. (R) Portrait of a community member posing in their kitchen, 2017.
	(Bottom image - L) Red brick house in the community, 2018, (Second from bottom - L) Portrait of a community member in her garden, 2018, (Top image - L) three image composite of community member portraits, images provided by Norma Zeleny (one image), and Jenny Siracky (two images), dates unknown. (R) powerline in a snowy field early on a foggy morning, 2017.

	(Back image) Open source image of the Milky Way Galaxy from the NASA database, 2018. (Second from back image) Barn burning to make more room for planting crops near the community, image provided by Norma Zeleny, date unknown. (Top - L) Damaged portrait of a posed community member, from 'Found Negatives Batch #1' Archive, date unknown.
	(Right back Image - colour) Prairie fire near the community, 'Found Negatives Batch #1' Archive, date unknown. (Top image - L) Community member holding two hens on a farm, cut out using a lightweight knife, image provided by Katherine Lesoway, date unknown. (Top image - R) Environmental portrait of a community member standing next to a car, cut out using a lightweight knife, image provided by the Town of Mundare, date unknown.
	(L) Community member pouring a beer on the steps of a house, image provided by Sylvia Zaharkiw, date unknown. (R) Community member enjoying a beer on wing night at the Corner Pub, 2019.
	(L) Community member showing an image of his car that caught fire on the highway near the community, 2018. (Top Right) A community member posing in swimwear near a lake close to the community, image provided by Norma Zeleny, date unknown. (Bottom Right) A community member sitting in a pasture near the community, image provided by Jenny Siracky, date unknown.

	(Back image - L) Candid image of community members in a car, image provided by Katherine Lesoway, date unknown. (Second from back image - L) composite image of two rural intersections, 2018. (Top image - L) Damage to the front end of a car caused by an accident, image provided by Jenny Siracky, 1950. (R) Damaged family portrait in studio modified with red pastel, image provided by Jane Stawnichy, date unknown.
	(L) Image of a dead garter held at the end of a shotgun barrel, 2018. (C) A community member throws her hand up towards the sky, 2018. (R) A portrait of a cowboy illuminated by flash in a community member's house, 2018.
	(back image - L) Studio image of Ukrianian Easter Eggs in a nest of orange and blue bail twine, 2018. (Front image - L) Portrait of a community member and farmer moving between fields at harvest, 2015. (R) Burning of an old sod house to clear land for farming, image provided by Robb Zeleny, date unknown.
	(L) community members and grandparents posing with a newly born baby modified with red pastel, image provided by Jane Stawnichy, date unknown. (C) A table of community members standing and toasting at a function modified by 200 grit sandpaper, image provided by the Mundare Fire Department, date unknown. (R) Community member posing in a suit modified with red pastel, image provided by Jenny Siracky, date unknown.

Informed Consent Form

Study Name: Visualizing Rural Alberta

Researcher: Kyler Zeleny – Doctoral Candidate in the Communication & Culture program at York University

Email Address: zeleny@ualberta.ca
Office Phone: 1 (780) 937-2548
Website: kylerzeleny.com/phd

Purpose of the Research

The project uses documentary photography as a way to learn about rural Alberta. The purpose of the research is to create a contemporary photographic account of rural spaces and communities in Western Canada.

What you will be asked to do in the research

As part of this project I will be taking photographs of rural communities and individuals in Alberta (and surrounding areas – British Columbia, Saskatchewan and Montana). These photographs will only be used in a context related to the research of rural communities in Alberta and will take 3-5 minutes of your time to produce.

I am asking your permission to share the photographs I take of you with people who are not part of this research team, by signing this form you consent to the following:

1. The photographs can be included in publications, presentations, and presentations about this research study that are seen by other researchers and by the general public.

2. The photographs can be shared online to promote the project's findings. Photographs will only be presented in the context of the project and never sold for commercial use.

3. The photographs will not be destroyed and will be stored in the researcher's possession unless a gallery or academic institution wishes to receive the collection.

Risks and discomforts

The research process has been designed with your protection as its primary concern. However, since your image may be shared online as part of the findings, there is a risk it may be used in a context other than the one stated above. To help stop this from happening, the researcher will caption all images used online and do periodical reverse image searches to ensure they are not being used to misrepresent you.

Benefits of the research and benefits to you

You may request a printed version of the photograph for your personal use. By taking part in the project participants are also helping to further our understanding of a) the way rural communities are represented, b) the issues facing rural communities and their current needs.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to volunteer will not influence the relationship you may have with the researchers or study staff or the nature of your relationship with York University either now, or in the future.

Withdrawal from the study: You can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researchers, York University, or any other group associated with this project. In the event you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

Confidentiality

You will be identifiable by your photograph and your first name only. If any additional personal information is received during the exchange it will be kept confidential and separate from the findings. Photographs will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. Digital images will be stored in two computers accessible only with a password. The photographs will not be destroyed and will continue to be archived in the researcher's possession unless a gallery or academic institution wishes to receive the collection. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

Questions About the Research? If you have questions about the research in general or about your role in the study, please feel free to contact Dr. Paul Moore either by telephone at 416-979-5000 ext. 2604 or by e-mail (psmoore@ryerson.ca). You may also contact the Communication and Culture Graduate program by telephone at 416-736-2100 ext. 22915 or by email (smargett@yorku.ca).

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, your may contact the Senior Manager and Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University, telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca.

To follow the research as it progresses feel free to contact the researcher directly or visit the study-specific webpage: kylerzeleny.com/PhD. This webpage is updated regularly and has additional information about the project.

Legal rights and signatures:

I, _____, consent to participate in conducted by Kyler Zeleny. I have read and understand the nature of this project and wish to participate. I am not waiving any of my legal rights by signing this form. My signature below indicates my consent.

Signature _____ Date _____
Participant

Signature _____ Date _____
Principal Investigator

Verbal Script for Obtaining Informed Consent

(Visualizing Rural Alberta – Consent Documentation Waived)

Please note that although the script has been written chronically, the researcher is aware that the order in which information is dispensed may change based on how each conversation unfolds. The researcher is fully aware though that all the following information must at some point be shared during the interaction.

Script

Hello, my name is Kyler Zeleny. I am a graduate student at York University in the Communication and Culture Program, and I am photographing rural communities in Alberta as part of my dissertation. I am interested in photographing the rural landscape that surrounds communities but also the buildings and people who live in rural areas.

Do you live in a rural region of Alberta and would you allow me to take a portrait of you? This will only take a few minutes (3-5min).

- If yes, continue below.
- If no, thank them for their time.

The images taken will only be used in a context related to the research of rural communities in Alberta. But before I can do that I need to know you are ok with the following:

1. The photographs can be included in publications, presentations and exhibitions about rural community's study and could be seen by other researchers and by the general public.

2. The photographs can be shared online to promote the projects findings. Photographs will only be presented in the context of the project and never sold for commercial use.

3. The photographs will not be destroyed and will be stored in the researcher's possession indefinitely unless a gallery or academic institution wishes to receive the collection.

You should be aware that your image may be circulated online as part of the findings and as a result there is a risk it may be used in a context other than the one I've mentioned. This is unlikely but it could happen. To help stop this from happening, I will caption all images used

online and do periodical reverse image searches to ensure they are being used appropriately and not being used to misrepresent the research or you.

Please keep in mind this research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. This is done to protect your rights. I will leave you some information on how you can contact them if you feel you need to in the future.

As an appreciation for your time, I would like to offer you a printed version of the photograph I'll take. As well by taking part in the project you'll be helping to further our understanding of how rural communities are represented and possibly shed more like on the issues facing them.

Of course your participation in the study is completely voluntary and you may choose to stop participating at any time with no negative recourse. And you can stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide.

Your rights are important to us and your confidentiality will be secured to the fullest extent possible by law. However, you will be identifiable by your image and your first name. All other personal information received during the exchange will be kept confidential and separate from the findings. Film negatives will be stored in a locked filing cabinet and digital images will be stored in two computers accessible only with a password.

If you have any additional questions concerning this research or your participation in it, please feel free to contact me, or my dissertation supervisor or our university research office at any time. I will leave you with the required information to get in contact with them.

I will leave you some information detailing how you can contact the university, my supervisor, or me in the future.

At this time the participant will be given print material detailing how they can contact the researcher. The contact information will be explained to them and they will be encouraged to visit the active project webpage (kylerzeleny.com/phd).

Postcard for Field-Research



Front side of postcard featuring image from the project.

VISUALIZING RURAL ALBERTA

PLACE STAMP HERE

Kyler Zeleny

Doctoral Candidate in the Joint Communication & Culture Program at York University

Phone: 780-937-2548
Email: zeleny@ualberta.ca

The Visualizing Rural Alberta project uses documentary photography as a way to learn about the province's rural spaces. The purpose of the research is to create a contemporary photographic account of rural spaces and communities in Western Canada.

For additional information about this project please visit www.kylerzeleny.com/phd

The faculty supervisor for this research project is Dr. Paul Moore. You may contact him with questions or if you feel you have been harmed as a result of your participation.

Phone: 416-979-5000 ext. 2604
Email: psmoore@ryerson.ca

This research has been reviewed and approved by the Human Participants Review Sub-Committee, York University's Ethics Review Board and conforms to the standards of the Canadian Tri-Council Research Ethics guidelines. If you have any questions about this process, or about your rights as a participant in the study, your may contact the Senior Manager and Policy Advisor for the Office of Research Ethics, 5th Floor, York Research Tower, York University, telephone 416-736-5914 or e-mail ore@yorku.ca.

KYLERZELENY.COM

Backside of postcard with contact and additional project information.