

# We Made Baldur

Notable People from Baldur's Past



On the Cover: Left: Dr. Irving Cleghorn; centre: James, Peter and Henry Strang; right: Margaret (Maggie) Schultz.

## A Project of the Argyle Museum Heritage Advisory Group

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# We Made Baldur

## NOTABLE PEOPLE FROM BALDUR'S PAST

**T**HE THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE who have made BALDUR their home over the years, since its inception in 1890, have been a fascinating group, full of strength and wisdom, wit and vigour, kindness and foresight.

Some of these people are also significant, key figures in our history. They have either come to define Baldur by their very being, or they have changed Baldur through their actions and decisions.

This booklet recognizes and honours these people.

On the following pages you will encounter the collection of Baldur-ites who have made a real difference. The way we have chosen to explore and describe these people has been to focus on traditional occupations and avocations. With one key person typically defining each entry (a merchant, a school teacher, a brick-maker, etc.) we expect that the rich and deep experience of life and work in Baldur can be effectively and succinctly defined.

The people profiled in this booklet are special, but we have also endeavoured to feature others with slightly lesser claims to significance who help define or enhance a certain entry. And where possible we have also added information and details on

certain occupations and avocations so that readers can come to fully understand and appreciate who these people were, what they did, and how they did it.

This booklet was developed through a project called *Notable People*, an initiative of the Historic Resources Branch of Manitoba Culture, Heritage and Tourism. That project allowed us to develop a comprehensive inventory of potential candidates, and to carefully analyze and assess the relative significance of the approximately 200 individuals profiled. We are grateful to the Province for this support and direction.

It is easy at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century to forget the origins and qualities of Manitoba's smaller communities. But at their beginnings these were very industrious places, with young, ambitious people, full of life, and with great dreams for their new home. It is also important to recall that these places were also self-sustaining, with nearly everything one would need made at hand. Much of what was required for daily life was manufactured here, from bricks to dresses, harnesses to flour. A place like Baldur in 1900 was active, lively and fun.

It is important to set the stage for the following stories.

The creation of the Village of Baldur as a commercial centre in its current location was not part of the plan when The Northern

Pacific and Manitoba Railway began building its line through the Municipality of Argyle in 1889. In 1899 the *Baldur Gazette* Historical Edition offered this introduction to the history of the region:

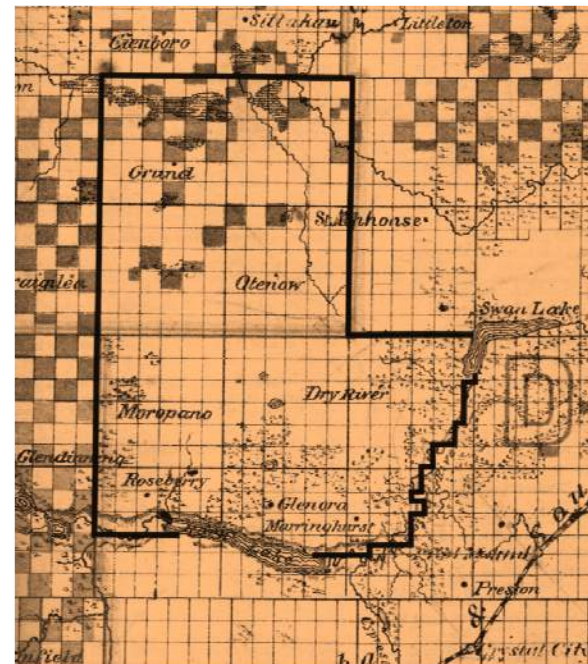
“Up to the year 1879 the municipality of Argyle was a wilderness of bluffs and prairie grass in which the wolf, the badger and the prairie hen found shelter. In that year John Wilson crossed the Pembina river and pitched his tent on what is now known as the Marringhurst plains. Mr. and Mrs Wilson's hospitality to the immigrants passing through in those early days is not forgotten. In the same year William Stark, John. O. Bell and John Harrower and others settled in the Roseberry District. In the year 1880 the influx of settlers began in earnest to the east half of the municipality. The Playfairs, Cramers and others took possession of that fine township east of the town of Baldur.”

There were no towns in Argyle as we know them in the 1880s. Settlements were known by the name given the post office. Sometimes these locations included a general store, with perhaps a school or a church nearby contributing to the sense of identity. Services such as grist and sawmills opened to serve very local needs but were not usually associated with an identifiable village or settlement. Because of the relative isolation of the region in the middle ground between the Boundary Commission Trail and the Assiniboine River, Argyle avoided the speculative boomtowns that blossomed and then disappeared along those routes.

By the summer of 1882, the completion of the Manitoba portion of the C.P.R. trans-continental railway had created a string of towns along its line from Winnipeg to Moosomin, Saskatchewan. A second westward line was soon completed

along a route south of the R.M. of Argyle, bringing service to La Riviere, Pilot Mound and eventually Boissevain, and a third line to the north served Glenboro by 1885.

That left the people of Argyle in the middle, forced to make long trips for supplies and to market their produce. That didn't stop them from establishing farms schools and churches, raising families, and generally getting on with life. But the story of the early days in Argyle is the shaped by those geographic circumstances.



This map, from the pre-railway days, shows the communities that existed in the Argyle district.



By 1881 the first council of the newly created R.M. of Argyle was in place and by 1886 15 school districts had been established. Land was being broken. Crops were being grown. As in all parts of the province in pioneer times, the communication and population patterns evolving in the pre-railroad days were to undergo a major change once those rails arrived.

While the surveyors were busy grading the line, farmers in the Otenaw district lead by A.W Playfair, succeeded in convincing the railway company that another station was needed between Greenway and Belmont. The first site chosen was three miles west of the present town and again citizens, including Jesse Chester, Peter Strang and Sigurdur Chistopherson, rallied in support of the current location. The surveyor reconsidered and chose a location a few miles further east. This still wasn't what the locals had in mind and Jesse Chester apparently carried the surveyor's equipment himself to the current site. His persuasion won out.



Carrie Avenue.

Given that beginning, the name “Chesterville,” suggested by a railway official named Mr. Lehorn, would have seemed appropriate, but Sigurdur Chistopherson’s daughter Carrie has been given credit for the suggesting the name “Baldur,” the Nordic god of innocence and summer sun. A vote settled the issue and Baldur it was. Carrie herself was recognized in the name of the second avenue of the new town.

**BALDUR, May 10.**—Quite a few buildings are in course of erection here, and the town is steadily growing year by year. J. P. Wright, the druggist, is putting up a commodious store facing the station, and Messrs. J. Huffman and Geo. W. Creamer are erecting dwelling houses.

Most of the wheat is in now, and a lot of it is up two or three inches. All the farmers round are expecting a big crop this year.

The I. O. O. F. will organize a lodge here on June 5. Upwards of forty members have given in their names as candidates as charter members. Bro. R. H. Shanks, G. S., will officiate.

The football club is again organized and the “Kickers” go to Cartwright on the 23th inst. to play the opening match of the season.

Mr. Chris. Creamer, a farmer near here, has on exhibition, in Wright’s drug store, a bunch of Schallotts with over 300 in the group, all of which originate from one Schallott planted two years ago. This speaks well for the soil around here.

The Brandon Sun, Jun 5, 1891.

Before the first train arrived, Mr. A. E. Cramer had moved his creamery from his farm to the site of the new town. It was in turn sold to G.W. Griffith as a general store in the spring of 1890, still before the town site was settled. The main street was named Elizabeth, after Mr. Griffith's wife.

In the fall of 1899 Mr. G.W. Playfair had moved his grain buying business to the new town site, and into a building he had also moved from its previous location on his farm. Once the issue of the town site was firmly settled he moved the building to the front street and began a lumber, furniture and coal business.

Other businesses soon followed. Sigurdur Christopherson, who had taken the role of Icelandic Immigration Officer, opened an office. William McKnight build a carriage and blacksmith shop. Thomas E. Poole erected a store for his hardware and tinsmith business. A.E. Cramer built a two-storey building used as a saddlery shop by C.W. Watson. G.W. Cramer built a blacksmith shop, which was operated by Harry Goodman.

Thus the names we have come to know as Baldur pioneers established themselves in the very early days of the town. By 1898 the population was around 400 and townspeople could choose from four general stores, a hardware, three fruit and confectionery stores and a host of other businesses. It had become the commercial centre of the agricultural region that surrounded it, and in doing so had become, quite separate from that, a community.

Baldur's development and growth in the early years of the twentieth century followed a pattern established across Manitoba, as newcomers, often quite young and from a variety of backgrounds, came together and through their energy, ingenuity and determination made a life for themselves and their descendants.



The "Invincibles," Baldur's unbeatable hockey team, ca. 1903. (Photo courtesy S. J. McKee Archives)

## Change and Opportunity

As the decades have passed, new transportation choices and the continually improving roads changed everything, leaving no need for more than one “full-service” market town. Being centrally located, and having a well-developed business section, that town was Baldur.

And today? It’s not as busy as it was on any given Saturday night in 1956, when all the stores on a two block span of Elizabeth Avenue and down Second Street were open late, with both tables busy at the pool hall, with a movie playing at the Memorial Hall and with every parking spot full. But a walk down that same Elizabeth Avenue today will take you past the K-12 school, that replaced the 1905 Simpson School, and the Credit Union that long ago replaced the Union Bank built in 1903. The Fowler Block is still home to a thriving grocery store and T. Poole’s Hardware, built in 1910, now houses the Argyle Museum. The Train Station grounds have been lovingly re-cast as a park; and several newer buildings housing Senior’s Housing and a Personal Care Home have appeared. Several commercial services are evident; such as the “modern” Motor Hotel across the street from the site of the original Chester House, the nearby Post Office, a café and variety store, the offices of the Baldur Gazette, and a Coop.

The needs of Baldur’s population are different than they were in 1896, or even in 1956, and such a walk reminds us that times change and what we see is a town adapting to its changing role.

What we see is a community that continues to serve its people.



Two views of Elizabeth Avenue – separated by more than a century. (Archival photo courtesy of S.J. McKee Archives)



The list of Baldur's notable people has mostly been arranged alphabetically, according to last names, with four exceptions. The first four entries have been determined to more effectively set the stage for those who follow, describing pioneer experiences and early farm life.

**Christopherson, Sigurder**

**Porter, William**

**Playfair, A.W.**

**Dale, James**

**Taylor, William Stuart**

**Parsonage, Everett**

**Stark, William**

**Notable Baldur Area Families**

**Chester, Jesse**

**Cleghorn Dr. Irving**

**Curtis, Percival**

**Playfair, George W.**

**Schultz, Frank**

**Bateman, Mildred**

**Community Religious Leaders**

**Fowler, Alex**

**Goodman, Harry**

**Johnson, Christian**

**Harrower, John**

**Lee, Foon**

**Kristofersson, Hernit**

**Poole, Thomas**

**Schultz, Margaret**

**Snydal, Karolina (Nurse)**

**Stevens, Fred**

**The Invincibles**

**Johnson, Tom**

# We Made Baldur Pioneer

## **Farmer Sigurder Christopherson**



Sigurdur was born on July 9, 1848, at Neslondum, Myvatn, Iceland. As an adult he worked for a neighbouring farmer, but wages were poor. Late every fall he went up the mountains searching for sheep that had not been found the first time of fall roundup. These trips were fraught with danger and hardship. Any sheep found so late in the fall and winter were equally divided between the owner (all sheep are marked in Iceland)

and the one who found them. In this way he made more money than his wages. When he was 25 years old, he managed to save enough to pay his passage to America. He saw it was not possible to live in Iceland except in poverty and he thought how much better it would be to live in a country where grain, fruit and vegetables would grow. No one from that part had emigrated from Iceland and everyone thought it a foolish move.

A few days before Whit Sunday, 1873, he bade farewell to family and friends who had accompanied him to the seaport town of Husavik. There he boarded a small sailing vessel called 'Hjalmar', that was leaving for Norway. Among those who took passage on the same boat were Gudrun and Gudfinna Aradottir (sisters of Skafti Arason), and Jon Halldorson.

On June 30, 2 a.m., they arrived at New York. It was a dark night, but the city was shining with lights, the most beautiful sight Sigurdur had seen in his life. The young Icelanders then had their first taste of railway travel from New York to Milwaukee. From there the men set out looking for work. Sigurdur was hired by a farmer for \$18 a month. He found the weather unbearably hot and found it hard to sleep at night; he became ill.

In July, 1875, Skafti Arason and Kristjan Jonsson arrived in Milwaukee from Kinmount. They were on their way to Manitoba to look for land. Sigurdur joined them and after deciding on the Keewatin district north of Manitoba for the Icelandic Immigrants, the three men took work on the C.P.R. in East Selkirk until October when the Icelanders from Kinmount joined them.

Caroline Taylor was born May 11, 1856, the daughter of William Stuart Taylor and Isabella Slimmons. Her early childhood was spent in Kingston, Ontario, later, the family moved to Lansing, Michigan. When Caroline was nine years old, her mother died, leaving five daughters. There followed a sad period when these five little girls in heavy mourning (black dresses trimmed with black crepe) lived with their grief-stricken father. Strangers would stop them on the street and ask them whom they mourned, and the girls would burst into tears. Carrie, in later years, had a strong aversion to mourning, especially for children.

Carrie's uncle, John Taylor, had become involved with a group of Icelandic settlers, including, Sigurdur Christopherson, who were arranging to settle in Manitoba. Through him she met Sigurder in Winnipeg and they were married January 22, 1877. Because the Icelanding settlement was under a smallpox quarantine the happy couple stood on one side of Netley Creek (the quarantine boundary) while the Metis minister stood on the other.

Sigurdur had taken a homestead and named it Husavik (just south of Gimli), where they farmed for four years until moving to Argyle Municipality in the spring of 1881 the move Their new homestead of 'Grund', was on NE 10-6-14. Their household effects, stove, dishes, and a precious box of books, were shipped to Portage la Prairie, but were lost in transit. They lived in a tent and Carrie cooked over a campfire all summer until a small one-room cabin was built.

Sigurdur was on the first town council of Baldur, and it was Carrie who suggested the name for the town. 'Carrie Ave.' was

named for her. Both took an active part in community life. Their doors were always open to friends and strangers. Many families would stay with them or on Sigurdur's pre-emption (Little Baldur) until they could get their own homes built.

A new house was built in 1896; in 1904 a large barn. Sigurdur continued much colonization work, making more trips back to Iceland, and also some into the Swan River area of Manitoba. He had also built up a real estate and insurance business, with Carrie working as his secretary, well able to carry on his business when he was away.

In 1903, Sigurdur was finally struck down by ill health and was confined to bed for months. The following winter he suffered a relapse, so on his doctor's advice, he and Carrie travelled to the west coast. On a previous trip, Sigurdur had bought a piece of land on the seaside. One day when the west coast climate had made him stronger, they walked up to this property, a beauty spot with an overgrown orchard, they fell in love with it.

Sigurdur died on Easter Day, March 27, 1921. Carrie died on December 9, 1923. The day of her funeral was like a summer day, sunny and warm, 'just like Carrie's character', it was said. Both are buried in the Grund Cemetery here in Argyle Municipality.

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 335.

# We Made Baldur Pioneer

## Farmer William Porter



William John Porter was born in Toronto, Ontario, on March 23, 1856. When he was eight years old, he and his family moved to Banda, Ontario, where he spent his early years.

As a young man in 1881, he went to the newly-opened west, in search of a homestead, and joined old friends, Dick Wilson, the Galloways and the Morrises, living in the Marringhurst district, which was east of the town now known as Glenora. There he worked for a short time at a logging camp near Rock Lake and helped build the first log post office in that district. He also joined a survey party and worked on the southern line of the C.P.R. He returned east in the fall, and the following spring, he and his uncle, Robert Johnson, returned to Manitoba and took up homesteads on 20-4-14. William took the north half and Robert the south half. Here, Robert opened the first post office, known as Moropano, later known as the Rosehill district. William started work on his homestead, building a log house, and also a shelter for his oxen, and breaking the sod with a walking plow.

One evening, one of his oxen took sick, and he walked to Pilot Mound to the vet for medicine, and was back in the morning, and saved the ox. He also walked to Emerson and often to Brandon for supplies, staying overnight near Wawanesa with friends for a night to rest up, and then go back to his homestead. William continued his homestead improvements, each year breaking the required number of acres to hold his homestead. He went east each winter, returning in the spring.

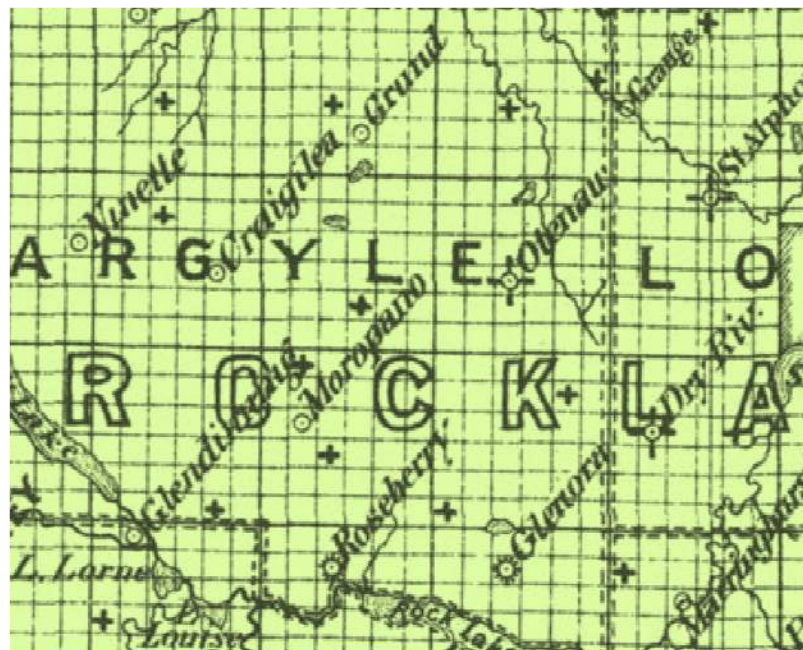
On March 5, 1885, he married Miss Emma Jane McAteer in Paradise, Ontario. When William and Emma returned to Manitoba, they continued to improve their land, working with horses now. They built a log house and other buildings.



William took an active part in organizing the municipality of Argyle, the local school districts, and in obtaining religious services for his community. A man of high principles and deep religious convictions, he was a member of the Methodist Church, and later the United Church in Baldur.

During this time, a family of seven were born. When Mrs. Porter passed away after the birth of the last child, William's sisters came west to care for his family. The children all attended Rosehill School and later, Baldur High School, taking an active part in sports and social activities in the Rosehill district.

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 607.



The Moropano District was one of the early identifiable communities during the pre-railroad days.

# We Made Baldur Pioneer

## **Undertaker A. W. Playfair**



Andrew W. Playfair, front left, poses with his wife Agnes on their 50th wedding anniversary in 1922. In the back row stand daughters: Ethyl, Etta and Minnie.

A.W. Playfair was born at **Playfairville**, Lanark County, **Ontario** on May 26, 1850, the son of John and Elizabeth Playfair and brother of George and John. He married Agnes Morrow of **Maberley**, Ontario, in 1871.

In 1880, the **Playfairs** settled on a homestead in Otenaw, near what is now the town of Baldur.

A.W. was a farmer and upon retiring the family moved into Baldur where A.W. assumed the position of undertaker. The hearse was kept in a barn in town and their grandchildren used to play in it. A.W. also picked up the mail at the train with his wheelbarrow and delivered it to the post office. The grandchildren were treated to ice-cream cones after the mail was picked up.

When the municipality of **Argyle** was organized in 1881, the Honourable John Norquay appointed A.W. a commissioner to swear in the first council of the new municipality. In 1883, he was, himself, elected to the council, a responsibility he filled many times over a period of the next 30 years.

A.W. was an ardent supporter of the Methodist, and then the United Church in which he held many lay offices. He was a generous contributor to the Bible Society, **Wesley College** and the Children's Aid Society. He was an active member of the Canadian Order of Foresters.

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 600.

## The Evolution of the Undertaker

Early undertakers tended to work as builders, joiners and carpenters, skills that translated to coffin-making at times of death in the village. This was often the case even in the early 20th century. The family would inform their doctor first to certify a death, and then the local ‘layer out’—usually a woman—would help carry out the ‘last offices’, attending to the needs of both bereaved and deceased. They would call on the local clergyman to attend, and summon the undertaker to take measurements for a bespoke coffin, made in haste from sanded and polished hardwood, and sealed inside with wax and bitumen to avoid leakage.

The undertaker would return to the house to deliver the coffin, sometimes having to remove a window as the door was too narrow. The deceased, clothed in their best nightdress or Sunday suit, would then rest in the front parlour until the funeral, usually held three or four days after death.

Gradually, the function of the undertaker was assumed in many small towns by the local furniture dealer, who have expert knowledge of carpentry, and access to find woods and hardware. And by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century local furniture makers would be called upon to “undertake” difficult and emotional tasks for the family when handling a death. Because these skilled tradesmen were pioneers who moved into areas needing furniture, they also “undertook” the task of preparing the dead by constructing caskets.

These early furniture makers, who often hung out a shingle that read “Furniture Maker and Undertaker” would be called upon

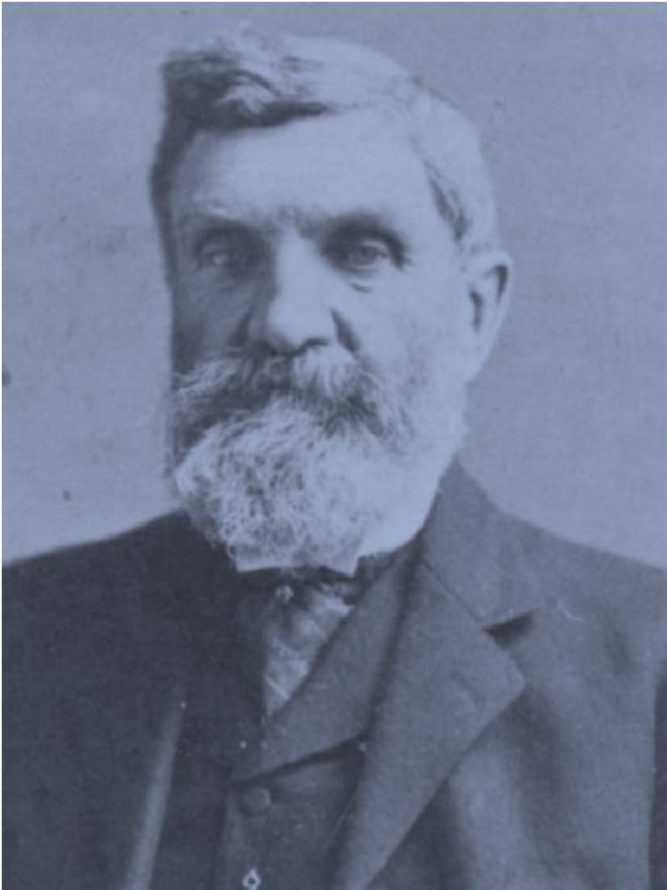
by a family to measure the deceased, and further fashion a six-board coffin for which the body would be laid out in for a one-night vigil that gave family and friends a chance to pay respects. The purpose for the one to three day vigil gave the deceased a chance to awake from a coma or show indications of life. Within 24 to 48 hours of death, the coffin would be carried to the village burial ground and interred in a final resting place.



An old coffin-making shop that might typically have been in the back of the local furniture store.

# We Made Baldur Pioneer

## **Farmer James Dale**



In 1881, a young pioneer teacher by the name of James Dale arrived from Uxbridge, Ontario seeking a new way of life in the much publicized, fledgling province of Manitoba. His destination was what is now the **Glenboro** area. He decided to make his new home there, acquiring **N 4-6-14**. His wife, formerly Elizabeth Chambers, and their family, came to the home "out west" in 1882 – a log house which was their home for the next 26 years.

James was a scholar and was keenly interested in the progress and welfare of his community. At plowing time he studied his books while the horses rested. He taught the first school in southwestern Manitoba, situated on the southeast corner of 15-16-14, just a mile east of the later location of the well-remembered Victoria Church. This school was the original **Hecla** School and was later moved a mile west and one and a half miles north, where it remained until the end of rural school education.

From 1902 to 1904, inclusive, James was the Reeve of the Municipality of **Argyle**. At the end of his second term he made a trip to England for the Federal Government to encourage immigrants to come to Canada. One more trip was made at a later date for the same reason. He passed away March 8, 1907, at the age of 67.

*Adapted from Come into our Heritage, page 377.*



# We Made Baldur Pioneer

## Farmer William Taylor



Baldur fields, September 13, 1903.

William Taylor was born in Bristol, England on Aug. 9, 1830. His childhood was spent in Barbados where his parents, Richard and Jane Taylor of England, ran a plantation. He was 18 years old when he came to Canada in 1848, and settled with his brother John at Kingston, Ontario on August 15, 1851. In 1867, William moved to Lansing, Michigan, where he lived until the fall of 1875, when he then moved to New Iceland and homesteaded south of Kjalvik. He then moved further north to Vider River.

During the winter of 1875-1876 his daughter Carrie became the first teacher at Gimli. She taught English and other subjects to 25 students. The classes were held in a government warehouse. Classes had to be suspended the following winter because of the smallpox epidemic but were reopened the spring of 1877, with Carrie's sister Jane teaching 63 students.

In 1881, William and his family moved to Argyle Municipality where he homesteaded NW 36-5-14 (known as Taylor's Hill) and took a pre-emption, SW 18-6-14.

In the late 1880s, William and Sigridur, along with William's sons, moved north to his pre-emption, which William named "Rosemound" because of all the wild roses growing there. It is said to have been a beautiful site in early summer.

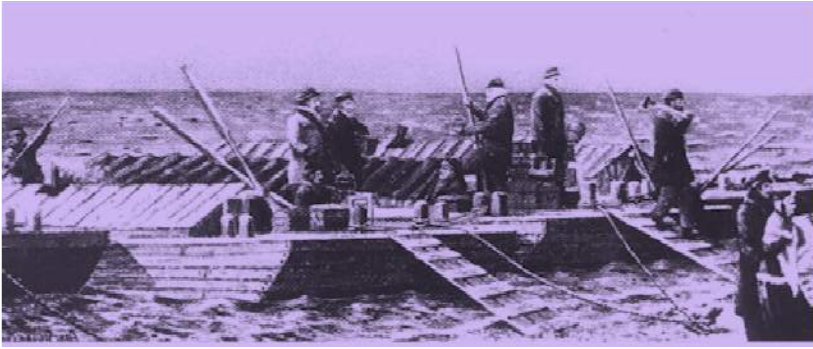
William and (his third wife) Sigridur eventually moved into Baldur where he kept up a friendly battle of wits with the editor of the *Baldur Gazette*, as is recorded in many of the earliest issues. William spoke Icelandic fluently and could also read and write it. Many a time he was called upon for counsel and advice and was always ready and willing to lend a helping hand to those less fortunate than he.

His health was failing and his daughter Carrie urged him and Sigridur to move into a small house in the bluff just west of her home at Grund. He died on March 2, 1903.

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 673.

# We Made Baldur Pioneer

## Settlement Guide Everett Parsonage



Icelandic settlers arriving near Gimli. It was a group like this that Everett Parsonage lead in 1875.

Everett Parsonage was born in 1855 in England, the son of Abraham Parsonage; a butcher by profession and his second wife, Mary Anne Filewood. Everett Parsonage came to Canada with his parents when he was eight years old. He grew up in the backwoods of Ontario along with his brother Fred. They became excellent woodsmen, canoe paddlers and fishermen, which prepared them well for their exploits on the western frontier in later years.

A group of about 500 Icelanders had arrived at Port Hope, Ontario, on their way to settle around the Gimli area of Manitoba. The Icelandic agent, John Taylor, was looking for a guide with wilderness experience to help them on their trip

westward. He heard of young Everett Parsonage and commissioned him for 10 months, at \$10.00 a month, to be their guide.

It was 1875 when they left Port Hope. They went by boat to Duluth. From there they came by Northern Pacific to Fisher's Landing. Here they commenced their long journey up the Red River, in flat bottom boats, to the mouth of the river. Here they were met by a Hudson's Bay Company steamer and towed to Willow Island, where they disembarked after a very long and tedious journey.

It was on this trip that Everett became close friends with Sigurdur Christopherson, Skafti Arason. Kristian Jonsson, John Taylor and many more of the Icelanders.

Five years later, in 1880, when Everett was established on his homestead in Pilot Mound, he was instrumental in persuading the Icelanders to explore the possibilities of starting another settlement in the Tiger Hills area, now the Municipality of Argyle.

# We Made Baldur Pioneer

## **Municipal Official William Stark**

An early comer to **Argyle**, William Stark was a well-educated Scot who immigrated to Canada about 1878, and worked for the **C.P.R.** in Montreal for a short time. In 1879, he was attracted to the prairies and homesteaded **NE 5-4-14**, pre-empted **SE 5-4-14** and purchased **6-4-14**. Once settled on his farm, he built a home and helped others to immigrate to Canada.

A bachelor, William, was always a welcome visitor. Because of his great store of stories and jokes he was often in demand as a chairperson for local concerts.

When the **R.M.** of Argyle was formed, William became the first secretary-treasurer, establishing the municipal office in his home. He served from February, 1882 to February 1889. He was renowned for his beautiful penmanship and was often asked to write records in family **Bibles** and to do correspondence for less well-educated neighbours.

In 1899 the *Baldur Gazette* reported that, upon the formation of Argyle Municipality:

“Mr. Wm. Stark was appointed clerk and treasurer, a position which he held for several years and by his uniform kindness and obliging manner won golden opinions from the ratepayers of Argyle.”

When, after 25 years on the prairies, William returned to his relatives in Scotland. He was sorely missed by his Canadian neighbours.

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 654.

## The Settlement Experience

In 1881 William Stark travelled by ox-car from Emerson to what is now the Rosehill District. Settlers squatted on the land they occupied and when it became necessary to lay claim they were obliged to file at **Deloraine** 90 kilometres away or **Morden**, 105 km distant and had to journey 120 km to Emerson with a grist.

They endured many hardships and privations, battling with cold in winter, terrible heat and mosquitoes and slow labour in summer and protecting their stock from beasts of prey the wolf and bear.

The first in the region was that of William Stark 6-4-14 and the first church services were held there conducted by Rev. **Hoskins**, Methodist, and Rev **Currence**, Presbyterian, were carried on until 1899 when the Roseberry School accommodated the gatherings.

# We Made Baldur Pioneers

## **Notable Baldur Area Families**

We know that Jesse Chester was instrumental in determining where Baldur was located; that Sigurder Christopherson and his wife Carrie suggested the name Baldur; and that a group of forward-thinking pioneer businessmen with names like Playfair, Cramer, Curtis, and Fowler established the economic foundation of the new village of Baldur in the early 1890s.

What we mustn't forget that despite the noteworthy contribution made by the people identified in this tribute, they weren't alone.

Of the many families who made Baldur what it is today, the following names stand out, partly because many live on through descendants in Baldur today. Their exploits are well documented in *Come into our Heritage*, but it is important to note them here as well.

**Conibear Family** – James Shiells Conibear homesteaded NW 23-5-13 in 1889.

**Dearsley Family** – Sydney Richard Dearsley came to Argyle (by way of New Mexico) in 1901.



Walter and Frances Conibear, 1920

**Frederickson Family** – Several Fredericksons were among the early Icelandic settlers in the Grund area. It is interesting to note how many of Baldur's older houses have a connection to the Frederickson family.

**Goodman Family** – The descendants of John and Gudrun Goodman who arrived in 1884.

**Lockerby Family** – The descendants of David and Marie Lockerby settled in the Greenway district about 1890.





Walter and Margaret Frederickson

**Lodge Family** – Oswald Lodge homesteaded in 1886. Three daughters married three Dearsley boys, creating an intricate family tree. Some 100 years after Oswald arrived there were 147 descendants – several in the Baldur area.

**McLaren Family** – Archie McLaren married Lavina Sexsmith in 1882, connecting two pioneer families.

**Parsonage Family** – We have recorded the role Everett Parsonage played in Manitoba's Icelandic settlements. The descendants of his brother Henry have had a wide ranging influence in the Baldur region as well.

**Ramage Family** – The descendants of Nelson Bradford Ramage, through his son Robert Burns Ramage, are well known in Baldur's farming and business community.



Henry and Elizabeth Parsonage, 1882.



Magnus and Ingun Skardal and Family.

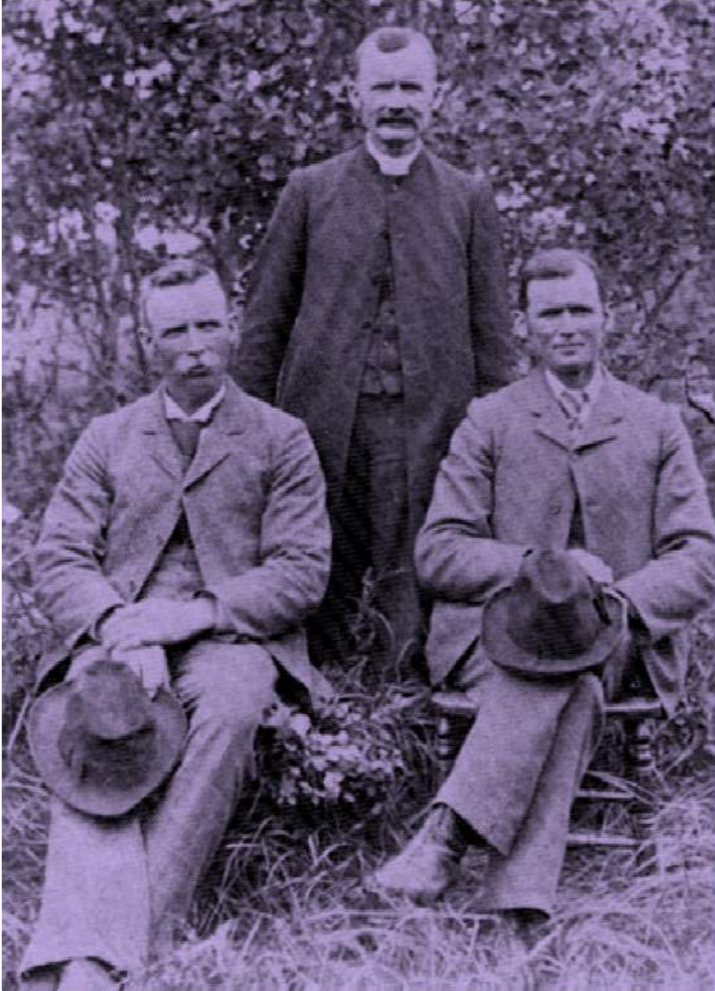
**Skardal Families** – Two Skardal brothers came to the region in the early 1900s. The descendants of Magnus and Ingun Skardal, and of Sigurdur and Ingiborg have been influential since that time.

**Strang Family** – John Strang, from Exeter Ontario, bought 25-4-14 from the C.P.R in 1882 with his four sons in mind. Two of those sons, Peter and Henry began farming the land in 1883.

The story of the troubles and triumphs of their early days is representative of the pioneer experience. The influence of the family on Baldur's history is more than the story of two young men. It is the story of the extended families. While Peter and Henry were influential in Baldur's early history, with Peter acting as Reeve and taking a role in securing a rail link for the settlement; it was brother James who married Annie Lovell and came west on 1891 and settled on 25-4-14 a farm soon known as "Borland Grove." One of their daughters Marguerite, married Hershel Lockerby, while another, Doris, married Jack Stone. Both families have contributed much to the Baldur story.



Albert and Jane Warrener and son Harry, 1915.



James, Peter and Henry Strang.

**Warrener** Family – The story of Albert Warrener’s trip to Argyle in 1885 is another fine example of the pioneer experience. Coming west he on the same train as Louis Riel, who was being taken to Regina for his trial and eventual execution. After arriving at Brandon he walked to Argyle, swimming across the Assiniboine River when it happened to be “in his way.”

There is no beginning and no end to the list of Baldur’s notable people. For a more comprehensive look at the region’s influential citizens see the Argyle Notable People Project, available at the Argyle Museum, and above all, explore the pages of *Come into our Heritage*.



# We Made Baldur Merchant

## **Hotel Keeper Jesse Chester**



Jesse Chester with "Maggie C."

Jesse Chester was born at Merrickville, Ontario, on November 17, 1829. In the fall of 1881, his water-power mill burned to the ground and he decided to move west. In the spring of 1882, he started out with his son, William, and came to Emerson, and from there, journeyed by horse to the present site of Baldur. Jesse had walked all through the southwest of Baldur district and after encountering wet marshy land, he came to the present creek. He waded north across the creek and sat down on a boulder. Looking over the creek towards the present town site,

he said to himself, "This is where I will settle!" and homesteaded 14-5-14. In August, 1882, his (second) wife Sybil, and their children joined him.

Jesse and Sybil lived on their farm until the railroad began to come through in the fall of 1889. The workers often went there for meals and farm produce and persuaded Jesse to build a boarding house close to the road, for they assured him a town would soon spring up. In 1890, Jesse built the Chester House, later known as the Baldur Hotel. He also built a livery barn to run in conjunction with it.

The Chesters seemed to prosper and many a day the folk would see Jesse driving his favourite mare 'Maggie C' hitched to a single-driver sulky, up and down the country roads.

Sybil Chester is remembered as the first teacher, in the first school established near Baldur. The school was Tiger Hills School, built in 1883, located about four kilometres southwest of the what would become the village of Baldur.

Mrs. Chester died in May 1909, in the boarding house. In 1910, when Jesse Sr. became very ill, he was taken in by his son, Jesse Jr. and Nellie. He died there in May of 1910. So ended the story of a true pioneer.

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 333.





## A Day in the Life of a Small Town Hotel

Running a small-town Manitoba hotel in the early 1900s was hard work. The hotel staff usually consisted of at least two chambermaids and a cook who worked from morning till night, cleaning the guest rooms, doing the laundry, and washing dishes. The maid's work day usually started at 6:00 a.m. and ended at 9:00 p.m. for which she was paid \$10 per month, plus room and board. Porters not only assisted hotel guests with their luggage; they also washed dishes, milked the cows that supplied the milk for the hotel and did all the odd jobs. The upstairs maid also polished the silver and glassware and kept everything shining.

All members of the hotel owner's family had to share in the work of running the hotel. "One of the duties of the kids was to help with the housekeeping and at noon you had to take your turn at washing the dishes before going back to school. My

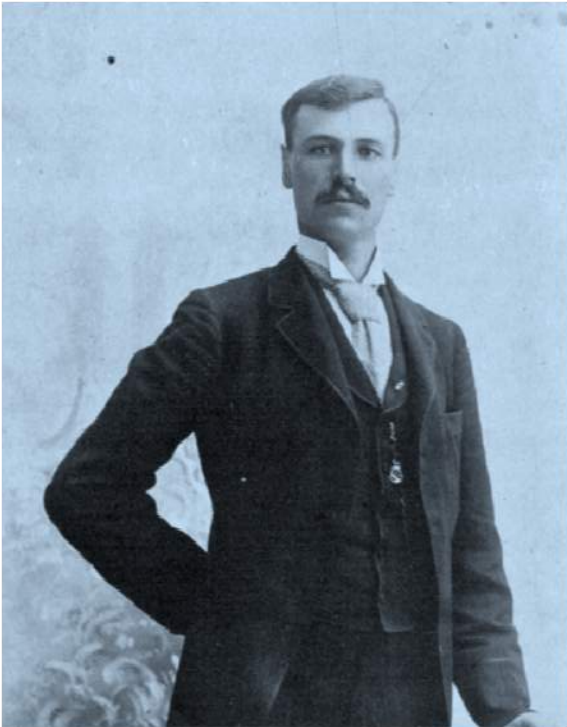
sister, Irma, served as a waitress in the dining room when she was barely taller than the table tops." "The years in the Hotel were busy ones for all of the family. It was the boys' job to fire the wood-burning furnace. This meant rising about three a.m. and again at six to stoke the furnace. ... We were responsible for bringing in blocks of ice and snow to melt for the daily wash. ... We hauled our drinking water from the town well."

Wash days – usually Mondays – were an ordeal, especially in winter. Washing bedding and clothes was often a two-day proposition. Water had to be hauled and then heated in tubs the night before. Start-up time was set for five or six a.m. and the laundry process quite often ran into the afternoon. The next day, one of the maids would run the clothes and sheets through a mangle, a machine used to wring water out of wet laundry. Most hotels did not get running water until the 1940s or 1950s, so water had to be hauled from a well in the summer. In the winter, hotels used melted ice and snow, or water that had been collected in rain barrels during the previous summer."

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# We Made Baldur Medical Services

## Pharmacist Dr. Irving Cleghorn



Dr. Irving Moffat Cleghorn practised medicine in Baldur for over 30 years. He was born in Dumfriesshire, Scotland, August 22, 1863. After graduation from the University of Manitoba in 1894, he married Katherine Ann Murray, a pioneer school teacher in the area. Miss Murray was born October 31,

1868 at Lochaber Antigonish County, Nova Scotia. She taught school in the Belmont area prior to her marriage and was the first teacher in the school. Dr. Cleghorn and Katherine were both of the Presbyterian faith and subsequently United Church. They built and resided in the fine old home at the corner of Elizabeth and Government Road. In 1927 Dr. Cleghorn was elected as the Liberal representative for the constituency of Mountain and was a sitting member at his death, November 19, 1929. Katherine lived in Baldur for several years after his death, and passed away in Winnipeg, Sunday, July 17, 1955. Both are interred in the Baldur Cemetery.

Irving Murray Cleghorn, their eldest son, graduated in medicine from the University of Toronto in 1922 and, after a period of post-graduate work at the Winnipeg General Hospital and the New York Lying-in Hospital, returned to Baldur to practise with his father. He then moved to Winnipeg in 1930 and spent the rest of his career with the Department of Health of the Province of Manitoba.

Their second son, Raymond, graduated in 1925 from the School of Pharmacy at the University of Manitoba. In 1930, after a short period as a druggist in Winnipeg, he returned to Baldur. Raymond owned and operated Cleghorn's Drug Store, which had been founded by his father, until his retirement in 1968. The drug store was one of the oldest family-operated stores of its kind in Manitoba.

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 348.

## The Small Town Pharmacy

An operation like Cleghorn's Drug Store, even in the late 1800s, had the benefit of a long history of experimentation and science to guide its proprietors. But of course it was still not quite like a pharmacy of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, with its sleek white walls and cornucopia of pills.

The main difference was the in-house manufacture of drugs, tinctures and vials, and of course of the tools to undertake those operations. In those days, doctors would write a prescription for a medication that needed to be made from scratch. It was the pharmacist who needed to know how to "compound" these chemicals and extracts into various dosage forms like capsules, tablets and suspensions. Before the advent of the pre-made drugs, a pharmacist wouldn't be worth much if he didn't know how to compound.

Common compounds were made from crude drugs like opium, foxglove, chrysanthemum or Nux Vomica. The pharmacist needed to know how to calculate the activity of these crude drugs prior to compounding. Foxglove's activity was determined by finding how much was needed to kill a cat. Chrysanthemum's activity was found by seeing how many flies were killed over a period of time by being exposed to the extract. Once the activity was established the medication would be compounded into a form the doctor prescribed.



Interior of Cleghorn's Pharmacy. Note the partially obscured sign near the top right of the photo. It appears that it may say "SURGERY." (Photo courtesy the S. J. McKee Archives)

# We Made Baldur Merchant

## General Merchant Percival Curtis



Photo courtesy the S. J. McKee Archives

Percival (Percy) and Alice Curtis both came from England. Percy Faulkner, son of C.W. Curtis of Dersley, was born in 1860. He came to Canada in 1883, and farmed in the Pembina Valley, where he met Alice Lea.

Alice, the fifth child in R.N. Lea's family of 12, was born in Staffordshire in 1875. She came to Canada with the Lea family in 1878, and settled with them on a farm ten miles south of Manitou and one mile from Pembina Crossing.

Percy and Alice were married in 1893, in St. Luke's Anglican Church at Pembina Crossing. Before coming to Baldur, they lived in the Bahamas, on a farm where they raised sisal. When they came to Baldur, they bought Mr. Griffith's general store.

From the time of their arrival in about 1895, Percy and Alice became active and highly respected citizens. By their participation in the life of the community, their deep interest in the youth, and their never failing generosity, they well deserved the respect and affection which they soon received from all who knew them.

Percy spared neither time nor money in his desire to help promote good sport for the youth of the community. In 1900, he gave cricket sets to boys of several school districts, and in the news of that time there is an account of the first cricket match. Excelsior vs. Baldur, which was followed by races, jumping and other contests; and finally a dinner served in the store. No wonder they sang "He's a Jolly Good Fellow."



In the same year, a boy's hockey club and a lacrosse club were organized. A tennis club followed in 1901, and in 1902, a rifle club was added. No doubt other men were involved in these projects, but always mention was made of Mr. Curtis.

Percy and Alice were also vitally interested in the serious side of life. They were staunch Anglicans, and gave their whole-hearted support to the building of St. Mark's, Baldur. If illness came to a family, they gave their support, and showed their sympathy in whatever way would be of greatest benefit. Briefly stated, they were citizens who endeared themselves to young and old alike. When they left in 1908, to make their retirement home in Victoria, B.C., the best wishes of the whole community went with them.

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 376.

Baldur's first store, built by George Griffith and taken over by Percival Curtis. It was noted in the Baldur Gazette, Special Edition of March 14, 1899 that "the residence is built in connection with the store and has a beautiful lawn bordered with very handsome maple trees."





In 1901 Mr. Curtis completed a new brick two-storey building with a distinctive corner entrance and a second level balcony. Proprietors included the Playfair Brothers, Neil McDonald, Frederickson's Cash Store, W.G. Kilgour and the Co-op. The upper level was called the Victoria Hall after Queen Victoria. It was home to various public gatherings and entertainments, including movies in its later years.

Mr. Curtis rented his store to the Playfair Bros. for a general store in 1905; Allison and Macdonald succeeded the Playfair Bros. in 1908, until 1918 when Mr. Macdonald removed his stock to Elgin and the store was vacant until Frederickson and Son took it in hand for general merchandise purposes, which they conducted until 1925 when Mr. G. Kilgour bought it for a general store

The Curtis Block, with upper floor Victoria Hall, ca. 1905. This fine Romanesque Revival building, with rich brick details, stands to the left of the first Baldur store (Photo from the S. J. McKee Archives)



## A Day in the Life of a General Store

The small-town general store, also known as mercantiles and emporiums, were essential aspect of commercial activity in small-town life, and saw their heyday in the period between 1880 and 1930.

These establishments served the rural populations of small towns and villages and the farmers in the surrounding area. Besides selling dry goods, farming equipment and other supplies, they sometimes also served as the local post office, drugstore and undertaker. They were also a popular meeting place for socializing and news gathering.

The storekeepers stocked their establishments with merchandise procured from salesmen who represented wholesale houses and manufacturers found in larger cities. Merchandise selections were often large and varied, though most of the items available for sale were those of necessity. As people and businesses prospered in the economy during the 1890s more luxury items were introduced into the store inventories. The expansion of the railroads, the advent of mass production and technological advances such as the refrigerated railcar to transport perishable foods all combined to escalate the national distribution and variety of goods that were available in the stores.

Most of the wall space in a general store was taken up with shelving to store and display for the merchandise; likewise the floors were crowded with barrels, wooden boxes and crates. Store counters were good for holding display cases for the smaller items, a coffee grinder, scales and a cash register. Many

stores had a display window or two in the front of the building. Cellars, basements and second floors were used for storage of merchandise and displays.

Food and consumables included coffee beans, spices, baking powder, oatmeal, flour, sugar, tropical fruit, hard candy, eggs, milk, butter, fruit and vegetables, honey and molasses, crackers, cheese, syrup and dried beans, cigars and tobacco.

Dry goods included bolts of cloth, pins and needles, thread, ribbon, silk, buttons, collars, undergarments, suspenders, dungarees, hats and shoes.

Essential items such as rifles, pistols, ammunition, lanterns, lamps, rope, crockery, pots and pans, cooking utensils and dishes, farm and milking equipment and even coffins could be found.

The apothecary sections of the stores were well represented with a surprisingly large number of patent medicines, remedies, soaps and toiletries and elixirs.

# We Made Baldur Merchant

## General Merchant G.W. Playfair



Elizabeth Avenue East, showing in the middle of the block, with the long awning, the Playfair Furniture and Lumber Store. (McKee Archives Photo)

George Playfair was one of Baldur's first businessmen. Before the site of Baldur was settled, he bought grain for the Bawlf Grain Company. In the fall of 1889 when the railway arrived and the townsite was selected, he erected a spur on the new railway track and established an office for his winter grain buying. The building was moved from its previous location on his farm.

Others soon followed and Baldur, as yet unnamed, was in business. In 1890 Mr. Playfair opened a furniture, lumber and coal business east of Second Street on Elizabeth. In 1891, he enlarged his furniture store to a two-storey building and his eldest son, John, joined the business. His third residence was at the rear of this building. In 1896, he built the first planing mill.

George was born at Playfairville, Ontario in 1839, the eldest son of John Playfair. With his wife, Jessie Ferguson, and their seven children, they arrived at Otenaw on August 10, 1880. An eighth child, Katie Wilhelmina, was born in October – the first birth in the new settlement.

This was the period without municipal government, and roads were from house to house. They were miles from a doctor, post office, groceries and railway. Katie's first apple was a "red potato." Suppers were often cleaned, boiled wheat with milk or cream.

In spite of numerous difficulties, one of George's children wrote: "My earliest recollections are of a happy family of mother, father and eight children seated about a long table with an oil-cloth cover and a kerosene lamp in the centre. The little red school was soon built on the side of the farm and here I spent some of the happiest years with neighbouring children, many of them our cousins. Gathering wild flowers and picking berries on our way to school in the autumn; sliding down the snow-covered hills in winter; story-telling and the best books we could procure for the winter evenings were all happy memories."

George's early farming years were hazardous. The first crops provided only seed and feed. Fear of frosts before harvesting the late crops was prevalent. Straw was placed in piles about the fields and on calm, frosty nights the straw was kept burning all night, so that the smoke would hold the heat down on the crops. The sheaves were tied with wire.

The coyotes were hungry and prowled about seeking food. One evening one of the children was sent to bring the cows home and she soon became aware wolves were following them. The wolves came closer and closer, snapping at the cows' hooves. She clung to the strap of the leader cow's bell and with the galloping herd, got safely home. Other predators, mink and weasel, carried off the chickens.

But perseverance paid off. Those farmers who struggled in the early years became the well-established, and successful farmers of the next era. Eventually there were surplus crops and the Playfairs, like so many others, had a new and bigger house for their second home.

For nearly 40 years George was actively involved with almost every community endeavour. He was chairman of **Wolseley** School and served as a trustee there and on the **Baldur** School Board. He was elected warden or reeve, in the fall of 1881, to the first **Argyle** Council, sworn in by **A.W. Playfair**, Commissioner. He was a member of the first **Baldur** Town Board formed in 1906. He and Jessie were staunch members and strong supporters of the Methodist Church, serving on boards and committees.

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 602.

# We Made Baldur Financial Services

## Banker Frank Schultz



Originally came from Ontario, Frank and Margaret Schultz settled at **Mapleton** on the banks of the Red River north of Winnipeg, where Frank taught school. On leaving there, they moved to the **Belmont** district where Frank took up a homestead south of the town. Needing money, he undertook to teach at **Northfield School** near **Wawanesa**. There **Nellie McClung** was one of his pupils. She made several references to him in her book "Clearing in the West". Later in thankful remembrance of her early teacher, she sent Margaret a copy of each of her books as they were published.

In 1892 Frank opened a real estate and insurance office and established a little private bank in the new town of **Baldur**. After a few years the Union Bank decided to open a branch in **Baldur**. They took over his little branch and he became their manager, a position he held for the rest of his life.

In politics he was a strong liberal and the family were brought up in that political persuasion. A story was told of **Sir Clifford Sifton** coming out to **Baldur** to speak at a political rally. All the **Schultz** family, father, mother and five sons, were there. **Stuart**, the youngest, and under school age was seated with his friends in the front seats. When **Mr. Sifton** finished his speech and people began to clap, **Stuart** excitedly asked his pals, "Is he a liberal? Is he a liberal?" When assured that he was, he too burst into most enthusiastic applause. He was not going to clap for anyone not of his true political faith.

They were a most hospitable family and the boys always felt free to bring their friends home for a meal and social activities.

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 624.





Union Bank of Canada Building in Baldur.  
(Photo courtesy Archives of Manitoba)

## Banking in Baldur

The Union Bank opened in 1903. Mr. Schultz was manager of the Bank until 1915. He was succeeded by Mr. J. A. Mitchell as acting manager. In 1916, Mr. E. H. Bally was appointed manager and when the Union Bank was taken over by the Royal Bank in 1925, he continued as manager until 1927. Mr. Bally was replaced by Mr. R. S. Hodge until 1934 when he was retired on pension. Mr. T. W. Cancannon succeeded him until 1936, when he was pensioned. Mr. F. H. Bridge succeeded Mr. Cancannon.

## F. Schultz, Private Banker

Frank Schultz came to Manitoba in the '80's, taught school a few years at Mapleton, then moved to Belmont, where he was connected with the office of Frank Burnett for about three years. A year or two ago he bought from the Northern Pacific railway the townsite of Baldur and is the veritable Lord of the Manor. He is master of Baldur Lodge, No, 27, I.O.O.F., is an enthusiastic Orangeman and has been an active worker in the order for years. At the recent session of their grand lodge he was elected to the responsible position of Grand Master. He never rests, is always on the move, and it is not his fault if Baldur is not one of the most progressive towns in the province.

The first town board was formed on May 6, 1906. A meeting of the ratepayers was called on that date and following were elected: Messrs. Frank Schultz (chairman), G. W. Playfair, and Alex Fowler.

From the 1899 *Historical Edition of the Baldur Gazette*

# We Made Baldur

## Educator

### **Teacher Mildred Bateman**



The girl at the far right leaning on the fence is Mildred Bateman. Her teaching career in Baldur and area touched hundreds of lives over several decades. She lived most of her life in this modest home on Oak Creek Road. (Photo courtesy S. J. McKee Archives)

Mildred Alice, seventh and last of the family of Arthur and Ellen Bateman, arrived Sept. 24, 1897. She remembers her early life as being that of an only child in a family of adults, - six of them, and all were her friends. But, of course, there were no little playmates either, but these she found in the homes down the street, so she never really thought about it until much later. Then she finally realized what a lucky little "kid" she had been, with such a family and such friends.

School and Sunday School brought their own challenges, with whole new vistas of knowledge to be explored, and a world of books to be enjoyed – ever changing as the years went by.

Before teaching in Baldur, Mildred taught briefly at Rosehill and Holmfield, then spent four years working at the Union Bank in Baldur. Those four years were not only pleasant but of great value to her, and she was always grateful for the opportunity which came so unexpectedly.

Most of Mildred's working years were spent in Baldur School, teaching at various times in grades from III to VIII, and having the opportunity of working with children who appreciated everything that was done for them, such as the opportunity of competing in music festivals.

She was also grateful for the privilege of working in Church and Sunday School; with the classes, the choirs and the women's organizations, where again she found good fellowship and loyalty which endured through the years.

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 300.

## A Day in the Life of a Teacher

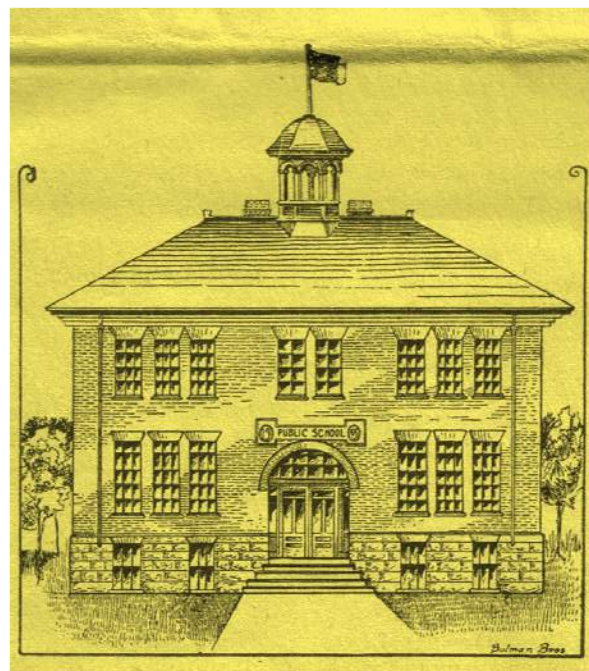
A teacher's duties in the late 1800s and early 1900s were many, varied and difficult. Many teachers walked a mile or more to work every morning, and home in the evening through farmer's fields, herds of cows, rainstorms, or blizzards. Some had the luxury of riding horses for lengthy distances.

Upon arrival at school, the new teacher drew pails of drinking and washing water from the well, then set them up just inside the front door of the school. If it was a cold morning she would gather wood from the woodpile and start a fire. If it was hot she would see to it to open the windows and door. She might sweep the floor and wipe off the rough-hewn plank chairs and desks. She would check to make sure the "privies" or outhouses were tidy and sanitary, and make sure that her black-laquered plywood blackboard was washed.

Next, she dealt with the arrival of her students, many of them immature and ignorant. The male students could be much larger than she, and even older in years—and some resented being there at all, away from farm work. There could be jeers and jibes, truancy, and general disobedience. Many 19<sup>th</sup>-century female teachers complained that teaching was especially hard when "big boys" flirted, teased or defied them.

The curriculum usually included reading, writing, basic arithmetic, a little geography and history. Books were scarce and teaching tools few. The texts often took the form of moral tracts or primers of childish virtues and sometimes children were even asked to bring whatever books were at home, such as an almanac or old textbooks.

The blackboard proved essential as she printed and wrote lessons while students copied notes onto slates. Most students had to furnish their own supplies including writing slates and chalk. It would be some years before scribblers and pencils came into use, and only when there was money to buy them. In rural schoolhouses, apart from overcrowding, practical solutions had to be sought to overcome darkness and poor ventilation.



Baldur's present school building was erected on the old site on the corner of Main and Government Road in the year 1905. (From the *Baldur Gazette* Special Historical Edition, March, 14, 1940)



# We Made Baldur Clergy

## Community Religious Leaders



Cornerstone Ceremony for the new Baldur Methodist Church, May 23, 1904. (Photo courtesy the S. J. McKee Archives)

The establishment of religious services was an early priority in the Baldur area as elsewhere. Throughout the 1880s a home or a school house often doubled as a place of worship. Building a church could have to wait.

In the early 1880s, Bethel Church was built on the W.J. Welsh farm (NE 34-4-14). The decision to build was made at a meeting, of which the Rev. Wm. McKinley was chairman, and which included Tom Leslie, Messrs. Rogers and Huffman. During the ministry of Oliver Darwin, Bethel Church was moved to town.

Early histories refer to the Methodist Otenaw Circuit which included Excelsior, Grund, Belmont, and Rosehill. Otenaw services would have been held at a home. The Minister was Rev. James Hoskins in 1884.

In 1882, owing to exertions of W. J. Porter and others, a schoolhouse was built at Rosehill which for some time after 1889 was used for Methodist church services. Prior to that the first Methodist services in the district were in the William Stark home.

The first Presbyterian and Methodist services were held in the upstairs of the Blacksmith shop. In the year 1891 a frame church from the Tiger Hills was hauled to Baldur and church services of all denominations took place there until churches were built. In 1898 an Anglican church was erected with Archbishop McRae as dedicator and Rev. Belter as rector.

In 1900 the Presbyterian Church was erected, a solid brick edifice of ample dimensions, with a basement for Sunday school, all heated by a furnace, sat a cost of \$3,000.00. The dedicatory services were conducted by the pastor, the Rev. McKay at 11 a.m. and Rev. T. B. Wilson and the Rev. J. J. Clemens in the evening.

In 1904 the Methodist church was built on the corner of Second and Carrey at a cost of \$10,000.00. It was opened on October 16, 1904. The Rev. Hamilton Wigle, B.A., of Regina, President of the Assiniboia Conference, preached the dedicatory sermon. In 1907 the Lutheran Church was built on the corner of Government Road and Carey Street. It was a white brick edifice. The dedicatory service took place on Nov. 24th, 1907. The President of the Synod, the Rev. J. Bjarnason, and the Rev. F. Hallgrimson officiated .

## Baldur's Historic Churches

Baldur United Church: Built at 202 Second Street in 1904 as a Methodist Church. The Rev. H. J. Miller was minister at the time. The building is a Municipal Heritage Site.

St. Mark's Anglican Church: Built in 1898 on Oak Creek Rd N.

St. Immanuel Lutheran Church: Built in 1907, with Arni Sveinson as head carpenter. It is located on Oak Creek Rd. N.

## Notable Early Clergy

### **Rev. James Hoskins**

First Resident Minister in 1884, responsible for the Otenaw Circuit composed of Otenaw, Excelsior, Grund, Rosehill and Belmont.

### **Rev. J.H.L. Joslyn**

Married Alex and Margaret Fowler on the Playfair farm in 1895.



Baldur Methodist Church, 1904. (Photo courtesy S. J. McKee Archives)



# We Made Baldur Merchant

## Postmaster Alex Fowler



Photo from the S. J. McKee Archives

Alexander (Sandy) was born in [Seaforth, Ontario](#) in 1868. In 1881, Alex, with his father, [W.O. Fowler](#) and family, came west and farmed in the [Chesley](#) district of Oakland Municipality. The Assessment Roll of 1886, lists Alexander Fowler "18 years, E 27-7-18, 300 acres under cultivation, single. Church of England, one cow, three young cattle, seven pigs".

It was during this period that Sandy and his brother-in-law

shared in one of the many hazards of pioneering. They set off for [Waskada](#), to buy seed and were enveloped in a blinding blizzard. All contact with roads was lost, but eventually, they discovered a small shack and nearby, a snow-covered tumble-down shed. In these, men and horses [holed-in](#) for the two day blizzard. The anxious family greeted them joyfully on their return.

Various stores and offices sprang up in the Municipality of [Argyle](#), with the coming of the railway in 1889, and in the fall of 1891, Alex Fowler came to Baldur to operate the newly-built Manitoba Elevator of which Company his father was president.

In 1895, Alex married Margaret, daughter of George William Playfair. They were married in the new farm home at [Otenaw](#), (the home of Irene and Hugh Playfair,) by the Rev. J.H.L. Joslyn.

In 1899, he built the Fowler Block, to which the saddlery business was moved. Mr. [G.W. Brisbin](#) was assistant until harness-making and repairs were taken over by [Ami Bjornson](#). Ami was in charge for 50 years, and during that time the "back shop" became an informal meeting place for customers and friends to discuss the affairs of the day. The second home was now above the store. The post office was relocated in the store in 1904, when Alex took it over from his father. In 1933, he built a new post office on Second Street.

Alex was elected secretary-treasurer of the new school, built in 1905, a service he enjoyed for 24 years. When the ratepayers met to elect the first [council](#) in March, 1906, he was elected a member. He was also on the board of the first skating rink. He was a shareholder and director of the 1914 rink.

A keen sportsman, he played first base for the original Baldur baseball team, and enjoyed golf. He was honoured by a life membership in the Manitoba Curling Association and at that time he had attended 44 consecutive Winnipeg bonspiels. In 1909, he was a member of the first Canadian curling team to curl in Scotland. Hunting was always a high point of the year.



Baldur's Elizabeth Avenue in the early 1900s. The Fowlers, Frank Schultz and Percy Curtis built a good part of Baldur's business district. W.O. Fowler's residence is at the left, Mr. Schultz's bank near centre and the Fowler Block and the Curtis Block dominate the right side of this archival image. (Photo courtesy S. J. McKee Archives)

## W.O. Fowler

Alex Fowler's father, William Oliver Fowler was born at Dandy Wiske, Yorkshire in 1839, just before the family immigrated to Canada in 1840, and settled in Ontario at Harpurhey, now Seaforth.

Allured by the adventure and opportunity of the Canadian West, in 1874, William made his first trip travelling by St. Paul and the Red River to old Fort Garry. He brought his family West in 1881, and took up land in the Chesley district of the Municipality of Oakland, near the junction of the Assiniboine and Souris Rivers. Here, he farmed and was a councillor.

He came to Baldur in 1891, where he built a flour and feed shop, and a bakery. He was a major shareholder in the Manitoba Elevator Co. In 1893, he built a two-storey brick building in the same area. His house, made of "St. Boniface brick", was erected in 1898-1899 and remains a Municipal Heritage site.

William was active in the community. A strong advocate of advanced education, he served for 10 years as secretary-treasurer of the Simpson School District. He promoted the building of the Presbyterian Church and became superintendent of the Sunday School. William was postmaster from 1897-1904.

# We Made Baldur Tradesperson

## Blacksmith Harry Goodman



The Historical Edition of the *Baldur Gazette* from March 14, 1940 in recalling the earliest businesses established in the new village of Baldur noted that:

“G. W. Cramer built a blacksmith shop, manned by Harry Goodman, who had deserted his trade to go on a homestead five miles east of town.” Thus the first two blacksmith shops in Baldur in 1890 were operated by Harry Goodman and William McKnight. Harry Goodman's blacksmith shop sat where the Baldur Hotel is now situated. He lived in a house to the north of it. Harry and his son Frank, worked at blacksmithing there until 1911, when Alex Mitchell bought the shop and house.

Mr. Goodman served as blacksmith for many years. He afterwards moved to Transcona where he became foreman in the car shops of the C.N. railway.

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 152.



## A Day in the Life of a Blacksmith

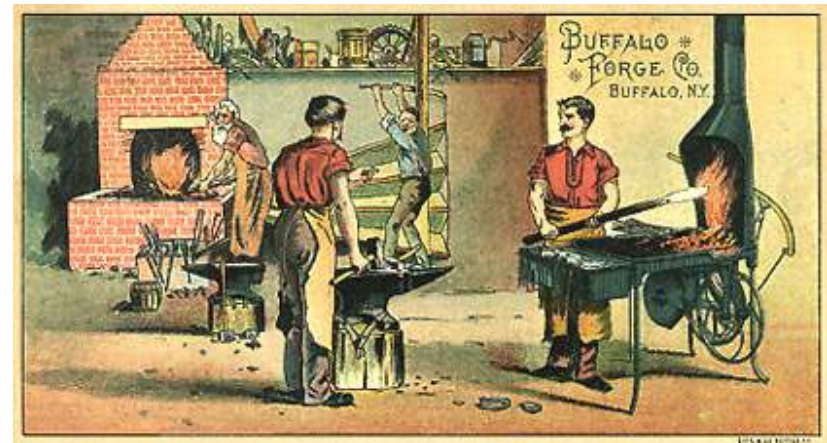
For the early settlers, the blacksmith was perhaps the most essential tradesman. Not only did he make the iron parts for the first farming implements, he also could repair all iron objects by hammering them by hand on an anvil.

After heating the iron until white-hot, the blacksmith would then shape and wield a multitude of objects from it, including carriage bolts and wheels, iron work, cooking utensils, and most importantly, horseshoes.

Blacksmiths who made horseshoes were called farriers, derived from the Latin word for iron. At a time when horses were the only means of transport, the blacksmith was important to not only individual farmers and travelers, but also to merchants whose businesses depended on transporting their goods to other places. Also, because they spent much of their time shoeing horses, blacksmiths gained a considerable amount of knowledge about equine diseases.

The new industrial output of the late 1800s allowed the smith to improve his shop. With a small boiler, steam engine, and a system of overhead shafts, pulleys, and leather belts, the formerly hand operated shop equipment like the post drill, the blower, and other equipment could be easily powered. The small belt powered machines like the Little Giant trip hammer or its blacksmith built counterpart took its place in many small shops. Later, the "steam" part of the steam driven leather belt systems were replaced with small gasoline engines or electric motors. In time, many power hammers were fitted with their own electric motors.

Many blacksmiths were manufacturers as well. Wagon boxes, the setting of wagon and buggy tyres, lathe turned parts for spinning wheels, the single bob manure sleigh, the making of sleigh runners, bolsters, bunks and tongues, and the custom manufacture of truck transfer boxes with cattle hauling equipment were some of the items fabricated with finesse befitting the labourers. Always, along with the aforesaid, there were the innumerable interruptions to repair broken machinery as is wont to happen in a mixed farming area.



This Buffalo Forge advertising card shows an "old" brick forge and bellows and a "new" style forge and blower. Note the hood at the back of the new forge.



# We Made Baldur Public Servant

## **Town Official John Harrower**



John Harrower was born in Ontario. He married Annie Couzens, who was born in 1854 to Elizabeth and Charles Couzens of Albany, New York. Annie spent her childhood in Guelph, Ontario. John and Annie were married at Aberfoyle in 1875. They lived at Walkerton, Ontario until 1878. In 1879, they came to Argyle and settled in the Roseberry district. In 1891, they moved into the new town of Baldur.

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 461.

A meeting held on the 22nd of January 1889 is an important stone in Argyle's history for on that date William Stark retired as secretary - Treasurer of the municipality; and John Harrower, on the motion of Councillor R. Johnson. William Stark had served the Municipality for a period of seven years, they were the formative years in municipal growth; and undoubtedly some of the wisdom of early leaders could be traced to the sound advice of William Stark. Today after fifty years it is a pleasure to read his minutes. Minutes written with bold strokes of the pen and contain an almost unsurpassed wealth of detail. John Harrower, his successor became an institution in Argyle. He held his office for 44 years. He saw Argyle grow from a scantily settled pioneering community to one of the wealthiest municipalities of the Province. The Municipality of Argyle was John Harrower's greatest love and he served it faithfully. When he retired in 1933 he was succeeded by his daughter Miss Gladys Bessie Harrower.

The complexities of modern civilization have added greatly to the burden of municipal administration. Municipal Councils and Municipal officers of today have to grapple with a vast amount of work unknown and undreamt of by the men of the 1880's., yet in reading the minutes of March 5th, 1889, I find some similarity in the problems. In that year the municipality found it necessary to advance money for seed grain under conditions somewhat similar to those employed in recent years. On that date they had to give consideration to a petition praying that a bridge be built between sections 3 and 10 in Township 4 range 14; but the praying petition had no effect, for the Council said no. They also listened to a long complaint about Roseberry School, yet judging from the action taken on the matter we are rather of the opinion that the worthy councillors believed the complaint had no foundation. They appointed two assessors and paid them \$50 a year each. They donated \$25 to the Winnipeg General Hospital; and so throughout the minutes we find these, pioneers dealing with subjects that I still found familiar to modern ears.

From the *Baldur Gazette* Special Historical Edition, 1940:



The premises of Harrower and Price which doubled as the Municipal Office.

# We Made Baldur Merchant

## Implement Dealer Christian Johnson



Christian and Arnbjorg Johnson

Having left Iceland in 1873, there is record of him at **Kinmount, Ontario** in 1875, where the group of immigrants secured work building the railway. In the same year he joined a small delegation to explore the Red River Valley as a possible site for the Icelandic colony. Obtaining a large enough block of land eventually led them to the shore of Lake Winnipeg, with Christian Johnson settling at **Vidines** where Christian is recorded to have been the **schoolteacher** at Vidines on Sundays and Wednesdays.

Early in 1880, together with a small delegation, he traveled by rowboat, steamship and on foot to the Tiger Hills and the **Argyle** settlement. With him was **Sigurdur Christopherson**, the first Icelander to file entry on a homestead at **Grund**. Christian Johnson also filed shortly after and these lands remain with the family today.

He appears to have been a lively participant in politics, church and community. Like virtually all the Icelanders, he was a vigorous Liberal and was chief returning officer for Mountain in 1892. As the Reeve of Argyle in 1896, he is reported to have "served with resolution and dignity".

He was also on the Baldur's earliest and most influential businessmen. In 1893 he established an implement dealership in Baldur on the lot where **Alex Fowler** built his block in 1899.

He later moved to the corner of Elizabeth and First. In September, 1899, and built an additional warehouse 30 feet by 50 feet.

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 494. & 154

Mr. Christian Johnson, the industrious and progressive Deering Implement Agent, has had his commodious warerooms painted, a chimney built over the office, and a handsome sign placed on the front street end of the building. Mr. Johnson has the largest and most commodious implement rooms of any machine agent in the province."

Christian's sons, Jack and Thomas, joined the business and the business continued under the name C. Johnson and Sons after Christian's death in 1918. Jack died in 1935, and Tom continued until 1947, when this business, known as the John Deere Agency, was sold to Andres Anderson.

Quote from the *Baldur Gazette* Special Historical Edition, 1940.

Chris Johnson's Implement Agency at Elizabeth & 1<sup>st</sup>.





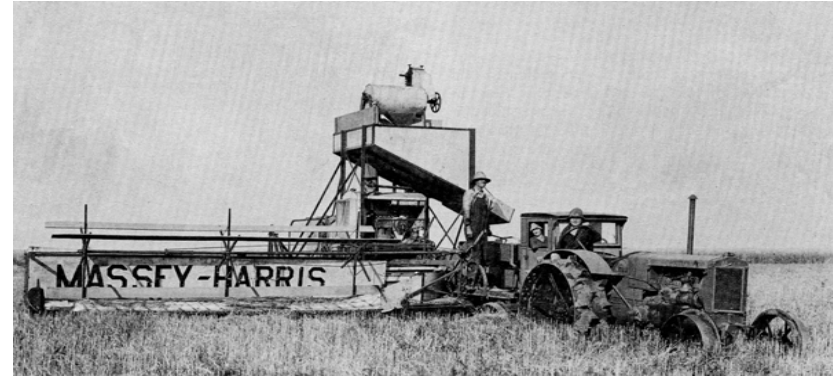
## Implement Dealers

Christian Johnson's business as an implement dealer was a key one in Baldur, and one that many other individuals also attempted over the years. All would have been very familiar with all lines of farm machinery, and of the firms that manufactured them.

Prior to 1900, all manufacturing consisted of short-line companies: full-line companies emerged primarily as a means to overcome competition. International Harvester Company (IHC), for instance, was formed in 1902 as an amalgamation of the five largest existing manufacturers of harvest equipment at the time.

Canada had two full-line companies: Massey-Harris (later to become Massey-Harris-Ferguson, and finally Massey-Ferguson) and Cockshutt, both located in the Hamilton region of Ontario. The Massey Company at one time was the world's largest manufacturer of farm equipment; however, it fell on hard times and went into receivership in 1988.

It is important to make the connection between the blacksmith shop and farm equipment manufacture, as it has often been said that the innovations and progressive ideas for machinery improvements largely came from farmers.



Perry and Edna Cowan and Nellie Carter in 1928.

## Key Farm Implements at 1900

Gang Plow – a combination of two or more plows in one frame

Harrow – implement for breaking up soil

Broadcast Seeder – used for spreading seed

Swather – machine to cut hay and cereal crops

Thresher – machine used to separate grain from stalks and husks

Wagons

All of these pieces of machinery were typically drawn by horses and eventually tractors.

## The Massey-Harris Company

The firm was founded in 1847 in Newcastle, Ontario by Daniel Massey as the Newcastle Foundry and Machine Manufactory. The company began making some of the world's first mechanical threshers, first by assembling parts from the United States and eventually designing and building their own equipment. The firm was taken over and expanded by Daniel's eldest son Hart Massey who renamed it the Massey Manufacturing Co. and in 1879 moved the company to Toronto where it soon became one of the city's leading employers. The massive collection of factories, consisting of a 4.4 hectare (11 acre) site with plant and head office at 915 King Street West, became one of the best known features of the city. Massey expanded the company and began to sell its products internationally. Through extensive advertising campaigns he made it one of the most well known brands in Canada..

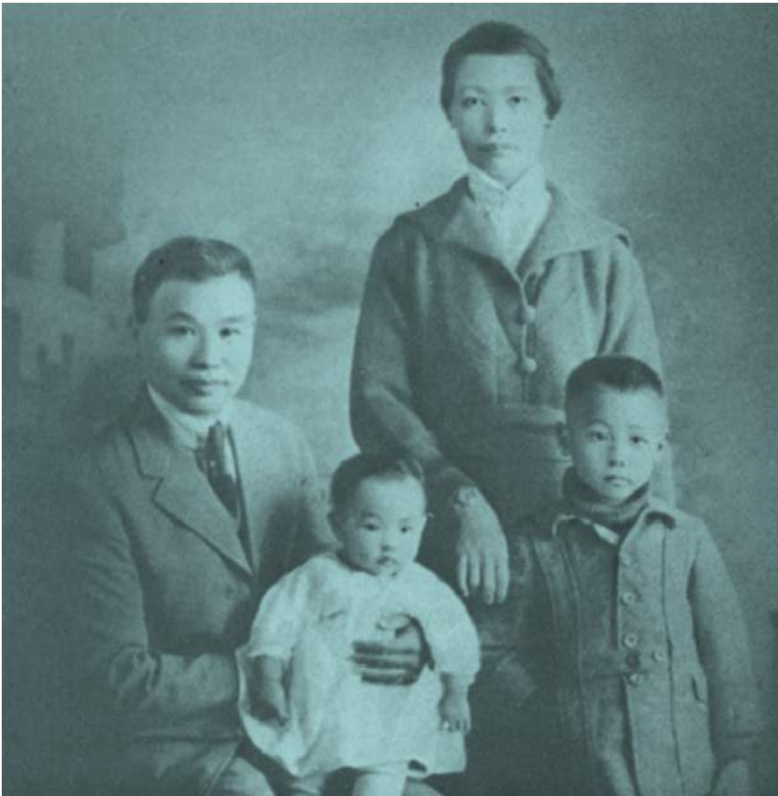
In 1891, Massey merged with the A. Harris, Son & Co. Ltd. to become Massey-Harris Co. and became the largest agricultural equipment maker in the British Empire. The company made threshing machines and reapers as well as safety bicycles, introducing a shaft-driven model in 1898. In 1910, the company acquired the Johnson Harvester Company located in Batavia, New York, making it one of Canada's first multinational firms.



A disc seeder in operation.

# We Made Baldur Merchant

## Restaurateur Lee Foon



In *The Way of the Bachelor*, an important study of early Chinese settlement in Manitoba, Brandon University historian Alison Marshall includes information about Lee Foon and his family:

Mr. Lee arrived by boat from China in 1893. Several years were spent working in B.C. He returned to China to marry See Yee about 1914. In 1916 he left his wife and new son, Kenneth Kwong, while he set out establishing himself in Canada. This time he wended his way across the prairies and settled in Baldur. From Charlie King, he purchased an ice-cream parlour and grocery in a small building on one of the side streets. He built a new building in 1924 which housed a store, café and ice-cream shop.

He was also able to have his brother bring his wife and son over in 1919. His store remained in the Lee family until it closed in 2010. After many years of hard work and raising nine children, Mr. and Mrs. Lee retired to Vancouver in 1959 leaving the business in charge of their son Tom.

Several of their children achieved noteworthy success, including Lillian, the first of their children born in Baldur, who graduated from the Grace Hospital School of Nursing after being the first Chinese-Canadian student to be admitted. Elin embarked on a teaching career and became Manitoba's first Chinese-Canadian school teacher. Oscar, who served with the Canadian Army in WWII, returned to Baldur in 1961, where he and his wife, Jean, from Kuala Lumpur, took over the original family business, which has now been operating for nearly 100 years.

## The Chinese Restaurant

In other sections in *The Way of the Bachelor*, Alison Marshall identifies some of the history of the Chinese restaurant, which became a fixture in so many small Manitoba towns:

“Neither the [Chinese] bachelors who made the Prairie their home [in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries] could have anticipated the enormous impact that Chinese restaurants would have on white culture. These eating establishments enabled all kinds of previously unfamiliar foods to flow into the Prairies, from rice to noodles to Cadbury chocolate bars, Orange Crush and pineapples. And as these “modern” commodities were consumed in rural and urban parts of Manitoba, people became receptive to the individuals, markets, cultures and ideas that brought them into their small communities.

Some cafe owners were especially lucky, diligent, and connected because of the social heat they enjoyed at all kinds of events. They remained in business for twenty or thirty years. Most owners were less stable, even though they found life easier to endure on the Prairies than elsewhere in Canada. They tended to move every ten years.

By the 1950s, restaurant owners learned the appeal of “Chinoiserie” (a blend of Chinese and European design) and its power to satisfy the public appetite for more information about both traditional Chinese customs and more modern ones. It was a commonplace in the restaurant industry that the nature and the quality of the food took a back set to its decor.

By the late 1940s, people were going out for dinner in larger numbers, with this era being the heyday of the Chinese restaurant, and how most people remember it.



Men in front of a Chinese restaurant.



# We Made Baldur Medical Services

## Homoeopathist Hernit Kristofersson



In 1883 Hernit Kristofersson, with his wife and small son immigrated to Canada and stayed with Hernit's brother, Sigurdur, the same Sigurdur who first settled in Argyle at 'Grund'. While a young man in Iceland, Hernit worked with a homoeopathist (also spelled homeopathist) and thus acquired some knowledge of the principals used in this type of medicine.

Hernit's knowledge of medicine became known in the district and many would come to him when illness struck their family. In those early years there was no doctor in Argyle, and his knowledge was invaluable. In later years, when a doctor was available, people would still go to Hernit for advice and treatment.

Johann (Joe) Christopherson is Hernit's youngest son. Today, at 82 years young, he well remembers watching curiously as his father mixed medicine for those seeking his assistance.

Often in the years preceding that date, Dr. Cleghorn would refer mothers to Hernit for the special mixture he used for young children. It was a dilute combination of water, alcohol, and belladonna —and was dispensed two or three drops on a spoon.

Hernit Kristofersson was a true son of Iceland, a hardy soul with a determined spirit — qualities which were shared by his friends and neighbours, themselves sons and daughters of Iceland.

Adapted from *For Those We Serve*, Page 6

## The Medicine Woman, Lilly Montroy

Lilly Montroy, a "medicine woman" serving those families around Rock Lake could speak Cree, French, English, Salteaux and Blackfoot. Her knowledge of medicine was taught to her by others at Indian Springs. Lilly was a midwife as well and attended many mothers in the area. Her 'medicine' was sought on a regular basis by not only the Metis families in the area but also by the settlers who heard of the success of her cures. Lilly Montroy kept her medicines in packages, and when asked to help a neighbour, she carried some of these with her in a pouch.

Adapted from *For Those We Serve, Page 4*

## First Nations Cures

In 1884, E.M. Holmes, Curator of the Museum of the Pharmaceutical Society, collected information about Cree pharmaceuticals and specimens, some of which are noted here:

Pow-e-men-artic (Fire Root, or Bitter Pepper Root).—This is the rhizome of *Acorus Calamus*, L., or a nearly allied species, and is used in coughs.

Wakinakim, the bark of *Juniperus communis*, L..This is used to make a poultice for wounds. The beneficial action of the bark is doubtless due to its great astringency, and to the volatile oil present in it, which would naturally act as an antiseptic.

Milawapamule, *Cornus sericea*, Herit., (Red Willow Bark).—The bark is used as an emetic in coughs and fevers. For coughs the bark is boiled in water and the decoction strained and given while still warm in the dose of a wineglassful every few minutes until vomiting supervenes. For colds and fevers a teaspoonful of the decoction is taken occasionally.

Nepatihe, or Green Alder.—This is the bark of *Alnus viridis*, DC. It has a very astringent taste with a slight bitterness and a flavor recalling that of the leaves of *Arbutus Uva-ursi*. It is used is dropsy.

Metooos (*Populus*) Poplar Bark.—This has a bitter, slightly mucilaginous taste with some astringency, and a fibrous texture. It is used in coughs. The inner bark of the poplar is eaten in the spring, and is considered to act as a mild purgative.

Wetchus-y-usk-wa, or Service Tree, (*Pyrus*)—This is in the form of thin shreds scraped off the young branches. It is of a yellowish-white color on the inner surface, and of a purplish-brown on the outer. It is used in pleurisy and inflammatory diseases.

We-suk-a-pup (*Kalmia angustifolia*, L.)—The twigs with leaves and flowers are used in bowel complaints and as a tonic. Karkar-pukwa or Country Tea (*Ledum latifolium*, L.).—The fresh leaves are chewed and applied to wounds.

# We Made Baldur Merchant

## **Tinsmith and Hardware Dealer Thomas E. Poole**



Thomas E. Poole moved to Baldur in 1890 and established himself as a hardware dealer and tinsmith. In 1910 he built the brick building that in 2012 houses the Argyle Museum.

Thomas was born on September 30, 1859, in Kemptville, Ontario. In 1880 he moved to Winnipeg, where he was associated with the [Ashdown Hardware Company](#).

In 1885, Thomas married Margaret [Gibson of Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan](#), and in 1889 they came to this district. In 1890, Thomas joined the ranks of pioneer businessmen in Baldur, when he built a store and went into the hardware business.

In 1900, Thomas and his family moved into their newly built house on the corner of Government Road and Carrie Street. It was a solid brick, 12 room, [two-and-a-half](#) storey model of beauty.

To quote from a 1900 *Baldur Gazette*: "This magnificent mansion has all modern improvements, including a bathroom and is heated throughout by a furnace." In 1910, he also had a new brick store built. Thomas participated in the growth and development of the town and was a sports enthusiast, taking part in baseball, hockey and curling. He was a rink director in 1914, and served on the school board. The family were members of the St. Mark's Anglican Church and the children attended Baldur School.

Thomas and Margaret had six children: Ella (Mrs. Cook), Madge (Mrs. [McFadden](#)), Clara (Mrs. [Scarth](#)), Brian, Alice and Dorothy (Mrs. [Annandale](#)).

In 1925, Thomas sold the hardware business in Baldur, and he and Margaret retired to Winnipeg. Margaret died in 1934, and Thomas in 1935.

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 606.



Harold Bateman behind the counter, Mr. Poole centre.



As the village of Baldur expanded in the early twentieth century, solid brick commercial establishments replaced many of the wooden buildings on the main street. A typical commercial block of its era, the Poole Building is distinguished by fine brick details at the roof line. The Thomas Poole Building is now the home of the Argyle Museum, and the building is a designated Municipal Heritage Site.



# We Made Baldur

## Community Volunteer

### **Community Leader Margaret (Maggie) Schultz**



Frank and Margaret (1853 – 1947) Schultz were quite prominent citizens of Baldur in the early days of the village.

After a number of years on the farm, taking care of the animals, living in fear of the Indians and tramps, and alone with her small sons, Margaret was very glad when her husband decided to move to Baldur. There Frank opened a real estate and insurance office and established a little private bank. After a few years the Union Bank decided to open a branch in Baldur.

Margaret was a staunch Methodist. In her estimation, dancing and cards were "of the Devil" and the boys were not allowed to have cards in the house. Later when they grew up and she found they were playing cards away from home she relented and allowed them to play and even started to play with them. Some of the boys were keen sportsmen, particularly Otto, who during his university years won many medals for racing and hockey.

Margaret is best remembered as an early advocate for the establishment of a "Cottage Hospital" a project, and interest of Frank's that was taken up by Margaret after his death. She bequeathed land for the Baldur Hospital and funds for equipment.

Margaret Schultz, by anyone's standards, was made of the "right stuff," and her independence and enthusiastic love of life and her fellow man helped mould the characters of her young boys. Another story, some years later, when 'Maggie' was in her late sixties or early seventies, helps illustrate her perseverance and pioneer spirit:

After a gusty rainstorm had swept the shingles off her kitchen roof, she simply gathered her materials and her skirt and proceeded up the ladder to repair the roof. Her next-door neighbour, Mrs. Johnson, pleaded with her to come down – fearing she would fall. Maggie's answer was an invitation to the dear lady to find another hammer and join her. Her friend threw up her hands in despair, and returned inside to peek anxiously from her window.

When a job needed doing, Maggie 'saw to it' that it was attended to, one way or another.

Maggie never forgot Frank's dream, nor his promise of land nor his pledge of funds. She was to live to watch her son Ivan become Minister of Health and Public Welfare for Manitoba in the Bracken government in 1944; and to watch as he carried his father's banner and pressed for the establishment of rural hospitals in Manitoba.

Maggie died in 1947, but not without bequeathing all that portion of the southwest quarter of section 13 township 5 range 14 of the Principal Meridian' to the Municipality of Argyle for the single purpose to which it had always been intended – as the site for a hospital. She also left funds to be used in equipping the hospital. And, in a manner befitting the mother he worshipped, Ivan saw to it that her wishes were carried out.

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 624 and *For Those We Serve*, page 29



The Argyle Museum has a portrait with a plaque outlining Maggie Schultz's many achievements.

# We Made Baldur Medical Services

## Midwife & Nurse Karolina Soffia Snydal



Karolina Soffia Snydal and her husband Eyolfur emigrated to Canada from Jukuideal in Iceland in 1876. Her mother had been a midwife in their homeland and Karolina told of helping bathe a newborn infant when she herself was only ten years of age. It seemed only fitting that after moving to a farm in Argyle, and being widowed only a few years later, Karolina should support her seven children, doing what she knew best, helping expectant mothers.

Karolina rented her homestead in the Grund district north of Baldur and, taking with her a cow, a few chickens and some sheep, the family moved to Baldur in 1899.

Word soon spread that 'Nurse Snydal' as she was called was available and she became a very busy person. Over a span of nearly fifty years Karolina, often without the help of a doctor, was called to help expectant mothers. Her task also included taking over all the household duties as well as caring for the mother and new infant.

One story comes to mind at this time. On a very stormy night in March when the snow was deep and the roads almost obliterated, Karolina and Dr. Cleghorn started north in a cutter and a team of horses. Their destination was Paul Frederickson's farm home. En route the cutter upset. Karolina was slightly injured. Someone had to go on horseback to seek help from a neighbour, Mrs. Bardarson. The new born baby arrived and was named Ellen, later Mrs. Ellen Magnusson.

Today many in Argyle will tell you that Mrs. Snyder brought all members of their family into the world. She also took expectant mothers into her own home when it was more convenient for all concerned.

Karolina Snyder delivered her last baby when she was seventy-five years old. The infant was Caroline, daughter of Mrs. and Mr. Walter Frederickson, born June 1st 1934.

The Snyder home was always a symbol of hospitality. The coffee pot was in constant use. The odour of green beans roasting in a wood stove oven while Karolina and her friends played Icelandic whist was a usual occurrence. Karolina will always be remembered for her patience and kindness to all her grandchildren. She lived to the age of 91 years, having been predeceased by all her children. She died on February 24, 1947.

Adapted from, *For Those We Serve*.

## Midwife Valgerdur Bjornsdottir

Valgerdur Bjornsdottir was born in Iceland and trained midwife, a much respected profession in Iceland at that time; when it was not advocated that girls need be educated. She delivered numerous babies and to cared for mothers and their newborns in the Bru district . It had been related that she took her daughter, Halldora, to assist at the delivery, when Halldora was only fourteen years of age. And thus Halldora learned the profession and carried on to serve her community likewise.

Halldora Sigvaldadottir (Valgerdur's daughter by her first husband) came to the Argyle district in 1883 to SE 28 6-13. Soon after the birth of her last childbirth, Halldora began helping people who were ill; or tending as a midwife; and went out day or night.



Valgerdur Bjornsdottir and Halldora Gunnlaugson.

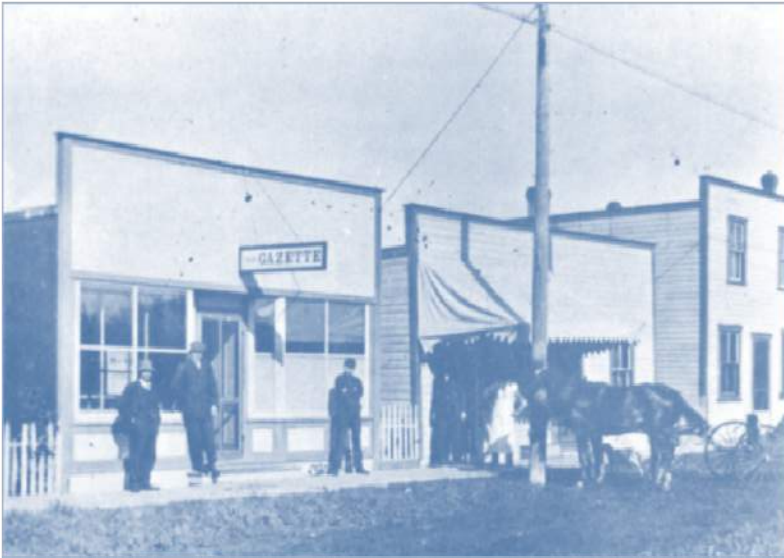
During the influenza epidemic of 1918, she went from home to home never becoming ill herself. At one time she came to nurse the Isberg family in Baldur, where all eight were down with the 'flu' . . . the mother being the exception. She nursed them all back to good health and moved on. Halldora died March 24, 1941 and is buried in Bru Cemetery beside her husband, Brynjolfur Gunnlaugson (1847-1914) whom she married in 1878 while still in Iceland.

Adapted from *For Those We Serve*, Page 8



# We Made Baldur Communications

## Photographer and Publisher Fred Stevens



Baldur Gazette Offices

In the summer of 1882, Fred Stevens came to Manitoba from England to seek his fortune in farming. After looking around, he decided on W 28-4-14. If he had known how many stones would have to be removed, he would have located elsewhere. He and his neighbours erected a log house in 1882. The house was lived in until 1937.

In 1883, Fred's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Stevens, arrived accompanied by Elizabeth Avis. Fred and Elizabeth were married that year. Fred's sister, Sara, married Jim Graham the same year. Jim and Sara homesteaded the land which was later purchased by the Waitt Brothers. They moved to the Neelin district. They had four girls: Jean, Dora, Maggie, and Beth.

Fred and Elizabeth had six boys; Charlie, Sydney, Arthur, Alfred, Harry and Frank, and one girl, Olive. All the children were raised in the log house.

Fred taught school at Roseberry for a few years, returning each night to his wife and family on the homestead. He continued to farm until the boys were old enough to carry on. Fred and Elizabeth moved to Baldur in 1920, where Fred had earlier purchased the local newspaper, the *Baldur Gazette*.

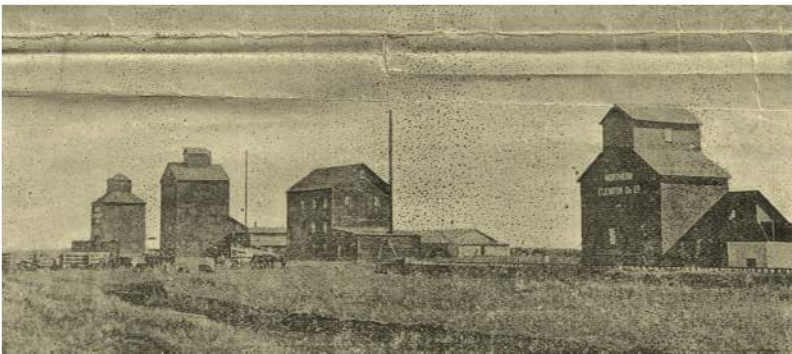
In 1907 Mr. Cooper left and Walter Fredrickson took charge of the mechanical department of the paper under Mr. P. F. Curtis, who at that time purchased the Gazette. In February 1909 the ownership passed from Mr. Curtis to Miss Annie Playfair, who immediately disposed of it again to Mr. Fred Stevens.

Earl and Joy Johnson took over the Gazette in 1963 from Earl's mother, Edna Johnson, who operated the business since 1948. So the weekly newspaper has been operated by the Johnson family for the past 65 years. (As of 2013)

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 657.

## The Photography of Fred Stevens

Fred Stevens was a skilled photographer and his images were used in a *Baldur Gazette* Special Historical Edition.



Winnipeg Elevator, Dominion Elevator, Roller Mill, Rink, Northern Elevator



Second Street, Baldur, Looking North



Store and Grounds of P.F. Curtis

# We Made Baldur Sports Enthusiasts

## The Invincibles Hockey Team



Back Row: Murdock Campbell, Sam Frederickson, Clyde Playfair and Jack Johnson. Front Row: Roy Schultz, Harold Bateman, George Playfair and Frank Goodman.

The first organized Senior Hockey Club of Baldur was formed at a meeting held on December 1, 1898. Members of the first team were: H. Laidlaw, Conibear, A. Fowler, J. Playfair, A. Duke, J. Johnson, T. Poole and S.R.P. Cooper.

The team was later named the 'Invincibles', as through the seasons, they were unbeatable. The following is a quote from the *Baldur Gazette* of February 27, 1902:

After defeating all local hockey teams within a radius of 40 miles, the 'Invincibles' looked around for other fields to conquer. Away out at the end of the C.N.R. branch, is situated a town which possessed a league team, which has won considerable fame. The Baldur team, undeterred by formidable reports, decided to take the long trip and give a real exhibition of scientific hockey. Consequently, Monday saw our boys leave for Hartney, where after a three hour journey, they arrived shortly after 7 p.m. Eight o'clock saw them lined up and the big crowd of Hartney sports were offering all kinds of money on their team. The game ended, Baldur 6 - Hartney 0. Our boys were accorded a most hospitable reception and entertained to an oyster supper after the match. Team players were: Roy Schultz, George Playfair, Harold Bateman, Murdock Campbell, Clyde Playfair, Frank Goodman and J. Nunn.

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 174



## Ice Rinks

The first skating rink in Baldur was built on a site on the south side of the Dominion Elevator, which was purchased from Frank Schultz for \$70.00. The building opened to the public on Dec. 8, 1898. A curling rink was built along the south side of the skating rink in 1899. In 1914, a building combined contained a two sheet curling rink and a skating arena, with a raised walkway in between, where spectators could watch either side of activity.

## Curling in Baldur

Baldur has a long and proud history of involvement in, and excellence at, the sport of curling. The Baldur Curling Club was organized at a meeting held on November 18, 1899, with the following officers elected: President - W. Moscrip; Vice-president – John Harrower, Secretary-Treasurer - C.C. Parker. The club was first affiliated with the Manitoba Branch of the Royal Caledonian Curling Club of Scotland in 1900. In 1909, Alex Fowler was chosen to represent the club in the team of the Manitoba Curlers who went to Scotland. In 1921, J.A. Johnson also represented the club as a member of the Canadian Curling representatives who visited Scotland.

## Baldur Ladies' Curling Club

The first bonspiel on record for the ladies was held in 1912. At this time, there were three ladies on a team, with one gent as a skip. The ladies then took part in patriotic bonspiels and charity bonspiels. By 1930, the ladies had an active club and in 1937, they had four regular rinks. By 1939, several reports show ladies' rinks taking part in out-of-town bonspiels.

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 174



Baldur curlers, ca, 1900.



# We Made Baldur Famous Son

## **NHL Hockey Star Tom Johnson**



Thomas Christian Johnson began his career in hockey shooting pucks at sister Shirley who was goaltender in the broom cupboard. Early years playing on the frozen Baldur Creek and at the rink reinforced this interest. As well, during his junior year, he skipped a rink of Donald Cleghorn, Donald Bridge and Ivan Vickers to the Manitoba High School Curling Championship.

Loyalties to studies at the University of Manitoba were transferred to the Montreal Canadiens. Beginning with their farm team in Buffalo in 1948, he moved to Montreal in 1950, and enjoyed many years of Stanley Cup Championships as a defenceman for the Canadiens. He won the Norris Trophy in 1959. In 1963, he became a Boston Bruin, and since his retirement from playing, he has been a scout, coach and a member of the administration.

Adapted from *Come into our Heritage*, page 495



Tom Johnson was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1970. (Tom passed away in 2007.)

## Parting thoughts

One of the pleasant things about small town life is that everyone, whether rich or poor, liked or disliked, has some kind of a role and place in the community. I never felt that living in a city – as I once did for a couple of years.

— Edward Abbey

History overflows time. Nothing is ever lost, and we are compacted together forever, even by our failures, our regrets, and our longings.

— Wendell Berry