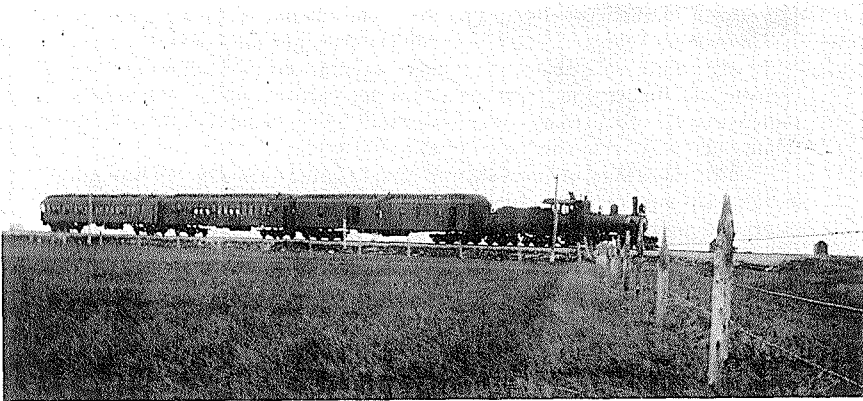


## Incorporation — the Formative Years



—Mildred Sheppard

“On a certain road running to the boundary, a particular engine became so noted an offender that the settlers knew to look out whenever it came along; three fires from it have been seen burning at one time!” A. L. Dryden comment. Above train is a CNR train, c 1902 that travelled through Oak Bluff, Sanford, Carman.

engines often started fires when live coals spiralling out of the smoke-stacks fell to the ground. Once started, the smoke would reach up to the clouds as the fire rolled rapidly along across the flat land. When fanned by a strong wind, the strength of the unchecked fire made fighting it futile.

The municipal council frequently passed bylaws forbidding open fires. In Andrew Dryden's scrapbook are numerous published letters to the editors of the *Free Press/Tribune*. One stated, “Now my idea of it is that prairie fires cannot be prevented and making it a penal offence to start a fire only results in preventing them till the grass is so thoroughly dry that everything is like tinder, and till a high wind and a warm day gives the very conditions necessary for a damaging fire and when ordinary fire guards are of no use. . . The railways that now intersect nearly all parts of the country are the cause. . . Say what they will about having their smoke-stacks and furnaces made safe, the jolting of an engine at high speed, even if the smoke-stacks are secure, may cause fire to fall from or under the train and the wind caused by the train will send it beyond the ballasted portion of the road. . .”

Common sense seemed to dictate the bending of the laws regarding setting fires on the prairies. Another of Dryden's papers tells this tale: