

The CNoR built two feeder lines that passed through the municipality. One was built along the southern border and gave life to the communities of Rossendale, Lavenham, Ladysmith, Pratt, Gateside and Arizona. This line was later abandoned and removed. The other line, running northwest from Portage la Prairie, crossed the northeast corner of the municipality through Youill, Beaver and Katrime, on its way to Gladstone.

These lines, whether main or feeder, were vital to the day-to-day existence of the communities along the tracks. Eggs, cream, milk, wood and other produce could be sent to waiting markets in all directions, while mail, daily newspapers and retail goods came into the municipality. Access to urban centres, for medical appointments and shopping, was another important role of the trains. But the railways were much more than a means to buy and sell or to go to town. Waiting at the station and visiting with neighbours was often a greatly anticipated event which helped bind the community together and increase its sense of fellowship.

The Canadian government announced the purchase of the financially troubled CNoR on August 14, 1917, joining it with the government's other railway holdings and incorporating it under the new name, Canadian National Railways (CNR), on June 6, 1919. In mid-1920, the GTPR announced its bankruptcy and by early 1923 the government had added it and its parent company, the GTR, to the CNR fold, making it the longest railway system in the world.

It is hard to overestimate the importance of the railways. The example of North Norfolk was repeated to both greater and lesser degrees all across western Canada. What began as a sparsely populated, poorly organized and isolated region was transformed in the matter of a few months into a busy municipality, well-connected with the rest of the country and showing signs of social and economic growth. The railways were a means of getting people to come, settle and farm the land, to foster the growth of service industries and to provide permanent, reliable access to world markets and goods. The railways' ability to carry farm products to established markets - local, national and international - was just as important. Without this connection, the development of overseas markets for grain and other produce would have been impossible and the modern growth of the west would have necessarily been delayed.

THE SETTLERS

The stage was now set for the appearance of the final piece of the development puzzle - the settlers. The fur trade had been the first catalyst to entice Europeans and eastern Canadians to explore, map and on a very limited scale, inhabit the region. The addition of the territory to the Dominion of Canada and the creation of the Province of Manitoba organized the land and facilitated the granting of land to the newly arrived immigrant families. The construction of railway lines throughout the region assured farmers of a reliable access for their produce to markets in eastern Canada, the United States and Europe.

Just as each little hamlet or town grew from this common history, so too did their developments differ. Each had its own pioneers and leaders, its own way of doing things and its own challenges. In the pages that follow, you will gain a sense of the uniqueness of North Norfolk's people and each of its communities. You will discover, as well, a common heritage, a shared past that links the Municipality and its citizens to the rest of western Canada.

In the next six hundred pages we have tried to capture the uniqueness Murray mentions. In reality our population represents a good cross section of the world population and we have learned to live together in harmony. This in itself may be unique.