

Settlers' Woodlot Began Development Of East Kildonan

By DAVID LEE

From a disparaging start as the woodyard and cow pasture for the Selkirk settlers 159 years ago, East Kildonan has grown to be one of Greater Winnipeg's most popular residential areas.

Although the suburb has met with never-ending frustration in its attempts to lure industrial growth, its tranquil charm and what one mayor called "real middle-classness" has always attracted rapid residential development.

Scarcely a year has passed since incorporation of the Municipality of East Kildonan in 1924 that hundreds of new housing units — many of them large-scale developments — weren't announced.

"The best way to describe East Kildonan is that it's a nice, peaceful place to live," former mayor George N. Suttie once remarked.

"We have always wanted industry, at least a little, but the lack of it has probably been what has given us such a prime residential city. It's been both a blessing and a curse."

Although it has claimed recognition as Manitoba's sixth largest city, with a population just over 29,100, East Kildonan was once only 2,071 acres of virgin land on the east side of the Red River.

That was in 1812, the year in which the historic Selkirk settlers arrived in southern Manitoba and began carving out a camp on the west side of the Red River in the area which was to become West Kildonan.

Led by Miles Macdonell, after whom an East Kildonan collegiate was named, the settlers called their new homeland Kildonan after a parish in northern Scotland in which many of them were raised.

Within a few days, the new arrivals ventured across the river and chose the timberland and grassy prairies as both a source of fuel for their wood stoves and as grazing land for their cattle.

Although a handful of people settled on the east side of the river during the next few decades, the area remained virtually uninhabited and without any recognized form of government until 1880, when the Municipality of Kildonan was officially established.

At the time, the municipality was given the responsibility of administering all the land now known as West, East, North and Old Kildonan as well as a few parcels of land in the northwest and northeast corners of Winnipeg.

During the next 36 years a series of annexations to Winnipeg began. That ended in 1906 when the area known as Elmwood was taken into the main city.

With an increasing flow of new settlers arriving in the area daily, the Municipality of Kildonan received its share of the new residents and quickly began to grow in all sectors.

It wasn't until 1914, however, that East Kildonan began to capture a real identity of its own. In that year, the Municipality of Kildonan was split in two, leaving East and West Kildonan as separate municipalities.

Ten years later the northern agricultural sector of the municipality was also separated and became the Rural Municipality of North Kildonan. That split left East Kildonan as it exists today. At the time, it had a population of 7,222.

East Kildonan had thus made its entry into the history books of Greater Winnipeg. Perhaps it was not a memorable entry, but the suburb was well on its way to better things in spite of its meager beginning.

Since incorporation as a municipality in 1924, East Kildonan has had 11 reeves and mayors. Only two of them, Reeve W. P. Larson and Mayor George N. Suttie, held them top post for more than six years.

The municipality's first reeve was Donald Fawcett, who was elected in 1924 and remained in office until



1917. He was succeeded by S. R. Henderson from 1918 to 1923 and N. A. Fletcher from 1924 to 1928.

D. J. Allan then moved into the reeve's post until 1933 when he was succeeded by Mr. Larson, who remained in office until 1947. One year later, the municipality's last reeve and first mayor, J. L. Bodie, was elected. He held the job until 1954.

F. W. Dryden was elected mayor for one term in 1955-56. He gave up the post to Mayor Suttie, who served until 1966 when he was defeated by Michael Spack.

Mayor Spack resigned the job one year later, however, and Mr. Suttie was re-elected to fill out the remaining year of the mayor's term. He was again defeated in 1968, this time by Michael Ruta, who only stayed in office one term before he was defeated by Stanley Dowhan.

Mayor Dowhan still holds the mayoralty in the city and was elected to the new recent civic elections. He again defeated Mr. Ruta.

Although East Kildonan's population continued to climb steadily over the years — it stood at 8,740 in 1947 and 20,500 in 1967 — municipal activities rarely attracted much attention from the rest of Greater Winnipeg.

There were a few exceptions, however, such as the time that East Kildonan received its charter from then-premier D. L. Campbell that enabled it to shuck off the monicker of "rural municipality" for the more flattering title of "city".

More than 6,000 people gathered in a shopping centre parking lot on July 1, 1957, when Premier Campbell handed the charter to Mayor Suttie to climax a day-long ceremony held to mark the occasion.

East Kildonan also attracted considerable attention — most of it scornful — from other municipalities in Greater Winnipeg when it went on record two months ago as favoring the new central city concept. It was the only municipality, other than the City of Winnipeg, to endorse the amalgamation plan.

Over the years, the municipality has had its share of minor scandals and angry confrontations, most of them involving either public services such as water, garbage collection and police protection or municipal council clashes between mayors and aldermen.



MAJOR DOWHAN
THE FINAL COUNCIL

East Kildonan city council which disappears today, was made up of seven members.

The members of the final council are:
Mayor Stanley Dowhan
Ald. R. F. Schick
Ald. Norman P. Stapon
Ald. John Haydn
Ald. R. W. Matheson
Ald. Frank S. McGarry
Ald. Wickham Ruta.

For example, such matters as the following gained headline prominence in the last two decades:

● May, 1955 — Acting Fire Chief G. R. King charged that the municipal council must assume responsibility for the failure of the fire department to reach a man who was seriously burned. The department's trucks became stuck on muddy municipal roads on the way to the call. The acting chief subsequently resigned.

● July, 1957 — City council gave its police department a reprimand for baiting motorists to pass on the right and then fining them for doing so. "The police just sit there at 15 or 20 miles an hour. You don't dare pass them or you've had it," charged Ald. A. J. Reid.

● May, 1962 — City council severely reprimanded an alderman for stopping a public works crew and sending them home because he felt "they were just wasting their time." Ald. Thomas Armstrong admitted he sent the trucks home when he found them blocking a road.

● January, 1965 — Police Chief Chris Einfeld borrowed a lie detector to clear up a case of missing money at the city police station. After several tests were completed, however, the chief sent the machine back.

● July, 1969 — Mayor Michael Ruta threatened to phone the police and "have everyone escorted" out of a council meeting because it was spending "too much time on old skeletons." He said police would attend future meetings and reporters would be barred from attending council.

● November, 1969 — Mayor-elect Stanley Dowhan said a reorganization of the city police department might be ordered when he took office in January because the department was trying to "keep me quiet ... keep the mayor in his place."

● March, 1970 — Police Chief Chris Einfeld said the city's lack of police manpower made it impossible to investigate many crimes. He said his annual request for more men was always rejected by council.

● February, 1971 — At one of its stormiest meetings in years, city council decided to renegotiate a garbage collection agreement with its present contractor. The decision, made amid threats of defamation suits and sinister motives, ended a lengthy series of debates on the question of garbage pickup.

Besides some of the events in East Kildonan's recent history that most aldermen would rather forget, the municipality has also achieved an impressive record in many areas.

The most noteworthy of these achievements was the East Kildonan police department's toughness with erring drivers which kept the city fatality-free for 3,095 days — a record in North America.

Although the city's amalgamation with other Greater Winnipeg municipalities on Jan. 1 won't be due to its prodding, East Kildonan considered at least two other amalgamation plans in the past 50 years — one with Winnipeg and another with North Kildonan. Neither plan was ever approved.

So, in its relatively brief history, East Kildonan has grown from a sparsely populated rural municipality to a city with a 1971 assessment of more than \$54.5 million.

For the next three years the affairs of the area will be handed over to two members of the present city council, Mayor Dowhan and Ald. N. P. Stapon, and school board chairman James Smith. The three were elected to the central city's 51-man council in the recent civic elections.

For the time being, all service clubs and community organizations have promised to continue functioning as East Kildonan units but some plan to reconsider after one or two years under amalgamation.



The Get Together '71 festival in downtown Winnipeg which attracted about 400,000 persons this summer proved that Greater Winnipeg residents can get together.

Taxes Made North Kildonan

By KEN INGLE

A feeling of domination and a sense of frugality led to the creation of the Rural Municipality of North Kildonan in 1924.

The municipality had its beginnings in 1812 to 1815 when it was part of the land settled by the Selkirk settlers. It began as a series of farms which fronted on the Red River — each about 792 feet wide — and stretched back about two miles to a village common or pasturage.

In 1851 the parish of Kildonan was founded as a bastion of Presbyterianism in Western Canada. It encompassed the land on both sides of the Red River which was to become the four Kildonans — Old, West, North and East.

In 1880 the parish was incorporated as a municipality and in 1914 was divided into West Kildonan and East Kildonan, using the Red as a natural division point.

By 1924 Kildonan had developed an urban area in its southwestern section and many of the farmers in the remaining area were beginning to feel a sense of domination from this sphere.

They also felt taxes were too high and the discontent led to a split and the formation of North Kildonan and East Kildonan.

The sense of frugality that helped create the split was still apparent in 1945 when the municipality was still not levying enough taxes to pay the wages of its staff. The councillors were well-known for the pride they took in maintaining a frozen mill rate.

However, things began to change after the Second World War. Taxes were permitted to rise somewhat in the face of an increasing population and a need for schools in which educate the children.

Five new schools were built and sufficient road equipment to meet the municipality's needs was purchased. A new pumper for the volunteer fire department was also bought.

However, the municipality continued to maintain a firm hold on its purse strings and refused to borrow money from the bank. Its standing at the bank was so good that it was able to ask for and obtain interest on its current account.

Prior to the Second World War a tract of 87 acres within the municipality's borders had been sold at a low price to the federal government. Following the war the council became aroused over Ottawa's refusal to pay taxes on the land and decided to take action.

It learned that in two other municipalities in Canada the federal government was paying a grant-in-aid in lieu of taxes on land holdings and a threat to have the matter raised in the House of Commons helped bring a similar grant to North Kildonan.

The 87 acres of federal land in the municipality is now known as Springfield Heights, the first of two major subdivisions to have been developed in North Kildonan since the war.

Started in 1956, Springfield Heights was envisaged as a 1,000-home subdivision, as was River East Park which was begun in 1956.

About 50 businesses and industries are now located in North Kildonan, including everything from construction and building supply firms to a furniture factory and a commercial printer.

A \$10,000 quonset-type fire hall was erected in the municipality in 1948 and was followed by a \$36,000 town hall in 1956. A library, constructed in 1960, is rented by the municipality.

The newest project to be given consideration is a recreation centre which is now

THE FINAL COUNCIL

North Kildonan municipal council ends its work for the community today.

Members of the final council are:

Mayor David W. Pekary
Coun. Leo J. Rougeau
Coun. Harry Merroek
Coun. Charles A. Barry
Coun. Barry J. Filbert.

posed of 21 volunteers and nine regular firemen. Its fire fighting equipment includes two pumps and a rescue and salvage vehicle and a water tender.

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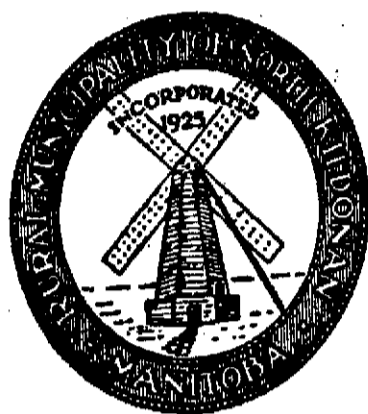
MAJOR PEKARY

in the planning. An estimated price of \$385,000 has been set and it is hoped the building could be opened before the end of 1972.

In 1963 the municipality established a parks board and since that time the board has developed 16 playground areas in North Kildonan, ranging in size from less than one acre to 8.5 acres.

As a centennial project, North Kildonan began work last year on a natural-setting park which will incorporate 23 acres of expropriated land, much of it former milk ranches. The park is bisected by a creek and will feature nature trails, barbecues and a play area. Scheduled for completion in five years, the estimated cost is about \$85,000.

North Kildonan had eight mayors in its 47 years as a separate municipality. They included Herbert C. Wel-



lams, 1925 to 1937; James Gallagher, 1938 to 1943; Cornelius Huebert, 1943 to 1945; James T. Aitken, 1946 to 1953; Jack L. Pearce, 1954 to 1957 and 1962 to 1963; John Dickson, 1958 to 1961; Stanley Copp, 1964 to 1965 and David W. Pekary, 1965 to 1971.

In 1924, when North Kildonan separated from the urban area of Kildonan East, it was mainly a rural farmland territory with a population of only 1,100 persons. Today, the population is 19,000.

The area now will become part of the East Kildonan community committee area.

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