



Old Kildonan Became Separate Unit In 1921

By PAUL ROBERTON

Old Kildonan was first defined as a political unit in 1921, when it separated from West Kildonan, but its history goes back to the days of the Selkirk settlers.

In August, 1817, the fifth Earl of Douglas, Lord Selkirk, told the settlers in the area that "this lot on which we are met today shall be for your church and manse, the next lot on the south side of the creek (Parsonage Creek) shall be for your school and for a help to your teacher, and in commemoration of your native parish it shall be called Kildonan."

The native parish was the parish of Kildonan in Sutherlandshire, Scotland.

The province of Manitoba was established in 1870. In 1873 the provincial government enacted legislation giving a greater amount of self-government to the areas that wanted it. The legislation stated that any area containing more than 30 freeholders could be incorporated as a municipality if two-thirds of its residents petitioned for such a move.

The parishes of Kildonan and St. John's used this legislation to form the municipality of Kildonan-St. John's in 1876. This was changed to Kildonan in 1880 when the Provincial Act of 1880 divided the area surrounding the City of Winnipeg into three municipalities — Assiniboia on the west and south, Kildonan on the north and St. Boniface on the east.

Up to 1880 the municipal boundaries were determined mainly by the parish boundaries. After this, however, Winnipeg began to plan for a building and population boom and started to absorb adjoining areas of land. A great deal of land speculation was also prevalent. Winnipeg's border was extended from Aberdeen Avenue to what is now called Inkster Boulevard.

The enlargement of Winnipeg at the expense of Kildonan continued to 1906 when Kildonan residents on the northern boundary of Winnipeg, Kildonan Ward Four, won a plebiscite to join Winnipeg. (The vote was 100 in favor of joining Winnipeg and 47 against joining).

When this plebiscite was accepted Kildonan's southern boundary shrank to McAdam Avenue west of McGregor Street.

Kildonan split into East and West Kildonan in 1914, with the Red River being the main division between the two areas. Finally, the northern part of West Kildonan separated from West Kildonan in 1921 and was called Old Kildonan.

By 1920, Old Kildonan was made up of 5,280 acres with 35 miles of roads. Old Kildonan's first reeve, and also one of its longest-serving officials, was R. W. Toshack, who served as reeve until 1936.

Old Kildonan's separation from West Kildonan created two municipalities whose social compositions differed greatly. Old Kildonan was mainly a rural area while West Kildonan could be classed as an urban area.

The population of Old Kildonan in 1926 was 451 people. In 1961 its population had reached 1,327. Now, Old Kildonan is experiencing a population boom because of housing developments. At the end of 1971 it was estimated that the population was 3,500 people.

Almost all the original Selkirk settlers in the area of Kildonan were Scottish and the main religion was Presbyterian. The population was still predominantly of Scottish origin by 1881, but residents of English origin made up more than one-fifth of the Kildonan population. By 1901 the residents of Scottish origin were no longer the majority of the area, but they did form the largest minority, representing approximately 40 per cent of the area's population.

The residents of English origin became the biggest minority in 1911 with approximately 40 per cent of the population; the Scottish representation had dropped to approximately 20 per cent.

Winnipeg's economic and population boom of the early 1900s had a great effect on the ethnic makeup of what was to become Old Kildonan. Two major impacts on the area were the establishment of market gardens north of Jefferson Avenue and the building in 1906, by the Winnipeg Electric Street Car Railway Company, of its major carhouses at the corner of McAdams Avenue and Main Street.

The gardens provided work for European immigrants, many of whom settled in the area. Establishment of the carhouses allowed many workers to settle in the area. Also, the streetcars provided cheap transportation so people were able to commute to work in the City of Winnipeg.

These factors changed the ethnic characteristics of the area. By 1951 the combined proportions of the people with English and with Scottish origins was 39 per cent. (In 1911 it was approximately 60 per cent.) This decreased to approximately 32 per cent in 1961.

By 1951 the area had taken a European flavor. Residents of Ukrainian descent represented approximately 29 per cent of Old Kildonan's population. This dropped to approximately 24 per cent by 1961. During the same period, 1931-1961, the proportion of people of German descent had increased to 15 per cent from eight per cent.

Old Kildonan came under Metro in 1964 but during the seven years Metro served the area, Old Kildonan continually threatened to quit.

One of the first controversies between Old Kildonan and Metro centred around the garbage dump in Old Kildonan which was being used by West Kildonan. In 1965 Mayor Blechner and his council made an agreement with the West Kildonan council allowing West Kildonan to dump garbage on the Old Kildonan property.

The next year's Old Kildonan council under Mayor John Pickley opposed the agreement but Metro approved the plan. The dump is still being used by the two areas.

Old Kildonan has also been unhappy with Metro's refusal to run buses in the area. Metro's position is that the area's population is too small to justify the service. Old Kildonan, however, did get some transit rebate from Metro.



MAYOR FERRIER

THE FINAL COUNCIL

Old Kildonan municipal council, which ends its term of office today, was made up of five members.

The final council's members are:

- Mayor Charles W. Ferrier
- Coun. Joseph Rozmus
- Coun. Alfred Jarvis
- Coun. W. Murray White-way
- Coun. George Strelein.

Further complications between the two councils were created by Metro's sewage disposal systems plant in Old Kildonan. In 1968, Old Kildonan Mayor Charles Ferrier gave his view of how Metro was treating his municipality: "We have had the course, the complete, filthy, dirty, rotten, slimy course," he said.

At that time, Mayor Ferrier complained that the presence of the sewage plant prevented further development in the area. Metro gave the municipality a tax cut of \$25,000 to compensate for the plant.

The biggest development project in the last few years in Old Kildonan is the \$144 million project by BACM Ltd. The first phase of the Maples housing development was started in 1970 and it contains more than 300 homes. In 1971, Metro's planning committee approved BACM Ltd.'s request to sub-divide land for an extension of the development.

Old Kildonan wasn't happy in joining Metro and

it was opposed to joining the new central city. The municipality's brief to the local government boundaries commission said rising municipal costs are directly related to involvement with larger governmental bodies and because of this it didn't want any change in Old Kildonan's boundaries.

The brief went on, "Amalgamation with an area with whom we have much in common, such as West St. Paul, makes sense — but not with West Kildonan or Winnipeg.

"Winnipeg is a product of its time. Nature must run its course. We are building a new city. Don't make us part of the old."

The chief elected officials during Old Kildonan's existence were: R. W. Toshack, 1921-1936; H. W. Swales, 1936-1950; D. F. Christie, 1950-1954; Samuel Bondar, 1954-1959; 1964-1965; J. S. Blechner, 1959-1964, 1965-1966; John Pickley, 1966-1968; Charles Ferrier, 1968-1971.

Old Kildonan's last mayor will be Mayor Ferrier.



Seven Oaks House, West Kildonan's municipal museum, was completed in 1853. It was renovated and opened as a museum in 1958. The house is located on Rupertsland Avenue east of Main Street.

West Kildonan, Scotland Linked With 1,300-Year-Old Name

By MICHAEL O'SHAUGHNESSY

One of the chief fears of the central city concept among the municipalities of Greater Winnipeg has been that they would lose their identities.

This need not be so in West Kildonan, for its absorption next week into the new, enlarged City of Winnipeg will be just one of many shifts and changes that have failed to bury the name since it was first chronicled more than 1,300 years ago.

It all began late in the sixth century when a gentleman by the name of Donnan landed on the shores of Scotland — from where no one seems to know. He was later to become St. Donnan. From that point, the name found permanent roots in the naming of the parish of Kildonan in Sutherlandshire. How the name evolved to that state is also a mystery but from that point the changes become clear.

The name came to Canada in 1812 with the fifth Earl of Douglas, better known as Lord Selkirk, and the first white settlers of the prairies. It was bestowed on the area north of Fort Douglas along both sides of the Red River by the earl himself in 1816, shortly after the battle of Seven Oaks.

The settlers of Kildonan were not from the first group, which left Scotland in 1811, but among a third group, which arrived June 21, 1814, — composed mainly of evicted crofters from Kildonan in Sutherlandshire.

Kildonan was first incorporated as the municipality of Kildonan-St. John's in

1876. It was an amalgamation of the parishes of Kildonan and St. John's — the result of a petition of at least two-thirds of its citizens.

In 1880, a provincial act was passed dividing the land around Winnipeg into three municipalities — Assiniboia, St. Boniface and Kildonan.

The first boundary, in 1876, was along what now is Aberdeen Avenue. This was later pushed back to Inkster and, finally, with the city of Winnipeg growing and needing more land, it settled along McAdam and Matheson avenues.

The northern half of Elmwood was part of Kildonan in 1876 and, in 1895, the southern portion successfully petitioned the provincial government to separate from St. Boniface and join with Kildonan. It wasn't to last, however.

Elmwood residents went petitioning again in 1906 and made themselves a part of Winnipeg in order to avail themselves of a higher standard of public utilities.

It was a similar petition that moved the Kildonan boundary to its present

southern limits in 1906 and for similar reasons.

It wasn't until 1914 that the area was split into East and West Kildonan with the Red River as the dividing line.

The present boundaries were made final in 1921, when Old Kildonan separated from West Kildonan. North Kildonan was formed three years later, by a similar process, out of East Kildonan.

The final move — until now, that is — occurred in 1961, when the City of West Kildonan was incorporated.

The story of what is known as "the massacre of Seven Oaks" has no doubt been slanted by prejudicial writing of settlers of the time but, nonetheless, Governor Robert Semple and 20 of his men from the colony of Red River did meet their deaths June 19, 1816, at the hands of a band of Nor'Westers.

How many of the attackers actually were in the direct employ of the North West Company is uncertain. However, it was not "a massacre" since Governor Semple and 32 of his men had ridden out to meet "the enemy" at Seven Oaks. At 5 p.m. that day, 11 men struggled back to the fort.

A monument to the men who fell that day stands on Main Street at Seven Oaks Place, in an area in which buildings from the early settlements remain.

Among them is Seven Oaks House, West Kildonan's municipal museum, which takes visitors back to life on the Red River 120 years ago.

Neglected for many years, the building was renovated and opened as a museum in 1958. Most of the work on the former home of

John Inkster was done by William Prins, who also remodelled Rose Cottage on Leila Avenue, built by pioneer settler James Fraser.

Seven Oaks House had been completed by John Inkster in 1853, built of hand-prepared spruce lumber and oak logs.

Inkster came to Canada to work for the Hudson's Bay Company but terminated his contract, married the daughter of the company's governor and took up farming. He opened a store and a post office, which is still standing on Seven Oaks Place off Main Street.

One of his nine children was Colin, who for 51 years was high sheriff of the province and later of the eastern judicial district. For 60 years, he was rector of the wardens of St. John's Cathedral and was a member of St. John's College council from its inception to 1925. He was also a member of



MAYOR YANOFSKY

the Manitoba Upper Chamber in the provincial government. It was his deciding vote in 1876 which abolished the upper chamber.

In the 57 years since West Kildonan was first incorporated as a rural municipality, the local council has been led by nine different men.

The first was Reeve Edmund Partridge, who led the council from 1914 to 1918, in 1924 and from 1926 to 1945. Charles A. Tanner held the reeve's office from 1920 to 1923 and G. R. Davidson was in the chair in 1925. Cecil J. Lyon was the first mayor, from 1946 to 1951. J. F. Partridge, son of the first reeve, was mayor in 1952 and 1953, and A. E. (Art) Wright held the post from 1954 to 1957. Then came C. N. Kushner from 1958 to 1967, Saul Miller, now Manitoba's colleges and university affairs minister, from 1967 to 1969, and D. A. (Abe) Yanofsky from 1969 to the present.

The present West Kildonan city council was opposed almost unanimously to the central city plan. When it became clear that the plan would be put into effect, the council expressed its desire for a gradual change with a long transitional period.

Now that the plan has been adopted, however, Mayor Yanofsky, who was



elected to the new government from a West Kildonan ward, has hopes that the plan will succeed.

He is concerned mainly with the community committee concept, which he feels could be the "spark-plug to build up area identity."

"I hope it will create greater citizen participation," the mayor said of the community committee concept. "If so, it will mean a strengthening of the community... if it is left up to us (the area councillors), the community's identity will never fade away."

One of the ways in which the identity of West Kildonan may remain strong is in the continued growth and success of events such as Seven Oaks Days.

This annual summer attraction will need greater involvement on the part of residents, however, as there will no longer be a large council to handle details.

Mayor Yanofsky said an allowance for the financing of the event has already been included in 1972 budget estimates, and he expressed hope that area service and community clubs would step into the breach to handle the organizational end of things.

The citizen involvement is both the key to the success of the new government and to retaining the identity of West Kildonan, said the mayor.



The Winnipeg Civic Centre on Main Street and William Avenue which will be the headquarters of Greater Winnipeg's new central city council. The council's inaugural meeting will be held here at 2 p.m. Tuesday.

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