



## **STREET PILLARS**

### **HELMSDALE AVENUE AT HENDERSON HIGHWAY**

City of Winnipeg  
Historical Buildings Committee  
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October 2013

## **STREET PILLARS – HELMSDALE AVENUE AT HENDERSON HIGHWAY**

The area on the east side of the Red River north of its confluence with the Assiniboine River was originally used by small groups of First Nation people, utilizing the fuel, plants and animals near the banks and its fish as part of their seasonal migration throughout the territory. The occupation of the west banks by the Selkirk Settlers beginning in 1812 marked the start of the permanent, agrarian-based settlement of the region. Some of the offspring of the original settlers, looking for property of their own, crossed the river and settled on the east side, farming and living on the long, thin strips of land known as river lots, each with river frontage (Plate 1) and stretching back beyond the Two-Mile Road (today's Gateway Road & Raleigh Street). Added to the offspring of the Selkirk Settlers were retiring fur trade employees and Métis families.

The first major change to this arrangement was the creation of the Province of Manitoba in 1870 and the subsequent organization of Municipalities. This area became the Municipality of Kildonan in 1876, taking the name of a Scottish parish from which many of the Selkirk Settlers had originated. It encompassed land on both sides of the river (Plate 2).

By the early 1900s, Kildonan, similar to Winnipeg and the surrounding communities, experienced a sometimes frantic growth phase that would last until World War I. This growth included all facets of life – new industries and businesses organized (Plate 3), old residential districts expanded and new districts were created and services, such as streetcars, began pushing further and further from the downtown. On the east side of the Red River in Kildonan, this expansion translated into a number of significant changes. The southern part of the Municipality became part of the City of Winnipeg as Ward 7 (Elmwood) in 1906. In 1912, part of the municipality became the Town of Transcona and in 1914, the Municipality of Kildonan was divided into the municipalities of East and West Kildonan with the Red River as the dividing line (Plate 4).

East Kildonan evolved into two disparate regions- the south saw increased residential and commercial development, taking on a more urban character, while in the north, the large tracts of farmland and market gardens continued, with little new development. As a result, in 1925, the

northern portion separated to form the Municipality of North Kildonan (the boundary was Oakland Avenue), after agreeing to pay \$80,000 as its share of the East Kildonan debt. The City of East Kildonan was incorporated in 1957 (Plates 5 & 6) with a population of approximately 20,000, making it the 6<sup>th</sup> largest city in Manitoba at the time.<sup>1</sup> It was the only suburban government that voted in favour of the Unicity amalgamation in 1972.

One of the earliest and most famous settlers in the Parish of Kildonan was John Sutherland (1821-1899) – Plate 7. Sutherland was born at Point Douglas, marrying in 1847 and having fourteen children, many would become influential in their own rights. John moved to River Lot 86 Kildonan after the 1852 flood, farming the land and operating a general store. He was a member of the Council of Assiniboia prior to the Riel Rebellion of 1869-1870, when he was appointed as one of the leaders of the loyalists. When Manitoba became a province, Sutherland was named its first High Sheriff and in 1871 became a Canadian Senator, holding this position until his death in 1899 at his Kildonan residence, “Bellevue House”.<sup>2</sup>

In 1906, a few local developers and land speculators moved to subdivide the agricultural tracts along the Red River on the east side, hoping that the industrial development in Elmwood would lead to heightened demand for residential property further north. These companies were also banking on streetcar lines being built on East Kildonan Road (today’s Henderson Highway).<sup>3</sup> One of Sutherland’s sons, Roderick Ross Sutherland,<sup>4</sup> placed an advertisement in the Manitoba Free Press announcing the creation of “Bellevue Place” a new subdivision located in his father’s Kildonan Property (Plate 8). It featured six blocks of residential lots to the north and south of the centre thoroughfare, Helmsdale Avenue. The street was named after the Village of Helmsdale, Kildonan Parish, County of Sutherland (or Sutherlandshire), Scotland, where many tenants

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<sup>1</sup> Manitoba Historical Society website, April 2013.

<sup>2</sup> J.P. Robertson, A Political Manual of the Province of Manitoba and the North-West Territories (Winnipeg, MB: The Call Printing Company, 1887), p. 119; F.H. Schofield, The Story of Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1913); and Pioneers and Early Citizens of Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB: Manitoba Library Association, 1971).

<sup>3</sup> The name change was approved by the Municipal Council in May 1928. Winnipeg Tribune, July 7, 1928, p. 16.

<sup>4</sup> The registered plan, No. 1173, included Sutherland’s partner’s name, Gudmundson Johnson, of whom nothing is known at this time.

farmers and their families – including Gunns, Mathesons, Mackays, MacBeths and Sutherlands – were forcibly resettled during the Highland Clearances of the 1810s.<sup>5</sup>

The subdivision certainly was not the early success that the developer hoped; the actual Bellevue House, located near the riverbank, was advertised for rent only a few months later, suggesting that the vacant lots nearby were not in high demand.<sup>6</sup> There is a reference to a house being built on Helmsdale Avenue in 1908 (#83 – Plate 9) and in late 1912, St. Stephen’s Anglican Church was built across East Kildonan Road (today’s Henderson Highway). In 1916, a six-room house on Helmsdale was advertised for rent for \$25/month. Services also came slowly to the area: some sewer lines were placed in the area in 1912 and in 1919 water mains were extended to Kildonan Drive.<sup>7</sup> It was not until the 1920s that this area really began to develop, a result of the post-War boom. In March of 1928, with dozens of comfortable new homes built and occupied, several citizens attended a Rural Municipality of East Kildonan Council meeting asking for improvements to Helmsdale Avenue including boulevarding and two pillars at the east end of the street at the main road.<sup>8</sup> Although no report on the actual construction of the pillars has been found to date, it is assumed they were built during the 1928 construction year.

## **STYLE**

These are modest, understated pillars with little architectural detailing.

## **CONSTRUCTION**

The two pillars were built of red brick and were placed on a bulky, raised concrete base. A flat concrete cap finished the pillars.

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<sup>5</sup> See Village of Helmsdale, Scotland website, [www.helmsdale.org/highland-clearances](http://www.helmsdale.org/highland-clearances), 2007; and [www.redriverancestry.ca/GUNN-JOHN-1791.php](http://www.redriverancestry.ca/GUNN-JOHN-1791.php), 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Manitoba Free Press, June 9, 1906, p. 43.

<sup>7</sup> Manitoba Free Press, various dates, 1910-1930.

<sup>8</sup> Rural Municipality of East Kildonan Council Minutes, March 19, 1928, p. 2. The delegates were D. Reid, C.W. Laidlaw, M. McInnes and S. Newton.

**DESIGN**

The Helmsdale Avenue Pillar features an inset panel on their Henderson Highway fronts (east facing) – Plate 10. All four faces bear brick diamonds, located approximately three-quarters of the way up (Plate 11). The concrete caps includes the words “HENDERSON” carved in the east sides and “HELMSDALE” on the north side of the cap of the south pillar and the south side of the north pillar (Plate 12).

They were built larger and slightly more ornate than the pillars at Hazel Dell Avenue three blocks north on Henderson Highway (date of construction unknown), of which only one remains (Plate 13).

**INTERIOR**

N/A

**INTEGRITY**

The pillars stand on their original locations, are in good structural condition and have not suffered major alteration.

**STREETSCAPE**

The pillars mark the intersection of Henderson Highway and Helmsdale Avenue and mark the beginning of the modest subdivision west of the highway.

**ARCHITECT/CONTRACTORS**

It is unknown at this time who designed and built these pillars.

## PERSON/INSTITUTION

Original developer of the Helmsdale subdivision was Roderick Ross Sutherland, 1862-1945 (Plate 14), who was born at the Bellevue House, Kildonan and graduated from the University of Manitoba in 1884. He was called to the Manitoba Bar in 1886 and was a distinguished lawyer in the City for over 25 years. He built and lived in a fine home at 135 Middle Gate (Plate 15), remaining there until he moved to Victoria, B.C. in 1912 where he died in 1945.<sup>9</sup>

The development of the Hazel Dell Avenue area continued slowly into the 1930s (Plate 16), as illustrated by an advertisement in a local newspaper describing blocks of acreage on Helmsdale Avenue up for tax sale “ideal for market gardens or chicken ranches.”<sup>10</sup> Most of the construction of houses west of Henderson Highway was completed by 1945, although some construction continued to occur into the 1970s.

## EVENT

There is no known event connected with these pillars.

## CONTEXT

The pillars at Helmsdale Avenue, built just prior to the Great Depression, are one of several examples of this type of ornamental construction meant to add visibility and prestige to subdivisions in East Kildonan and elsewhere in the city.

The City has recognized their importance as a building type by designating three gates:

- Armstrong’s Point Gates, East Gate, Middle Gate and West Gate @ Cornish Avenue: built in 1911 and designed by H.N. Ruttan, these stone and iron gates mark the entrance to Armstrong’s Point, one of the City’s most exclusive residential districts of the pre-1915 era (Plate 17);

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<sup>9</sup> “Memorable Manitobans,” Manitoba Historical Society website, 2011.

<sup>10</sup> Manitoba Free Press, May 10, 1930, p. 46.

- Nanton Estate Gates, 229 Roslyn Road: these stone and wrought iron gates were built in 1900, designed by J.H.G. Russell for Sir Augustus M. Nanton, influential businessman as the entrance to his two-hectare estate and mansion (Plate 18); and
- Silver Heights Gates, Mount Royal Road at Traill Avenue: designed by William D. Lount in 1950-1951 to mark the southern entrance to his father's new residential sub-division, Silver Heights, these modern gates are built of brick with wrought iron accenting and a concrete canopy (Plate 19).

## **LANDMARK**

These markers are placed on a busy corner of Henderson Highway and would be familiar in the neighbourhood.

# STREET PILLARS – HELMSDALE AVENUE AT HENDERSON HIGHWAY

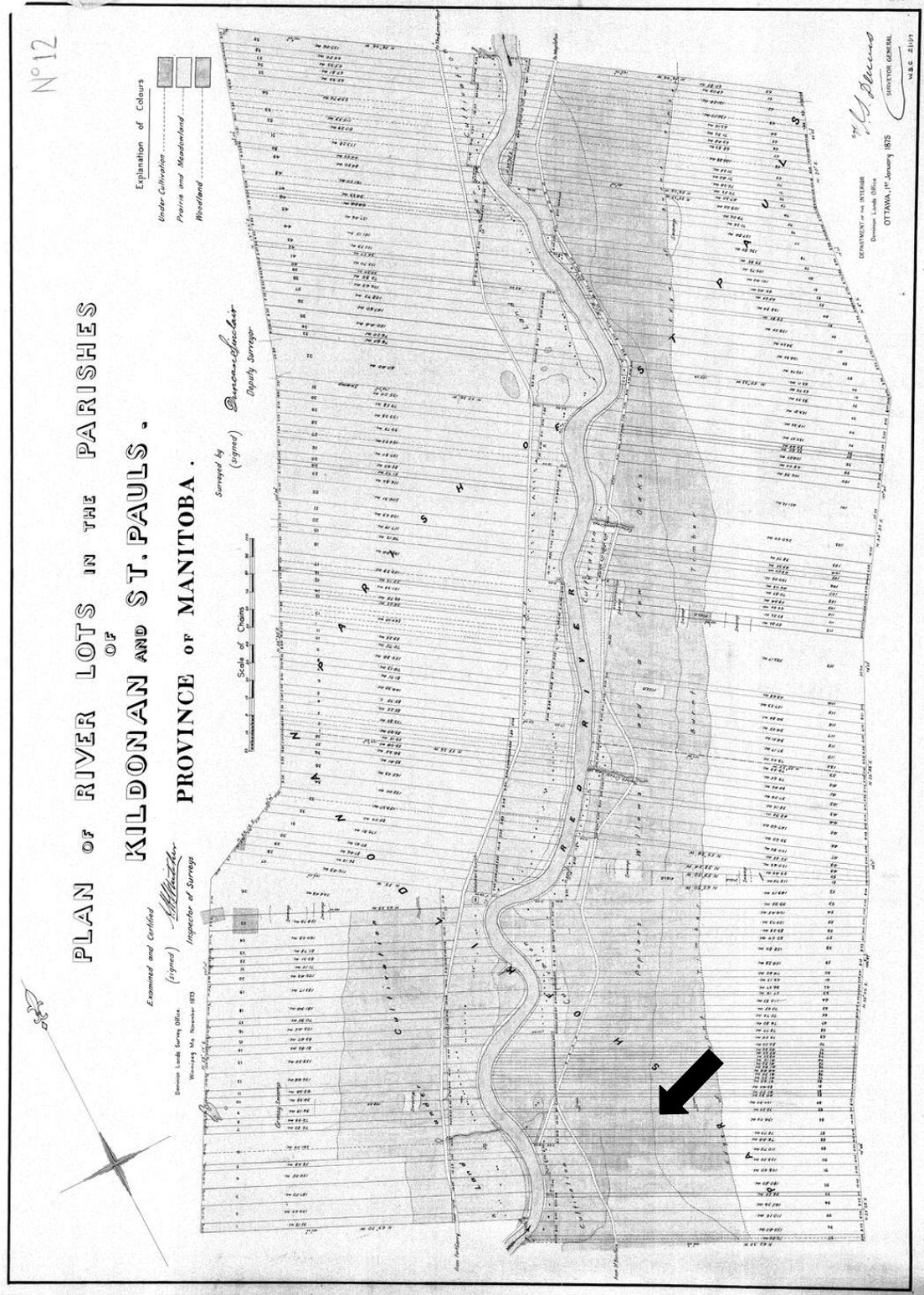


Plate 1 – Parish of Kildonan, 18. John Sutherland property, Lot 86 Kildonan (present-day Helmsdale Avenue) at arrow. (Courtesy of the City of Winnipeg.)

**STREET PILLARS – HELMSDALE AVENUE AT HENDERSON HIGHWAY**

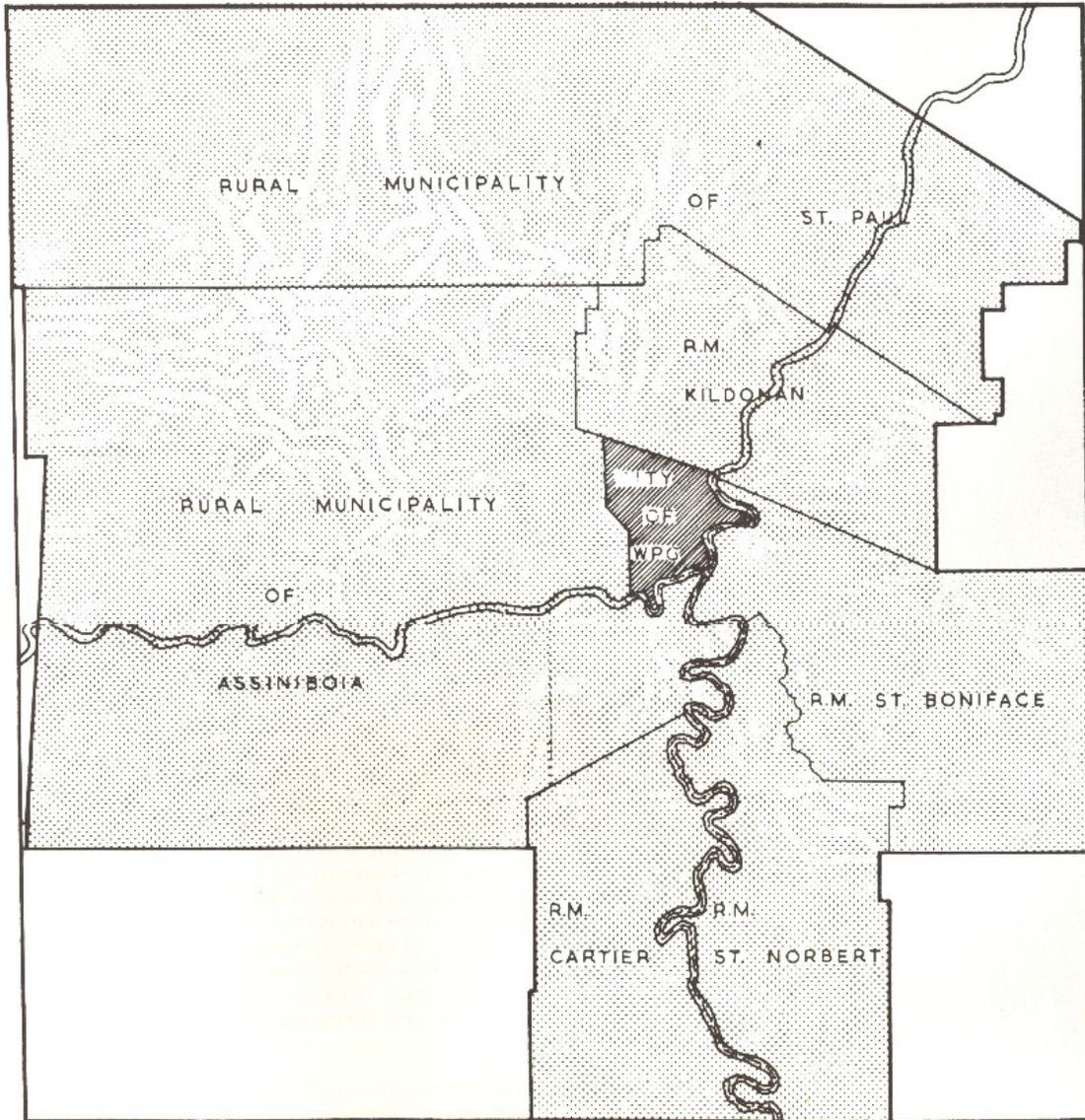


Plate 2 – The municipalities around the City of Winnipeg as they appeared in 1880. (City of Winnipeg.)

**STREET PILLARS – HELMSDALE AVENUE AT HENDERSON HIGHWAY**

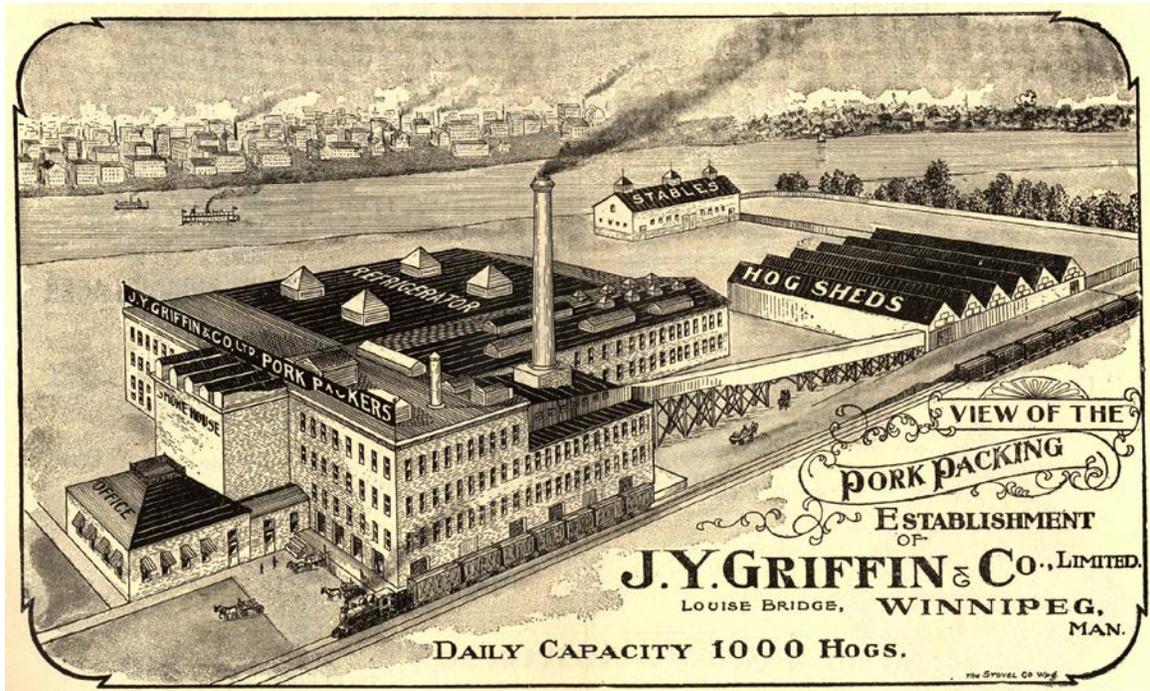


Plate 3 – The J.Y. Griffin & Company Meat Packing Plant, Red River at the Louise Bridge, ca.1900. The plant, located on 1.6 hectares of land, was built in 1892 and expanded several times. It provided permanent work for many people on the east side of the Red River. (City of Winnipeg.)

**STREET PILLARS – HELMSDALE AVENUE AT HENDERSON HIGHWAY**

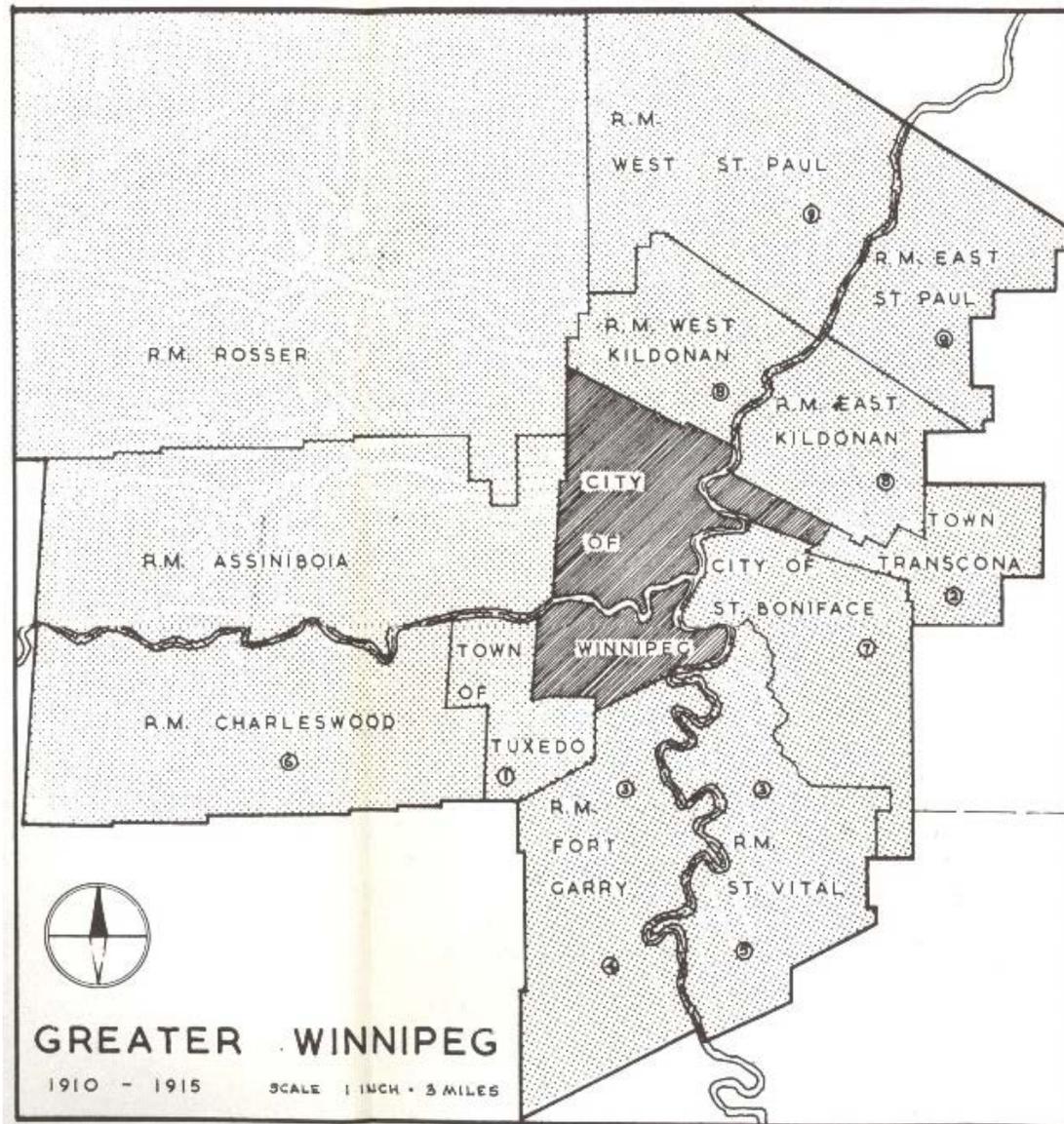


Plate 4 – The municipalities around the City of Winnipeg as they changed between 1910 and 1915. (City of Winnipeg.)

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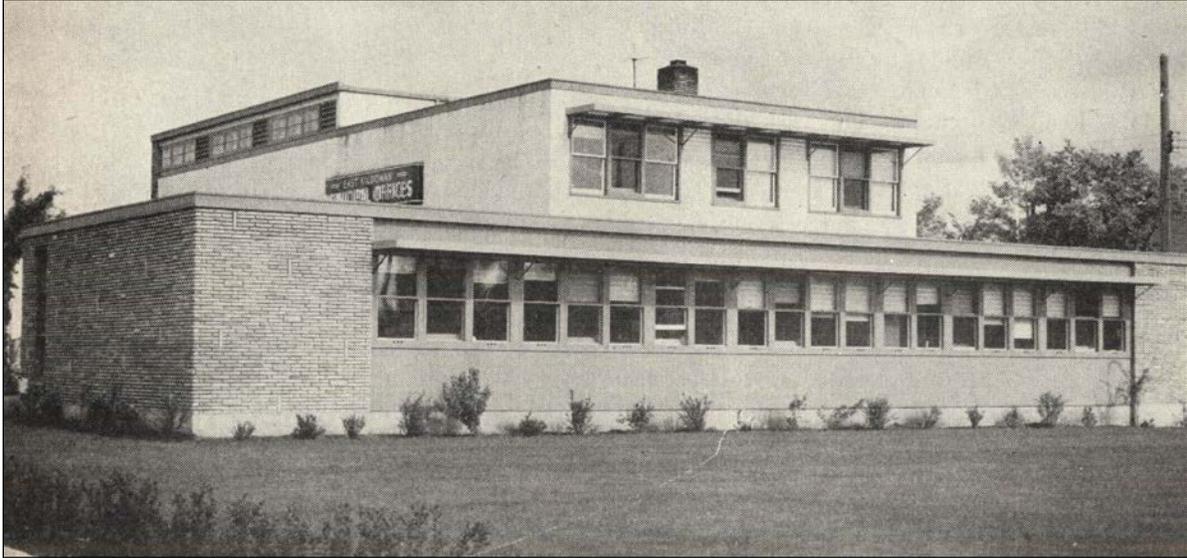


Plate 5 – East Kildonan Civic Offices, Henderson Highway at Kimberly Avenue, shortly after opening in 1957, demolished 2010. (City of Winnipeg.)



Plate 6 – Former East Kildonan Civic Offices (East Kildonan-Transcona Community Office), 755 Henderson Highway, shortly before demolition, 2009. (M. Peterson, 2009.)

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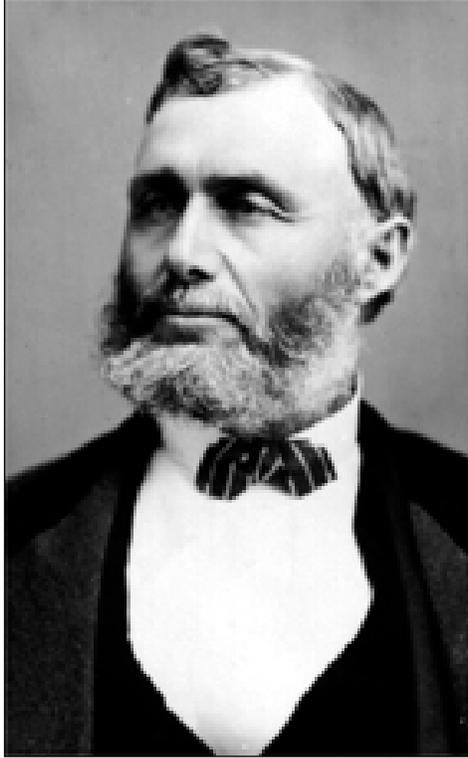


Plate 7 – The Honourable John Sutherland, no date. (Courtesy of the Library and Archives of Canada, PA 033728.)

# STREET PILLARS - HELMSDALE AVENUE AT HENDERSON HIGHWAY

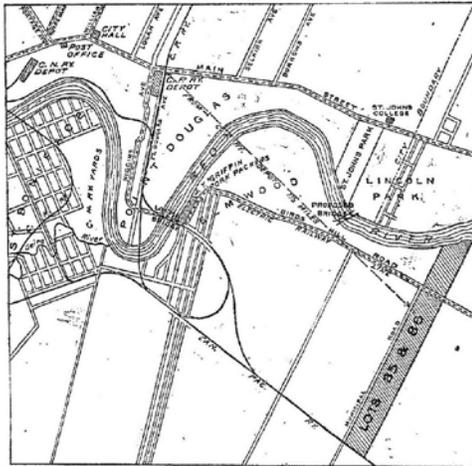
MANITOBA FREE PRESS, WINNIPEG, SATURDAY, MARCH 24, 1906.

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## BELLEVUE PLACE

The Beautiful Suburban Property Belonging to the Estate of the Late Senator Sutherland, in Kildonan

A Rare Opportunity for Persons Desiring Beautiful Suburban Building Sites or Market Gardens, Also River or Track Frontage



THIS property is situate just outside the City limits as shown by the accompanying plan and is only one and a half miles from the Canadian Pacific Ry. Station having the Electric Street railway line running through the centre of the property, giving a half hour service and being only twenty minutes run from centre of the city. Sidewalk from the City is laid through property.

This property has a magnificent river frontage covered with large oak, elm and hardwood trees and about half of the property is well-treed and the balance under cultivation. All the lots are high and dry and they are situate in a district which is being rapidly built up. The proposed North End bridge will make the property as desirable for residences as anywhere in the city. This property is situate close to schools and churches and no richer market garden land is found in Manitoba.

The building lots have each 50 ft. frontage, facing on wide streets and having a depth of from 130 to 140 feet to a lane, and half the property is subdivided into blocks of about one acre in extent, or a person can secure six to eight acres in one block.

### Offers Will Be Received Up To and Including April 10 Next

Offers to be made either for cash, or one quarter cash and the balance in three equal annual payments with interest at 6 p.c. Offers can be made for the whole property or any single lot or block. All offers to be addressed to the undersigned executor of the said estate who will be pleased to furnish full information to any person interested.

**R. Ross Sutherland**  
416 McINTYRE BLK.  
WINNIPEG - - - MANITOBA

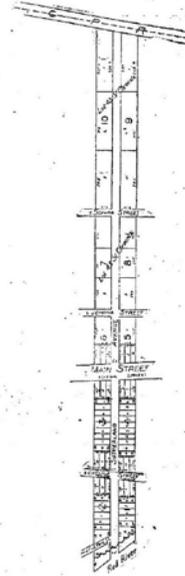
### Best Hotel Site in Winnipeg

In Block Adjoining C.P.R. Station Cor. Main St. and Henry Ave.

Having a frontage of 66 ft. on Main, by 126 ft. on Henry. Present rental of stores, etc., on the premises will not be less than 5 per cent. on the selling price, after payment of taxes, insurance, etc.  
For price and terms apply to R. ROSS SUTHERLAND, McIntyre Block.

### Town Lots

In the Heart of the Rapidly Growing Town of Selkirk  
As shown in this plan—



The Electric Railway line between Winnipeg and Selkirk has given a great impetus to building operations in the beautiful town of Selkirk, which in 25 years time will likely become a part of Winnipeg. This property is in the centre of the town, having a fine river frontage. Lots average 50 ft. x 140 ft. and part is in acre to five acre plots. \$50 cash and monthly payments of \$3 each will secure these lots at low figures. Apply R. ROSS SUTHERLAND.

### Farm of 320 Acres

3 1/2 Miles from Brandon  
If sold within ten days only \$10 per acre, quarter cash, balance in three equal payments.

### Farm, 160 Acres

Improved, in Holland District  
Situate on Assiniboine River. If sold within 10 days \$1,800, \$500 cash and balance in three equal payments.

### Farm, 160 Acres

In Strathclair District  
A snap at \$2,000, only \$500 cash, balance to suit purchaser.

### Ranch

On Shores of Shoal Lake  
In Township 18, Rge. 2 W., nearly A MILE OF LAKE FRONT, good soil, excellent hay and pasture, only \$10 per acre, one \$750 cash.

### Some Choice Lots

At PONEMAH, WHYTEWOLD AND WHITEHAVEN BEACH on Lake Winnipeg

A few having lake frontage and well-treed. Prices from \$5 to \$8 per foot for water frontage, one-third cash and balance to suit purchasers.  
For full particulars and terms apply to R. ROSS SUTHERLAND, McIntyre Block.

Plate 8 - 1906 advertisement for "Bellevue Place." (Reproduced from Manitoba Free Press, March 24, 1906, p. 12.)

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Plate 9 – 83 Helmsdale Avenue, built in 1908, front (south) and east façades, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)

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Plate 10 – North pillar, Helmsdale Avenue at Henderson Highway, south and east sides, 2013.  
(M. Peterson, 2013.)

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Plate 11 – South pillar, Helmsdale Avenue at Henderson Highway, north and east sides, 2013.  
(M. Peterson, 2013.)

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Plate 12 – North pillar, Helmsdale Avenue at Henderson Highway, south and east sides, 2013.  
(M. Peterson, 2013.)

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Plate 13 – North pillar, Hazel Dell Avenue at Henderson Highway, south and east sides, 2013.  
(M. Peterson, 2013.)

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Plate 14 – R.R. Sutherland, ca.1902. (Reproduced from Representative Men of Manitoba (Winnipeg, MB: The Tribune Publishing Company, Winnipeg, 1902).)



Plate 15 – 135 Middle Gate, R.R. Sutherland House, 2004. (M. Peterson, 2004.)

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Plate 16 – Dates of construction for buildings in the Helmsdale Avenue neighbourhood. Note that the majority of houses built on both sides of Helmsdale were constructed prior to 1945, most prior to 1930 and only a handful prior to 1915. (City of Winnipeg.)

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Plate 17 – Armstrong’s Point Gates, West Gate and Cornish Avenue, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)



Plate 18 – Nanton Estate Gates, 229 Roslyn Road, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)

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Plate 19 – Silver Heights Gates, Mount Royal Road and Trill Avenue, 2013. (M. Peterson, 2013.)