A Predictive Study of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers Junction: A Pre-Impact Assessment of the Site of the Forks National Historic Park and the Proposed Provencher Bridge Realignment

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Introduction

This report outlines the potential for the discovery of heritage resources along the west bank of the Red River below The Forks in the area bounded on the north by Lombard Avenue, as far as Westbrooke Street (formerly Victoria Street), along Westbrooke to Water Avenue, then east to the Canadian National Railway low line, then south to a point opposite the place where Gilroy Street (formerly Christie Street) makes a right angled turn east to the Red River, and north along the river to the foot of Lombard Street (Figure 1). This report was prepared in anticipation of the proposed development of the Forks National Heritage Park located between the junction of the Red and Assiniboine rivers and Provencher Bridge and, also, in light of the proposed Provencher Bridge expansion and route realignment. The following report (1) outlines past land use in the study area from the Prehistoric Period until the present; (2) summarizes Parks Canada research at The Forks; and (3) summarizes the potential for the recovery of heritage resources. It will be shown that the research area was used primarily during the post-1880 period and that associated construction activities were usually accompanied by the deposition of fill over the area.

Past Land Use at The Forks

A detailed summary of historic land use at The Forks area has already been released by Parks Canada (Guinn 1980a, 1980b, 1980c), with a summary of the three reports contained in Priess et al. (1986). A second summary would not only be redundant but, in light of the research area in this report, unnecessary. Most of the documented land use at The Forks during the Historic Period has been centred in close proximity to the actual junction of the Red

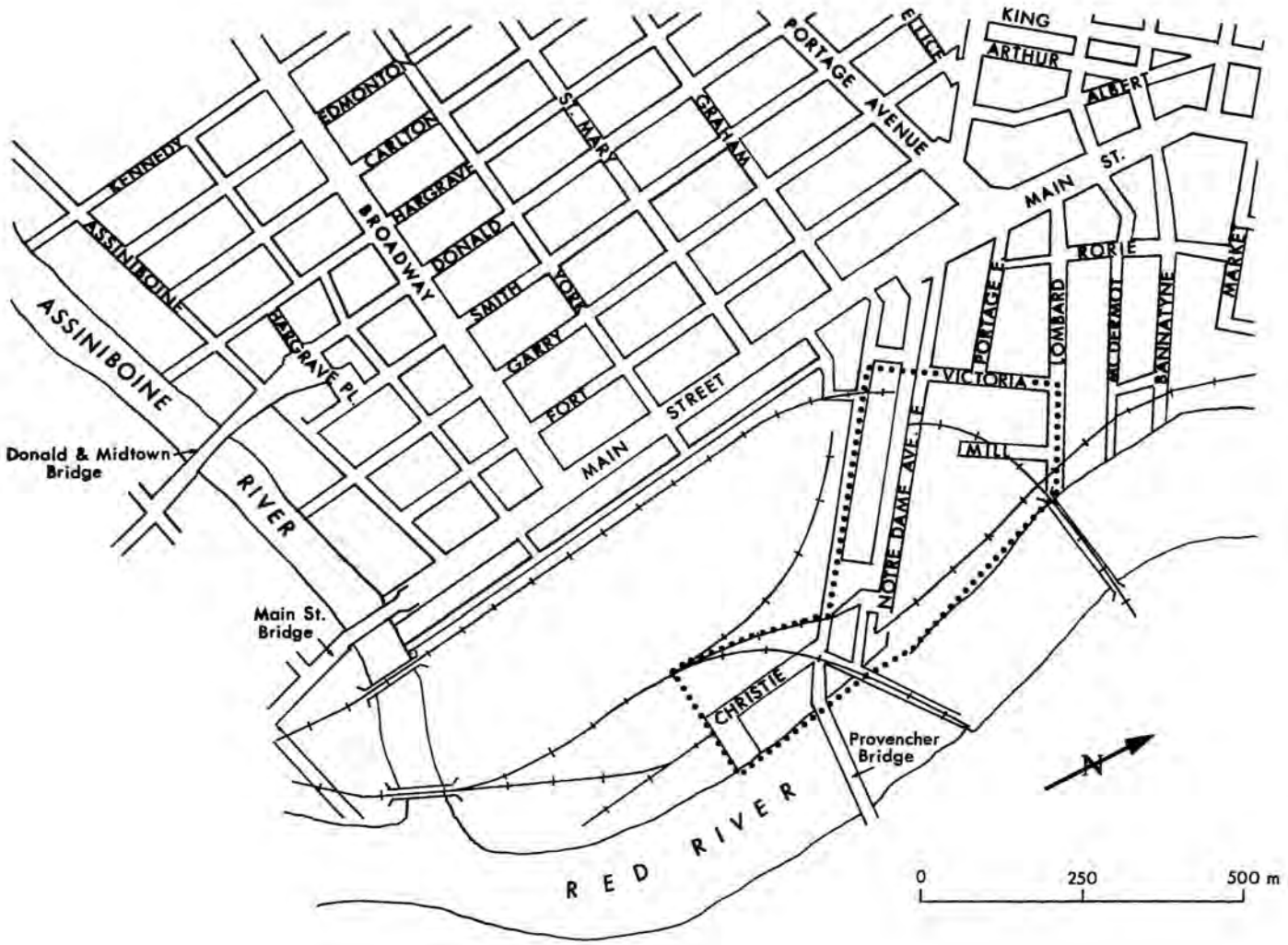

Figure 1. Location of Study Area.

and Assiniboine rivers. The area that contained all known trade posts, excluding Fort Rouge and Upper Fort Garry, measured a maximum distance of 200 m north of the Red-Assiniboine junction. The south boundary of the research area for this report lies approximately 450 m north of the junction.

Land Use During the Prehistoric Period

Kelly (1984) has predicted several potential land uses for the Forks area that include encampment, burial and war party (Figure 2). Kelly's model is based on ethno-historical accounts and, as such, is susceptible to the argument of whether the fur trade altered Native lifeways from that of prehistoric times. In addition, two of Kelly's potential land uses, encampment and war party, do not appear compatible. Kelly included the latter land use potential from an entry in John Tanner's journal which stated that "the mouth of the Assiniboine is a place much frequented by the Sioux [Dakota] war parties, where they lie concealed and fire upon such as are passing" (James 1956:39). The number of references by early fur traders to Native encampments at the Forks area would suggest that the incidence of concealed war parties was not that great and, therefore, that the major Prehistoric Period land use was encampment and burial. Of these, it is probable that encampment was the major activity. Most historical references place burials outside of the research area, either along Main Street between Graham and York avenues or on the south bank of the Assiniboine River at the Forks.

Based on the direct historical approach, it has been assumed that Native encampment was the main land use in the research area during the Prehistoric Period. Prehistoric use of the Forks region was given only brief consideration by Parks Canada researchers who, nevertheless, suggested that the junction area should contain prehistoric archaeological resources of

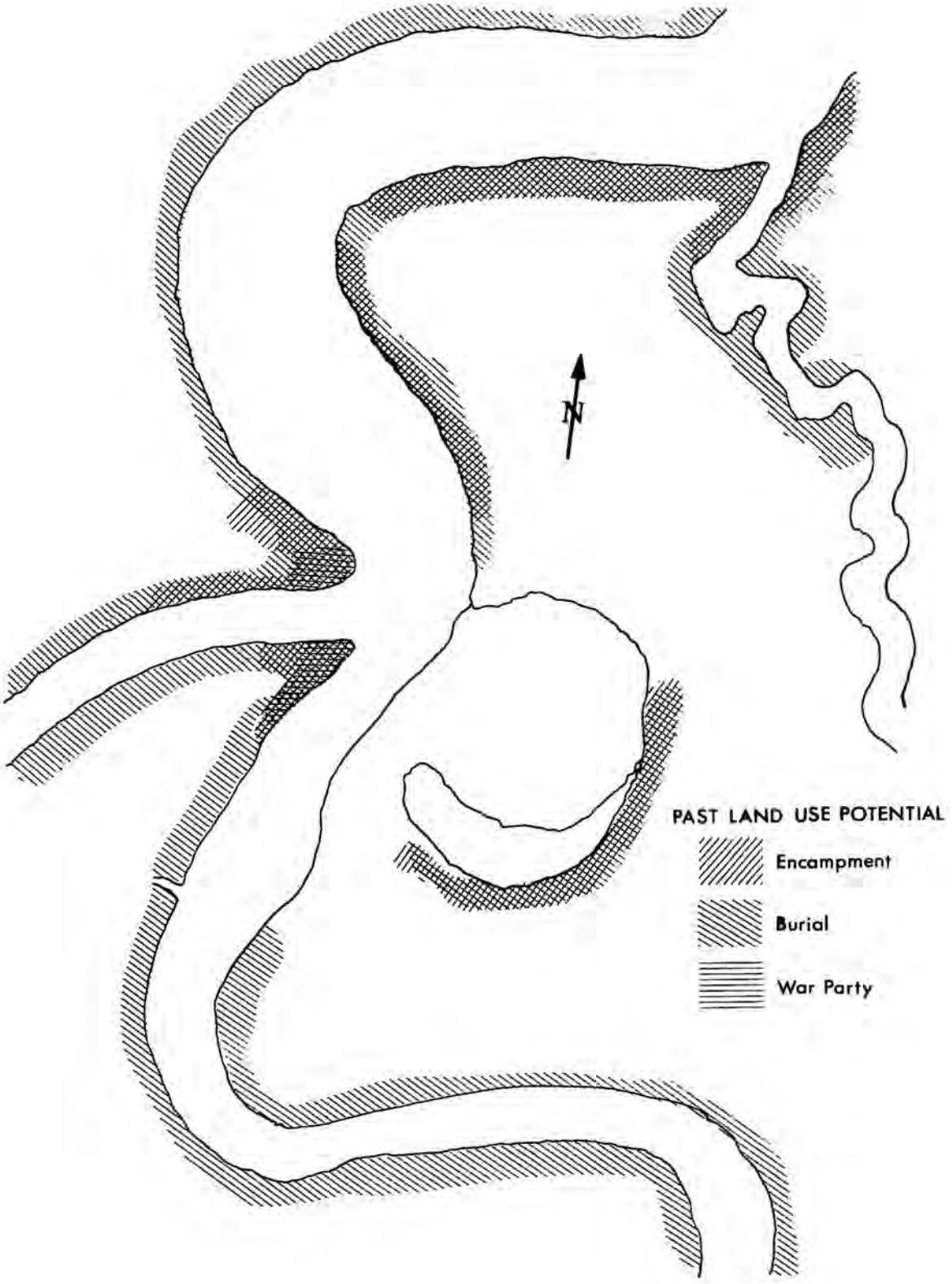

Figure 2. Distribution of Prehistoric Land Use Potential at The Forks Area (from Kelly 1984:32).

considerable depth or complexity (Priess et al. 1986:3). This suggestion was confirmed by Parks archaeologists who found and reported on Prehistoric Period remains during 1984 excavations at the planned site of the national park (Priess and Bradford 1985:33).

The most relevant consideration should be the approximate extent, both horizontally and vertically, of prehistoric sites. The Lockport Site can serve as an analagous example for comparison, as it appears to have been a major Native encampment for over 3000 years. The main portion of the Lockport Site is located on River Lot 165, Parish of St. Andrew, and extends approximately 100 m along the river frontage. The deepest unit excavated during the 1986 field season was 2.3 m below the surface. In the 1984 Selkirk and District Planning Area Archaeological Survey, a site was recorded on River Lots 161 and 162 (McLeod 1985:28). This site, containing Late Prehistoric materials, is possibly an extension of the Lockport Site, which would give it a horizontal width of 160 m. Other examples of river frontage distribution for prehistoric sites are those of the Larter and Overwater sites. The Larter Site is situated across River Lots 10 - 12 in the Parish of St. Andrew, while the Overwater Site is situated on River Lot 20. Recent evidence (McLeod 1986) has revealed prehistoric materials scattered across Lots 13 to 17. This distribution suggests that the Larter Site may extend along the river frontage for a distance of 900 m.

The area under consideration at The Forks is located about 450 m north of the junction. Therefore, the Lockport data would suggest that if materials were found at The Forks, the site would not extend into the research area. However, Larter Site data suggest that materials could extend from The Forks into the area presently under study. This suggestion presupposes that use of the Forks area would have been as frequent during the Prehistoric Period as in the Early Historic Period. It also assumes that land use at The Forks was of

the same scale or magnitude as that of the Lockport and Larter sites.

This overt stretch of inductive reasoning has suggested that because the Forks area was used for Native camps during the Early Historic Period, then the area was also used during the Prehistoric Period. Data from four sites were used to approximate the horizontal distribution of site materials and a range of 450 to 900 m was estimated. The area under discussion at The Forks extends from 450 to 1000 m north of the Red-Assiniboine junction. Depth of prehistoric materials could extend approximately 2 to 3 m below the original ground surface. A subsequent section of this report deals with land use activities that have altered the original ground surface.

Land Use during the Historic Period

Land use during the Historic period has been discussed extensively by Rodger Guinn. His manuscripts indicate that limited activity took place in the research area.

The earliest possible Historic Period occupations were likely the trading posts of either St. Pierre (1752-53), Boyer and Bruce (1781-82), John McDonnell (1793-94), Alexander Henry (1800-08), or Peter Fidler (1819-22). The exact locations of the first four posts are not known, but they have been placed in close proximity to The Forks (Guinn 1980c:233). Because their locations have not been pinpointed, the possibility exists that they may have been constructed in the research area. Bell (1927:28) placed Fidler's post between Pioneer Street and McDermot Avenue.

Following the amalgamation of the HBC and the NWC in 1821, there was a concentration of activity in the Forks area where Fort Gibraltar was improved and renamed Fort Garry. The 1826 flood caused a large amount of damage to this fort and would have certainly impacted the area north of The Forks. This

could have resulted in the destruction of structures, erosion of the river bank and the deposition of flood silts. The 1826 flood caused enough damage to necessitate the construction of a new fort complex, Lower Fort Garry, which was undertaken in 1834 in a downstream location. In 1836, the HBC began an experimental farm east of Upper Fort Garry on the west bank of the Red River. It is possibile that stables from this farm may have been constructed in the vicinity of the research area (Figure 3 and 4). The farm operated unsuccessfully until 1841 and, as of 1848, the stables were still standing. However, the 1852 flood may have removed any standing remnants of them.

The research area does not appear to have witnessed any major activity during the 1841 to 1870 period. Most activity was concentrated either at Upper Fort Garry or in the slowly forming town site north of the fort. When Manitoba joined Confederation in 1870, a large portion of the land surrounding Upper Fort Garry, 202.5 ha, was reserved for the HBC (Figure 5). The research area was included as a defined block within the reserve and remained largely untouched and undeveloped until the 1880s. Because this land was reserved and for a number of other reasons, the original city core was established north of the research region.

Four possible archaeological features dating to the post-1872 period may be located within the study area (Figure 6). The first site is that of a hospital (ca. 1872) which was moved from the original village core to a location along the west bank of the Red River. This structure was located along the southern edge of the study area. Also located in this vicinity is a possible feature associated with the ferry which connected St. Boniface to the main settlement by way of Provencher and Broadway avenues. The latter street extended to the Red River until 1908, when the Union Station was constructed. By 1884, the ferry had been replaced with a bridge. A third building complex

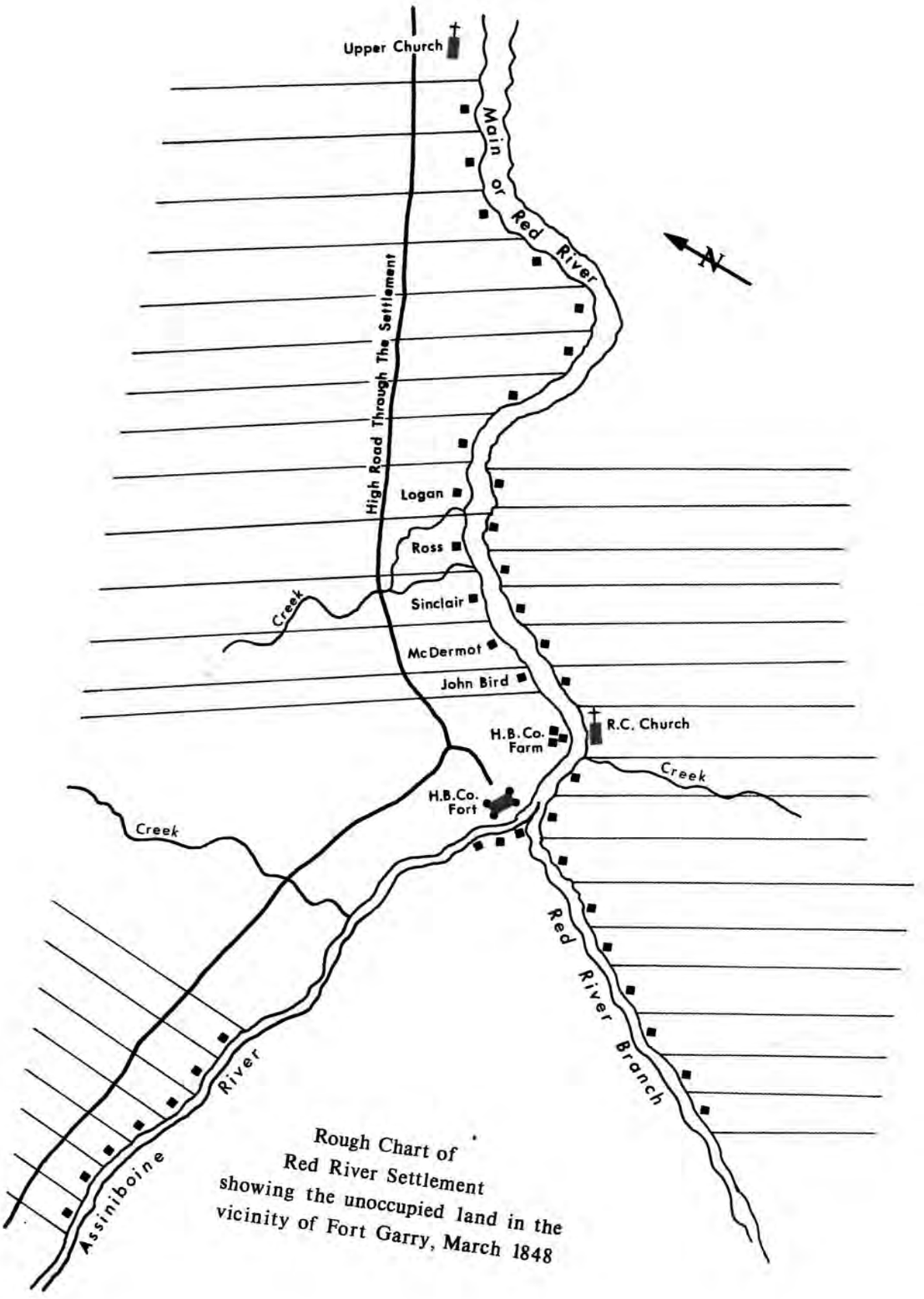

Figure 3. 1848 Map of the Forks Area Showing the HBC Experimental Farm (Courtesy H.B.C.A.)

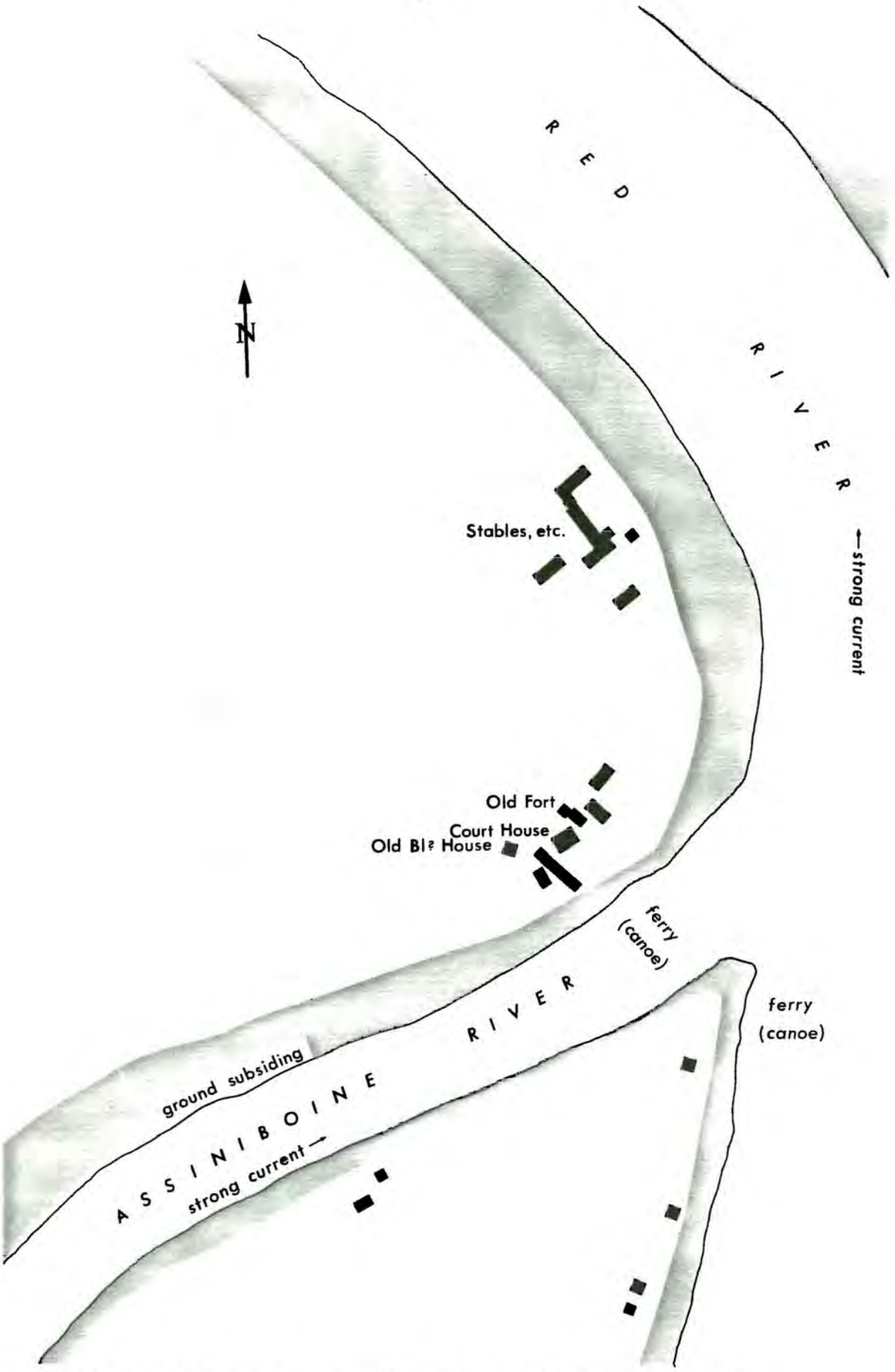

Figure 4. Enlargement of an 1848 Map Showing Location of HBC Experimental Farm Stables (Courtesy P.A.M.).

Figure 5. Extent of HBC Reserve (Courtesy P.A.C.).

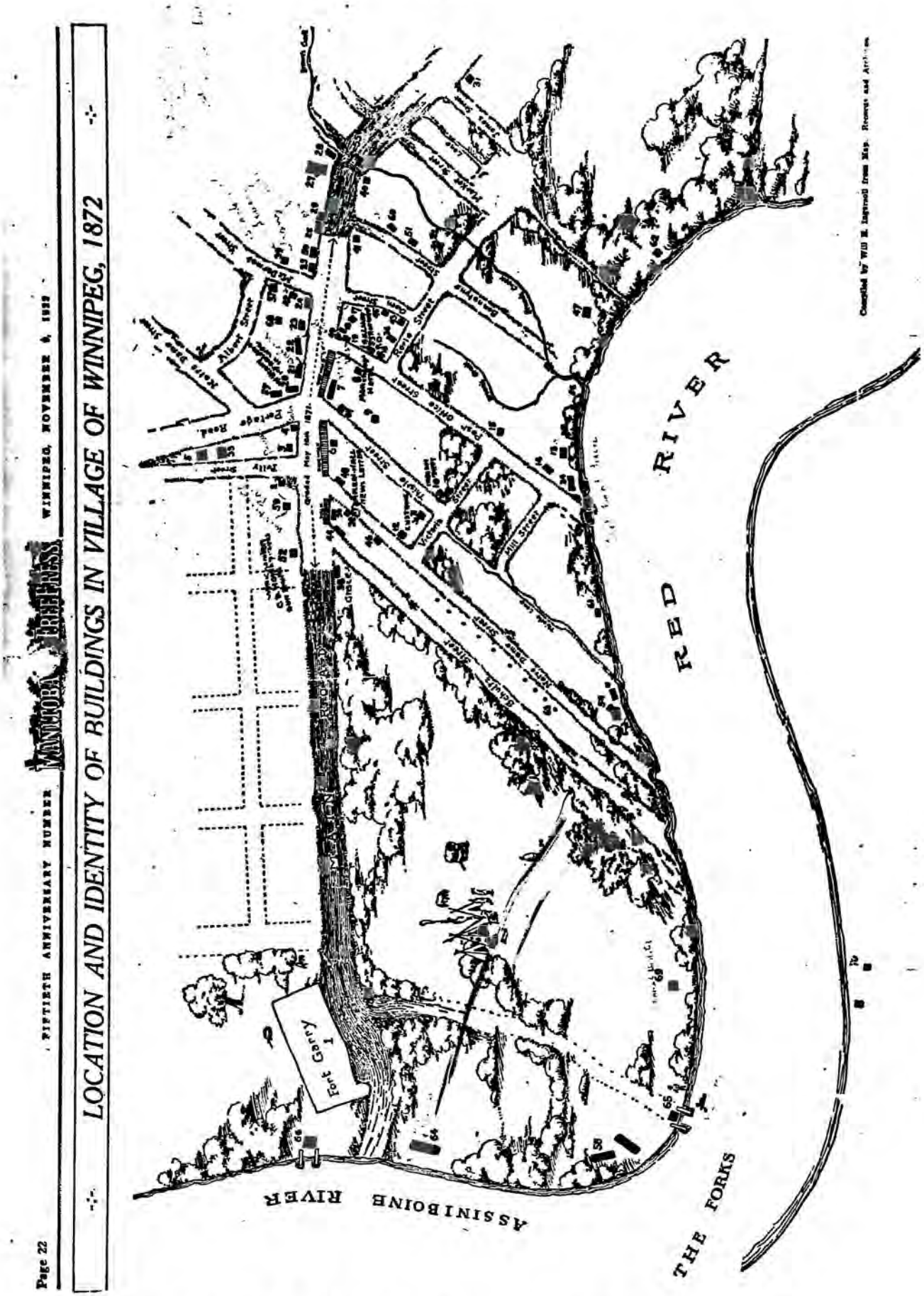

Figure 6. 1872 Map of the Forks Area Showing Extent of Winnipeg: Note Numbers 54, 61, 63, 65 and 69 (Courtesy P.A.M.).

was located on the north side of Notre Dame Street East and consisted of three structures associated with W.J. McAuley's lumbermill, men's boarding house and office. Located north of this complex was a single structure associated with Dick and Banning's sawmill.

By 1880, a series of mills were located between Notre Dame East and Lombard Avenue. In addition, a number of residences were constructed along Broadway Avenue (Figure 7). As well, early photographs of the 1880-81 period show shacks and shanties along the west bank of the Red River (Figure 8).

The first Fire Atlas for Winnipeg, compiled in 1885, does not cover the entire area under examination, but does show the nature and extent of the various mills in the northern portion of the study area (Figure 9-11). By 1885, the railroad had been constructed along the west boundary of the study area (Figure 12 and 13). Most associated railway buildings were constructed south and west of the particular area in question. Also by this time, there were additional houses along the north side of Water Street, extending to the south side of Notre Dame East (Figure 14 and 15).

The period of the post-1900s was associated with the greatest amount of development throughout the area and therefore the period during which the earlier sites were impacted to some degree. Records used for the post-1900 period include photographs and the Fire Atlases of 1917 and 1955.

A 1913 photograph shows extensive use of the west bank of the Red River for dock and wharf facilities, which extended along the river bank south and north of the Broadway-Provencher Bridge (Figure 16). This bridge was dismantled ca. 1920; however, the piers are still visible.

The 1917 and 1955 Fire Atlases show a number of structures throughout the area. Illustrated are copies of the 1955 Atlas which portray buildings in

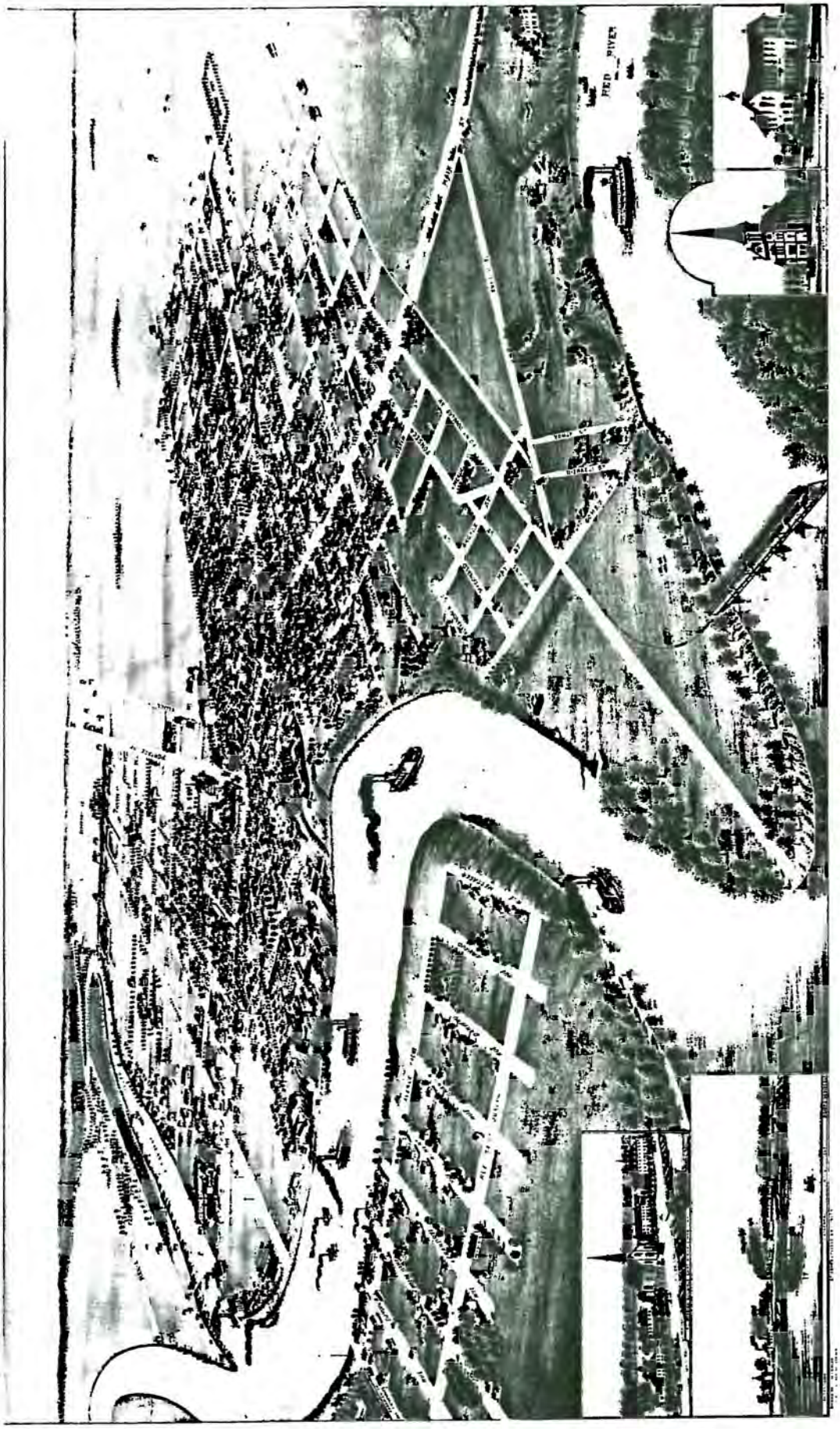

Figure 7. Bird's Eye View of Winnipeg, ca. 1880 (Courtesy P.A.M.).

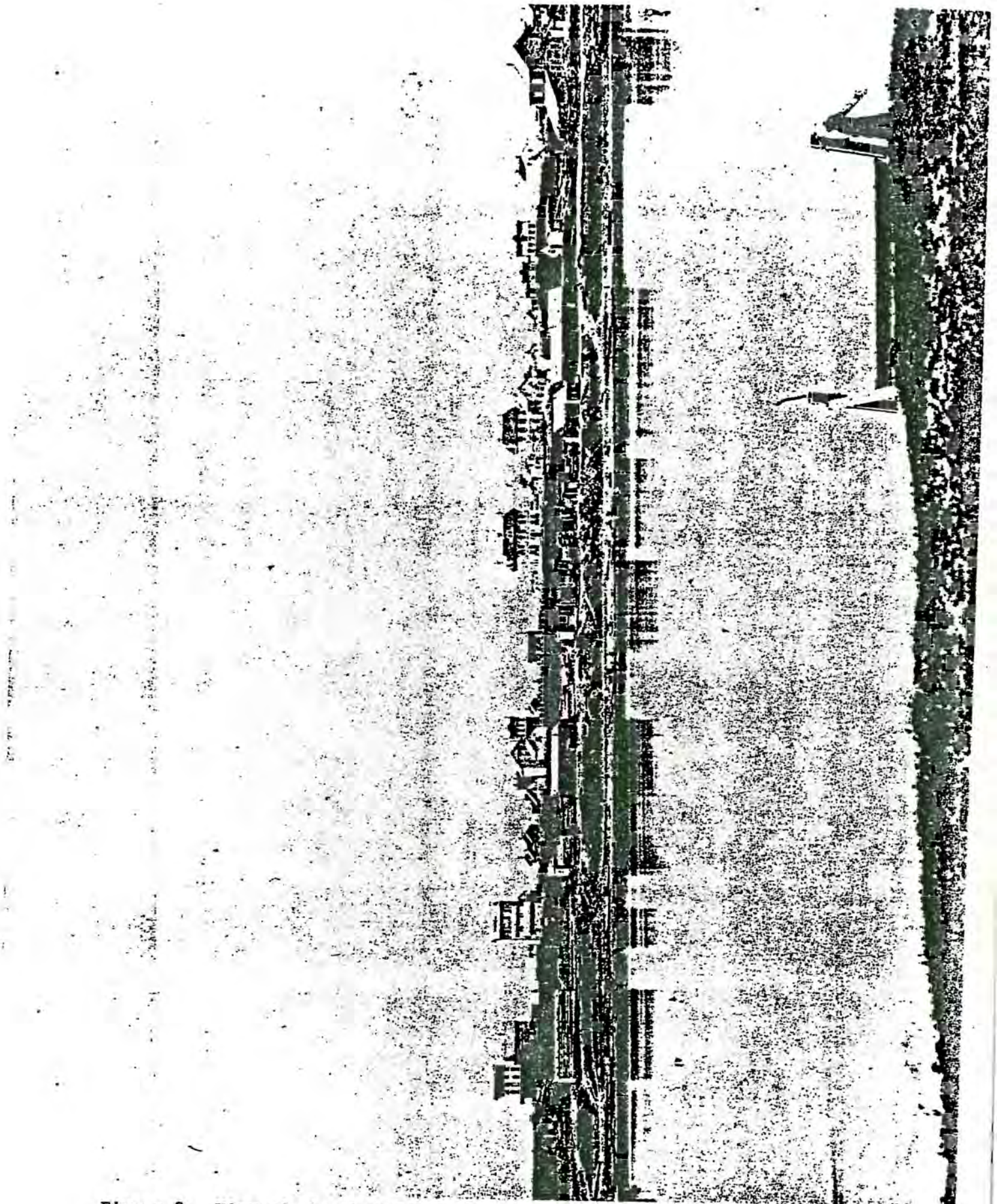

Figure 8. View of the West Bank of the Red River from St. Boniface, ca. 1880-81 (Courtesy P.A.M.).

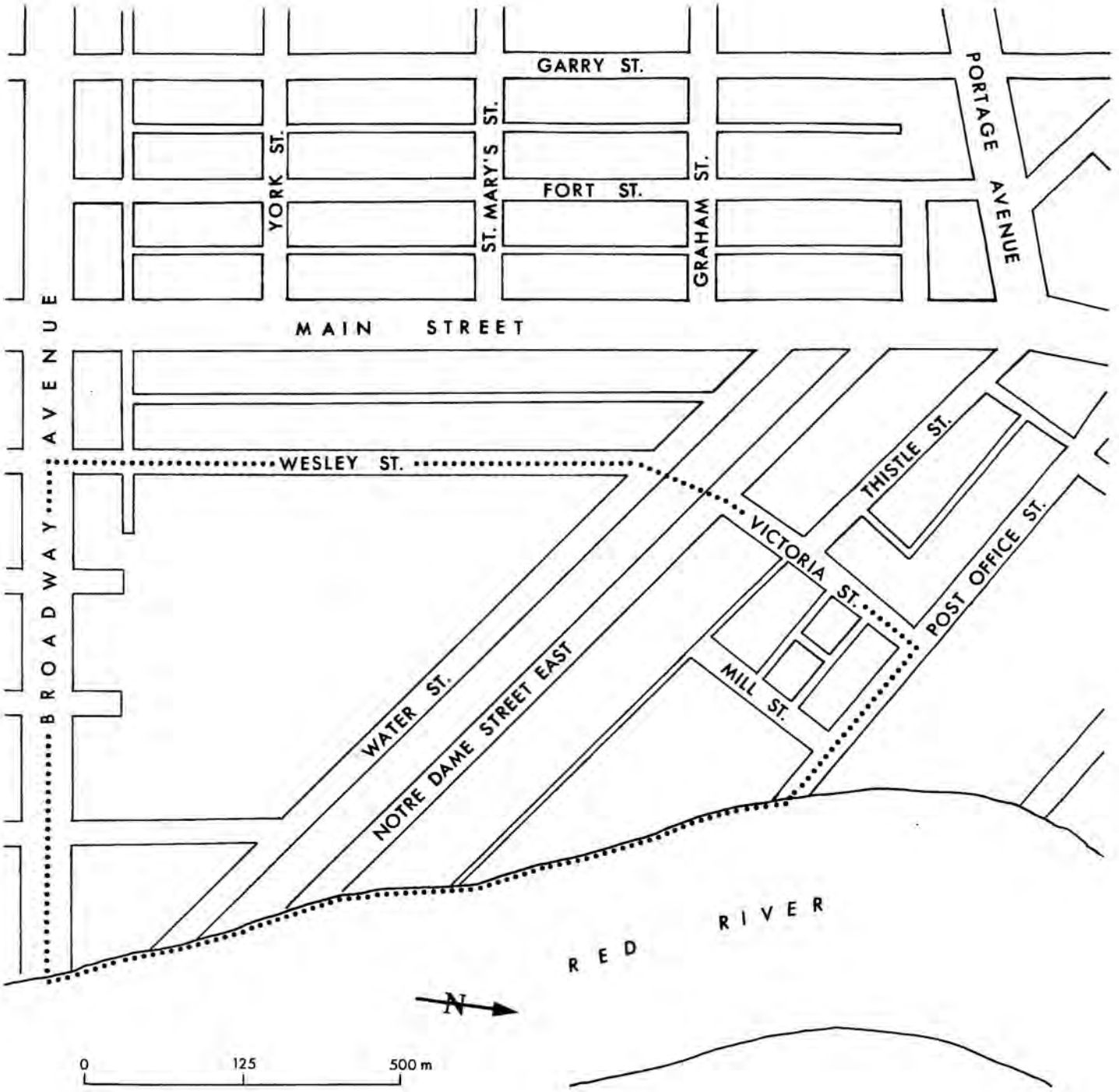

Figure 9. Areas Covered by 1885 City of Winnipeg Fire Atlas (Courtesy P.A.M.).

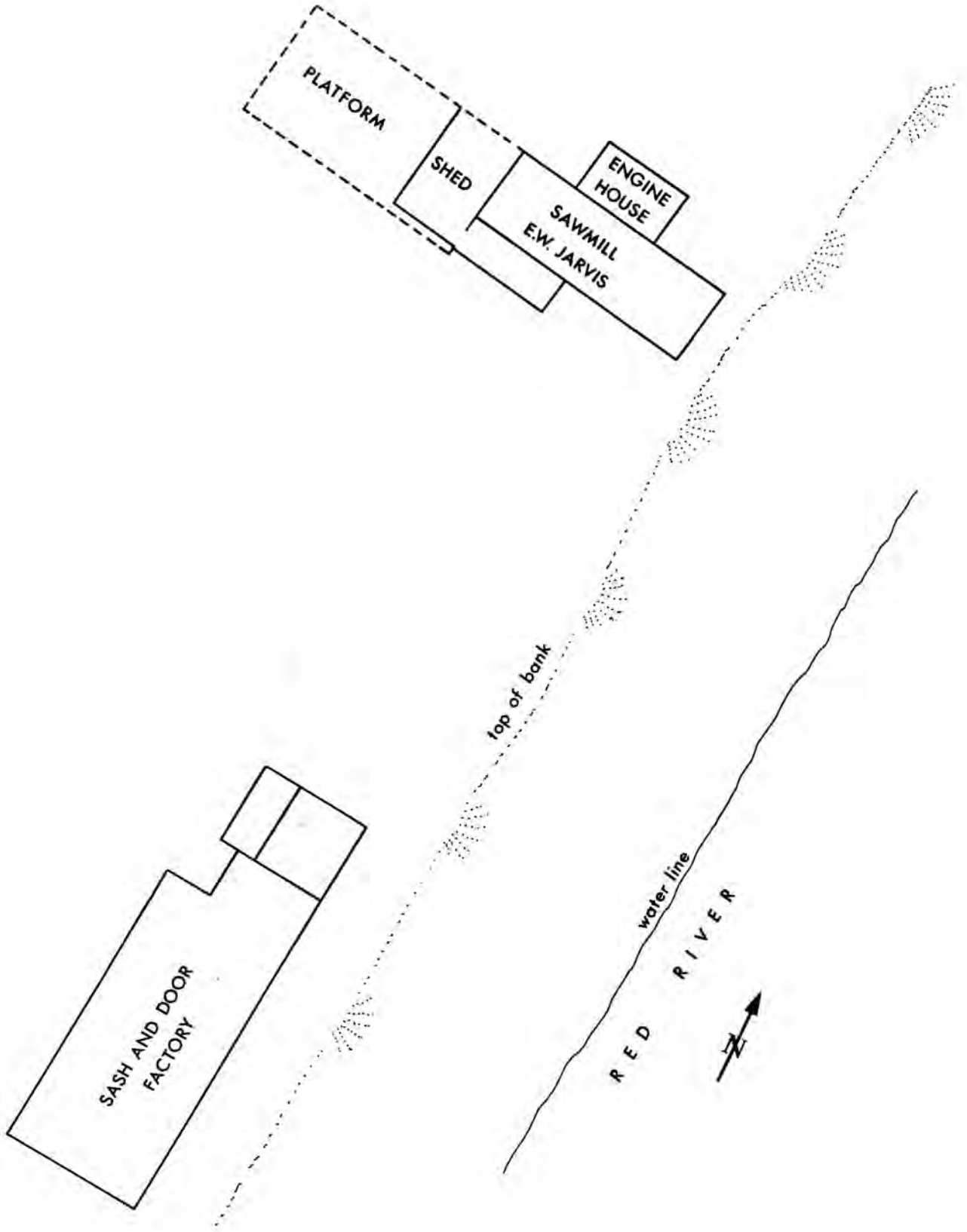

Figure 10. Portion of 1885 Fire Atlas Showing Area Along the West Bank of the Red River (Courtesy P.A.M.).

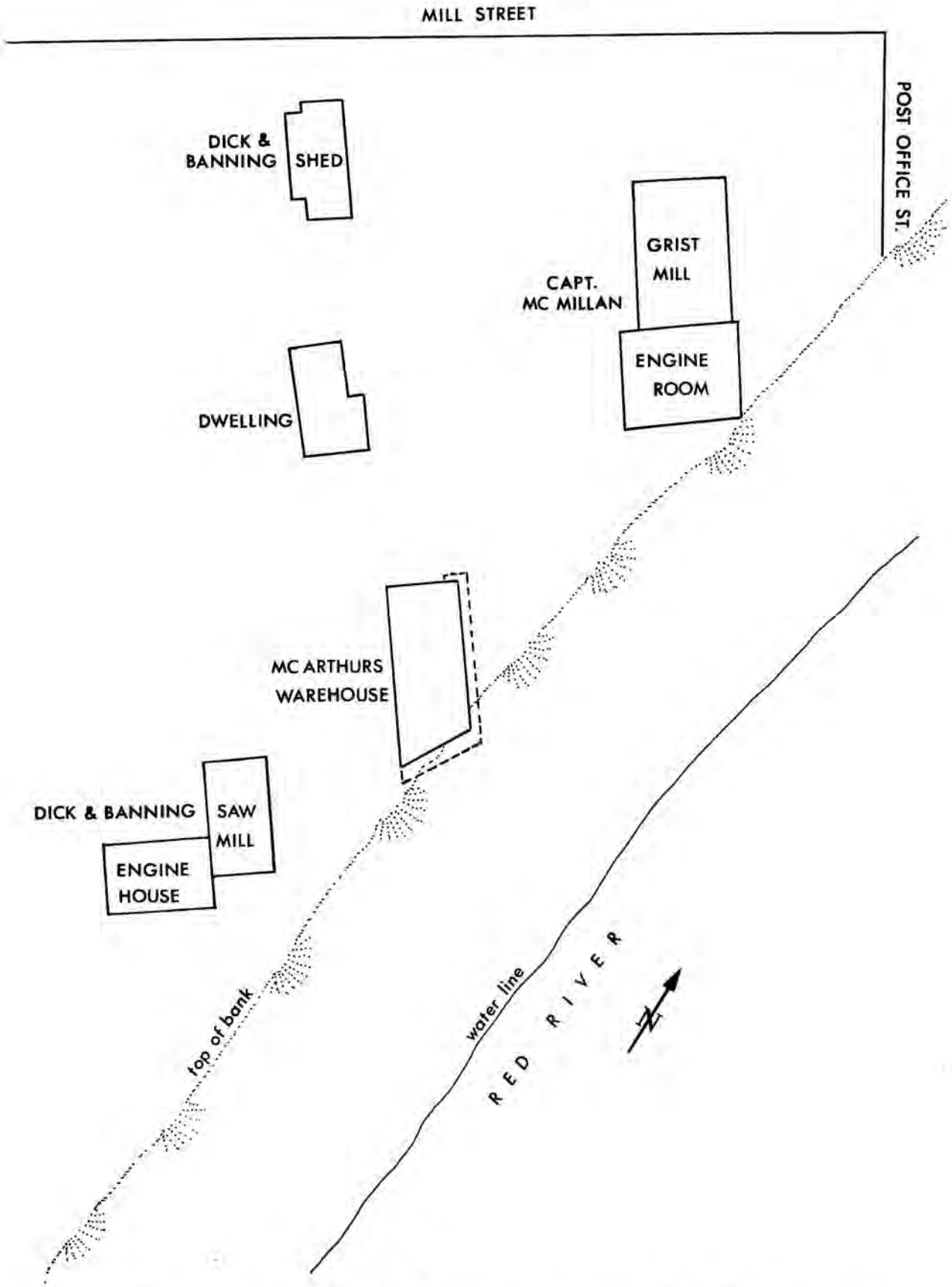

Figure 11. Portion of the 1885 Fire Atlas Showing Area South of Mill Street and West of Lombard (Post Office) Avenue (Courtesy P.A.M.).

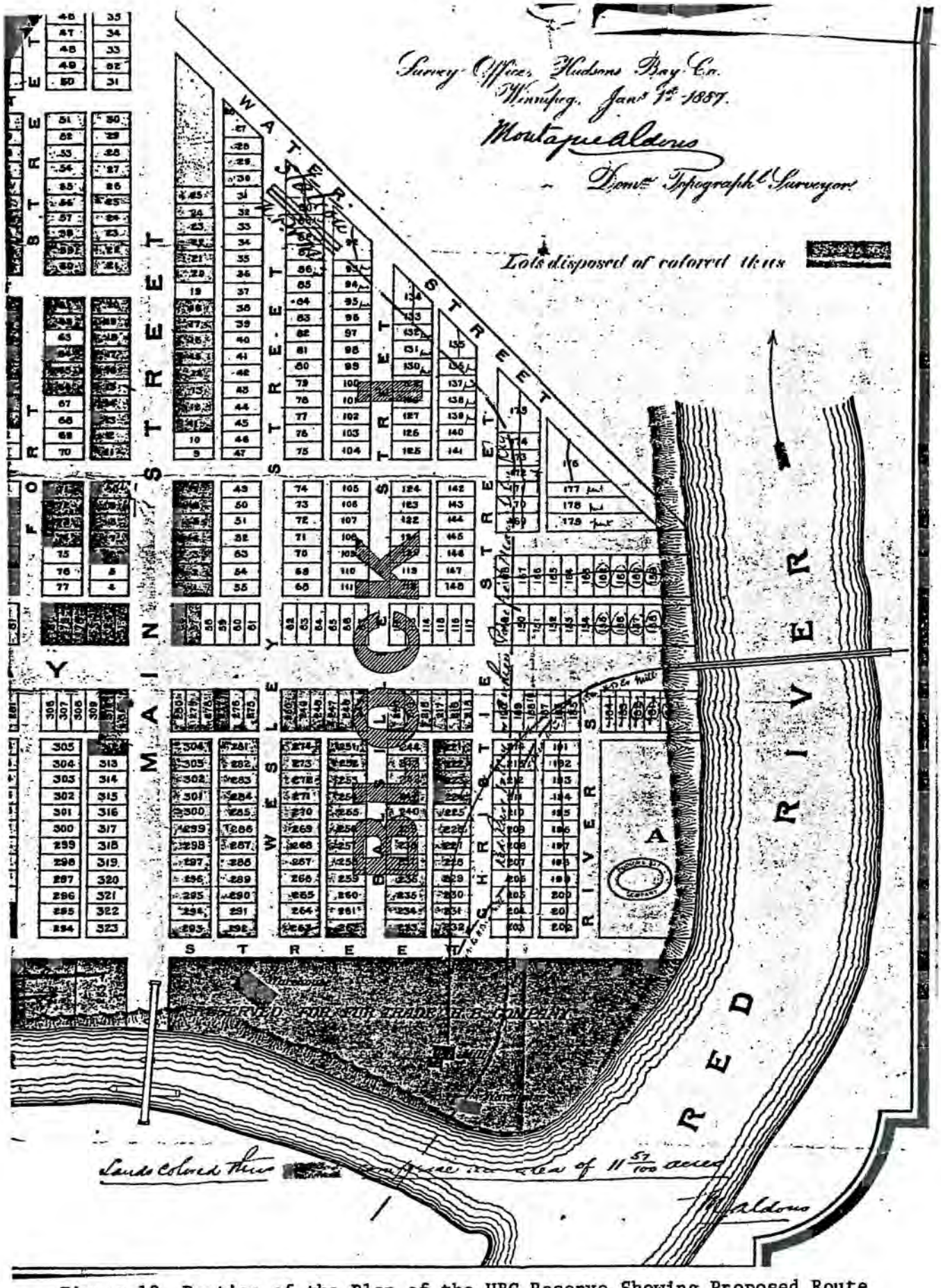

Figure 12. Portion of the Plan of the HBC Reserve Showing Proposed Route of Northern Pacific and Manitoba Railroad, ca. 1888 (Courtesy H.B.C.A.)

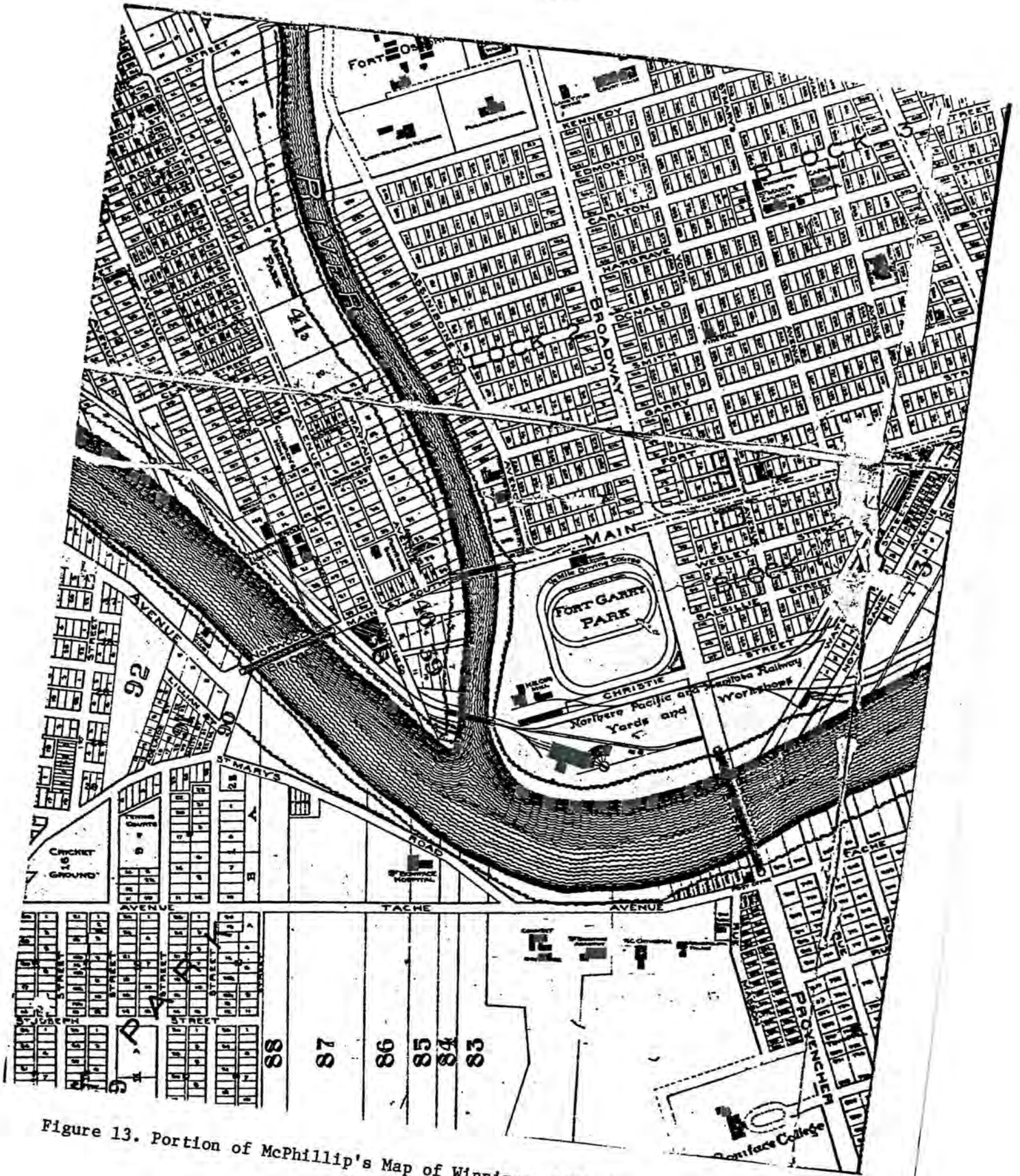

Figure 13. Portion of McPhillip's Map of Winnipeg, 1895 (Courtesy P.A.C.)

Figure 14. Bird's Eye View of Winnipeg, ca. 1895 (Courtesy P.A.M.).

Figure 15. Bird's Eye View of Winnipeg, ca. 1896 (Courtesy P.A.M.).

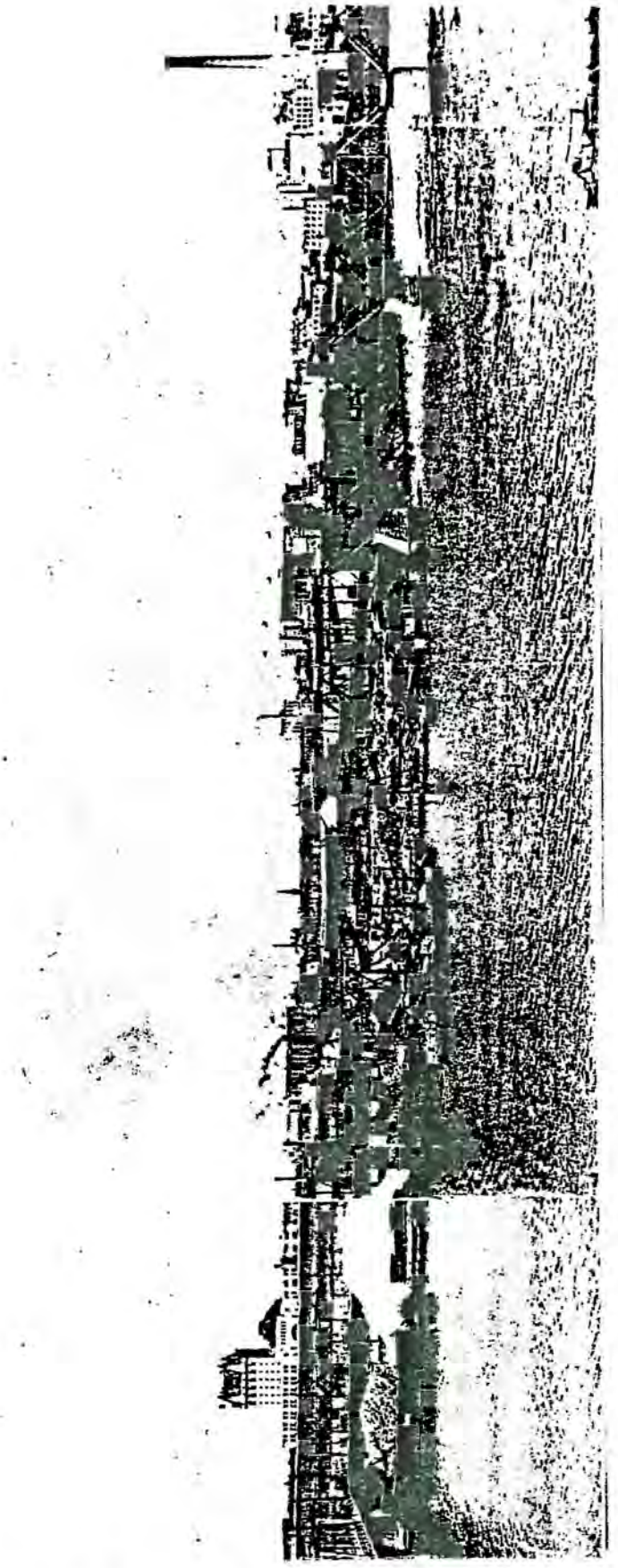

Figure 16. View of Research Area, ca. 1913, from East Bank of the Red River (Courtesy P.A.C.).

roughly the same locations as that of the 1917 Atlas (Figures 17-19). The area bounded by the Provencher Bridge, Christie Street and the closed portion of Broadway Avenue contained several buildings associated with Building Products and Coal Company Limited. Several concrete and metal clad storage buildings and one concrete block office building were contained within this complex. These structures appear to have been constructed on the ground surface. North of this area, in the region bounded by Notre Dame East, Mill Street and Lombard Avenue, stood a number of structures which included several residences on Notre Dame. South of these stood the Lambert Fuel Yards and the Fort Garry Coal Yards. There were no structures located between the rail line and the west bank of the Red River. Several buildings associated with the City of Winnipeg Hydro and Electric System stood west of the rail line. All the above mentioned structures do not appear to have had basements and were likely constructed on the ground surface.

The above section outlined Prehistoric and Historic Period land use in the study area. The most concentrated amount of activity occurred during the post-1880 period when a number of different businesses and dwellings were constructed. Subsurface disturbance appears to have been minimal, except in areas of the bridge crossings. An indication of how past land uses have affected the study area can be inferred on the basis of Parks Canada's archaeological research in the immediate area. This research will now be briefly summarized.

Parks Canada Research at the Forks

The objectives for the research at the Forks were: "(1) to locate and identify archaeological resources, (2) to collect and analyse a representative sample of artifacts and (3) to assess and plan mitigation to development

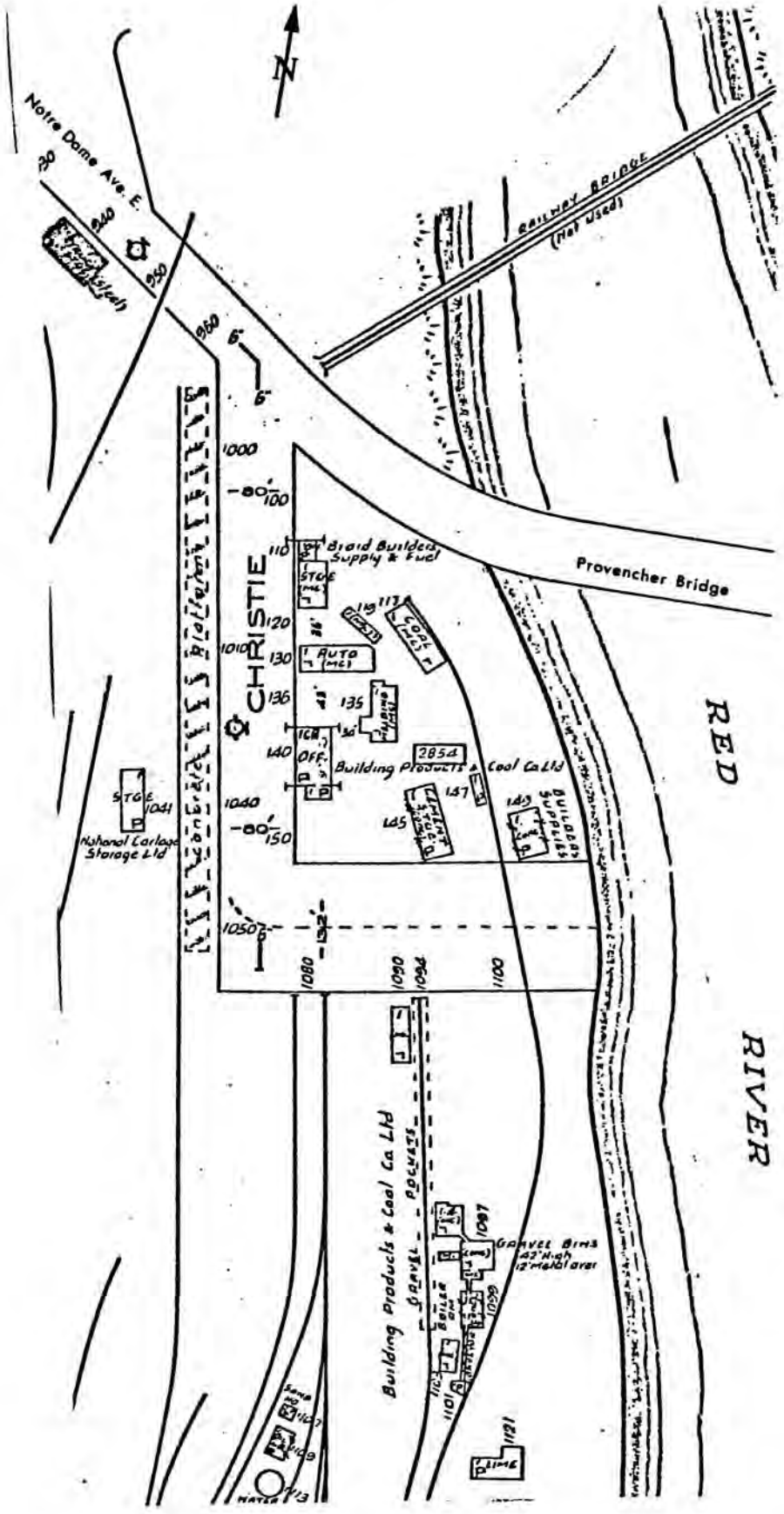

Figure 17. Portion of 1955 Fire Atlas Showing South Portion of Area (Courtesy P.A.M.).

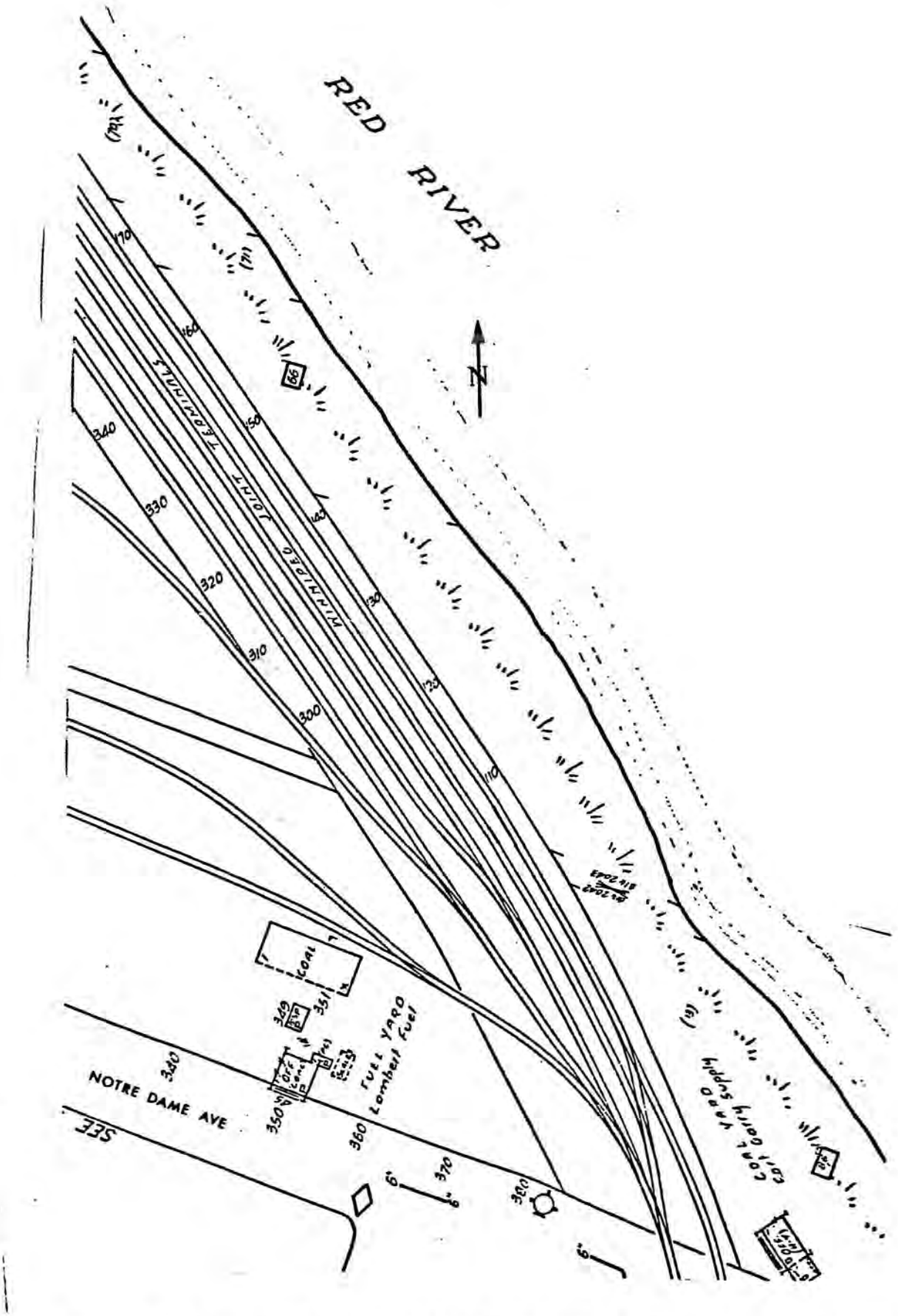

Figure 18. Page of 1955 Fire Atlas Showing Northern Portion of Study Area Along the West Bank of the Red River (Courtesy of P.A.M.).

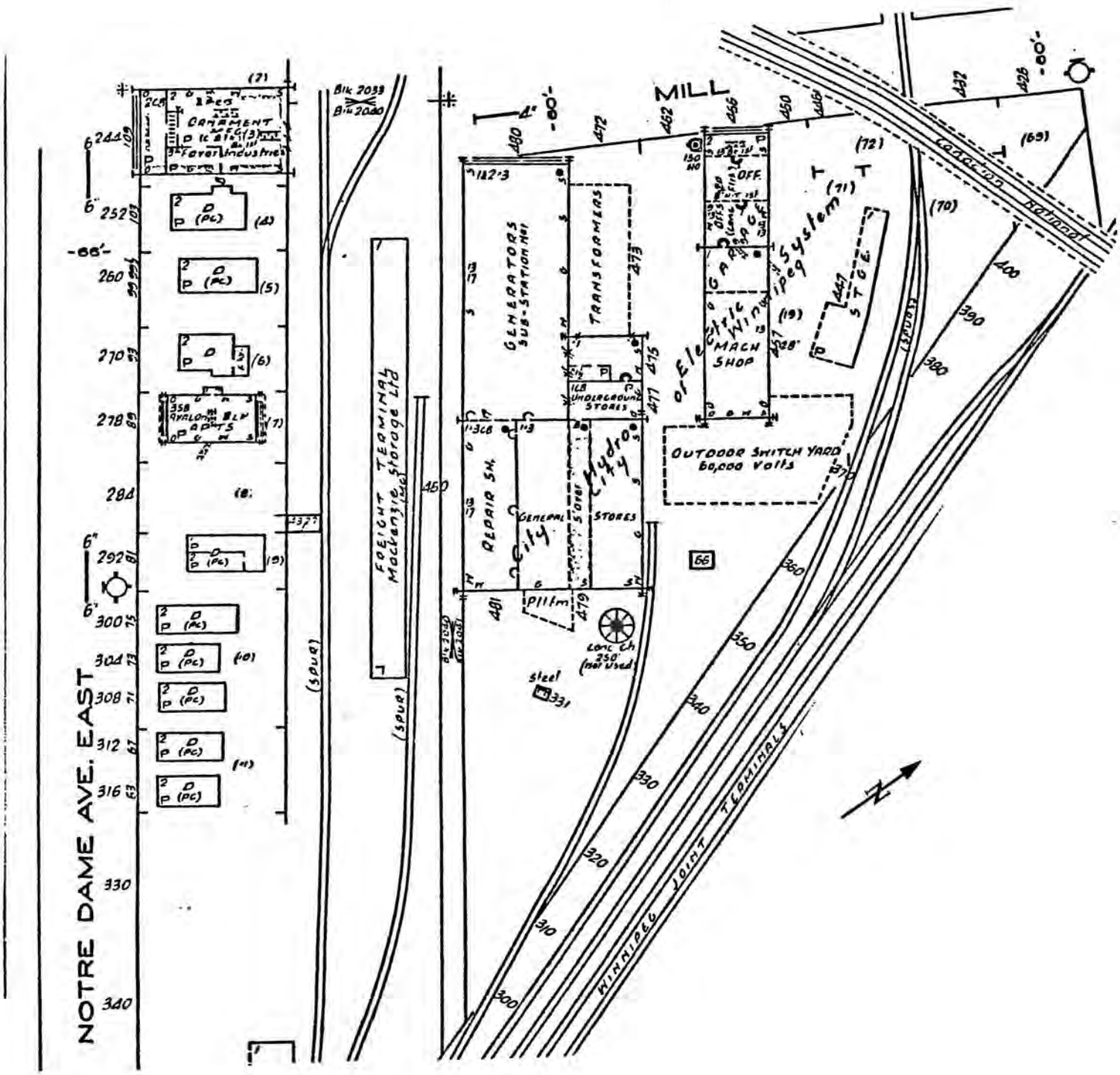

Figure 19. Page of 1955 Fire Atlas Showing Northern Portion of Study Area (Courtesy of P.A.M.).

impact." (Priess et al. 1986:4). Certainly the primary land use that has adversely affected achievement of these objectives in the area is the presence of CN Rail facilities. In addition, areas along the river bank indicate that the river's edge has been used as a disposal area, raising the bank's elevation and moving the edge closer to the water (Priess et al. 1986:4). Parks Canada conducted an auger survey in areas away from the river to document the general stratigraphy. The soils, or fills, encountered consisted of loose materials which could not be collected as cores. The test hole data indicated that the:

> "...present topography of the site resulted from extensive dumping of debris along the river bank. There was an increase in elevation and a probable levelling of the ground surface. Dumping off the edge of the upper terrace had resulted in shifting of the edge towards the river and the widening of the upper terrace. Ground surfaces and edges associated with earlier, pre-railway occupations now lay buried to varying depths so that archaeological excavations near the present edge would likely encounter greater depths of railway related fill." (Priess et al. 1986:6).

One test hole was augered in close proximity to the southern edge of the research area. This test consisted of fill that extended from the surface to a depth of 3 m. From 0 to 1 m, the fill consisted of sand and gravel; from 1 to 2 m, broken shale and from 2 to 3 m, the fill was composed of extremely wet tan silt. This wet condition caused the test to collapse at a depth of 2.9 m. From 3 to 4 m, the soil consisted of grey-brown sand and seepage was noticed at 3.35 m. At 4 m, the test encountered a soft, dark grey clay-silt. The test was augered to a depth of 4.57 m. No cultural material was recovered by the auger survey.

Parks Canada recovered cultural materials from excavations that revealed ten soil zones containing prehistoric artifacts, the possible remains of Forts Gibraltar I and II, cellar or trash pits possibly associated with Fort Gibraltar II and railway period occupations. The deepest prehistoric soil zone lay between 2 to 2.5 m below the surface. The prehistoric layers contained materials which dated to the Blackduck Complex and an occupation date of A.D. 697 was estimated, based on a series of C^{14} dates (Priess et al. 1986:2). Preservation of historic material was exceptional, with wood grains observable in the remains of Fort Gibraltar I. No doubt this preservation had been enhanced by the deposition of silts over the structural remains. The area of Fort Gibraltar II exhibited a large amount of disturbance from railway period posts and trenches. The two cellars associated with the Fort Gibraltar II area extended from 0.92 m below the surface to a maximum of 1.27 m, and from 1.12 m to 1.39 m below the surface, respectively. The period of railway occupation can be summarized by the following:

> "The railway now dominates the character of the site. Throughout the area of investigation the ground surface was composed largely of gravel and below that there were extensive layers of cinders, sand or coal. Some layers contained a variety of railway hardware such as track sections, track couplings, large bolts and various parts of car couplings. Several structural features were also present." (Priess et al. 1986:10).

Summary and Conclusion

The research area could contain a number of Prehistoric and Historic Period remains. Prehistoric Period sites are probably campsites with the remote possibility of burials being present. Historic Period remains would be material associated with fur trade posts from the 1760-1830 period, as well as

the 1836-1841 HBC experimental farm. In all instances, except for Fidler's 1819-1822 fort, the post locations were in close proximity to The Forks. Fidler's Fort has been estimated to have stood downstream from The Forks. After 1872, the building of structures began in the research area and construction became intensified during the post-1880 period.

Post-1880 land use appears to have elevated a major portion of the research area, especially south of the Provencher Bridge. Disturbance of any sites is likely greatest in areas where bridges have been built. Deposition of fill has probably served to seal over any existing cultural remains. In addition, pre-1880 flooding has probably deposited moist layers of silt over all cultural materials and, therefore, good to excellent preservation should be expected.

The conclusions of this report are that cultural materials: (1) are probably contained within the research zone; (2) are likely buried beneath as much as 2 m of fill; and (3) should be in a good to excellent state of preservation.

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