

126 ROBERTA AVE



HISTORY OF THE MUNROE HOUSE

In the 19th century, Highlanders from Scotland were forced to leave the land. Fortunately, Douglas 5th Earl of Selkirk—who had been granted 116,000 square miles of land comprising what is now part of Saskatchewan, North Dakota, Minnesota, and Manitoba, came to the aid of these unfortunate Highlanders. He offered them passage to the Red River for the price of £10 Sterling.

The Highlanders came in groups of approximately one hundred men. The first group had to break the land to prepare for the arrival of the future groups. The settlers built flat bottomed York boats for their journey to the Red River in the spring of 1811 and upon arrival, built Fort Douglas. The settlers were given hundred acre farms that were long, narrow river lots that extended two miles. Some farmers were also given a wood on the east side of the river to be given to the next generation.

In 1830, George Munroe came to the Red River settlement. Up till now, all the people had settled on the west side of the river, but George Munroe was the first white settler to live on the east side. He became the secretary treasurer of Kildonan, and when East Kildonan split from West Kildonan, he was the secretary of the municipality.

George Munroe had settled on Lot 67 by the river near the old E.K. School. His daughter married a McLeod and thus, Lot 67 is now McLeod Avenue. Another child of

George Munroe, Robert, was granted Lot 78 which extended two miles from the river up to what is now Panet Road.

Robert Munroe never actually lived on Lot 78, but lived in a two-storey house at the end of what is presently Canterbury Place, and his youngest son, Alexander Munroe eventually received Lot 78.

In 1892, when Alexander acquired the land, he, with Peter MacCalman as his contractor, built a farmhouse. Originally, he built a small, two-storey house, but at about the same time, his brother-in-law, Jim Penrose had a bad case of rheumatism and became immobile.

Alexander Munroe, who was then a bachelor, built another part onto the house to accommodate Jim Penrose, his wife, and seven children. They lived there for about five years. When they left, Alexander, who was still a bachelor, then had a housekeeper-possibly his niece-live in the house with him for about three years.

In 1899, Alexander Munroe married a lady who was over twenty years younger than him. Between then and 1912, his wife, Sarah, gave birth to eight children in the house. The children's names were Robert, George Earle, Norman, Leslie, Margaret, Alexandra, Donald, and Jack.

Somewhere around that time, Alexander had rented part of his land to two Dutch garden farmers. They worked very hard for ten years-from "sun up to sun down" as Norman Munroe had put it. Their hard work eventually paid off. They were prosperous and had earned enough

money to go back to Holland. It is believed that these two men died in war when they got to the Netherlands.

Presently, the south side of Roberta Avenue lies on both lot 78 and 79. The reason for this is because Alexander Munroe had bought land from Daniel Hamilton, who owned lot 79. Later, in 1912, he altered the house—running the addition into lot 79.

At this time, other improvements were made in the house. In 1910, a telephone was installed, in 1912, electricity, plumbing, and heating were added, and in 1916, a sewage drainage system went down to the next street which is now Leighton Avenue. The same radiators and the same plumbing system still are used in the house.

Tragically, Alexander Munroe died in 1924. The house was now in Sarah's possession. Sarah lived in the house until she moved into an apartment with her son Leslie. Somehow, even though Norman wasn't the oldest son, he got the house. One possible reason for this is that Norman was the only one home when Alexander died.

Norman Munroe had married Pearl. They had three daughters—Irene, Barbara, and Sandra, who were all born in the house.

Up till now, the Munroe's had owned most of the land on this block of Roberta except for the land that was sold for Angus MacKay School and John Black Church. In 1946, there was a building boom in this area. Lots with fifty foot frontage were being sold at the price of one

dollar if a house was built within a year. By 1950, most of Roberta Avenue was filled up. There were two empty lots, though, and they were the lots on either side of the house. Norman Munroe sold the west lot first, and later sold the other lot in 1955 when the taxes went up because they were paving the street.

In 1960, Mr. Norman Munroe sold the house. He had said he had kept it with a lot of strain and was finally letting it go. The house was also too big for just his wife and himself.

The next family to live in the house was Alexander and Annelove Sardachuk, and their one child. They bought the house on March 25, 1960, but lived in it for only a short time. They were from Europe and couldn't speak much English. According to Mrs. Iwankow, a neighbor, they were very quiet and kept to themselves. After living in the house for almost four years, they sold it on February 18, 1964 to Michael Clarence Jackson. This family had only two children—a girl and a boy. Apparently, these people also kept to themselves and lived there for only a short period of time. They sold it on September 21, 1967 to Cornelis de Haan.

It is believed that the Jacksons ran a type of boarding house. It is also possible that the Sardachuks rented out rooms. The five bedrooms on the second floor of the house still has room numbers on the doors.

The de Haan family had taken advantage of the size of the house. When they moved in on Sept. 21, 1967, every room in the house was used by the eleven children. Coming from a small, three-bedroom bungalow, the house was very well appreciated. After living in the house for almost twelve years, only five children are still living in it. Because more than half of the de Haan children have moved out, the house is presently very spacious. The de Haan family has enjoyed this house immensely for a number of years already and still are.

Aside from the historical facts about the house, there are many interesting stories about the house.

During the Munroes' time, the house was the great community house. The reason it was called this was because when Alexander owned it, friends of all the Munroe kids would come to the house. Anyone and everyone was welcome. These people would gather here every night of the week. For twenty years, the house was also the meeting place for the council and school board meetings. The first Juvenile Hockey Team of East Kildonan was organized in the house.

Almost everyone who came to the house was offered a meal and a bed. Indians were also welcome-but before a meal or bed was offered, a bath usually was given. Many people would accept the offer. One night, Norman Munroe came home late, and although there were many beds (approximately 16 beds), there weren't any left for him.

Many people thought it was a bad place-mainly because everyone would go there to play cards, or whatever, but nothing really bad happened, according to Norman Munroe.

Even after Alexander Munroe's time, the great community house still kept its name. Before Norman Munroe sold the lot on the east side of the house, that lot was the playground of the community. All the neighborhood kids would play there and even if it started to rain, many times they would go and play in the big front porch of the house.

The house has also been a place of sorrow. In 1913, Margaret Munroe-fifth child of Alexander and Pearle-died from the after effects of diphtheria at the age of six. Four years later, their seventh child also died from diphtheria at the age of six. In 1924, Alexander Munroe had just come home elated because he had collected about \$10,000 from back taxes and Norman had just graduated from high school-everything seemed to be going great. Alexander had a pain near his shoulder but thought it was only a muscle spasm. He went upstairs and apparently had a fatal heart attack in the bathroom.

STRUCTURE AND STYLE

When Alexander Muroe first started to build this farmhouse in 1892, it was a relatively small home. It consisted of a very large kitchen on the first floor. Norman described it as a great place to ride their tricycles. It also had two normal sized bedrooms upstairs, a basement with a very large vegetable bin, and a large shed right next to the house. When Jim Penrose, his brother-in-law, became immobile from rheumatism, he built a second part, which is presently the main part of the house. It had three fairly large rooms on the first floor and three bedrooms upstairs. There were also two sun porches with colored glass in the front and back of the house.

In 1912, four more rooms were added-two upstairs and two on the first floor. A porch and balcony in the back were also added. The original part of the house was too close to the street so it was removed and a large porch replaced it. These two porches were removed by the Sardachuk's somewhere between 1960 and 1964. From that time on, a few minor changes have occurred but no major alterations have been made.

The interior of the house is in some ways different from most houses. The house's size, the decorative radiators, baseboards, and bannister, the size of the attic, the old laundry chute, and the dumbwaiter are characteristics that emphasizes the age of the house.

This house has a variety of styles-which is called "Canadian eclecticism". There is a mixture of French, English, Victorian, and classical.

The third level, or attic, with the two dormers is French, and the chimney style is English. Before 1912, the house had two sun porches with colored glass and on the roof was a decorative metal railing. This detail gives the house a Victorian style. Presently, the house is well balanced, especially the front of the house. This aspect gives the house a classical structure.

TRIVIA

• Roberta Avenue is named after Robert Munroe. Robert was originally given to the street, but another Robert Avenue already existed.

• When the present Munroe Junior High School was looking for a name, they asked the public for suggestions.

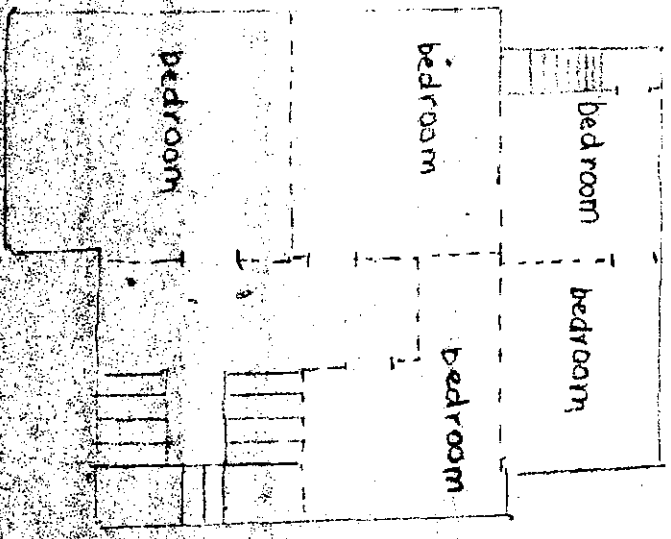
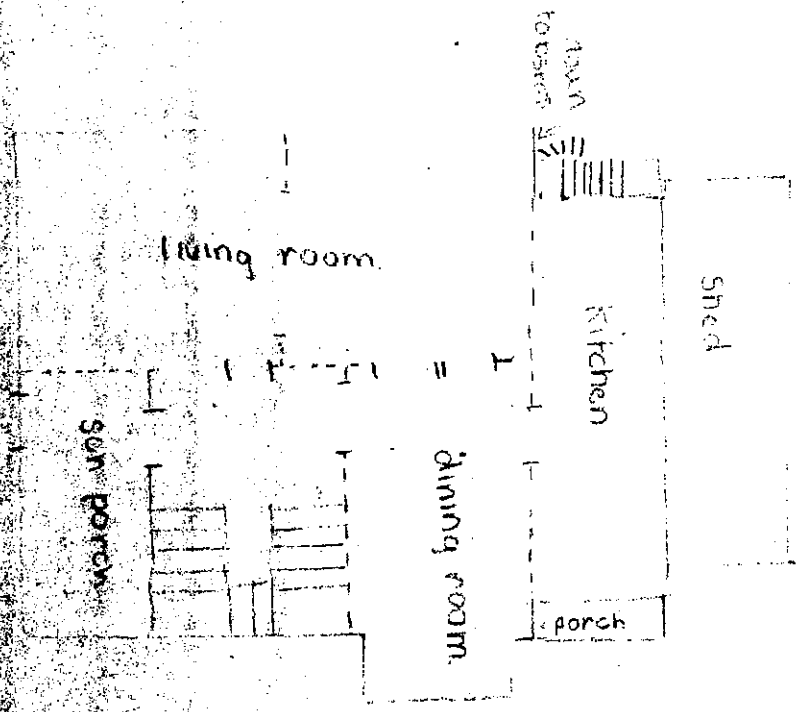
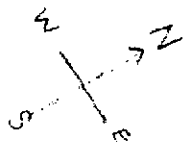
Barbara Munroe, daughter of Norman Munroe, submitted the Munroe name. Apparently, they chose her suggestion.

• The house is often referred to as "the big house on the hill"-by both older people of the community and the people of today.

• Munroe Avenue is named after an uncle of Norman Munroe, Donald Munroe.

*It was Munroe School in 1953
since ~~called~~ 1960 called Polson School*

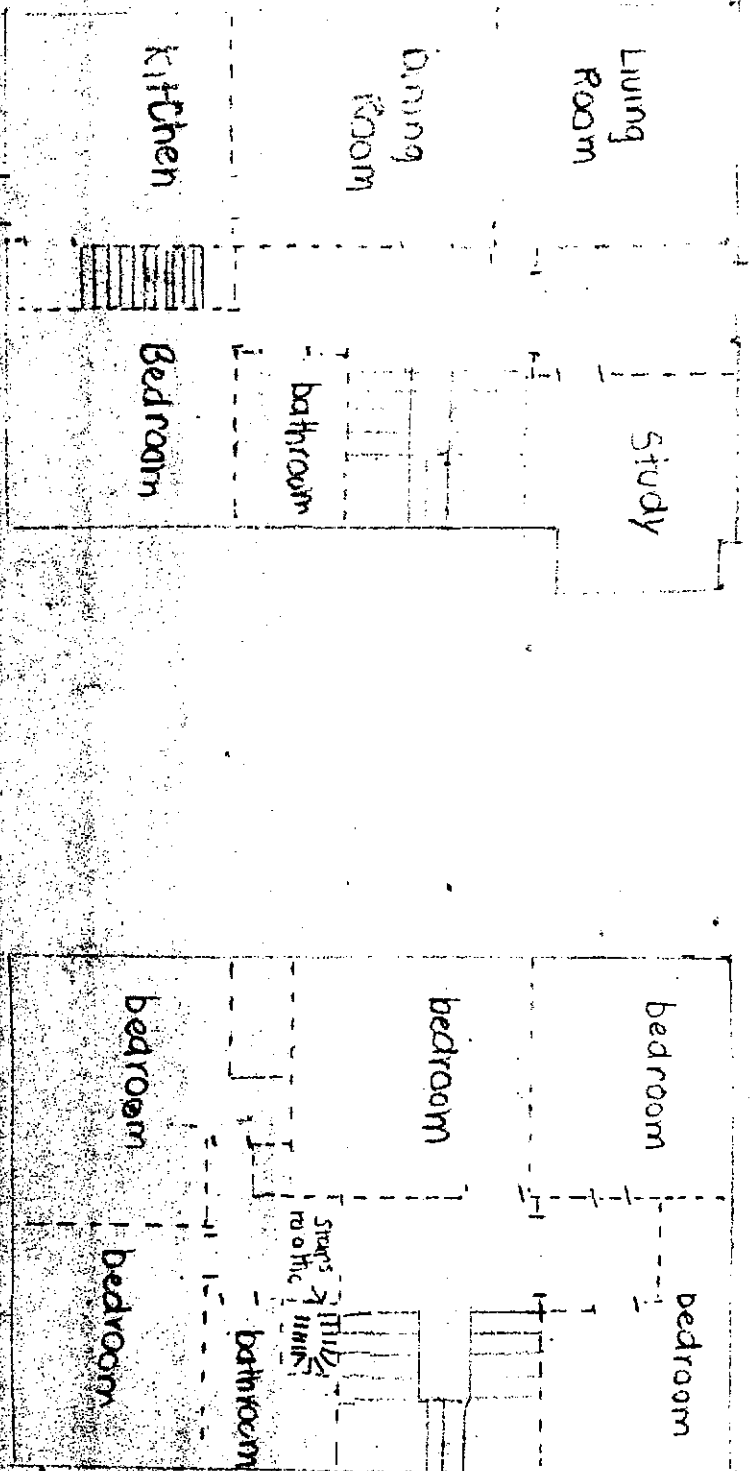
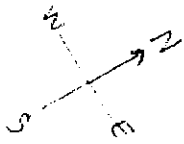
HOUSE IN 1892



FRONT OF HOUSE

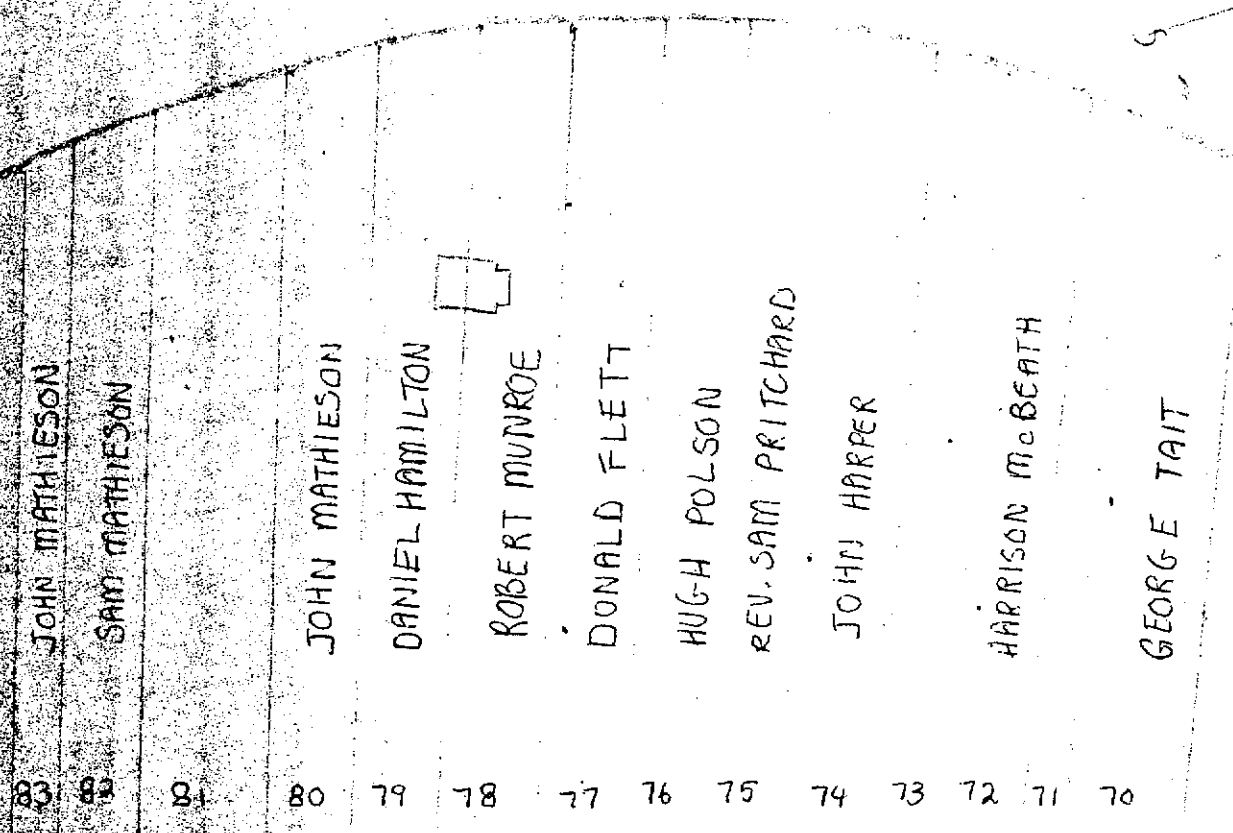
HOUSE IN 1979

FRONT OF HOUSE

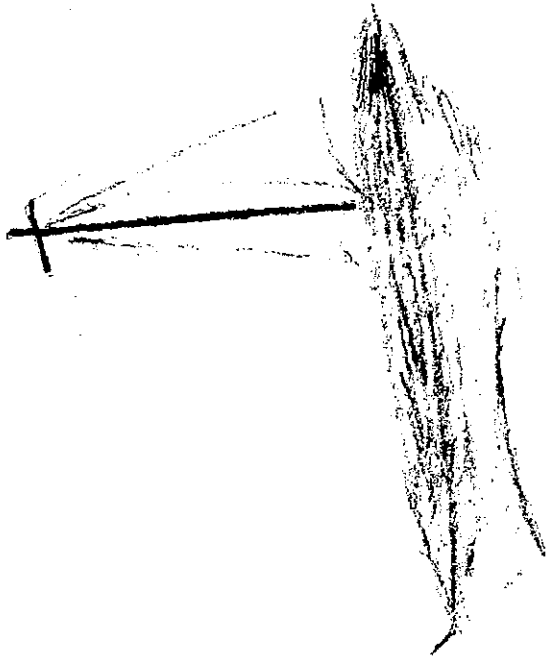


enlargement of "Parish of Kildonan"

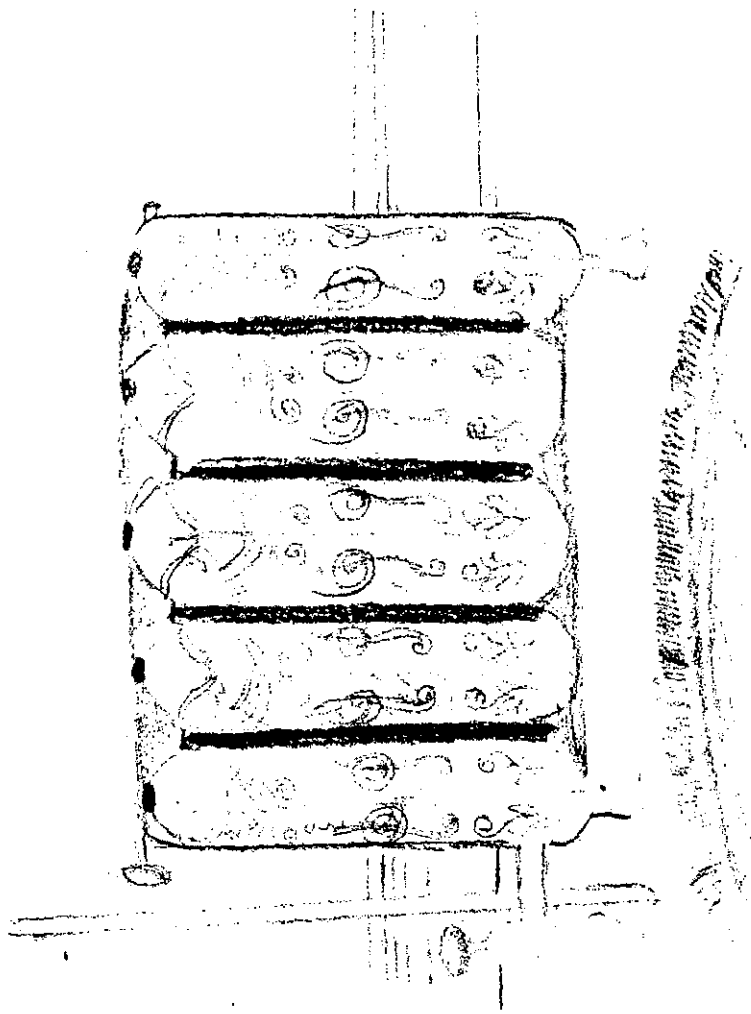
Red River



This is an enlargement of the "Parish of Kildonan" - a map that shows who owned the land in this area (Selkirk Settlement) in the 1800's. Lot 78 and Lot 79 is where the big house is located. Presently, the whole street of Roberta Ave. lies on both lot 78 and 79.



at bottom York Boat
which transported the
Scottish Highlanders
into the Red River
settlement.



This Old fashioned Radiator
was installed in the house in
1912. They still heat the house
very well.