

Inside a Home of Winnipeg's Yesterday

By J. RAE TOOKE.

You Will Find "Stornoway House" Along the East Kildonan Road, Its Hearth-Fire Still Sparkling and Its Latch-String Out, Though Its Age Has Passed Three Score and Ten.

HEARTH-FIRE STILL BURNING HERE

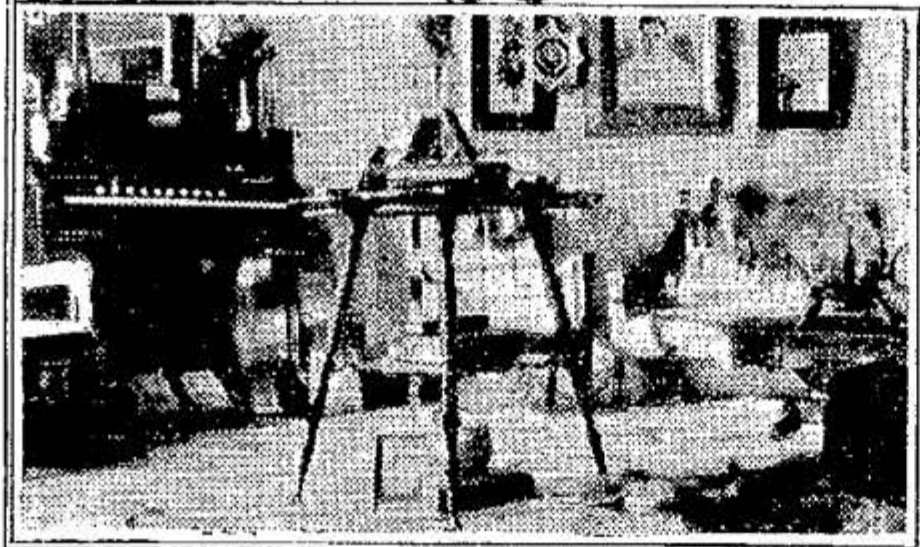
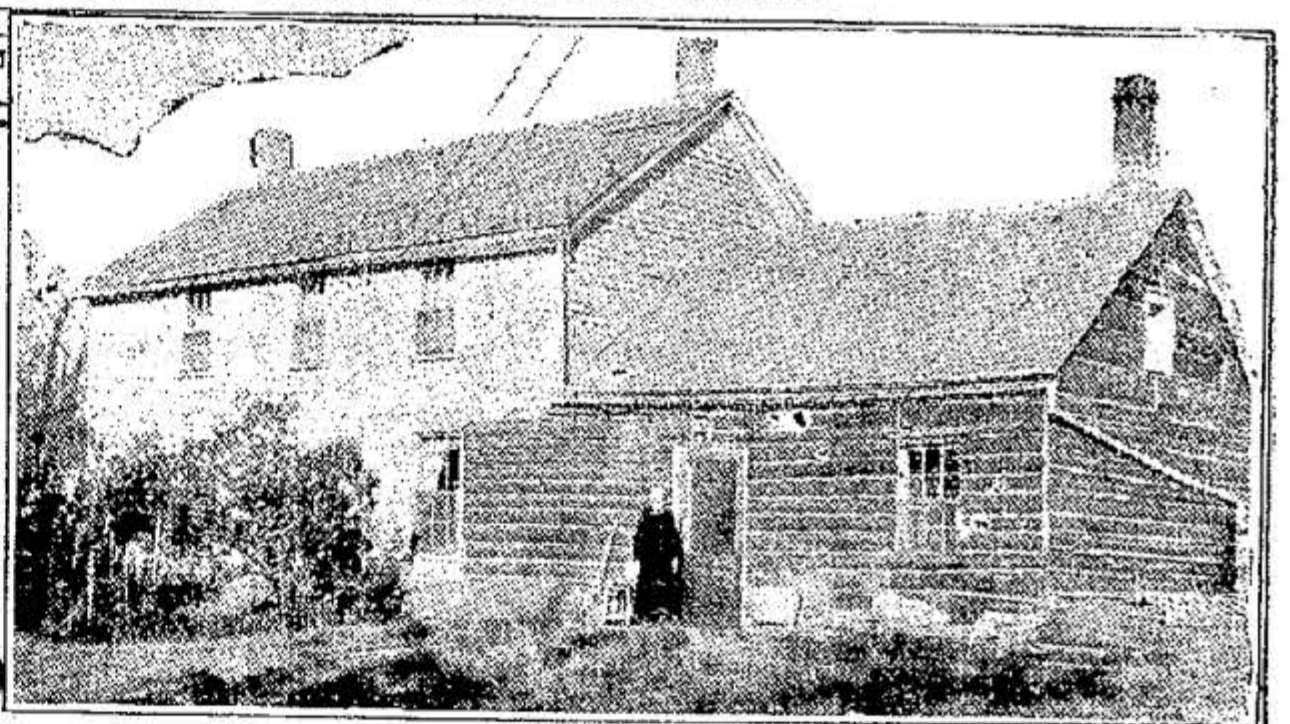
NORTH of the city of Winnipeg, on the East Kildonan road, stands a sturdy old house, "Stornoway House," the sign by the road tells us. A bit of a home-made sign it is, nailed to a post; quiet, unassuming, easily missed by the glance of the hundreds who whizz by on the road of a summer afternoon.

Back from the road among the trees on the Red river bank, the house stands. A long frame building it is, with a kitchen built on one end. From its low, square windows it seems to look at one with an air of quiet superiority. History is written across its weather-beaten countenance and in that history stands out names of men whose acts and deeds have been built into the foundation of our western life.

It is the McIvor home and a relic of Selkirk Settlement days; the oldest home still owned and occupied by descendants of those pioneers. Donald McIvor, the first of this name to own the property, was born in Stornoway, Scotland, and came to the Canadian North West in 1847. He was a fur-trader with the Hudson's Bay company and knew the west from the Rocky Mountains to the eastern settlements. He was a noted musher of his day and owned one of the finest dog trains.

While stationed at Norway House he was married to Marion Munroe. It was by this marriage that the name McIvor was linked with that of the Selkirk settlers. Marion Munroe was the daughter of George Munroe and Annie Matheson, who in 1815, with other courageous souls of their kind, left the heathered hills of Scotland, faced the dangers, the uncertainties of a new land to establish a colony on the banks of the Red River.

At the marriage of Donald McIvor and Marion Munroe, Sir George Simpson, governor of Rupert's Land, gave the bride away and presented her with a beautiful cameo brooch and earrings, still worn by members of the family. The first child of this marriage was a daughter, Margaret Stewart McIvor, now Mrs. D. A. Ross of East Kildonan. She was the first white child born at Norway House. Annie McMurray McIvor, who is now



At left, above—Annie McMurray McIvor, hostess of olden days, still keeps latchstring out at pioneer Stornoway House. At right, above—Stornoway House. At left, below—Living-room. At right, below—Kitchen.

mistress at "Stornoway House," was the next born in this family.

It is interesting to note the spirit of friendliness which must have existed between employer and employed when these two children were named after officers of the Hudson's Bay company, Stewart and McMurray.

In 1862 Mr. and Mrs. McIvor decided that the environment of the northern trading post was not the best in which to rear their children. It meant giving up a position, but with the daring of the pioneer, they made the move. In York boats they accomplished the long and hazardous journey down Lake Winnipeg and the Red River to the settlement.

"Stornoway House," as they afterwards named it, was at that time the property of the McKays. James McKay, member of Manitoba's first legislative council, was a son of this family. John McKay was another. The latter was one of the party who in 1866 made the journey by ox cart with the Rev. James Nisbet up into the Northwest Territories establishing mission houses. The present city of Prince Albert gets its name from one of the missions which they established at that point. The name, Prince Albert, was chosen in honor of the memory of the Prince Consort, who had just died.

The McKay house was not fully completed when Donald McIvor took possession of it. Mrs. McIvor had to use a blanket across the outside entrance to serve as a door. The logs to build the house were of solid oak and had been floated down the Red River from Georgetown in the United States. This town was named for Sir George Simpson and was the head of navigation at that time. The siding which covers the house today was put on at a later date.

The roomy kitchen with its low, beamed ceiling; the quaint staircase, the many-paned windows lend an air of cozy friendliness to the old place. All about is evidence of the handiwork, the influence of those early settlers "upon whose patient shoulders was upheld the open arches to a waiting land." A cupboard in a corner of the kitchen, built by the father of Frederick Burd, member of the first Manitoba parliament; historical calendars of the Hudson's Bay company in plentiful array upon the walls, to which the family point while they tell you that "this is so-and-so who did such-and-such for the west."

The parlor is there; that holy-of-holies of yesterday. To walk into it is like stepping back into the pages of history. The horse-hair sofa, scorning the years in dignified durability; the "tiddles" over the chair backs; the old organ; lace curtains sweeping the floor like the graceful skirts of the old days. Here is no flicker change. Sturdy as the race that established it, true to the old days, the parlor stands. Endured pictures of Sir William Leitch

and Hon. Alexander Mackenzie look down upon this conservatism in calm reserve.

EVIDENCE of the hunt and chase is here; buffalo horns forming the legs of stools or used as hooks upon the wall. Pelts which would make a fur-dealer's eyes gleam with satisfaction. A huge musk-ox hide over the back of one chair, the glossy pelt of a cross-fox on another. Thick coats of the prairie and timber wolf upon the floor. These, all home tanned and trapped on the property where the house stands. They are used as mats, yet show no trace of the forty years that have marched over them.

It was Donald McIvor's business to know furs. "And the kept that knowledge to his closing years," his daughter told us. When in his eighties, with his eyesight almost gone, he could run his hand over a fur and tell what pelt it was.

Bead work from Fort Felly and Fort Providence is in this house. Moccasins from Norway House; petrified mollusks from the Red Deer reserve. A plate over three hundred years old, an heirloom brought out from the old land.

And in the midst of it all, a worn family Bible; a wedding gift to Mrs. McIvor from Dr. John Black, "the Apostle of the Red River."

The outside door of the house is hand-carved with a pen-knife. "And these are the original floors," Miss Annie McIvor told us, adding with a reminiscent gleam in her kind grey eyes, "in spite of all the dancing we did on them."

That was the spirit of the McIvor home. When winter closed over the settlement and the river was frozen hard, a road used to cross the ice. It came up the bank at Donald McIvor's. Everyone called in in passing. Unlimited hospitality abounded there, the latch string was always out, the welcome warm and sincere.

THUS the old house stands, on a spot once used as an Indian burial ground. Miss McIvor remembers her mother telling of how Indian mothers used to come and weep over tiny mounds near the house. In the trees about the place, armed rebels prowled during the troublesome Red rebellion days. More than one fugitive from unjust imprisonment found a haven of safety behind its oaken walls.

A generation has passed away from it. Its beams, that once vibrated in the tune of the fiddle, the creak of George Fox, still ring with the

hunt and the chase, now resound to the roar of the speed-boat on the river, the drone of the seaplane overhead.

The feet that tread the old floors now are not so nimble, but the greeting is just as warm, the handshake as friendly. It is still the McIvor home with the old-time welcome for all.



A Song of Bethlehem

(By George Henry Gunn)

Sing a song of Bethlehem—
Sing a song of Jesus!
At this merry Christmas-tide,
Sing a song to please us.

Sing a song of Bethlehem
And the lowly manger,
Where the gentle Jewish Maid
Laid the Little Stranger.

Sing a song of Bethlehem—
How the watching shepherds
Heard the Song of Songs and saw
Angels hovering earthward.

Sing a song of Bethlehem!
Sing the Heavenly Chorus,
"Peace, good will to all around,
And God's Glory o'er us!"

Sing a song of Bethlehem
And the Star of Wonder,
Beaming brightly there on high
With the Christ-Child under.

Sing a song of Bethlehem—
Of the Wise Men kneeling;
Gifts of gold and frankincense
In their hands revealing.

Sing a song of Bethlehem:
Say in silvery numbers
How the fields were draped in night
And the world in slumbers.

Sing a song of Bethlehem!
Tell, in accents golden,
Wondrous things forever new
And forever olden.

Sing a song of Bethlehem!
Sing, my soul, and harken,
Men and maids and matrons all,
Now while shadows darken.

Sing a song of Bethlehem!
Join the joyful chorus,
"Peace, good will to all below,
And God's Glory o'er us!"

THE DOUBTFUL YOUTH

By Fogal A. Guest

Three hundred years ago or more old people used to sigh
And wondered who would do the work when they at last should die.
They wondered who would run the world and serve the ends of truth,
Since absolutely hopeless seemed to be the ways of youth.
Old women used to sit and fret because the young were gay,
They thought that motherhood with them would wholly pass away.
"These modern girls," they often said, "will never learn to sew,
Will never bake or teach their babes the path which they should go."

Yet this old world keeps going on, and every age appears
With mothers making little clothes and scrubbing little care.
And fathers daily go to work, and gardens still are kept,
And curtains hang at window frames and floors are neatly swept.
I wonder if the wise old dead can see the world today
And count the many happy homes where little children play.
I wonder if they realize what once they never guessed
How much of faith and courage their doubtful youth possessed.



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