

Filling the Gap in the Map

Extending the Trans Canada Trail

From

Paradise Hill, Saskatchewan to Edmonton, Alberta

Along

The Historic Carlton Trail

Presented By the Iron Horse Trail Committee

May 24, 1999

On May 8, 1999, our representative, Sheila Thompson, attended the Trail Talk '99 conference in Calgary and returned with the news that there is a length of the Trans Canada Trail (TCT) yet to be determined extending from Paradise Hill, Saskatchewan to Edmonton, Alberta. We propose that this section of the TCT run along the historic Carlton Trail.

We believe this is an idea whose time has come. Again. This route was first documented c. 1790 in the Journal of Duncan M'Gillivray, Wintering at Buckingham House. Indeed, it was the original trail linking eastern and western Canada and its roll of travelers reads like a *Who's Who* of Western Canadian history. It is described in the journals of George Simpson, Governor of the Hudson Bay Company, Sanford Fleming, Engineer-in-Chief of the Canadian Pacific Railway and the members of 'A' Troop, N.W.M.P. as they trekked arduously to Fort Edmonton. The Carlton Trail was used by freighters using red river carts and by missionaries such as Father Lacombe and George McDougall.

The Carlton Trail carried much of the drama of Canadian history: the coming of the fur trade in the 1790's, missionary settlement in the 1860's, the march west of the N.W.M.P. in 1874 and the Northwest Rebellion in 1885.

The inclusion of the Carlton Trail route would be a valuable addition to the Trans Canada Trail for many reasons:

1. It has extensive historical significance.
2. It was the original Hudson Bay Trail and could be called the original Trans Canada Trail.
3. It is scenic and varied in terrain.
4. It could be a double trail, having both a land and water route, in that it meets with the North Saskatchewan River (Canadian Heritage River System) in many places.
5. Communities representing Canada's founding peoples (French, English and First Nations) are located along the route.
6. It includes Provincial Parks, Historical Interpretive Centres and all amenities modern travelers expect.
7. Local jurisdictions are expressing a willingness to develop this route as part of the TCT. The following have verbally endorsed the trail and have letters forthcoming:
 - County of St. Paul
 - County of Smoky Lake

- Town of St. Paul
- Heart of the Lakeland Destination Tourism Board
- Kalyna Country Destination Marketing
- others

8. The Carlton Trail has never really gone out of use and it would be relatively easy to complete this trail. Even as this is written, signage is going up from Fort Saskatchewan to Victoria Settlement south of Smoky Lake marking the historic route. The trail will be officially declared in August. The TCT could follow this marked route. With endorsement by the Counties of Smoky Lake and St. Paul, the trail runs almost to the Saskatchewan border. Thirty kilometers of trail from Elk Point to Heinsburg has been completed to date.
9. Completion of the Elk Point to Heinsburg Iron Horse Trail has shown citizens the many benefits of having a trail system. More people now understand the concept and wish to develop it further.
10. Documentation is attached to show historic references and maps regarding the Carlton Trail.

For further information, please call Sheila Thompson, Iron Horse Trail Committee at (780)724-2007 (evenings) or fax (780)726-3730.

