

Compiled and drawn by D.B. Dowling, B. Sc.

DISTRICT OF ASSINIBOIA N.W.T.

MAP SHOWING WOODED TRACTS AND CHARACTER OF SURFACE OF THE CYPRESS HILLS WOOD MOUNTAIN AND ADJACENT COUNTRY

by R.C. MCCONNELL B.A.

1895.

LEGEND

The coloured spots show in most cases the actual position and extent of the wooded areas, but for some localities the information is not sufficient to enable this to be indicated except in a general way. Information as to character of soil and distribution of wooded tracts derived in part from reports of Dominion Land surveyors.

NOTES.

The district may be divided according to relative altitude into plains and plateaus. The latter form the uplands of the region, and vary in height from those which scarcely rise more than a couple of hundred feet above the general level, up to plateaus like the Cypress Hills, which, at its western end, is bounded by abrupt escarpments fully a thousand feet high, from the base of which a further though less rapid descent of about 1,200 feet must be made before reaching the level of the surrounding plains. The plateaus are usually very irregular in outline, and are trenched in all directions by deep wide valleys, as every student soon wears a deep channel in the soft rocks of which they are composed. The Cypress differs to a considerable extent from the other plateaus, and is characterized by a more uneven surface, which

is dotted with a multitude of small lakes and is often boulder-strewn. The plateaus, owing to their height, have too cold a climate to be of much use from an agricultural standpoint, but are admirably adapted for grazing purposes, as they are always covered with a luxuriant growth of grass, and are well supplied with fresh water. The low-lying areas are separated by the plateaus into three distinct plains. The largest of these is the great plain which stretches from the Cypress Hills to beyond the Saskatchewan, and from the Cypress to the western edge of the map. One of the most remarkable features of this plain, and one which testifies to the aridity of its climate, is the entire absence of any general drainage system. Throughout its whole extent of nearly 10,000 square miles it does not support a single stream which flows the whole

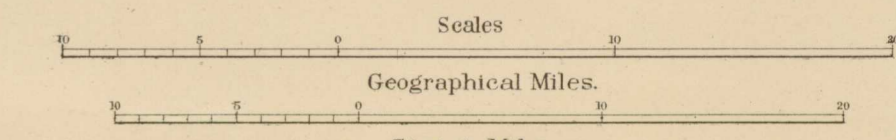
year through. It must not be inferred from this, however, that the district is incapable of cultivation, as farming operations have been successfully carried on in a number of places for several seasons, and the soil is apparently able to retain sufficient moisture throughout the summer to enable it to produce excellent crops. The part of this plain best suited for agricultural purposes lies along the foot of the Cypress Hills slope, and north along the Saskatchewan. In the interior the surface is frequently interrupted by areas of drifting sand, and high boundary ridges are not uncommon. The second plain is situated south of the Cypress Hills and White Mud River plateaus; its western part is underlain by a hard clay soil and is hopelessly barren, but towards the east it becomes much improved, and is tolerably fertile.

The third plain corresponds with the basin of Old Wives' Creek, and contains a considerable area of good loamy land. A more detailed description of each of the above plains and plateaus will be found in the accompanying report. Taking the district generally, probably about six-tenths may be regarded as fitted either for cultivation or grazing—a large proportion, when we consider the fact that the region in question is undisturbed by the most arid in the Canadian North-west. The Saskatchewan flows through the northern part of the district, and is navigable for light stern-wheel steamers for two or three months during the year. In low water, the number of shifting sand bars which block its channel in so many places renders its navigation by boats of any size almost impossible. This stream has a slope, in the district

covered by the map, of about 1.95 feet per mile, and an average current in low water of 2.5 miles an hour. The wood in this district is confined entirely to the higher plateaus, the river valleys, and to the sand-hills, and is nowhere very abundant. The largest supply is found in the western part of the Cypress Hills, where several square miles of the surface is covered with a thick growth of white spruce, (*Picea alba*) the trees ranging in size up to twelve or fourteen inches in diameter. In the eastern part of the hills the general surface is treeless, but groves of poplar, aspen, and spruce occur at intervals in most of the valleys and along the edges of the plateau. Wood Mountain and Swift Current Creek plateaus are both wooded to some extent, but the supply is more limited, and none of the groves exceed a few acres in extent.

Old-Man-on-the-back plateau and Boundary plateaus are entirely wooded, and White Mud River plateau and the Cypress are practically the same. The Valley of the Saskatchewan for a few miles below Medicine Hat, contains a number of flats which support groves of large cottonwoods, principally *Populus monilifera*, some of the trees being from two to three feet in diameter. It is then almost treeless until near the mouth of the Red Deer, where wooded flats are again met with. At this point, in addition to the numbers of the poplar family, and such common shrubs as the Choke Cherry, (*Prunus virginiana*), the service berry, (*Ambelanchier alba*), and some species of willow, the white birch was also observed. Below the mouth of the Red Deer groves of cottonwood and aspen are seldom absent for any considerable distance all the way down to the Elbow, and for a

number of miles above the latter place, they form an almost continuous fringe to the banks of the river. Old Wives' Creek is wooded for some distance above its mouth, chiefly with the ash-leaved maple, (*Aegle aceroides*), and the same tree is also found on Maple Creek, Flat Creek, and other streams flowing from the Cypress Hills. Swift Current Creek, and that portion of Milk River within the limits of the map are both sparingly wooded, but the White Mud River and the East and West Forks of Milk River are entirely destitute of any arboreal vegetation whatsoever, after leaving the vicinity of the Cypress Hills. The sand-hill areas are usually sprinkled with a scattered growth of shrubs and small trees, consisting principally of cherry, willow, aspen, birch, and rose; its one or two places isolated groves of cottonwood were observed.



Statute Miles. Natural Scale 1:500,000. HEIGHTS IN FEET ABOVE SEA-LEVEL.

Sources of information.

Main geographical features of townships marked by heavy lines from the Dominion Land surveys. Region in the vicinity of the 49th parallel from joint surveys of the North American Boundary Commission. Surveys by R.C. McConnell 1883-4, D.B. Dowling 1894.

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