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CHIEF GEOGRAPHER'S PLACE NAME SURVEY

1905-1909

II. ALBERTA

Alan Rayburn*

ÉTUDE TOPONYMIQUE DU GÉOGRAPHE EN CHEF

1905-1909

II. ALBERTA

Alan Rayburn*

In Volume 4, Number 1 of CANOMA five replies to James White's survey of British Columbia place names, 1905-1909, were reproduced and were accompanied by notes and commentary. In that article the writers, H. Kerfoot and W.B. Yeo, questioned whether Robert Douglas, the author of *Place-names of Alberta* (1928), had access to any of the White material. A thorough examination of the 235 Alberta circulars received by White can leave no doubt that they were not available to Douglas, who was the Secretary of the Geographic Board of Canada from 1916 to 1930. It would appear, therefore, that the circulars for western Canada were mislaid from some time before 1916 until 1977 when they were discovered in one of the divisions of the Surveys and Mapping Branch. The circulars for eastern Canada had been found in 1964.

In 1905 there were only 272 post offices in Alberta, but by 1909 the number had increased to 654. It is, therefore, difficult to evaluate the total response received by Mr. White since there is no information whether each of the postmasters in 1909 had received a circular. No responses were received from Calgary, Drumheller, Wetaskiwin, High River and Hanna, all of which were established communities before 1905. Several places, which are currently well known, like Hinton, Grande Prairie, Barrhead, Westlock, Edson and Drayton Valley did not have post offices before 1909.

* Alan Rayburn, Executive Secretary, Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names.

Dans son volume 4, numéro 1, la revue CANOMA a reproduit, avec notes et commentaires, cinq lettres reçues par James White sur l'enquête des noms de lieux de la Colombie-Britannique, 1905 à 1909. Dans cet article, les auteurs, H. Kerfoot et W.B. Yeo, se demandent si Robert Douglas, auteur de *Place-names of Alberta* (1928), avait eu accès aux documents de White. Après un examen minutieux des 235 circulaires de l'Alberta reçues par White, il ne fait aucun doute que Douglas n'y a pas eu accès, lui qui était secrétaire de la Commission de géographie du Canada de 1916 à 1930. Il semble donc que les circulaires pour les provinces de l'ouest ont été égarées quelque temps avant 1916, pour refaire surface en 1977 dans l'une des divisions de la Direction des levés et de la cartographie. Les circulaires pour les provinces de l'est ont été retrouvées en 1964.

En 1905, il n'y avait que 272 bureaux de poste en Alberta, chiffre qui était passé à 654 en 1909. Comme on ne sait pas si tous les maîtres de poste, en 1909, avaient reçu une circulaire, il est difficile d'évaluer le nombre de réponses qu'a obtenues White. Aucune n'a été reçue de Calgary, Drumheller, Wetaskiwin, High River et Hanna, toutes des collectivités établies avant 1905. Quelques localités, maintenant bien connues, comme Hinton, Grande Prairie, Barrhead, Westlock, Edson et Drayton Valley, n'avaient pas de bureau de poste avant 1909.

* Alan Rayburn, Secrétaire exécutif, Comité permanent canadien des noms géographiques.



Alberta: showing communities for which replies to James White's circulars are discussed.

Alberta: montrant les collectivités pour lesquelles sont incluses les réponses aux lettres circulaires de James White.

A few of the letters have been selected to illustrate the variety of names given around the turn of this century: *Taber*, from biblical sources, although different origins were surmised; *Stettler* and *Hillcrest Mines*, personal names honouring the founders of each place; *Marwayne*, an acronym derived from a settler's name and his English birthplace; *Krakow*, a name transferred from Europe; *St. Paul*, a Métis settlement established by Father Albert Lacombe; and *Spirit River*, a name relating to an intriguing tale of an Indian having been mauled by a bear.

In 1905 White received a reply from TABER. Aaron Johnson stated that the village was named Tabor, while the

Quelques-unes des lettres ont été choisies pour illustrer la diversité des noms donnés vers le début du siècle. Par exemple, *Taber* serait de source biblique, bien que différentes autres origines sont avancées; *Stettler* et *Hillcrest Mines* sont des noms propres en l'honneur du fondateur de chaque endroit; *Marwayne* est un acronyme formé à partir du nom d'un colon et de son lieu de naissance en Angleterre; *Krakow* est un nom importé d'Europe; *St. Paul* est un établissement métis fondé par le père Albert Lacombe, et *Spirit River* vient d'un mystérieux récit selon lequel un Indien aurait été mutilé par un ours.

En 1905, White a reçu une réponse de TABER, dans laquelle Aaron Johnson disait que le village était appelé Tabor,

Tabor Alta, Can.

Aug. 25th 1905.

Dear Sir,
Yours of Aug 19th at hand. Will say that the village of Tabor was named for the Mountain in Palestine mentioned in the Bible. However, one mile from the Ry. Station here, the name *Taber* appears; so the Station is called *Taber*, while the townsite, or village goes by the name *Tabor*. The blue print, or map (plan) of the village bears the name spelled with an *e*. The village site is $\frac{1}{4}$ of a mile from the station. Mr W. F. Russell, Chairman of the Village Committee told me this morning that Supt. Jamieson of the C.P.R. told him that the name should be *Tabor* named for the Mt mentioned in the Bible. The town, or village is known as *Tabor*, & contains about 600 people. The *Belly River* runs one mile north, & parallel with *Tabor*. It is a large stream containing many varieties of fish, which the people catch in great numbers.

Am not able to learn the derivation of the name "Belly".
Rocky Lake 2 m. south from *Tabor*, contains but little water; so named because of the many boulders lying about its borders.

5 Coal mines developing here, all within 2 m. from center of *Tabor Village*; "The *Tabor Coal Co.*" is in the lead, putting out about 10 car loads per day.

Aaron Johnson
Asst. pm.

railway station had become known as Taber. In *Place-names of Alberta* Douglas reported that Taber derived from the first part of the word tabernacle, this information having been provided by two surveyors, J.N. Wallace and N.S. Clouston. Shortly after the book's publication in 1928 Judge J.A. Jackson of Lethbridge informed Douglas that the name was derived from the biblical Mount Tabor, and this additional information was provided in an errata and addenda sheet circulated with copies of the book. Evidence submitted in 1943 by Judge Jackson indicated that Tabor was on two town plans registered in March, 1906 but a plan registered later that month had the spelling Taber, and this was used consistently thereafter. Judge Jackson stated that a trip by Senator Taber of Colorado through southern Alberta at the time when the station was named may have influenced the spelling, but that the persons who named the site definitely wanted Tabor. He reported that the name was definitely not derived from "tabernacle". At one time a small siding near Taber was known as Elcan, and it was recorded in Douglas's 1928 study that the name was a reversal of the last part of "tabernacle". Perhaps it was chosen in the belief that the nearby town's name was derived from the first two syllables of this word.

The details on STETTLER provided by Carl Stettler are especially fascinating since the town had been established only a few months before he received the request for information. In 1905 a post office had been established at Blumenau. The following year, on March 1, Carl Stettler moved the office two miles to the west to the thriving new village, which was then named in his honour.

In his letter Mr. Stettler explained that he was the local representative of the German American Colonization Company, which was responsible for encouraging German farmers to migrate from the United States. He noted that he had migrated from Switzerland to the United States in 1887 at the age of 26 and had moved to Alberta in 1903. Although the town of Stettler was only three and a half months old at the time he wrote his letter, he reported that there were over 50 businesses and professions already established there.

alors que la gare était connue sous le nom de Taber. Dans *Place-names of Alberta*, Douglas signale que, selon deux arpenteurs, J.N. Wallace et N.S. Clouston, Taber serait dérivé du mot tabernacle. Or, peu après la publication du livre en 1928, le juge J.A. Jackson, de Lethbridge, apprenait à Douglas que ce nom découlait du mont biblique Tabor, information qui fit l'objet d'un errata annexé aux exemplaires du livre. En 1943, le juge Jackson soumettait des documents qui indiquaient que Tabor était inscrit sur deux plans de ville enregistrés en mars 1906, mais que son orthographe a été changé à Taber sur un autre plan enregistré plus tard le même mois, pour être gardé ainsi par la suite. Le juge Jackson pense que ce changement d'orthographe peut avoir été influencé par une visite du sénateur Taber, du Colorado, faite dans le sud de l'Alberta au moment où un nom a été choisi pour la gare, mais que ceux qui l'ont choisi voulaient plutôt garder Tabor. Quoi qu'il en soit, ce nom, selon lui, ne vient certainement pas du mot tabernacle. En revanche, il y a déjà eu une petite voie d'évitement près de Taber nommée Elcan, qui est, d'après l'ouvrage de Douglas publié en 1928, un anagramme de la dernière partie du mot tabernacle. Ce nom a peut-être été choisi parce que l'on croyait que celui du village voisin était dérivé des deux premières syllabes du même mot.

Les détails sur STETTLER, fournis par Carl Stettler, sont particulièrement fascinants du fait que le village avait été fondé seulement quelques mois avant de recevoir la demande de renseignements. Le 1^{er} mars 1906, Carl Stettler déménageait le bureau de poste, ouvert l'année précédente à Blumenau, à deux milles à l'ouest dans un nouveau village prospère, qui a ensuite pris son nom en son honneur.

Dans sa lettre, Stettler explique qu'il était le représentant local de la German American Colonization Company, laquelle avait pour but d'encourager les fermiers allemands à émigrer des États-Unis. Il signale également qu'il a lui-même émigré de la Suisse aux États-Unis en 1887, à l'âge de 26 ans, pour ensuite s'établir en Alberta en 1903. Bien que le village de Stettler n'avait que trois mois et demi d'existence au moment où Stettler a écrit sa lettre, ce dernier raconte qu'il y avait déjà plus de cinquante commerces et professions sur place.

Blumenau P.O. is not in existence any more since March 1st 1906. - As founder of this German & Swiss Colony I have named this Post Office after a very prosperous German Town in Brazil South America, but since Jan. 1st we have Train Service from Lacombe to Stettler which is the end of the Railway at the present time. Stettler is named after me, my home is at Blumenau yet, but the Post Office was removed to Stettler with myself as Postmaster, am also a member of the German American Col. Co. and Manager of the Stettler Branch our Main office is at Calgary 119-9th Ave. West.

We will bring Lumber & German Farmers from the U. S. & locate them east of Stettler, to create some extensive immigration work without any support from the Government. One of our boys born near Bern in Switzerland ¹⁸⁶¹ and came to the U. S. in 1887 and moved to Alberta in April 1903. - Stettler is a new town only 3 1/2 months old and has the following business houses:

- 1 Bank (Merchants) 3 Lumber yards, 3 Hardware,
- 3 Livestock stores, 2 Hotels, 4 Boarding Houses, 1 Barber,
- 4 Implement dealers, 1 Harness shop, 1 Drug store,
- 1 Doctor, 2 Blacksmiths, 1 butcher, 1 Fruit & Candy store,
- 1 Jeweller, 1 Furniture store, 1 bakery, 1 Chinese Laundry
- 8 Real Estate Agents 3 building Contractors, 1 Feedmill
- 1 Creamery fully organized, also a Board of Trade,

Steps taken to organize electric Light Comps.

- 4 General Merchants, 1 Wholesale Whisky House,
- 1 Grain buyer and 2 Elevators to be created this season. The Luce Land Co. of Minneapolis has bought 200,000 acres of land in this District and will run special Cars & Trains to Stettler this season. We expect to get a Sub Agency of the Red Deer Land Office at Stettler by next month. Many residences under construction. Carl Stettler

Reply to circular: from Stettler

Réponse à la lettre circulaire: de Stettler

HILLCREST MINES was established by C.P. Hill, who had come to Alberta from the state of Idaho. In noting that Port Hill in Idaho was also named for him, he humorously quipped: "Such is the result of 24 years hustling in the Northwest". A letter was also received from the nearby Coleman, indicating that it was named for the daughter of A.C. Flumerfelt, but no letters were returned from other Crowsnest Pass communities like Blairmore and Frank, and Bellevue was not established until after White sent out his circulars to postmasters in the area.

HILLCREST MINES a été fondé par C.P. Hill, originaire de l'Idaho. En apprenant que la ville de Port Hill en Idaho était également nommée en son honneur, il a répondu avec une pointe d'humeur: "Such is the result of 24 years hustling in the Northwest". Une lettre a également été reçue du village voisin appelé Coleman indiquant qu'il avait été nommé en l'honneur de la fille de A.C. Flumerfelt, mais aucune lettre n'a été renvoyée par les autres collectivités de Crowsnest Pass comme Blairmore et Frank. Bellevue n'a été fondé qu'après que White eut envoyé ses circulaires aux maîtres de poste de la région.

M. P. DAVIS,
PRESIDENT

G. W. FOWLER, M. P.,
VICE-PRESIDENT

C. P. HILL,
MAN. DIRECTOR-TREAS.

THE
HILL CREST COAL & COKE COMPANY
HILL CREST MINE LIMITED

POST OFFICE ADDRESS, HILL CREST MINES, April 7 -09.
ALBERTA, CANADA

James White, Esq.,
Chief Geographer,
Department of Interior,
Ottawa, Ont.

Dear Sir:-

In reply to yours of the 24th March, I beg to say that the Post Office of Hillcrest Mines was named after your humble servant. I am also glad to report that the town of Port Hill, Idaho was dedicated and the Post Office named for me. Such is the result of 24 years hustling in the Northwest.

Yours very truly,

CPH.

The Hillcrest Coal & Coke Co., L't'd.
C. P. Hill
.....
Managing Director

Reply to circular: from Hillcrest Mines

Réponse à la lettre circulaire: de Hillcrest Mines

The naming of MARWAYNE illustrates imagination in the creation of a new name for a farm near Lloydminster. W.C. Marfleet chose the acronym by combining the first syllable of his surname with that of the community of Wainfleet in Lincolnshire, England; in his letter he spelled it "Waynflete", possibly an archaic form of the name. Another place named in much the same way was Whitecourt, given by Walter White who was responsible for picking up the mail at Green Court, 40 km to the southeast. The name was adopted for the local post office in 1906.

MARWAYNE est un exemple d'imagination dans la formation d'un nouveau nom pour une ferme située près de Lloydminster. Son auteur, W.C. Marfleet a composé cet acronyme en combinant la première syllabe de son nom de famille et celle de Wainfleet, petite collectivité située en Lincolnshire, en Angleterre. Il épelaît "Waynflete" dans sa lettre qui est peut être une forme archaïque du nom. Whitecourt est un autre endroit dont le nom a été formé de la même façon par Walter White, à qui incombait la responsabilité d'aller chercher le courrier à Green Court, quarante kilomètres au sud-est. Le nom a été adopté par le bureau de poste local en 1906.

Mr. W. Creasey Marfleet,

"MARWAYNE,"
LLOYDMINSTER,
SASKATCHEWAN,
CANADA.

Marwayne po
Alia

12/2/09

Dear Sirs,

In reply to your letter of the 26th January this Office was not named after myself only the first sentence of my name Marfleet and the second part after the Town I lived in the Old Country Warrington we had the name made out for our Farm before we left England and when we applied for the Post Office ^{of the Department} accepted the name Marwayne enclosed is my Card I had printed in England trusting you will understand my explanation.

Yours faithfully

W. C. Marfleet, p.m.

Reply to circular: from Marwayne

Réponse à la lettre circulaire: de Marwayne

The letter from the postmistress of KRAKOW, Anna Hamutka, September 5, 1905 reflects the significance of the French language in communications by persons of Polish ancestry at the turn of this century.

La lettre envoyée le 5 septembre 1905 par Anna Hamutka, maîtresse des postes à KRAKOW, reflète l'importance du français dans les communications entre personnes d'origine polonaise vers le début du vingtième siècle.

En réponse de votre circulaire de 24

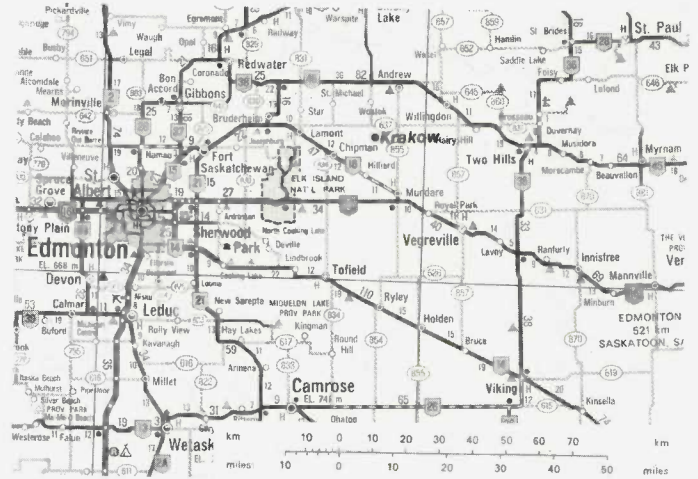
abord je ne puis par vous donner exactement toutes les particularités parce que cette environs où je demeure est peu connue soit parce est peuplé par pauvres Saliciens farmers qui ne connaissent l'anglais ni lire ni écrire soit parce qu'il n'y a pas aucune ville ni village ni mines ni fabriques seulement agriculteurs Saliciens qui depuis dernière année arrivent toujours de nouvelles familles et ont occupés déjà depuis rive Fort Lashatchewon jusqu'à Vegreville et de Star jusqu'à Victoria et plus loin. A Dix miles de notre Krakow est un à l'Inde et dans T. 53 et 54 R. 15 et 16 est nomé ce espace Dąbrowa Dąbrowa. Dans sec. 15 T. 54. R. 11 il y a une mission R. Catholique. il y a un couvent de sœurs polonaises dans même place Il y a aujour de notre P.O. plusieurs petits Lakes qui se sont formées il y a deux ans a cause de grandes pluies mais si seront années seques ils disparaîtront Premier missionnaire dans ce nouveau settlement que qualifié maintenant par les Saliciens était R. Father Olszewski R. C. Priest C'est lui qui fait venir beaucoup de Saliciens de Salice Lui fonde plusieurs églises R. C. établie aussi les sœurs polonaise au tra Krakow
Votre servante obéissante Anna Hamulka Krakow 5/9 1905

In translation, she stated:

In answer to your circular of August 22 I cannot give you every particular exactly as to these surroundings where I am living, as little is known, being as it is populated by poor Galician farmers who do not know the English language being neither able to read nor write, and being as there are no town or village, nor mines or industries, only Galician farmers. During the twelve years new families have been arriving and have taken up land from Fort Saskatchewan to Vegreville and from Star to Victoria and further. Ten miles from our Krakow to the south, that is in Township 53 and 52, Range 15 and 16, this area is named Dabrowa. In Section 15, Township 54, Range 17 there is a R. Catholic mission. There is a convent of Polish sisters in the same place. Around our P.O. there are several little lakes which were formed two years ago because of heavy rains but if there are dry years they disappear. The first missionary in this new settlement now populated by the Galicians was R. Father Olszewski, R.C. Priest. It was he who encouraged many Galicians to come from Galicia. He founded several R.C. churches and also established the Polish sisters in Krakow. Your obedient servant, Anna Hamutka, Krakow. 5/9 1905

The following winter White sent another circular to Krakow, and once more Anna Hamutka provided a detailed statement on the settlements of Krakow and Dabrowa. When White acknowledged receipt of that circular, she responded by noting that Krakus was the legendary founder of Krakow in Poland, thus explaining the origins of that name.

Another letter received in French was from ST. PAUL, then known as St-Paul de Mètis.



"Travel Alberta Road Map 1978/79"

L'hiver suivant, White a envoyé une autre circulaire à Krakow que lui a, une fois de plus, retournée Anna Hamutka en donnant tous les détails demandés sur les établissements de Krakow et de Dabrowa. Après avoir accusé réception de la circulaire, White a reçu en réponse une note lui expliquant l'origine du nom Krakow: il vient de Krakus, fondateur légendaire de Krakow, en Pologne.

Une autre lettre, écrite en français est envoyée de ST. PAUL, alors connue sous le nom de St-Paul de Mètis.

St Paul de Mètis - Alta

Le nom de St Paul a été choisi pour conserver le nom de la Mission St Paul de ce grand entrepôt sur la rive de la Rivière Saskatchewan par le R.P. Lacombe pour y réunir les Indiens Crés. Cette mission a dû être abandonnée plus tard quand les sauvages firent leur traité avec le Gouvernement d'Otawa et durent se retirer dans leurs réserves respectives.

En 1896, Le P. Lacombe fonda non loin de cet ancien St Paul, une nouvelle Colonie entièrement peuplée de Mètis.

Dans le Plan Original de St. Paul de Métis
 (est le nom de la Colonie, du Bureau de Poste, et
 de la mission elle même — Les deux lacs qui
 viennent se joindre tout près étaient autrefois
 connus des Indigènes sous le nom de Lacs
des Oeufs. Mais ce nom est si commun dans
 ces parages, que l'arpenteur général, sur
 la demande de M^r Hopkins G.L.S. les inscrivit
 sur la carte sous le nom de Lacs Thérien.
 L. R. P. J. A. Thérien ^(o.m.i.) ayant été le premier Directeur
 Directeur de la Colonie de St. Paul comme il en
 a été pour longtemps le principal soutiens —

G^{ve} Simonin

Reply to circular: from St-Paul de Métis (now St. Paul)

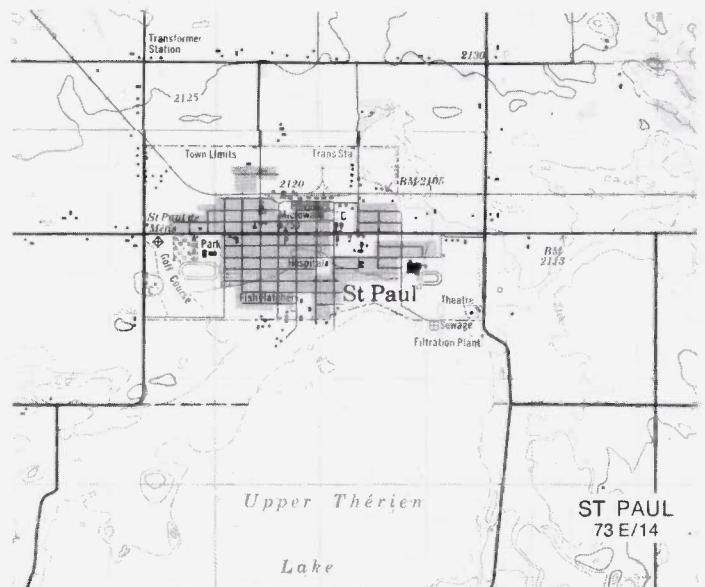
Réponse à la lettre circulaire: de St-Paul de Métis (aujourd'hui St. Paul)

In translation the letter reads:

The name of ST. PAUL had been chosen to preserve the name of the St-Paul des Cris Mission, founded earlier on the banks of the Saskatchewan River by the Rev. Father Lacombe to bring together the Cree Indians. That mission had to be abandoned subsequently when the savages made their treaty with the Ottawa Government and withdrew to their respective reserves.

In 1896 Father Lacombe established not far from this Old St-Paul, a new colony populated entirely by Métis. The full name is St-Paul de Métis. It is the name of the colony, the post office and the mission itself. The two lakes which are located quite near are otherwise known to the natives by the name of Lacs des Oeufs (Egg Lakes). But for us that name was so common in these surroundings that the Surveyor General, on the request of Mr. Hopkins, G.L.S., wrote on the map Lacs Thérien. Rev. Father J.A. Thérien (o.m.i.) had been the first director of the St-Paul colony as he had been for a long time its main supporter.

G^{ve} Simonin, o.m.i.



Some of the letters provided interesting folk tales relating to the naming of features by the Indians. An example is SPIRIT RIVER. The details provided by H.E. Calkin have not been previously noted in published works on the names of Alberta.

Certaines lettres faisaient mention de contes intéressants sur les noms que donnaient les Indiens aux lieux. Un exemple: SPIRIT RIVER. Les détails fournis par H.E. Calkin n'ont jamais encore été relevés dans aucun ouvrage publiée sur les noms de lieux en Alberta.

Spirit River, Apr. 24/1906

Jas. White Esq.
Government Geographer
Ottawa.

Dear Sir:

In accordance with your request under date of Feb. 22nd, I have made inquiries regarding the origin of the name of this settlement. The settlement is named after the river of that name, which is a small stream flowing through about ten miles of prairie and emptying into a somewhat larger stream called "Burnt" River which in turn empties into Peace River about 20 miles below Fort Demoyan. The old Cree settlers here tell me that long ago, when the Buffalo were plentiful here

and when the Beaver Indians inhabited this part of the country, before being driven back by the Cree, the Beavers used to camp here and hunt Buffalo. Once when they were in camp here, a very large grizzly bear appeared on the prairie, and the braves, getting large sticks instead of their guns, got on their horses and started out to have some fun, by teasing and chasing the bear. It chanced that one man being disabled in some way - or his horse lame, could not tell which - was unable to load the bear successfully and got caught. The bear dragged him over the bank into the river bottom near the edge of the water and there killed him in sight of his comrades. The bear then became to them a ghost or a devil instead of a bear. Hence the name of the river, which the Cree call "Chépye Seepé" or Ghost or Spirit River. Yours Respectfully H. E. Aldin
North West Mounted

Reply to circular: from Spirit River

Réponse à la lettre circulaire: de Spirit River



Spirit River, looking north, 1920

(National Photography Collection,
Public Archives of Canada,
PA-18367)

Spirit River, vue nord, 1920

(Collection nationale de photographies,
Archives publiques du
Canada, PA-18367)

This selection from the circular letters illustrates the wide variety of cultural sources from which Alberta's cities, towns and villages derived their names. Many of the other letters provide equally fascinating details about the founding of communities and the selecting of names.

The Chief Geographer's place name survey will be continued in Volume 6, Number 1 of CANOMA. In that number a selection of the 384 circulars received from Saskatchewan postmasters will be reviewed.

Certaines des lettres reçues illustrent bien la grande diversité des sources culturelles qui sont à l'origine des noms donnés aux collectivités, grandes et petites, de l'Alberta. Beaucoup d'autres lettres apportent des détails tout aussi fascinants sur la fondation des collectivités et le choix de leur nom.

L'étude toponymique du géographe en chef se poursuivra dans le volume 6, numéro 1 de CANOMA qui traitera alors de quelques-unes des 384 circulaires reçues des maîtres de poste de la Saskatchewan.