

A landscape painting of a rural scene. In the foreground, there is a field of tall grasses and purple wildflowers. A dirt path leads towards a wooden cabin in the middle ground. The cabin has a gabled roof and a small flag on top. To the left of the cabin, there is a pond with two swans. A fence line made of wooden posts and wire runs across the middle ground. The sky is a clear, bright blue. The overall style is that of a classic landscape painting.

Original Humboldt

Stories of the Land

Published by Humboldt & District Museum

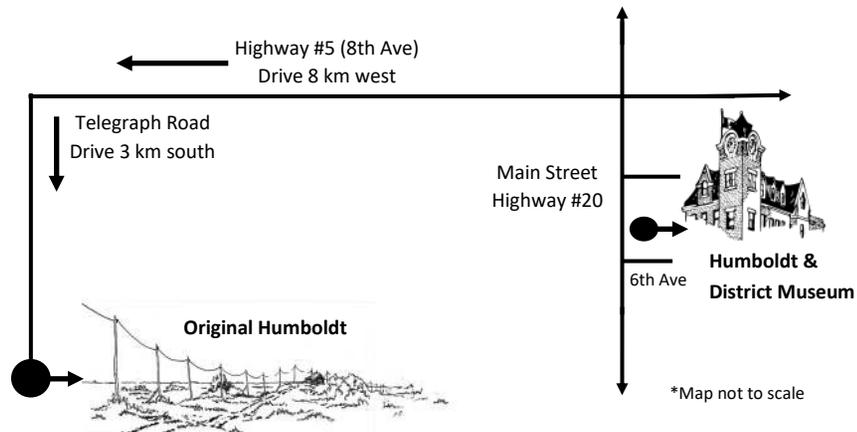
Humboldt, Sask - Fourth Edition - 2018

Lukan



Original Humboldt

The Original Humboldt site is located south and west of the City of Humboldt, in Saskatchewan.



Published by
Humboldt & District Museum
www.humboldtmuseum.ca

Cover artwork by Urban Lukan, Humboldt

80 acres of land - rich in history and fun to explore!

The Original Humboldt site is a scenic 80 acres of land located an 11 kilometer drive southwest of Humboldt where the original Humboldt Telegraph Station was built in 1878.

The significance of the land is multifaceted, as it played an important role in the Canadian story of communications, transportation, the 1885 North West Resistance, relations with First Nations and Métis people, and the settlement of Saskatchewan.

The art installations and storyboards share the fascinating stories of the land.



Murray Cook of Humboldt forged a metal log cabin depicting the Humboldt Telegraph Station from 1878.



Don Wilkins of Davidson created a Red River Cart that symbolizes the stories of the Métis people and the Carlton Trail.



In 2017, the Sharing Stories of the Land event included special guests Her Honour the Honourable Vaughn Solomon Schofield Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan, Honourable Minister Donna Harpauer, Chief Darcy Bear of the Whitecap Dakota First Nation, Captain Rich Bulley and Master Warrant Officer Doug McIlvenna of the Royal Canadian Dragoons, Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Scott Duncan and the Regimental Sargent Major, Chief Warrant Officer David Munroe of the Governor General's Horse Guards, Mayor Rob Muench with members of the Original Humboldt committee.



The partnership with the Whitecap Dakota First Nation resulted in two tipis, flag, and storyboards installed at the site to share the story of Chief Whitecap and the Dakota.



Replicas of military tents and storyboards in the military camp area tell the story of the 460 soldiers camped on the land during the 1885 North West Resistance under the command of Lt. Col. George T. Denison of the Governor General's Body Guards.

The Governor General's Horse Guards Cavalry and Historical Society formed a joint partnership to dedicate a memorial plaque to remember the service of the Regiment in Canada.

The site is the only place in Canada which commemorates the National Historic Event of building the Dominion Telegraph Line.



Enjoy a leisurely walk along the grass paths with walkways over the marsh sponsored by Conexus. There have been stories of a grave on the land. A small picket fence and storyboard shares what is known about the mysterious grave.



View a replica of a telegraph line constructed with poplar poles, to the 1878 Ducharme House, which was created by Garry Jenkins and Reynold Fortowsky.

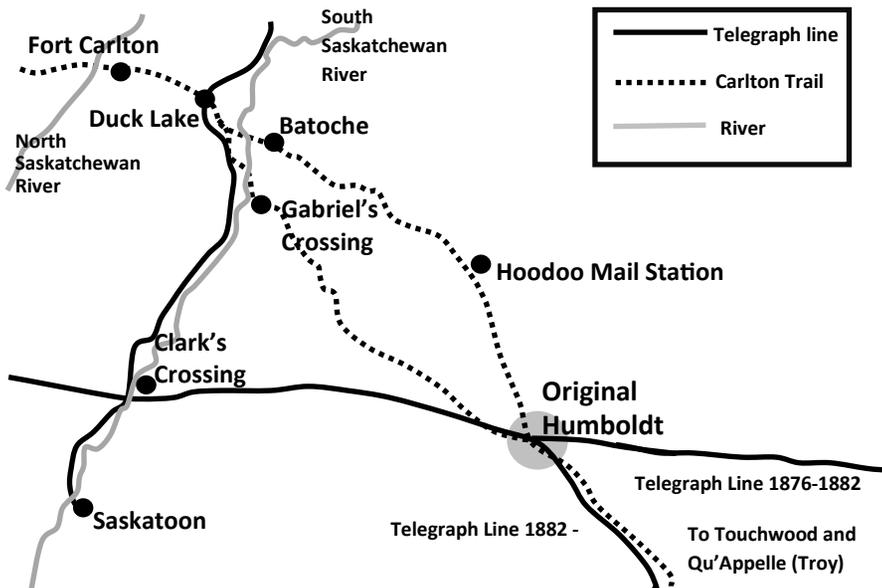
Historic Stories of the Land

Carlton Trail

The Humboldt Telegraph Station was built in 1878 alongside the prominent Carlton Trail which was an overland transportation route connecting Fort Garry (Winnipeg) to Edmonton. The Carlton Trail was named after a Hudson's Bay Company post located on the North Saskatchewan River. Parts of the Carlton Trail were used as early as 1799 and, although there are some recorded journeys on horseback as early as 1815, the cart trail had become a recognized overland travel route by the mid 1800s. With oxen speed of approximately two miles per hour, it would take a cart 40 days to travel the 480 miles from Fort Garry to Fort Carlton.

The Carlton Trail entered Saskatchewan southeast of Melville, wound through Touchwood Hills, and passed near Wynyard, Lanigan and Humboldt. The trail crossed the South Saskatchewan River at Batoche and proceeded towards Duck Lake, Fort Carlton, and Fort Pitt. At Humboldt, a southern section was established in the mid 1800s that crossed the South Saskatchewan River at Gabriel's Crossing before joining up again with the original trail west of Batoche.

The Carlton Trail became a vital transportation route for the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies at the height of the fur trade. The trail was significant in the initial planning of the Canadian Pacific Railway when it was proposed as the route across the northwest. The development and position of this historic trail through the Humboldt area was influential in further development of the area.



Métis People

The Carlton Trail was integral to Métis life in early Saskatchewan. By the mid nineteenth century, Métis men worked as seasonal freighters in the Hudson's Bay Company transportation system and carried goods and supplies along the trail to inland settlements. This work complemented that of other Métis who served as tripmen on the rivers and lakes.

The Carlton Trail connected Métis communities in the region, such as the nearby Grosse Butte wintering site (Mount Carmel) and those in the Batoche area. It also provided access to the northern plains and the bison herds. Métis families hunted in large groups during the summer and returned to their home with pemmican (dried meat) and tongues, as well as robes and tipi covers.

The annual summer bison hunt was a carefully organized and executed event. Once the herds were located, Métis men hunted the bison from horseback, while women and children prepared the slain animals on the spot and processed the meat into pemmican.



Métis freighters and hunters used the two-wheeled Red River cart. One of its most distinctive features was its huge wheels, five feet high, and ideally suited for travel over the tough prairie sod or marshy ground. It was also made entirely of wood and could be relatively easily repaired from local trees whenever there was a breakdown. But its most unforgettable characteristic was the constant screeching when it was in motion, caused by the dry wooden wheel hubs turning on the dry wooden axle.

The Red River cart has become an enduring symbol of the Métis people and the important role they played in the development of the Canadian west.

*Bill Waiser
Department of History
University of Saskatchewan*

Settling western Canada

The development of the Original Humboldt site was influenced by the national events of the new country of Canada formed in 1867. The national policy of Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first Prime Minister, led to the expansion of the new country to include Manitoba, North West Territories (which included Saskatchewan and Alberta), British Columbia and Prince Edward Island.

By the mid 1870s, the Canadian government wanted an immigrant population of agricultural settlers established in the west. No urban centers existed on the prairies in the 1870s, and rural settlement was the focus of the federal government's attention. Settling the west offered the advantage of safeguarding the 49th parallel from the threat of American take-over. The surest way to protect Canadian territory and to achieve the secondary goal of joining British Columbia to the rest of the country was to import large numbers of Eastern Canadian and British settlers.

To bolster Canada's population and agricultural output, the federal government took steps to secure western land. The Dominion of Canada purchased Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1870. In 1872, the federal government enacted the Dominion Lands Act to encourage settlement. The Canadian government also created the North West Mounted Police (NWMP) in 1873 and stationed men in the west to secure the area for future settlers.

Settling the west also made imperative the building of a transcontinental railway. The railway would work to create an east-west economy in which western Canada would feed the growing urban industrial population of the east and in return become a market for eastern Canadian manufactured goods.

In 1872, John Macoun began evaluating agricultural potential with a series of expeditions across central Saskatchewan which were initially part of the railway and telegraph surveys carried out under Sandford Fleming. Then, between 1877 and the 1920s, the Dominion Land Survey carried out a massive program mapping over 3,000 individual townships across the southern half of the province.

The goal of developing the west had begun, but an important piece was still missing – a communications link.

Building the Line

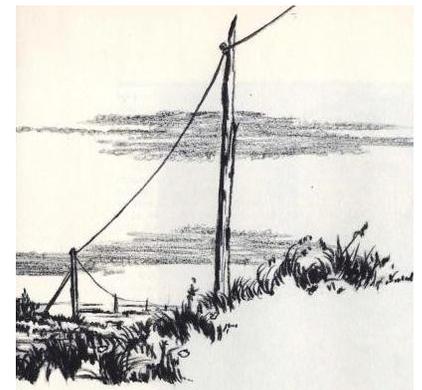
In the 1870s, the Canadian government was working on settling the west, providing law enforcement to the area, and building a transcontinental railway. The development of the Dominion Telegraph Line in 1876 was another critical aspect of Canadian history that is linked to the establishment of the Humboldt Telegraph Station at the Original Humboldt site.

In 1874, the Dominion government began construction of a telegraph line that would follow the proposed route of the Canadian Pacific Railway. The line was built to bring the areas of western Canada within range of the central authority and prepare them for immigration and settlement. It was also important to have a communications link with the Mounties at their posts.

The first section of the Dominion Telegraph western line was strung across Manitoba connecting Selkirk to Swan River and was operational by July 1876. The second section of the line extended from Swan River through Humboldt to Clark's Crossing, Battleford, and into Alberta near Leduc. This western section of the telegraph line was completed in November 1876 with repair stations at Poplar Plains, Humboldt, and Battleford.

From the beginning, it was a constant effort to maintain the line in working condition. Linemen were stationed approximately 100 miles or more apart and had to travel by horse and buckboard over difficult terrain. Unsuitable poplar trees were used as poles, which were regularly knocked over by buffalo using them as scratching posts, or burned by prairie fires. When the wire was strung through leafy groves, the line lost current in wet weather which made it difficult to telegraph any considerable distance.

By the end of 1876 the line was in operation from Selkirk, Manitoba to a point near Edmonton. It was the development of the telegraph line that would bring George and Catherine Weldon to the Original Humboldt site.



Sketch by Urban Lukan

George and Catherine Weldon

The name "Humboldt" was initially chosen to mark the telegraph station that was planned as part of the Canadian Pacific Telegraph Line in 1875. The building of the Original Humboldt Telegraph station began with the arrival of George and Catherine Weldon in 1878.



George Weldon (pictured at left) departed from Ireland on May 16, 1871, landed in New York on June 3 and travelled north to Ontario working various jobs such as farm labourer and store clerk.



In October 1876, George married Catherine Liggett (pictured at right), his sweetheart from Ireland who had immigrated to Canada with her brother.

In March 1878, George and Catherine, along with Catherine's sister Maggie, headed west to work for the Canadian Pacific Telegraph line at \$75 per month. The difficult trek was hampered by muskeg, bulldogs, mosquitoes and thunderstorms. At one point their horse pulled the cart into a creek but could not get it out. George unloaded the supplies and hitched the cart to the horse's tail to pull it out. George waded for more than a mile knee-deep in water covered with ice an inch thick.

George recorded family and work life at Original Humboldt: "July 25, 1878 - The mosquitoes are a perfect fright. Make a noise on the tent like heavy rain. We breakfast on our feet, here, there, everywhere tormented by mosquitoes. Maggie threw the porridge out, it being too well sprinkled with mosquitoes to be palatable."

On August 19, 1878, George began building the log cabin that would be the family home and the Humboldt Telegraph Station.

A Number of Firsts



Catherine Weldon (pictured at left) took on the duties of telegraph operator and became well-known as the first female telegraph operator in the west.

The first commercial telegraph message from Humboldt was sent by the Stobart Co. in Duck Lake to the Stobart Co. in Winnipeg on August 25, 1878.

Construction of the station continued through snow falling in mid-September, and the family finally moved in on September 27. George wrote in his diary, "...as the shadows of evening are gathering, we move into our home and now we know how to appreciate a home, be it ever so humble."

On a visit with the Weldons, Reverend Whiteside noted the difficult conditions that hampered George in building the station. "He had to bring his boards from Battleford for the floors and the water for the plaster a distance of seven miles and driving twice a day. The logs are poplar wood, poor quality for that purpose, yet they have made quite a comfortable place."

George's diary entries provide a glimpse of everyday life: "September - Stevenson freighter passed leaving oats along the way for surveyors. Cold and frosty. Line works poorly west. October - Prairie is on fire to the northwest. A light breeze gets up, we make preparations. Wind shifts and fire keeps off to west, a heavy frost extinguishes fire. November - Corporal Latimer and seven men of N.W.M.P. camp. Robinson and I ride to the mail trail and get letters left



there. We celebrate the Fifth of November! Bandmaster Walker give appropriate music on flute. Mr. and Mrs. Percy and attendants camp. They left England last June and went on a hunting trip to the Rocky Mountains. Journeyed into British Columbia and now on their way home, which they wish to reach by Christmas."

The Weldons had survived their long journey west and built a home to shelter the family through the long, lonely winter. On the prairie in 1878, George and Catherine, along with their daughter Birdie (pictured at left with George), had put "Humboldt" on the map.

Duties of a Lineman

George Weldon and Joe Ducharme worked on the telegraph line. George mentioned Joe in his diary as early as May 1878, as they left for a brief trip from the Swan River Barracks in Manitoba and headed west. By the summer of 1878, they were in the Humboldt area, as George wrote of numerous travellers camping at Joe's place. There was a second building, approximately 100 meters southeast of the station, which is referred to as the Ducharme House.

George's diary entries from 1878-79 recount the difficult work: "July 4 – I take 34 trees off the line by standing on wet log, cutting trees above. I slip and cut the line – not having pulleys, I cannot fix it up. Have dinner, and head west again, finding trouble on the line. I take nine trees off the line making a total of 43 trees today. I make camp and am almost eaten to madness by mosquitoes."

"July 7 – Provisions getting small... Joe Ducharme and I pick strawberries and come back just in time to extinguish fire which is burning a hole in the tent. Manage to save saddle and other traps."

"August 2 – Joe reports finding line in grass for over a mile; cutting off 200 trees and resettling 22 poles. The lightning had shattered poles. Put in temporary poles, insulated line well, turned back at Assiniboine."

"September 4 – Poles shattered by lightning. Badly slivered three of them, one on top of another... middle pole hanging three feet from the ground. Wire grounded for 100 yards."

"September 20 – Piercing cold. I am lulled to sleep by the mournful hum of the wire; neither bush, brush nor shrub for shelter. I sleep soundly. I travel without shelter, make a fire on clay tossed up by the badgers. Very windy nights."

"October 19 – As we pitch the tent, snow falls. Through the night, the tent is blown down, at 1:00 am we rise, axe can't be found. A blustery night to turn out and peg down tent. We make a start next morning in a blinding snowstorm."

"January 2, 1879 – Joe gets message that his pay stops from date. January 4, 1879 – Joe receives message that he must pay rent for house from date."

"January 19, 1879 - The men lay over stopping at Joe's. That night we had a grand old time, songs galore, a step of the Red River jig, and a war-whoop from the boys that gets the dogs howling and the baby wakes up." It is unclear how long Joe remained at Original Humboldt, as George mentions him later in February 1879, but not again.

"During the year 1879, I have taken 1,533 trees from the line, reset 373 poles and traveled 2,748 miles. I have found five breaks and I found grounds and escapes too numerous to keep track of. All of this work I have done myself with the exception of help while setting about 200 poles."

Remote Humboldt

In the summer of 1881, Humboldt had one of its most distinguished early visitors. The Marquis of Lorne, Governor General of Canada, John Douglas Sutherland Campbell stopped at the Humboldt Telegraph Station in August 1881. His wife, Princess Louise, Queen Victoria's daughter, did not accompany him on this trip. The Marquis noted that "many a weary wayfarer remembers gratefully the open door and warm hospitality of the Weldon home in Humboldt."

The visit was recounted in an article in the *London Graphic*, dated August 23, 1881. "It is perhaps fortunate that I have left myself no space or time even to try to do justice to Humboldt as I might otherwise be tempted to exceed all reasonable limits. For Humboldt is actually a telegraph station; the first we have seen since we left the railway, full 15 days ago. Humboldt contains two houses (the nearest house is 60 miles away) and a population of, I believe, four persons, and has some right to be proud of being not only a telegraph but also a meteorological station with an anemometer, barometer, and two thermometers. We found two ladies here. They both complained, not perhaps, altogether unnaturally that Humboldt was 'a little lonely' and the sister briefly summarized here as 'four months mosquitoes and eight months winter'."

Catherine Weldon took a less gloomy view of Humboldt life. "She declares that the 'only thing she misses is church.' She likes the North West very well, better even than the Old Country, and does not the least mind the cold though she has twice seen the spirit thermometer register 64 degrees below zero... Her house has been built with wood got close at hand, and it seems a sufficiently good one, though the younger sister abuses it and was indignant with Mr. Hall, from whose indefatigable pencil nothing is safe, for having sketched it 'so true instead of making something nice out of it'."



Drawing by Sydney Hall

Public Archives of Canada

This lovely bud of promise

The history of the Original Humboldt land includes the tragic death of young Birdie Weldon. Her father George mentions her often in his diary.

Ann Jane Weldon, fondly known as Birdie, was the first child of George and Catherine Weldon, born in the fall of 1877. Birdie traveled west with her parents in 1878 and lived her short life on the Original Humboldt site. The heartbreaking end of Birdie Weldon's life began just before Christmas, 1881. On December 23, 1881, the clouds began to gather. The home is quiet. The older folks walk softly, for the light and joy of the home – wee Birdie – is sick. For one long, weary, anxious month with five days more, a losing battle is waged. By telegraph, the diagnosis is quinsy. Remedies are applied and hopes are revived. Then the sky lowers and ground is lost. Another consultation over the telegraph line between the mother and the doctor, and again science and mother love renew the warfare but all in vain. George writes in his diary, "On Saturday, January 28, 1882, our darling little Birdie left us to join the angels above the skies."

Birdie's ailment was diagnosed as quinsy, which is an abscess behind the tonsil. The saddened parents wanted to give their daughter a Christian burial, but Prince Albert was the closest point where there was a resident minister. As the trail was blocked with snow, there were few options, except to keep her body frozen all winter. However, two men refused to accept this fate for Birdie and performed an act of courage and compassion. The two linemen at the station, Alfred Lindeburgh and Roderick Finlayson, rose to the occasion. Constructing a hand sleigh, they fastened the body to it, and on snowshoes accompanied Birdie's father George, and tramped 150 miles to Prince Albert, one man breaking trail while his companion drew the sled. The journey occupied several days, through an uninhabited country at the coldest season of the year.

Birdie was buried in the Presbyterian section of the Prince Albert cemetery. Her memorial card reads: "In loving remembrance of Birdie Weldon who died at Humboldt, N.W.T. on Saturday, January 28, 1882. Age 4 years, 5 months and 15 days. This lovely bud of promise was early doomed to die, She's gone to dwell with Jesus for evermore on high."

Ann Jane "Birdie" Weldon



A lively, pretty Irish girl

Margaret Liggett, Catherine Weldon's sister arrived at Humboldt in 1878 at the age of 20. When the Marquis of Lorne visited the Original Humboldt site in 1881, he described Margaret, known as Maggie, as "a lively pretty Irish girl, who has a right to feel aggrieved that her good looks and fun are wasted on such desert air. For want of a better sport, she has taken to 'gunning,' has a gun of her own and is a capital shot – has even slain a wolverine."

Maggie's prowess as a huntress resulted in an article about her written in the late 1800s. Maggie saw her brother-in-law, George Weldon bring down a partridge and "... each day she found that life itself depended upon the quick touch of the trigger, and quite as an amusement she learned to take aim, fire and load again. Within a season, she became an expert at target practice, and by her newly acquired skill she once saved her own life. It was her first 'game'."

"One fine afternoon, lured by the limpid light that fell athwart a prairie sky, she had wandered further than she knew. Tripping through the fields, unfenced, unhedged, and far reaching, she suddenly found herself confronted by a wolverine, one of the most vicious animals of the western prairies. Between the girl and safety, an appalling distance yawned, and the glare of two hungry eyes, eager-for-blood was before her. Down came the rifle from a careless shoulder, and up went the shining barrel, a quick Irish brown eye, all undaunted, looking along the 'sight' while a firm white finger touched the trigger. As the wolfish teeth snapped, the animal crouched to leap, but it was to receive the lead pellet in the middle of its forehead. Then the woman overcame the huntress, and seeing the creature dead before her, the plucky girl turned and fled, pursued by the terrible thought of a life taken. Later on, she learned to rejoice over such a splendid field prize.



Miss Liggett's skill with the rifle was remarkable. She shot all kinds of wild game, and the Weldon table had every delicacy known to the middle west. Trophies adorned the walls of the neat log house at Humboldt, and many beautiful and costly rugs were the proofs of her excellent marksmanship."

Margaret Liggett married Alfred Lindeburgh in 1884, and together they operated the Kutawa Telegraph Office in the Touchwood Hills area.

Margaret Liggett

Weldon Hospitality

Although George and Catherine Weldon's time at the Humboldt Telegraph Station was brief (1878 – 1882), they were an integral part of the history of the site. Many travellers who recorded their experiences along the Carlton Trail made special mention of the Weldons' hospitality.

In 1881, Rev. Andrew Baird wrote, "... the people here - Presbyterians from the North of Ireland - were very glad to see me. The lady of the house - telegraph operator - baked a couple of big bannocks for me to take with me, when they found that I was out of bread, and I was invited to stay for tea which was got ready in the middle of the afternoon."

George and Catherine Weldon remained at the Original Humboldt site until 1882. They moved to Grenfell and George became the agent for the Canadian Pacific Railway. In June 1883, George and Catherine had a son Charles, their second, and last, child. George and Catherine were active in their new community. "In fact throughout the building up of Grenfell, Mrs. Weldon has been interwoven in its history. For many long years, however, she was a great sufferer and gradually became quite helpless, but her sweet, bright Christian soul looked out through smiling eyes and cheerful face, undaunted by pain, weariness and weakness." Catherine passed away on November 20, 1908, at the age of 58, in Grenfell. George remained the CPR station agent until 1902. He had been involved with the Masonic Lodge, Orange Order and local school board. George died suddenly on September 28, 1913 at the age of 73 in Grenfell, while working on his autobiography.

After the Weldons left, the Humboldt site was used as a mail station. In September 1883, Superintendent Grisborne of the Telegraph and Signal Service visited the area and reported that Humboldt is "... at present a log hut which belongs to the mail contractors who now require it for their own service."



Saskatchewan Archives Board No. RB11834(2)

G. Leeson and James Scott were in charge of the Royal Mail Stage Lines from Fort Qu'Appelle to Fort Pitt which included the Humboldt Mail Station, around 1884 – 1885. Men would ride their horses hundreds of miles to bring mail to the next station.

William Scott, brother of James Scott (seated in photograph above) was in charge of the Humboldt mail station in 1885.

Humboldt Stations

Humboldt first appears on Canadian maps with the construction of the telegraph line through the prairies in 1876. Original Humboldt is located about 11 km west-southwest of the present city.

A drawing of the first building exists today because in 1881 the Governor-General of the time visited the station on a trip into the northwest and an accompanying artist sketched the "shanty." Photographs taken in 1885 at the time of the Riel Resistance confirm the accuracy of the drawing.

The telegraph line east of Humboldt to Swan River was soon abandoned and replaced by a new line from Qu'Appelle to Humboldt. Tenders were called for a new station at Humboldt. The original telegraph building became a mail station, at least until 1885 when it was used by Denison's troops.



Saskatchewan Archives Board No. RB2846

The last telegraph station on the Carlton Trail in this area was located on the former Macdonald farm near Wolverine Creek. This site is about 11 km south-southwest of Humboldt today and about 8 km south-southeast of the first station. The station, open until 1923, was also known as Humboldt, even though the location is today in the R.M. of Wolverine.

There are intriguing and contradictory references to a possible intermediate telegraph station in operation before the building of the station on the Macdonald farm. Writings and reports by travellers, soldiers, officials and surveyors, however, are inconclusive. Artifacts are available only from the two stations five miles apart.

The Original Humboldt site was long noted by landowner August Faul and confirmed in 1995 by Western Heritage Services, as being the first telegraph station. Telegraph technology was most important in the opening of the Canadian West, and Humboldt played its role in the process. As well, a strong military presence protected the station and ensured continuous communication with Ottawa during the troubles of 1885.

Red River Resistance

At the beginning of 1885, the Original Humboldt telegraph station was primarily used as a mail station but was transformed into a fortified encampment due to the North West Resistance of 1885.

The North West Resistance of 1885 (also referred to as the North West Rebellion, the 1885 Rebellion, and the Riel Rebellion) includes the Cree uprising of 1884 and 1885 and the Métis Resistance of 1885.

The historic background that led to the North West Resistance includes a multitude of decisions and events throughout western Canada dating back to the 1860s. When Canada became a country on July 1, 1867, it consisted of four provinces - Ontario, Quebec, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Canada's first Prime Minister, John A. Macdonald, began the process of building a nation during his first term in office. His "national policy" was based on three objectives: a high protective tariff, the completion of a transcontinental railway, and the settlement of the west.

In the Red River area of Manitoba in 1869, a number of the residents were apprehensive as the Hudson's Bay Company prepared to transfer control of Rupert's Land to the government. The French-speaking Métis, led by Louis Riel, were concerned about land ownership and language rights. They denounced the proposed land survey and took action to oppose the government's plan to annex the west for agricultural immigration. They seized Upper Fort Garry which led to armed conflict over the winter. Riel became the President of the Provisional Government which led the struggle for a negotiated entry of the Red River Settlement into Canadian Confederation.

The government sent a military expedition, under the command of Colonel Garnet Wolseley, to oversee the transfer of power from the Provisional Government. With the arrival of the Wolseley expedition at Red River in August, Riel and some of his followers were forced to flee the country. In 1870, Rupert's Land – which later became the North West Territories was purchased by the Dominion Government from the Hudson's Bay Company. Many Métis people migrated from Manitoba to new communities along the banks of the South Saskatchewan River.

Louis Riel remained in exile until the events of the North West Resistance began in 1884.

Frustrations with the Canadian Government

The 1885 North West Resistance was a time of unrest. The Saskatchewan Encyclopedia notes that, "for the aboriginal First Nations, principally the Cree of Treaty 6 region, the uprising of 1885 was the outcome of frustrations over the breaking of treaty agreements made in good faith with the Canadian government. In Treaty 6 was an entirely new clause written at Fort Carlton, guaranteeing that if the First Nations in the treaty were 'overtaken by any pestilence, or by a general famine,' then relief would be provided; that 'famine clause' was demanded by Red Pheasant headman (and later chief) Poundmaker." [...]

"Soon after the treaty was first signed, some bands chose reserves, moved to them, and began receiving treaty agricultural supplies. Others refused to choose reserves, and tried to hold out for better terms. But in 1879 the last of the great buffalo herds vanished, and the holdout bands had to adhere to the treaty to survive. Chief Big Bear was the most determined, but he finally signed in 1882; by that time, he had negotiated promises of additional treaty supplies, promises that continued to be sweetened as he delayed taking a reserve. Treaty 6, as well as the other numbered treaties, contained no provision compelling the First Nations to take reserves: these and other treaty provisions were meant to be in addition to the First Nations' usual way of life, [Lieutenant-Governor Alexander] Morris said at the negotiations at Forts Carlton and Pitt. The right to hunt and fish, with some restrictions, was contained in the written treaty text.

"However, after 1879 the Canadian government used increasing hunger among the First Nations to force them on to reserves: only First Nations who were actually settled and working for rations would receive food. The government believed that keeping First Nations in a state of near-starvation would bend them to its will; it also realized that this policy was likely to cause death and illness—as it did. The First Nations interpreted the loss of the buffalo to be the 'general famine' covered under the famine clause of Treaty 6, and many observers in the North-West agreed. But the Canadian government insisted that its grudging distribution of rations was a matter of favour, not a treaty obligation. As for the provision of treaty agricultural supplies, it was done in a disorganized, parsimonious and careless manner, with the result that many bands did not receive anything like the quantity or quality they were entitled to under the treaty. The lack of implementation, or at best the very poor implementation, of the provisions of Treaty 6 was the major reason some First Nations individuals participated in the North-West Resistance of 1885."

Bob Beal, "Treaty 6," The Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan – A Living Legacy, 2005 edition.

North West Resistance of 1885

The Original Humboldt site became an important communication and military post at the beginning of the North West Resistance of 1885.

On March 23, 1885, the *Winnipeg Daily News* reported that “the reported uprising of Riel at Carlton, announced by dispatches from Humboldt, N.W.T., beyond which the lines have been cut, is causing great excitement... [...]the telegraph wires have been cut northwest of Humboldt, thereby cutting off communication and necessitating the carrying of messages on horseback.”

According to the Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan, “the first shots of the resistance were fired on March 26, 1885, in a field near the small community of Duck Lake, when a force of about 100 North-West Mounted Police and volunteers from Prince Albert, under the command of Inspector Lief Crozier, clashed with a Métis force led by Gabriel Dumont. When the smoke cleared, twelve policemen and volunteers as well as five Métis, including Isidore Dumont, Gabriel’s brother, lay dead, and the Métis in the District of Saskatchewan were in open rebellion. In response to the clash at Duck Lake, a column of Mounted Police was hastily dispatched northward from Regina to garrison the town of Prince Albert.”

“As the first shots of the uprising were being fired, the commander of the Canadian militia, British General Sir Frederick Middleton, was on his way to the West to take command of the North-West Field Force, which was hurriedly being assembled in Manitoba and in eastern Canada. On March 23, 1885, General Middleton and the advance party of 100 riflemen of the 90th left Winnipeg by train, bound for Qu’Appelle Station (then called Troy) in the District of Assiniboia, North West Territories. It was there that Middleton first heard news of the Duck Lake encounter.”

The *Winnipeg Daily News* reported on March 30 that “at Hoodoo the mail contractors’ stock of horse feed has been drawn away to Batoche by the insurgents. At Humboldt there is a large stock of supplies. Freighters who have left here during the last few weeks are congregated there, and waiting for the arrival of troops to protect them. The police left supplies there and application has been made to General Middleton to have an advance force sent north to protect, pending the arrival of the main body of the troops. The mail which left here last week is now at Humboldt, and has been ordered to stay there until the troops arrive.”

The Government of Canada authorized the mobilization of select militia units under the overall campaign command of Major General Frederick Middleton, including the Governor General’s Body Guards under the command of Lt. Colonel George T. Denison and the Cavalry School Corps, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel James F. Turnbull.

On April 6, Middleton and his small force of westerners, now augmented by more infantry, artillery and cavalry from Winnipeg, and by Boulton’s Scouts from Russell, Manitoba, set out from the small town of Fort Qu’Appelle on a 200-mile journey northward to Batoche. The troops covered 20 miles a day, reaching the Humboldt telegraph station after a five-day march.

At Humboldt, Middleton’s column was permitted to rest. The few days halt enabled the Grenadiers and Boulton’s Scouts to overtake and be merged in the main body. The total of the troops now numbered around 950 made up of 183 artillerymen, 617 infantry, approximately 150 cavalry and mounted scouts, and a small hospital corps. The Cavalry School Corps were responsible for patrolling the lines of communication and providing flank protection to the main body in the Touchwood Hills between the rail line at Qu’Appelle and Humboldt.

Middleton’s forces continued their advance northward along both banks of the river. On April 24, his troops experienced their first taste of battle at Fish Creek.



Around midnight on April 26, Lt. Colonel Denison (pictured at left), stationed at Fort Qu’Appelle received orders to march at once to Humboldt. Years later, Denison wrote a book entitled *Soldiering in Canada: Recollections and Experiences* that was published in 1901 by G.N. Morang in Toronto. Denison writes about his time with a militia of approximately 460 men at Original Humboldt, as he commanded both

the 84 men of the Governor General’s Body Guards, a cavalry unit, and the provisional infantry battalion, made up from the 12th York Rangers and the 35th Simcoe Foresters, which numbered about 376 men who arrived on May 19.

“The next night, Sunday the 26th, I received orders about midnight to march at once to Humboldt. We left at 4 p.m. on the 27th, having a great difficulty in getting transport wagons. I reached Humboldt on the night of May 1st, and found awaiting me at the telegraph station, which was the solitary house which formed Humboldt, one or two telegrams from General Middleton, who after the fight at Fish Creek, had halted near that place. My instructions were to remain at Humboldt and await further orders.

“There was accumulating by this time at this post a large quantity of food and supplies of all kinds. I found a very large tent covering the perishable articles, the other things being piled in the open. These stores were in an absolutely indefensible position, and I saw at once that if they were to be guarded they must be moved.



"I went out to the rolling prairie, and about six hundred yards from the station I found two knolls or bits of rising ground, close together, about eight feet high, with a dip between them. On the higher or larger knoll I pitched my camp and in the dip I placed my picket ropes and fastened my horses, where they would be protected from fire.

"The position I was placed in here was another joke on the cavalry. I was on an open rolling prairie, open for miles to the north in the direction of the enemy, who were at Batoche, about fifty-five miles away by the Hoodoo trail. The General with about 1,000 men was at Fish Creek receiving his supplies from Humboldt by way of Clarke's Crossing, so that practically the enemy was nearer to me than the General was. And I was left with about ninety cavalry, all told, officers and men, to guard all the stores which were pouring in every day. I knew that cavalry could not act on the defensive mounted, and therefore would be forced to act as infantry.

"I began the first night to dig rifle pits to shelter the men; I kept enlarging and connecting them and deepening the ditches in front, until I had a fairly good little earthwork around my tents. On the other knoll, on the far side of the horses, I had sort of lunette field entrenchment, that was covered entirely from the other work. The stores, which were accumulating every day, were brought over and piled in a V-shaped pile, the point outward, so that each face could be enfiladed by the fire from the two works. In a few days I think I could have held my own against a respectable force, if they had no artillery.

"As I saw my horses in the little valley eating hay that cost about \$600 a ton to transport, for the grass had not yet begun to grow, and my men working as hard as they could by turns, with the few spades I had thought would be sufficient for cavalry corps to carry, I could not help smiling at the absurdity of the whole business. General Middleton, I am satisfied, had inherited the tradition of the department against me, and did not want me up there at all, and so he left me on the prairie guarding stores with cavalry. I had never met General Middleton at this time, but I gave him credit for doing a very clever thing, if he really did this to make a fool of me.

"Of course the news got up to Fish Creek that I was entrenching myself and the news soon got back to me from the front that the General was ridiculing me for

doing it, saying there were no enemies within fifty miles of me. As I had two hundred stand of rifles, and very large quantities of powder and cartridges among my stores, and the enemy, on their Indian ponies, could have left one evening and struck me in the early morning, I thought I was justified in taking care of my post.

"So affairs went on until about May 8th, when we heard that the General was going to move on towards Batoche. On the 9th we received news from the telegraph operator at Clarke's Crossing that they had heard the sound of cannon down the river, in the direction of Batoche, during the day, so we knew that a fight had been going on.

"I had been sending a patrol out every morning about eight miles to the north, to the Spatinaw, a conical hill about two hundred feet high, close to the Hoodoo trail, from which, with powerful field glasses, the men could watch the country for miles.

"I was sound asleep in my tent about 4 a.m. the next morning, May 10th, when I was awakened by hearing a voice saying to the sentry, 'Which is Colonel Denison's tent?' The sentry pointed it out, but I was up before he had done it, and pulling on my jack boots, which was all I had to do to be completely dressed, I unhooked the tent door and said to the officer, 'Come in.' As he bent his head to come in I saw a staff officer's cap, and thought it must be Captain Freer, the General's aide, but when he got in and stood up I saw it was Lord Melgund. [...] I knew Lord Melgund was Chief of Staff, and that battle had been fought the day before, and it startled me to see the Chief of Staff fifty-five miles to the rear by the morning.

"All this went through my mind in an instant, and I said, 'What news have you from the General?' He lowered his voice so that the sentry should not hear him, and said, 'Well, it is not good.'



Lt. Col. Denison at Original Humboldt 1885 Sask. Archives Board No. R - B11834 -11

‘What!’ said I; ‘surely he has not been defeated?’ ‘No,’ he replied, ‘but he has had a check. He tried to drive the enemy out but could not succeed, and he has fallen back a little way and formed a defense with his wagons, and there they are. Some thought he had better retreat, but it was considered that that would have a bad moral effect, and he has determined to stick it out.’

‘He then said, ‘I want to send off some telegrams at once.’ The operator was away, trying to mend the line beyond us, but one of my sergeants was an excellent operator, so I wakened him up and we went down to the station.

‘On the side of an old hayrack, leaning against the back of the log shanty which constituted Humboldt, with his cipher book before him, Lord Melgund wrote out his despatches. I walked up and down the grass, and saw the sun rise on a lovely May morning, everything looking beautiful, and I could not help thinking of the anxiety this news would carry to many a home in Manitoba and Ontario.

‘Lord Melgund came back to our camp where breakfast had been prepared. He then slept till about 1 p.m., when he had dinner, and I furnished him with a fresh horse to ride on towards Qu’Appelle. He never said a word about why he was sent down, but the impression was that it was to get up some regulars from Halifax.

‘I did not see Lord Melgund again for fourteen years, when, as Earl of Minto and Governor-General, he held his first reception at Toronto, when he reminded me of meeting the patrol of my men on their way to the Spatinaw. He met them a few miles away from our post in the early dawn. Lord Melgund was accompanied by an orderly, the Hon. Mr. Fiennes, one of the French’s scouts, a son of Lord Saye and Sele.

‘When the patrol met them, two men rode out rapidly to each flank and surrounded them, much to the amusement of Lord Melgund, who did not at first understand what they were doing. They showed him the way to our camp and then went on.

‘Lord Melgund told me that he was very much averse to leaving the front, but that General Middleton thought it necessary to send him, as he had important work for him to do. Just at this serious crisis of the campaign, the telegraph lines were constantly interrupted, and the events were thickening. Lieut. Colonel Otter had been defeated at Cut Knife on May 2nd, and for four days the General was entrenched about a half a mile from the enemy’s advanced posts.

‘During this period Humboldt became the end of the telegraph line, and as I was in command there, and the telegraph operator away for some days trying to repair the line from Humboldt to Clarke’s Crossing, the whole work had to be done by Sergeant Harry Wilson of the Body Guard, who was an expert operator. During those days, my time was principally spent in the telegraph station.

‘Despatches came pouring in from all points, from General Strange, from Winnipeg, from Battleford, from Qu’Appelle, Swift Current, etc., all demanding attention from the General.

‘It took about two days to get despatches to the General at Batoche, and a reply back. On May 9th, the first day of the fighting at Batoche, I had sent Trooper Scholfield with despatches to the General.

‘He got into General Middleton’s entrenchment safely, and some hours after he was sent back with a parcel of telegrams to bring to me, and on his return he reported that he had been fired at four times in getting away. A bullet was afterwards found imbedded in his horse’s neck.

‘We were, of course, anxious about the General’s position and I asked Lord Melgund whether we should not bring out all the troops we could hurry up, and march to reinforce our comrades. He advised me to wait, and if I found that at any time I could not get in couriers to the camp and receive replies, that then it would be best to telegraph to the Government that, as senior officer near, I was going to order forward all the troops that I could reach, and march to relieve the General. Fortunately, I had not to take any such responsibility.



Original Humboldt 1885

Saskatchewan Archives Board No. RA - 6492

‘I found, however, that many of the telegrams to the General required immediate replies, and that great difficulty would be caused by waiting the two days or more necessary to communicate with him. It was my habit to sit at the desk close to the operator, who wrote the despatches on separate sheets of paper and passed them to me as fast as he could take them.

‘I would read them and if they could await action I would put them aside to be sent by courier. If it was advisable to give a reply at once, I would write it at the bottom of the message. These replies always began ‘An answer from the General cannot be had for two days. You had better not wait. You had better do, etc., etc.,’ and I would give directions. Then these would go to the General with the others, and he would see exactly what I had done. I wrote to the General and told him what I was doing, and said I would continue in this course unless he told me not to do so.

“On May 11th he wrote me thanking me warmly for what I was doing. It was a curious chance that the fact of my being left to guard stores at a point in the line of communications should have been the means of causing me to render the General most important and responsible services.

“When he with 1,000 men was entrenched himself at Batoche, and the enemy as near to me as he was, it then struck him that I was in a very exposed position, and he at once sent me orders to bring up the 12th and 35th under Lieut.-Colonel O’Brien from Qu’Appelle to Humboldt, and to move the 91st Battalion under Colonel Scott from Troy to Qu’Appelle. This, however, took time, for Lieut.-Colonel O’Brien had to march all the way, some one hundred and fifty miles. I heard afterwards that General Middleton has said more than once, ‘I am anxious about Denison. He is in an exposed position. I wish O’Brien was up to reinforce him.’ I knew then that he must have forgiven me for entrenching my camp.

“The first message I got from the General after Lord Melgund’s arrival was to bring up these reinforcements, and to send on to the front by the Hoodoo or Batoche trail as many supplies as I could get teams to take. I managed to get fifty-four teams and sent 110,000 lbs. of stores up with an escort of thirty-five men, under my brother, Captain Clarence Denison. This was a good illustration of the absolute necessity of strictly obeying orders. My orders were to send them by the Batoche or Hoodoo trail. As soon as the teamsters heard of it they began to murmur. They came to me and told me they could go by way of Clarke’s Crossing and Vermillion Lake and past Fish Creek with much larger loads and very much faster, and that it would be safer in getting in to the General. I told them I had orders and they must be obeyed if the whole convoy stuck in the mud. My officers came to urge me, and no one could understand why the worst and most dangerous road should be taken, and I think there were considerable doubts for the time as to whether I exercised enough discretion for a commanding officer.

“The convoy started and before they had gone more than about twenty-three miles it was found that the horses could not possibly draw the loads, so that about twenty-five percent was taken off each wagon and piled around a tent so as to make a barricade, and a small guard of a non-commissioned officer and four men left in charge. The men had named our camp at Humboldt, Fort Denison, and this little post they named Fort Dunn; it existed for some six or seven days. Afterwards I discovered that the General thought it possible that he might have to fall back, and if so he would have been obliged to fall back by this trail, and he very wisely wished to have some food upon it.

“Had I disobeyed orders and had it turned out that the General had to retreat, he would have found no food to meet him as he expected, and the convoy would have gone right into the enemy’s hands. This is a good example of the necessity of obeying orders, even in details.

“Before the convoy reached Batoche the four days fighting was over, and the rebels had been utterly routed. Of course we heard a great deal of what had taken place from the numbers of those engaged, and after I came home I took considerable pains to learn all I could of the affair. No two people would give the same account[...]



Original Humboldt 1885

Saskatchewan Archives Board No. R - B11836

“After the fight at Batoche we were left with nothing special to do but eat our meals and speculate on when we would receive orders to go home. We drilled a couple of hours each morning, and the rest of the day there was nothing to do. There was not a house nearer to Humboldt than Clarke’s Crossing, some forty-five miles away. In other directions there was no house for over fifty miles. The country around Humboldt in this early summer was perfectly beautiful. The ground was fairly carpeted with wild flowers of every variety. The country on one side of us for twenty miles was rolling prairie, with clumps of trees dotted about everywhere, with small lakes and ponds, the grass in the open stretches clean and fairly short, so that the whole place looked like an enormous old country park.

“For three months at Humboldt our food consisted almost entirely of salt pork and hard tack. We were so far from the railway base and transport so expensive, that practically nothing could be got but the Government rations, and officers and men fed much the same.

“At first the officers had a few canned things, which we had brought up, and which were principally kept to entertain guests, but these ran out after a while and we had simply our rations. We had plenty of good tea and sugar, and I found the food all right. We had canned corned beef, but very soon we all tired of that and used only the salt pork. We had no bread or potatoes.

“We left Humboldt on July 9th, on a dull morning. The column consisted of the Body Guard and the provisional battalion, made up from the 12th York Rangers and the 35th Simcoe Foresters, under the command of Lieut-Colonel W. E. O’Brien.



*Governor Generals Body Guards Tent Squad - at Humboldt
Library & Archives Canada No. 3406930*

These two corps marched so well that I dubbed them my ‘foot cavalry.’ We left Humboldt at 8 a.m. on July 9th, and arrived at Fort Qu’Appelle at 11 a.m. on the 13th; a distance of about one hundred and forty miles, in four days and three hours. I was astonished day after day to see how those men marched. Of course it was in lovely weather, over excellent roads. There was no enemy to fear, and they were allowed to march in the easiest way.”



Original Humboldt 1885

Saskatchewan Archives Board R-6493

“The whole dispute was over some 40,000 or 50,000 acres of land, in a wilderness of tens of millions of acres, for which the Government were crying for settlers. It cost Canada the lives of two hundred of her people, the wounding of many others, the expenditure of about \$6,000,000 in cash, and the losses of time and business that cannot be estimated. When it was all over the Government offered, free, to the volunteers 1,800,000 acres of the land if they wanted it to settle on, and yet the whole dispute was mainly about some red tape regulations as to surveying some forty or fifty thousand acres of land on which people were already settled. It is not often a country suffers so severely and so unnecessarily.”

The Dakota Return North

The traditional governance structure of the Dakota was called the Seven Council Fires or *Oceti Sakowin*. Their territory extended into both Canada and the United States. The Dakota were hardworking people who valued alliance. Indeed, the word “Dakota” means “ally.”

This spirit of alliance forms the basis of the Dakota’s long-standing relationship with the British Crown, which includes wampum ceremonies in the 1760’s and a signed Treaty in 1787. The Dakota honoured this Treaty as military allies to the British in the American Revolution and in the War of 1812. They were given medals, flags, and promises of protection for their contributions.

After decades of being mistreated by the Americans, the Dakota rose up in a conflict known as the “Minnesota War” in 1862. Led by Chiefs Whitecap, Standing Buffalo, and Littlecrow, hundreds of Dakota moved to their northern territories to seek peaceful existence in their northern territories amongst their British allies.

Some Dakota stayed in present day Manitoba, while others travelled west to present-day Saskatchewan. Chief Whitecap’s community settled in the Beaver Creek area in 1878. They moved further south to their current location in 1879, where their descendants continue to live today.

The Whitecap Dakota First Nation reserve was officially established in 1879 along the Saskatchewan River in the area known as Moose Woods.

Personal, trade, and labour relationships connected the Whitecap Dakota to their nearby communities. The Dakota had formed long-standing relationships with the Métis people at nearby Round Prairie, one of the largest Métis settlements at the time. As settlers moved to the area, they built friendships with local farmers and business owners. Some Dakota women worked in the homes of Saskatoon residents.



*Dakota encampment near Saskatoon in early 1900’s
Photograph courtesy of Saskatoon Public Library – Local History Room LH-4170*

Although the land Chief Whitecap's community settled on was poor quality farm land, the Dakota became successful cattle farmers. They had approximately 500 head of cattle, and sold hay to settlers in the area.

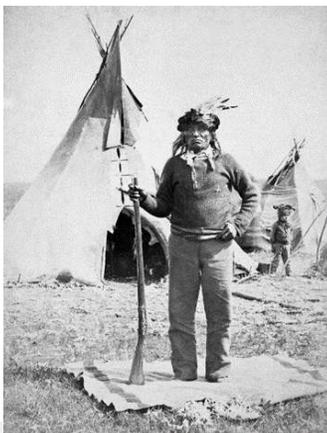
In 1886, near the start of the residential school era on the prairies, Chief Whitecap's community successfully petitioned the federal government for an on-reserve day school in an effort to safeguard the education of their children. Whitecap also designated a home where widows and orphan children lived and were provided for by the community.

Wapaha Ška- Chief Whitecap

Chief Whitecap was born in 1819. A headman of the Santee Dakota Oyate, Whitecap aided in leading the group of Dakota who relocated permanently to their northern hunting and trading territory in the 1860's. Chief Whitecap was held with his family here at the Original Humboldt site as a government prisoner following the 1885 fall of Batoche.

Throughout the 1860's and 1870's, Chief Whitecap advocated for the recognition of Dakota Indigenous title in Canada, attending the negotiations on the Numbered Treaties on the prairies to speak with Canadian officials about the Dakota's right to lands in Canada.

In August, 1882, Chief Whitecap counseled John Lake on the location for a new temperance colony that would become the City of Saskatoon. Today, Chief Whitecap is recognized as one of the founders of this city.



Glenbow Archives
NA-1940-3



Glenbow Archives NA-229-20

During the Riel Resistance of 1885, Chief Whitecap negotiated with some of the Métis who were on their way to Batoche and intent on rising against Saskatoon residents. He successfully convinced them to bypass the Saskatoon residents peacefully, and accompanied members of his community travelling with the Métis to Batoche.

Although he went along to provide guidance and counsel, Whitecap was arrested and tried for treason on the false belief that he had joined the resistance.



National Archives of Canada No. 1941-014



At the fall of Batoche, Whitecap was arrested and removed to Humboldt. He was then charged with treason-felony and imprisoned in Regina while awaiting trial.

Chief Whitecap in chains at Regina penitentiary.

Library and Archives Canada Negative No. C-001874.

Chief Whitecap was acquitted of all charges, partially due to the testimony of his Saskatoon friend, Gerald Willoughby, who attested that Whitecap was truthful, honest, and loyal to the Crown.

His community suffered many hardships following his release. During the Riel Resistance, the community's homes and crops were destroyed, leaving the destitute community to rebuild entirely. As well, increasing restrictions from Canadian government, including the repressive pass and permit systems under the Indian Act, made hunting, trade, and commerce difficult.

Chief Whitecap passed away in 1889 at the age of 70.

Research and writing: *Whitecap Dakota First Nation*

Discovering and Developing Original Humboldt

The stories of the land prior to 1900 were almost lost. In 1903, Josef Faul filed for a homestead and built a sod shack on the land. Most of the land remained as pasture until 1953, when it was broken by Josef's son, August Faul. As a boy, August had heard stories about the artifacts found on the land, and recognized the significance of the material coming to the surface through cultivation.

In the 1980s, R.C.M.P. Corp. Larry McLeod conducted research during his posting in Humboldt. August and Larry believed they had found the location of the original station, which had not been definitely known for some time. In 1995, Western Heritage Services of Saskatoon conducted archaeological investigations which confirmed Larry and August's belief: that the land was the site of the original Humboldt telegraph station from 1878 and the 1885 military camp.

The Original Humboldt committee was formed in 2008 by Dennis Korte and Edward Novecosky with the goal of securing, preserving and developing the Original Humboldt site. The committee expanded under the auspices of the Humboldt and District Museum and Gallery to include Rev. Alvin Hingley, Garry Jenkins and Museum Director Jennifer Fitzpatrick. In 2015, Reynold Fortowsky and Museum Supervisor Jean Price joined the committee.

Throughout 2008-2009, the committee sought donations to purchase the site from August Faul's niece Joan and her husband Harold Hergott. The land purchase was made possible through the private donations of the founders. In 2009, the Original Humboldt committee purchased the land and entrusted it to the City of Humboldt to be held in public trust. Thanks to George, Nicholson, Franko & Assoc. for their support of this transfer. The site was designated as Municipal Heritage Property by the R. M. of Humboldt in 2009.

In 2011, a public access area was built with interpretive storyboards to share the stories of the land. The public access area was officially opened on June 2, 2011, by His Honour the Honourable Dr. Gordon L. Barnhart Lieutenant Governor of Saskatchewan. Art installations and storyboards were added throughout the site to provide visitors with a unique view of history.

The site is being seeded to grass. Thanks to the following who assist with land management: George Ries, Larry Ries, Colin Ries, Horizon Fertilizers, Greenside Sod, City of Humboldt, R.M. of Humboldt and many volunteers.

Our Founders

We acknowledge with gratitude the following as our founders:

Matt and Elvie Breker	Ed and Isabelle Brockmeyer
George and Marion Burton	Conexus
Dave and Darlene Eberle	Friends of the Museum
Garry and Karen Jenkins	Dennis and Vyenda Korte
Bernie and Gloria Malinoski	Edward Novecosky
Jim and Hedy Ogilvie	Allan and Carol Oleksyn
John and Marilyn Scott	
Kevin and Michelle Bankowski	Michael Deutscher
Gerald and Jeanette Hergott	Joan and Harold Hergott
Rev. Alvin and Marion Hingley	Dr. Warren and Karen Huber
Art and Ursula Klassen	Brad and Wanda Lefebvre
Mark and Shirley Seidel	Leon and Lois Winkel

Archaeological Investigations at Original Humboldt

The Original Humboldt committee and Western Heritage resumed archaeological investigations in 2009, focusing on the telegraph station area and the military camp area.

The military area excavations have located many artifacts which provide information on the lives of soldiers at the site. Refuse pits were uncovered containing tins, bottles and other detritus, all with dates that are consistent with an 1885 military occupation.



Rectangular tin cans with profile on left and hole-in-cap technology on right.



Budweiser Bottle - This bottle is 28cm tall aqua glass and would have held about a pint of liquid. The embossed label reads "C. CONRAD & CO'S./ ORIGINAL/ BUDWISER/ PATENT NO. 6376". The base has a stylized "C. C. & Co." maker's mark. The style is typical of bottles produced from around 1876 to 1883, which coincides with the years that the Adolphus Busch Company made Budweiser when it was owned by C. Conrad & Co. The company declared bankruptcy in 1883. Anheuser-Busch acquired the rights to the bottle and to distribute the beer.



Left - Metal buttons were found in the refuse pits. Although very corroded, the word RING can be read on one of them.



Left - iron, heart-shaped tobacco tags found in the refuse pits with hearts punched out of the centre, with two triangular prongs on either side. The tags were attached to MacDonal tobacco products to create part of the closure. W.C. MacDonal was in business with his brothers until 1866, when he started an independent company. These tags were produced from 1877 to 1922.

One of the goals of excavation is to more clearly identify the defenses constructed by Denison's men while at the camp as there is no record of their extent or formation. Historical records show that Denison constructed defensive works around the encampment and a prominent hill on the site was suspected of being a possible location for the camp. This was based on a combination of the historical records available, artifact finds in previous years in the area, geoarchaeological data, and topographic evidence showing that the hill was an unnatural feature of the site.

Archaeological work at the Humboldt Telegraph Station area continues to provide information about life at the cabin, including an 1883 nickel among the discoveries. (pictured at right).



While there has been significant progress in the archaeological work at Original Humboldt, the land still holds further secrets to discover.



Heritage for their overwhelming support and professional work completed at the Original Humboldt site.

Thanks to the Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation for funding several of the excavations at the Original Humboldt site.



We are grateful for the partnership with the Saskatchewan Archaeological Society which has allowed us to undertake student and public fieldschools, and present the science and excitement of archaeology to hundreds of people.

Dig into history!

We conduct public excavations annually at Original Humboldt. If you are interested in volunteering with the project, please contact the Humboldt & District Museum. You don't need experience, just enthusiasm to discover some exciting history.



Sponsorship Opportunities

The Original Humboldt committee continues to find ways to bring the stories of the land to the public. Your support of this project will help to increase public access to this valuable cultural resource.

Public programs

Our programs engage youth with the stories of the site through educational activities that explore the local connection to the history of western Canada. Your sponsorship will assist in the publication and distribution of printed materials and multi-media products about the history of the site, and link the site with other 1885 tourist attractions.



Replanting our natural heritage

This extraordinary historic land will be restored to the prairie grasses and wildflowers that will again attract wildlife and birds to the area. Your support will assist in the seeding and maintenance of this historic environment.

Trails

The site has several different heritage areas such as the Telegraph Station and Fort Denison. Your support will enable us to continue developing walking trails for visitors to explore the various areas of the land.

Conserving the heritage resources through archaeology

A critical part of the project is further archaeological and geophysical investigations that determine the location and extent of Fort Denison, the Humboldt Telegraph Station, the Ducharme House, and the Carlton Trail. We work with a team of professional archaeologists from Western Heritage and invite the public to volunteer and participate during the excavation. Your support will ensure this vital research continues.

Thank you!!

Special thanks to RONA - Evan Pronych, Kim Collins-Lauzon and Tim Kiefer (shown at right with committee members) for sponsoring highway billboards, and to Mervin Ford and Collin Ford for permission to mount them on their land.



The City of Humboldt thanks our Original Humboldt volunteer committee: (pictured below left - right) Dennis Korte, Rev. Alvin Hingley, Reynold Fortowsky, Garry Jenkins, and Edward Novocosky.



Please consider supporting this worthwhile community project by sending your donation, payable to the City of Humboldt to:

Original Humboldt - Box 2349 Humboldt, Saskatchewan S0K 2A0

Donations to the Original Humboldt project are tax deductible and accepted with gratitude.

Thanks to the Humboldt Good Neighbour Store, Information Services Corporation, Humboldt Museum Foundation, Trails of 1885 and the City of Humboldt for funding support. We acknowledge the financial support of the Government of Canada in 2017.

Thanks to Jennifer Fitzpatrick, Director of Cultural Services for the City of Humboldt for her leadership of the project and compilation of this booklet.

We are always searching for further stories and history of the land. If you have any information, please contact the Original Humboldt committee at the address above or email humboldt.museum@sasktel.net

If there are any errors or omissions, we hope you will contact us to discuss. We have attempted to acknowledge all relevant sources. The site of W 1/2 SW16, T37, R23, W2M is connected to us all. We invite everyone to join us in the future development of our Original Humboldt.



Exhibits and archival material about Original Humboldt can be found at the Humboldt and District Museum, 602 Main Street, Humboldt, Sask. www.humboldtmuseum.ca

