



~ West Kildonan Horticultural Society ~

Rooted in the Past, Growing Now, Flowering in the Future

HISTORY OF THE WEST KILDONAN HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

1895-1927

Manitoba became a province in 1870 and as Agriculture was of prime importance, two years later an Agricultural Society Act was passed. At first provision was made for a Provincial Society and as there were four county societies at the time, the presidents of each of these societies became the directors of the Provincial Society. It is believed by some of the members in those days that the first fair was held in Selkirk district.

The organization of the Kildonans and the St. Paul Agricultural Society took place at West Kildonan school on July 27, 1895. Mr. W.W. Watson was chairman and Mr. George F. Munroe was secretary.

The first fair was held September 27th and 28th, 1895. It was held at the Industrial School Grounds, Middlechurch. This was opened by the Lieutenant-Governor, Sir John C. Schultz. The entries were mainly cattle and poultry, but there were also classes for agricultural products such as roots, vegetables and fruits.

Attractions were ox racing, a farmers' slow horse race, running and trotting races. The races were held on the main highway through West Kildonan. One may wonder how the people came and went back and forth across the river as in those days there were no bridges to speak of. There were a number of ferries plying the river. It is told the Old Kildonan Presbyterian Church bells were sounded when the ferry on the now John Black Avenue was in operation. That road was once called Church Road, the Ferry Road and now John Black Avenue.



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Four years later the Society purchased six acres of land on Lot 45, North Kildonan. The following year prizes were offered for five acre plots of wheat, oats and barley.

An old timer's building was donated to the Society by the late Robert McBeth (a Selkirk settler), the logs of which had been in use for over 100 years. The Society procured quite an assortment of artifacts made and used by the Selkirk settlers. The ladies took pride in serving meals to the visitors at the fair.

The first Annual Convention of the Agricultural Society was held in February, 1906. The Kildonan - St. Paul Agricultural Society was represented by Messrs. M. Harper and S.R. Henderson.

Society Activities

The Society had for many years carried on Field Competitions among market gardeners, potato growers and homeowners.

The 1927 president, Mr. D.J. Allan built his home on Munroe Avenue, East Kildonan. He beautified his grounds for all to see and won the Shaughnessy Cup, the highest award for the best garden in Greater Winnipeg.

The Society has exhibited at the Winnipeg Garden Show for many years, winning three cups and a diploma at the Land and Apple Show in 1913 for the best district display in the province.

In 1905, the Society sent an exhibit of potatoes and canned fruits to Kansas City Exhibition, achieved the distinction of winning 100% on their whole exhibit. Mr. Klaas DeJong sent an exhibit to the Royal Agricultural Fair at Toronto in 1921, winning first place for his collection of vegetables against Canadian and American exhibitors.



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In 1926, he again sent an exhibit of cauliflower to Cleveland, Ohio, winning 1st prize and achieved the honour of being "Cauliflower King" of North America. He also sent an exhibit to the Royal Agricultural Fair in 1926 which provided much publicity for Manitoba and the Red River District particularly.

Mr. C.E. Nye, still an active member of the present society, was also one of those who sent exhibits abroad and who has won many prizes.

For reasons unknown to me, the Society became extinct in 1927.

The presidents of the society, since its organization, were the following in order in which they held office: R.R. Taylor, E.G. McBain, G.F. Munro, S.R. Henderson, J.H. Gunn, Robert McBeth, A.F.W. Severin, W.J. Harrison, P.J. McRae and D.J. Allan.

The secretaries were: D.W. McIvor 1895-1906 and S.R. Henderson 1907-1927

1951-1970

All was quiet in the Kildonan area during the depression days until around 1940 when people began building new homes and started landscaping their ground to create beauty. Some very good gardening was put into practice.

Mr. Hector Macdonald, the then supervisor of the West Kildonan Park, and Mr. Douglas McKay, a councilman, were interested to see the area coming into bloom and so decided to form a Horticultural Society.

An organizational meeting was held in the Governor Semple School on March 8, 1951. Mr. F.J. Weir, the Provincial Horticulturist, was present and explained to the meeting the requirements needed to become a Horticultural Society.



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Mrs. Eugene Slipetz was appointed Secretary-Treasurer, and it was left to her to get the 30 paid-up members required. She held the secretarial post for 20 years.

Mr. D. McKay was appointed the first president. These two people, Mrs. Slipetz and Mr. McKay, through their untiring efforts in the Society, are now Honorary Life Members of the Manitoba Horticultural Association.

The same year, 1951, Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Slipetz, Scotia Street, won the coveted Shaughnessy Trophy for the best home grounds in Manitoba. They opened their grounds to the public to view and were unexpectedly honoured by the visit from the then Lieutenant-Governor, Mr. R.F. McWilliams and Mrs. McWilliams.

The first few years the exhibitions were held at the local curling rink. In those days the ground was sand and lime and the building was hot from the sun beating down on the uninsulated roof.

Professor F.W. Brodick and Mr. Klaas DeJong of the past Society were two of our first judges. Later new schools were built and the auditoriums were made available to the society free of charge, and for the past 15 years we have been holding our exhibitions in the beautiful Edmund Partridge Junior High School.

Within a few years, the society, not satisfied with lecturing and exhibiting, branched out and started on municipal projects.

In 1955, the society directors landscaped the City Hall grounds. In those days a school choir was on hand to give us support by singing and a great deal was made of the occasion.



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In later years all projects went on in a modest manner, but nevertheless conscientious members and directors raised money through shrub, flower, plants and what-have-you auction sales.

The money is spent towards the beautification of the West Kildonan public grounds, such as Tot Lots, Library Grounds, Arena Grounds etc. This year some members headed by Mr. Lawrence Gans, president and Mrs. E. Slipetz, were actively engaged for two months viewing 24 Tot Lots and a greenbelt parkland area and drawing landscaping plans for the City of West Kildonan. The society has sent out tenders for these lots and has made beneficial recommendations which will save the taxpayer a great sum of money.

The society took a firm stand in 1964 by presenting a brief to Metro objecting to the building of a maintenance garage fronting on the West Kildonan Park on Main Street and Armstrong. We were commended by Metro and the West Kildonan City for our stand in the interest of all the residents in preserving this historical park in its natural beauty.

For the Canadian Centenary, all the West Kildonan residents' grounds were viewed and 100 award certificates were presented to 100 citizens whom the society felt merited an award for beautiful home grounds.

The society has welcomed members north of the West Kildonan border and are happy to say a large percentage of the membership comes from the Old Kildonan and the West St. Paul area. In 1967 and 1968 again the Shaughnessy Trophy came to the society, the winners being Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Gans, very active members of the society. Their grounds are a show place in West St. Paul and are visited by many people and societies as a group.



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The presidents of the society since its second rebirth, were the following in order in which they held office: Douglas McKay, W.C. Edgar, Charles Edwards, Mrs. Morris Glesby, Charles Huggins, Robert Wylie, Mrs. Henry Hoffman, Douglas McKay, Mrs. Hugh McLean, Michael Kepron, Mrs. Frank Leavens, J.F. Campbell, Lawrence Gans, Mrs. Nick Denys, Lawrence Derlago, Eugene Slipetz and Roman Pawlik.

by Mrs Eugene (Jeanette) Slipetz, November 1970
Secretary-Treasurer 1951-1971

1971-1980

In his book *A Century of Horticulture in Manitoba, 1880-1980*, Peter J. Peters (1914-2012) bases his history of our society (pp. 226-229) upon Jeanette Slipetz's account (above), while adding some additional details from later years. According to Peters, no society has produced as many champion home grounds as West Kildonan. Society president Lawrence (Lorry) Gans and his wife Lucille won the provincial Shaughnessy Trophy in 1958, 1965, 1967, 1968, and 1975; Mr. and Mrs. A. Korolyk won it in 1978; and Mr. and Mrs. Pawlik won it in 1982. The annual flower show and exhibition was moved in 1971 from Partridge Junior High School to the Garden City Shopping Centre Mall. Along with tot lots and the Library grounds, the West Kildonan Horticultural Society was also involved in landscaping the Seven Oaks Arboretum, the Garden City Community Centre, and the courtyard of Luther Home. They erected a statue with a fountain in the pond behind the Peguis Pavilion in Kildonan Park and donated another fountain statue with blooming plants to Seven Oaks Hospital when it opened in 1979. In 1982, Dr. Gordon Danzinger was president and Mrs. W. Slonosky was secretary.

By Linda Dietrick
President 2000-2002