

Three Rivers Trail Newsletter

(Arm River – Qu'Appelle River – South Saskatchewan River)

Three Rivers Trail Association (TRTA), Box 367, Craik, SK, S0G 0V0.

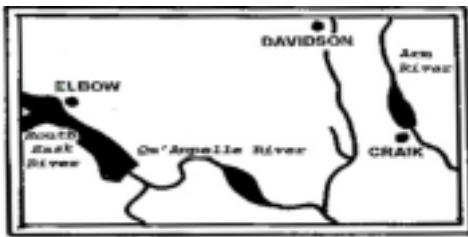
No.3, Spring 2004

The TRTA Objectives:

- To promote the beauty of valley vistas, the prairie geography and the 'spirit' of the land;
- To give an understanding and appreciation of grassland ecology by identifying points of interests and associated trails in glacial pothole country, sand hills, wetlands, and old glacial valleys;
- To make maps showing birding trails and heritage sites; and
- To mark hiking and equestrian trails with metal posts showing the **TRTA Logo:**



The TRTA Area:



The TRTA Board of Directors:

Bob Doig, Chamberlain
Lyle/Christine Benz, Aylesbury
Sterling Schollar, Craik
Doug McIvor, Girvin
Don Wilkins, Girvin
Ed Spratt, Davidson (Chairman)
Shirley Eade, Craik (Sec./Treasurer)

Trail Ride Set for May 23, 2004

The second annual TRTA May long weekend trail ride will once again start at the Craik Regional Park on their opening day, after their traditional pancake breakfast. This year we will travel adjacent to the golf course north to the west side of Arm Lake, north to McCaw's cabin and onward to Wilkin's Wildlife Reserve at the north end of Arm Lake. There should still be thousands of migrating waterfowl in those wetlands. We will loop Wilkin's land and return to Craik the way we came – about 16 km total distance.

Spread the word to your equestrian friends. For those without horses, come for a wagon ride.

Plan to be at the Craik Park before 10 AM for breakfast so the ride can start by 11 AM.

Any questions? Phone 734-2250 or 567-4215.

Exploring from Aylesbury to the Qu'Appelle Valley:

Turn off the Louis Riel Trail (Hwy # 11) at Aylesbury and you will see a cemetery on a hill. From there you get a view over Lake Alexander, a paradise for bird-watchers. In the cemetery is a special grave (monument) for a NWMP Officer, Col. James Kennedy, who was exhumed nearby and reburied here.



Lake Alexander viewed from Aylesbury Cemetery

TRTA is fortunate to have Vern Mittelholtz of Aylesbury on video/audio tape (at the Craik Library) explaining the many sites that one could see traveling from the Louis Riel Trail at Aylesbury west to the Qu'Appelle Valley on the way to Eyebrow.

Vern and his brother spent much time in their youth exploring their father's ranchland in the Qu'Appelle valley. From a view point on the west side of the valley one can look across their native grass pasture for 3 km, seeing the winding river on the flood plain and the beautiful vista of hills on the far side of the valley. There are some smaller hills that stand between the Qu'Appelle River and the steeper valley wall, and within that area there is a well-drained, sheltered depression about the size of a football field. Vern knows that it was a slaughtering/processing place used by buffalo hunters over hundreds of years. Once the buffalos were gone, and by the time the railways were built, the Metis crisscrossed the prairies picking up bones to export to Britain. No doubt bones from the Mittelholtz land had contributed to the 'Pile-of-Bones' (formerly Regina) but there was still enough left for Vern and his brother to collect many wagons full in the 1940's to sell for the war effort.

In this same area, one of the hills is slightly higher and very rounded on top. Vern tells of the hours in late fall, winter and early spring he spent watching a stallion standing on that hill watching over his brood mares. For many years, farmers turned most of their workhorses out to open range over winter and they ran in herds. This particular stallion seemed 'wild', meaning, belonging to no one, but farmers allowed their

mares to be bred by him. One annoying problem with the wild stallion was his habit of kicking a hole in a grainery to give the herd some extra feed over winter.

Across the valley, one of these small hills at the bottom edge of the valley (they actually came from valley edge slumps ten thousand years ago) is what Vern calls a 'growing' hill. He has observed it for over 60 years (drove over it with horses in the early years) and swears that the hill is several meters higher now than it was in his youth (others agree). It has an active spring under it.

Nearby, beside the Qu'Appelle River there are remnants of a farmyard where a rancher offered Louis Riel a drink, and the police a resting place, when Louis was being transported from Batoche to Regina for his trial. In the pre-settlement days there were many trails along the Qu'Appelle Valley.

Around Aylesbury several cairns have been set up to mark the sites where schools were built during early pioneer days. The Aylesbury Homemakers Club raised the funding (Mrs.M.Luther and Mrs. Mittelholtz) and Vern Mittelholtz set up stone cairns. The School Districts marked with cairns are: Aylesbury, Antelope, Eclipse, Foxbury, Watkins, Hallville, Banbury, Squaw Creek, Shepard, Park Hill, Barrett, Hustler and Willow Bunch. A good story could be written about each of those districts.

About halfway between Aylesbury and the Qu'Appelle Valley at Buffalo Pound Lake is a remote, little known, spring fed glacial lake called Loverin Lake. In pioneer days the Loverin farm on the edge of the lake was a center for local picnics, fishing, boating and swimming. Its clear water was a treat compared to the swampy Eyebrow and Buffalo Pound Lakes. Now, due to the canal from Lake Diefenbaker, the Buffalo Pound Lake is deep and Eyebrow Lake is nearly drained.



Aylesbury SD cairn as installed by Vern Mittelholtz

The Springs at Chamberlain

During the 1890's, the Qu'Appelle Railway was surveyed and extended to make a freight terminal at Aylesbury. For years Aylesbury was a thriving town where ox-carts and wagon trains loaded and unloaded freight (settlers affects, bones, furs, etc.). The CNR bought the RR line and extended it to Saskatoon during the mid-1900's. Since the earliest times, the valley at Chamberlain was one

of the main campsites. That is because of the excellent water source coming from the springs on the side of the Arm River valley. Herds of workhorses and mules were kept in the valley at Chamberlain because of this source of water. There is one spring that has been 'harnessed' that yields a constant stream of water with pressure through a pipe of approx. 5 cm in diameter. This can be seen today on Bob Doig's land. For years Chamberlain was a major stop on the CNR line for water for the steam engines.

The upland collection area for the underground streams comes together on top of the valley near Chamberlain. The surveyors for the construction of the No.11 highway (LRT) had to curve the right-of-way to avoid this area.

Another interesting diversion that the highway surveyors had to make, at the insistence of local residents, was to go around a large stone that had a metal marker spike in it, likely set up and recorded by early explorers. This site is now marked on the LRT with a large silhouette buffalo statue made by Don Wilkins.



Buffalo Rubbing Rock with Surveyors metal marker and a Statue on the Louis Riel Trail near Chamberlain, SK

Ideas for the TRTA Newsletter

One purpose of this Newsletter is to document the natural history and folk stories of our region, like the stories told by Vern Mittelholtz in this edition. Mrs.Vi Spencer has assigned an Archives accession number for the TRTA Newsletters at the Palliser Library, Craik. They will be saved for posterity. We would welcome some 'suggestions and leads' to work on for future articles. Phone your ideas in to Shirley at 734-2250 or Ed at 567-4215 or write to the address on page 1.

Announcements:

The Davidson Riding Club have Gymkhana Events scheduled for the summer, every 2 weeks, on Sundays, alternating between Davidson and Hanley. Phone Gloria at 567-4295 for the schedule.

There is a trail ride at Griffin's Ranch, Elbow, on the 25th of July. Phone 854-4748 for details.

TRTA is planning more trail rides and will announce them in the next NewsLetter.