

B.C. PERSPECTIVES

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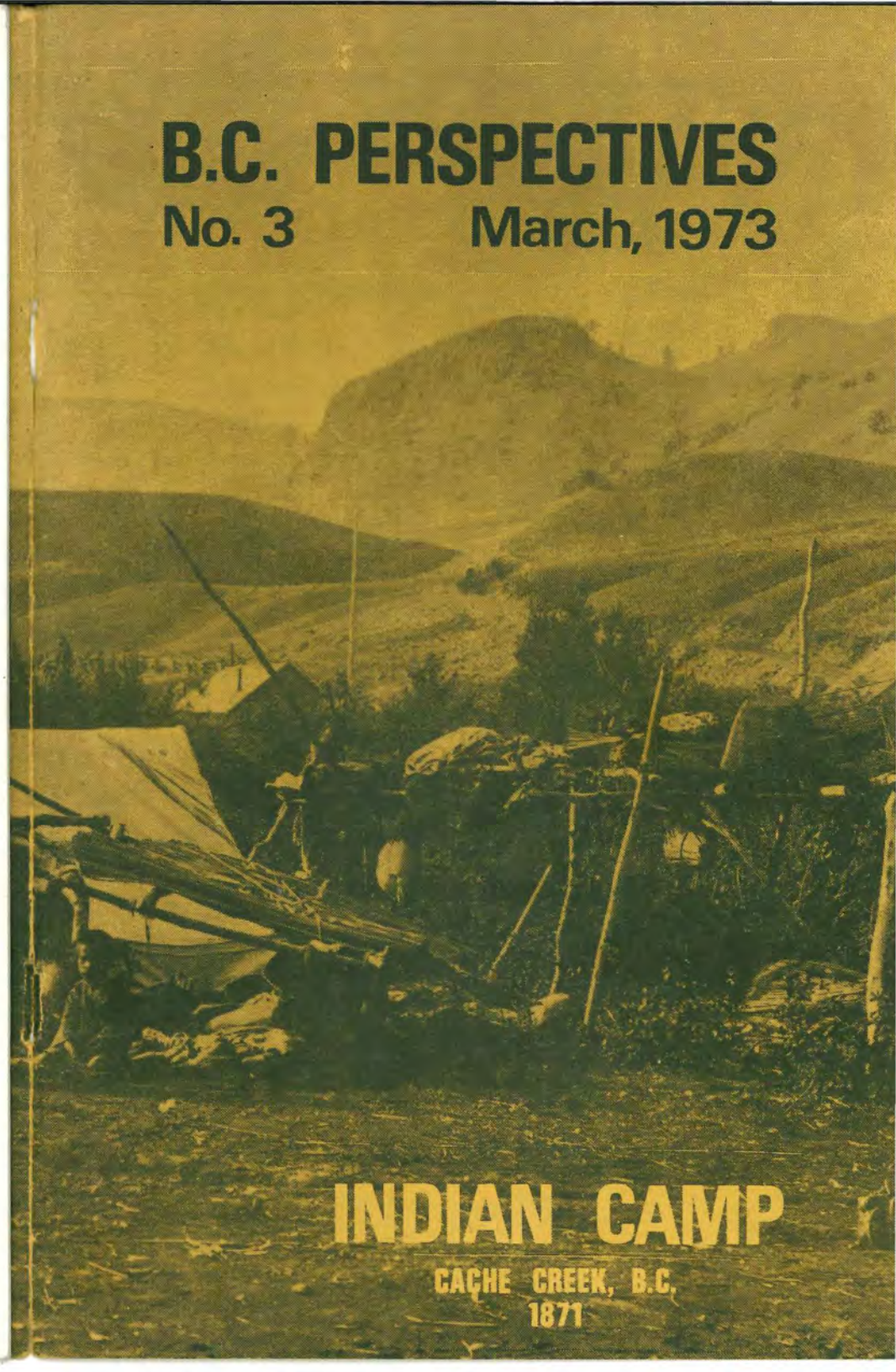
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INDIAN CAMP
CACHE CREEK, B.C.
1871

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IRMI HOPPENRATH

BROCKLEHURST FRAGMENT OF THE CANADIAN MOSAIC

Immigration and ethnic affiliation have been major factors in the formation of Canadian society. The policies governing immigration have therefore been of great importance, since they have determined to a large extent the make-up of the Canadian mosaic. Often new conditions have called for new policies, and such was the case at the close of the First World War. It became apparent to the Canadian Government that its first obligation was to reabsorb into its economic life the thousands of returning soldiers. As a result Canadian immigration policy changed and became very selective in character.

Gone were the days when just anyone with sound body and mind was given permission to enter this country. After 1918 it was the British immigrant who received distinct preference and encouragement.¹ This reflected the desire of Canadian public opinion that the country should remain primarily British in the make-up of its population. It was recognized, however, that the industrious and thrifty people from northern Europe — the "preferred countries" — were excellent material for the building of a nation. Consequently these were eventually admitted, provided they met certain requirements. It was to the people from eastern and southern Europe that Canada closed its doors. The fear was expressed that these people would not become fully assimilated to Canadian ways and habits of thought.²

It was not until September 1925 that Dominion Immigration policy was changed. The government authorized the railways — C.P.R. and C.N.R. — for a period of two years to invite citizens or residents of the "non-preferred" countries to emigrate to Canada and to settle there as agriculturists, agricultural workers and domestic servants. The agreement was subsequently renewed for a period of three years from October 1, 1927.³

The Department of Colonization organized this venture. Its affiliated organizations, however, were among the most distinctive and important parts of the colonization machinery. There were some twenty-five of these, conspicuous among them being the Lutheran Immigration Board, the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, the Atlantis Hungarian Board, and many others.⁴ These organizations were instrumental in assisting many immigrants to come to this country. One of their functions was to obtain from farmers applications for farm and domestic help, thereby settling the immigration procedures into motion. It was not sufficient to recruit immigrants; it was necessary to secure employment for them.

In a broad sense this constitutes the immigration policy in Canada in the late twenties and provides the background for a case study of a European settlement in Brocklehurst, British Columbia. The focus will be on the development of this single settlement and its subsequent assimilation into the Canadian way of life.

Brocklehurst is located along the Thompson River adjacent to Kamloops, B.C. (see maps 1 & 2). In 1930 the land in Brocklehurst was owned by B.C. Fruitlands, a British company. It was a cultivated agricultural area, partially planted with fruit trees. Many hands were needed to tend the fields and do the planting and harvesting. Prior to 1930, Chinese laborers had worked the fields, but most of them had left, probably for better paying jobs. B.C. Fruitlands was in great need of new laborers. And this is where the Lutheran Immigration Board stepped in and—in connection with the C.P.R. — set out to recruit European settlers.⁵

About thirty families, all members of the Lutheran Church, were recruited from various parts of Eastern Europe: Romania, Jugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Austria.⁶ These German-speaking people had settled in these countries during the period 1867 — 1914, and had retained their mother tongue throughout the years. After the break-up of the Habsburg Empire of Austria-Hungary 1918 these countries became independent. The German-speaking people living there constituted an ethnic minority, retaining their language, although most of them adopted Jugoslavian, Romanian or Czechoslovakian as their second language.⁷

Since most people worked as laborers on big estates — where hope for self improvement was minimal — they grasped the opportunity to move to a vast, undeveloped country with the guarantee of employment upon arrival. B.C. Fruitlands had given that guarantee and also the promise of adequate housing facilities. In compliance with immigration laws the people had to finance their own passage. The amount of money necessary for a family of three was \$450.00, plus \$25.00 per person landing money upon arrival in Canada.⁸

It is important at this point to establish the position of B.C. Fruitlands and the significance of the fruit and vegetable industry in Kamloops at that time. B.C. Fruitlands' large blocks of land were not only cultivated but irrigated, and produced substantial amounts of fruit and vegetable. The C.N.R. Freight Division published in the Kamloops Sentinel in January, 1929 the following statement:

B.C. Fruitlands was responsible for 250 carloads of produce in 1928 (4500 tons)

160 cars went to Vancouver markets

75 cars went to the Prairies

6 carloads MacIntosh apples went to England, the balance to local markets, such as Prince George, Smithers, and other cities.....⁹

This is a very good indication of the type of business B.C. Fruitlands was involved in. During the summer of 1930 the C.N.R. ran daily fruit trains throughout the season.¹⁰ And yet only a fraction of the produce left Kamloops since local demands had to be satisfied and two canneries supplied, the C.F. Bickford Kamloops Cannery and the Columbia Cannery.¹¹

Because of the volume and extent of B.C. Fruitlands' vegetable industry many hands were needed to keep it functioning efficiently. To

maintain maximum results new laborers were needed. This then instigated the migration of European farmworkers.

The Kamloops Sentinel carried an article on its front page, January 14, 1930: "C.P.R. Official Heralds Coming of many Families!" It described how the official in question had conferred with John Jamieson, manager of B.C. Fruitlands Ltd., regarding the final details for bringing the initial group of settlers to Kamloops. The article ended with the statement: "This movement of families into the district adjoining the city will inaugurate quite a building program immediately it is expected."¹²

II

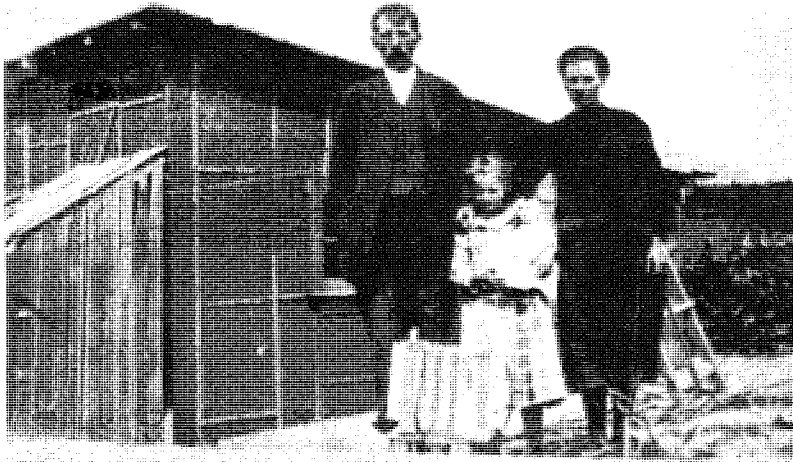
In the meantime the European families had left their homeland in February 1930 and were nearing the completion of their arduous voyage, eagerly awaiting the final destination. For people who have never left their homeland, it was an entirely new and somewhat startling experience. A whole new world rolled by their train window; the English language was heard by many for the first time; strange habits — even the train — confronted them. It was during March, 1930 that most of them arrived in Kamloops. The thirty families did not all arrive together, but in groups of ten people or more. Rev. C. Pfothhauer, the Lutheran Minister, greeted them at the Station, welcoming them in a familiar language — German.¹³ Although many of them spoke Jugoslavian or Romanian, they could all understand German, and so the German language became a common bridge upon which they could meet.

At one occasion three families arrived who were all from Jugoslavia. Rev. Pfothhauer accompanied the newcomers to Brocklehurst, where they were to occupy three little brown shacks near the present Tranquille Highway and 13th Street (see maps 1 & 2) until their permanent accommodations were completed. The earlier arrivals had occupied similar shacks near the Thompson River. Housing was not adequate; it consisted of a one-room wooden structure.¹⁴

It was a hard, strenuous existence, working ten hours a day, six days a week. Men and women worked side by side, pruning the apple trees, seeding, planting, and finally harvesting the vegetable, which consisted of tomatoes, onions, potatoes, carrots and alfalfa.¹⁵ The entire Brocklehurst area was under cultivation; the only houses that existed were located near the Thompson River. A row of Lombardy popular trees was planted as a windbreak, and today that street is appropriately called Windbreak Street, showing a few remnants of its past. (see maps 1 & 2) The irrigation flumes north of Ord Avenue are also left-overs of that time.

In the fall of 1930 the families from Jugoslavia left their three little brown shacks and moved to their permanent homes, joining the rest of the settlers. These permanent homes were located near the river on Crestline Street and Townsend Place (see maps 1 & 2). They were one-room shacks, some of them previously occupied by Chinese laborers and some of them built for the purpose of accommodating the new settlers. For many this then became "home" for the next few years to come.

These thirty families then were the last immigrants to arrive in the Kamloops area for several years.



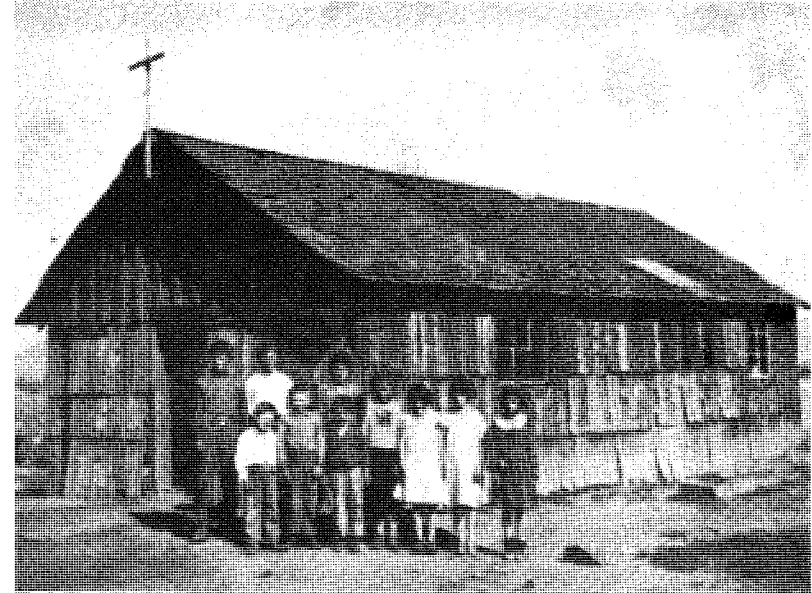
Settler's Home

Life was not easy for these immigrants. Perseverance and determination, however, were qualities none of them lacked. In the fall of 1930 a one-room school was opened for the sixteen school-aged children of the settlers. A young school teacher, Anne Henski, who also spoke German, undertook the task of teaching them the English language. The children overcame the language barrier much faster than their parents, since the latter only associated among the settlers. For the next seven years this capable young lady taught the children all the basic subjects.¹⁶

The settlers also covered an old shack with shingles and held their church services in it. They called their church the "Zion's Gemeinde" (Zion Lutheran Church), but did not draw up a constitution until January, 1936.¹⁷ Two Lutheran ministers travelled between Vernon and Kamloops, preaching their sermons stabilizing the community by their moral support and encouragement. Apart from work the settlers had no social activities, and consequently, the Church had not only a religious function but a social one as well.

There were no additions to the settlement after 1930, since immigration laws changed in view of the employment situation. Indeed during March, when most of the settlers had arrived, the Kamloops Sentinel printed the following:

Deputy Minister of the interior stated this week that the Government would change its policy and abolish assisted immigration and that the agreement with the C.P.R., for bringing out immigrants, would not be renewed in the fall.¹⁸



Lutheran Church



Congregation

III

As time went on most settlers found it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. In the beginning they had received no wages at all, because they had free accommodation and obtained vegetable left-overs whenever possible. Eventually after approximately two years — they received \$.20 an hour or \$2.00 per day, working ten hours a day. During peak seasons their working hours were often extended to twelve or fourteen hours; their \$2.00 wage, however, remained the same.¹⁹ They could barely make a living; their standard could not possibly be altered since it had reached its lowest point.

It is relevant here to list some food and clothing prices of that time to bring the \$2.00 wage in its proper perspective.

Swifts Premium Hams	\$.35 per lb.
One side of bacon	\$2.25
Fresh eggs — 3 doz.	\$1.00
1 lb. butter	\$.40
Japanese Oranges	\$.90 per box
Hudsons' Bay Sweaters	\$ 2.95 — \$3.95
Ladies' Dresses	\$ 9.85
Men's Suits	\$25.00
Chiffon Hose	\$ 1.50 ²⁰

The last item mentioned — "Chiffon Hose" — is not an essential one, certainly not a necessity, but it serves to indicate how far removed these people were from luxury items.

Changes had to be made, some settlers ever left, the rest of the community was willing to embark on a new venture and lease the land. They decided to work it themselves, hoping to improve their lot. B.C. Fruitlands agreed to this and leased lands to the settlers.

The lease was for a three-year term. The rent was \$5.00 per acre the first year and \$10.00 per acre the second and third year. The lessee had to pay 20% of the cost of the irrigation flumes, maintain their upkeep and pay for all the water used for irrigation. One third of the land, specified by B.C. Fruitlands, had to be planted with alfalfa, the rest of the land was to be planted as before with potatoes, tomatoes, carrots, onions. The settlers had to ship through or deliver all crops and produce to such shipper or company as was designated by B.C. Fruitlands. The old packing house near Ord Avenue still stands today, conveniently located near the C.N.R. tracks (see map 1). Under the terms the lessee was obligated to properly cultivate, crop and irrigate the land in order to ensure its best possible use.²¹

The settlers worked just as hard as before but with the slight hope that there would be a small financial reward. Some of the young girls and wives supplemented family income by working in their spare time for Major Townsend packing asparagus or for Captain Hilliard picking apples. Both were retired military men and had homes and some acreage near the Thompson River. Today a street — Townsend Place — and an elementary school — George Hilliard School — are named after them. Captain Hilliard

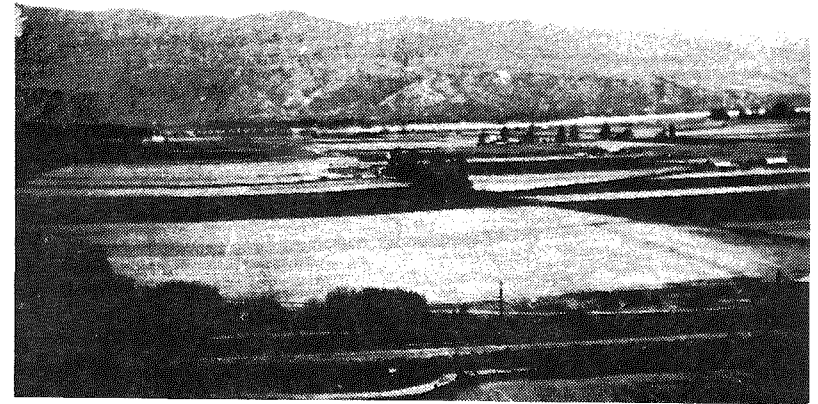
was held in high esteem by the German-speaking settlers. He often lent a helping hand or gave advice where it was needed.²² He was also chairman of "Kamloops District Vegetable Commodity Association," an organization representing fruit and vegetable growers.²³

The settlers tried to live almost entirely off the land, keeping a few animals such as cows and pigs. They shared a community pasture for this purpose. The few groceries they bought were purchased at "Ellsay Brothers",²⁴ This store still exists at the corner of Royal Avenue and Palm Street. Trips to Kamloops itself were a rarity since a trip would have required time and money and both were extremely precious.

By 1937 all the children were assimilated into the Brocklehurst Elementary School. There was no more need for separate schooling. Some students carried on with their education at the high-school level; many stayed home to help in the fields.

Before the outbreak of World War II many settlers were actually in a position to purchase the land from B.C. Fruitlands. They purchased it for \$95.00 an acre and moved their one-room shacks onto their very own soil.²⁵ For many it was the fulfillment of an ambition that had induced them to leave their homeland. It had taken approximately eight years of hard labor to finally reach that goal. The struggle was not over by any means; they labored just as hard, but now they began to build onto their shacks, or even build new homes, and manage the land the way they wanted to. Pride of ownership, an innate European characteristic, particularly among country people, was a worthwhile compensation for hardship.

The landscape of Brocklehurst looked basically the same, but now there were a few buildings added, as people took possession of their own tracks of land.



The Brocklehurst Landscape in 1931

As the years went by most settlers became Canadian citizens, the children got married, and some — approximately 15% — moved away.²⁶ Fifteen young men volunteered or went drafted to serve in the Canadian Army at home and overseas during World War II.²⁷

Change of economy and diminishing demand for fruit and vegetable induced the people in the fifties to eventually subdivide their land. What resulted is obvious to every visitor to Brocklehurst — a typical Canadian subdivision. The building lots are perhaps larger than average city lots, allowing some people to have spacious gardens, but on the whole it is an organized housing development not much different than any other housing development in Kamloops.

There was never too much known about these European families and their early years of struggle, yet they contributed considerably to the then thriving fruit and vegetable industry. Their livelihood depended for many years on B.C. Fruitlands, and B.C. Fruitlands was obviously aware of this. Farm labor was not regulated, since it involved seasonal work. Consequently people were at the mercy of their employer, which becomes obvious too, when looking at the type of housing the settlers had to contend with. The "building program" announced in the Kamloops Sentinel in January, 1930 certainly did not materialize. To what extent these people had been treated fairly remains questionable. What is certain is that these families helped shape a part of greater Kamloops, and for their efforts and contributions deserve our attention and respect.

IV

In retrospect it is important to recall the earlier statement made by immigration authorities prior to 1925, that people from so-called "non-preferred" countries had difficulty in assimilating to Canadian ways and habits of thought. In the case of Brocklehurst that statement can be clearly refuted. Not only do we find complete assimilation, but rapid assimilation. Perhaps the approach of the Second World War influenced this process. The fact that fifteen young men served during the War and even volunteered to service, should be sufficient evidence that these people had achieved equality of status with other Canadians. This is particularly true in regards to the younger generation.

Is it possible to view the Brocklehurst settlement in relationship to Turner's Frontier Thesis? Turner emphasizes the importance of the frontier in shaping people and their institutions, political or otherwise. Can we speak of a frontier in Brocklehurst in 1930? We can, but in a very restricted sense, because the frontier as such is gone. Turner states: "The wilderness masters the colonist."²⁸ In Brocklehurst we have no evidence of the wilderness mastering the colonist. And yet the new environment must have shaped the settlers to some extent. The fact cannot be denied that life in Brocklehurst also promoted democratic practices. The settlers participated in making decisions about their common life. They selected their community pasture; they decided together to lease the land; they faced within their settlement equal opportunities.

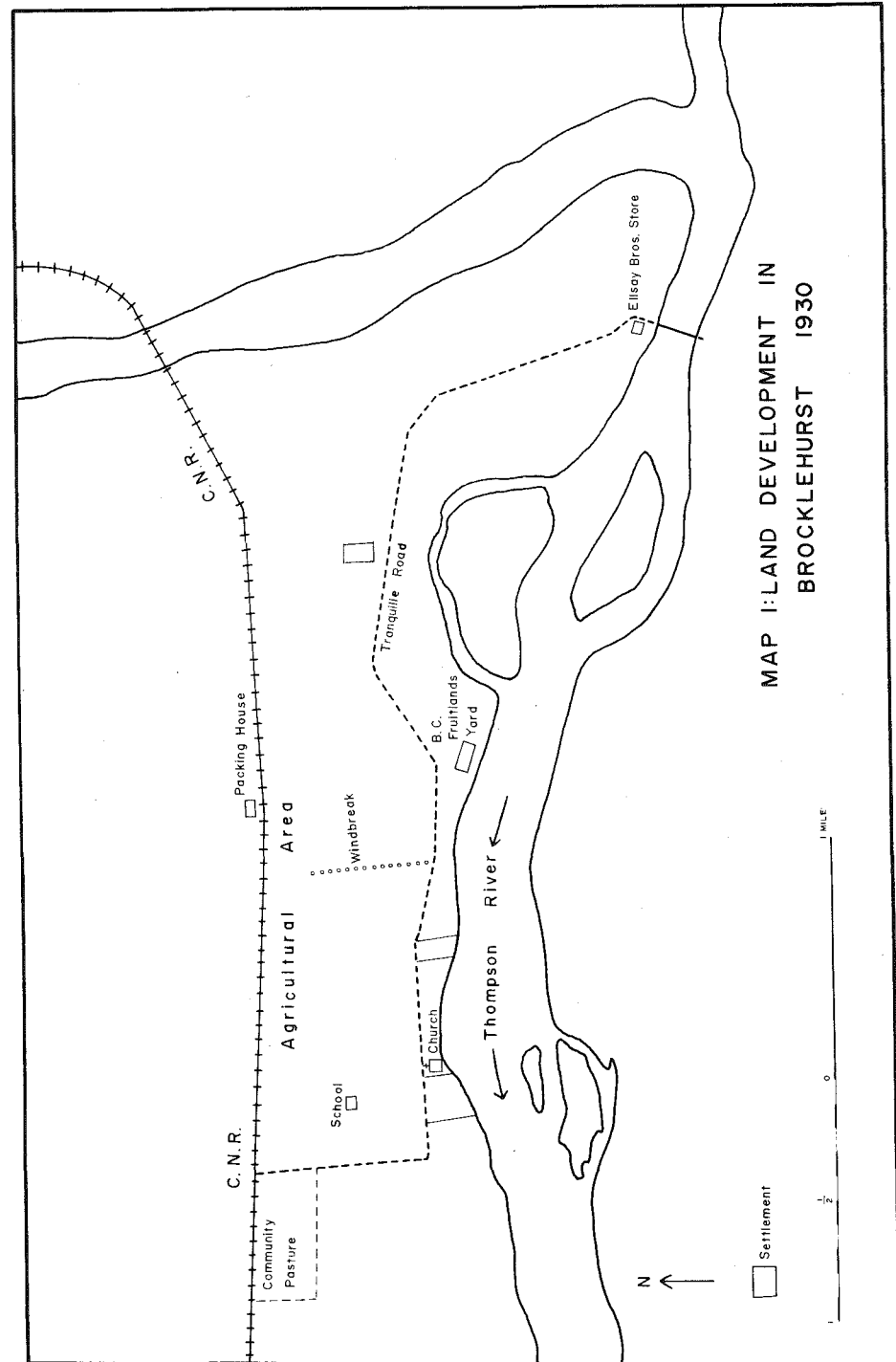
Yet in some respect Turner's Frontier Thesis cannot be applied, because we are dealing with a different frontier. These frontier farmers did not exhaust the soil and moved on. These people were indentured laborers and adopted the intensive method of cultivating the land like they did in Europe. Also, Brocklehurst did not shape rugged individualists. These people fused into the already existing Canadian way of life. Perhaps it can be said that the years in Brocklehurst served as an apprenticeship that groomed these people for a place in the growing society of Greater Kamloops.

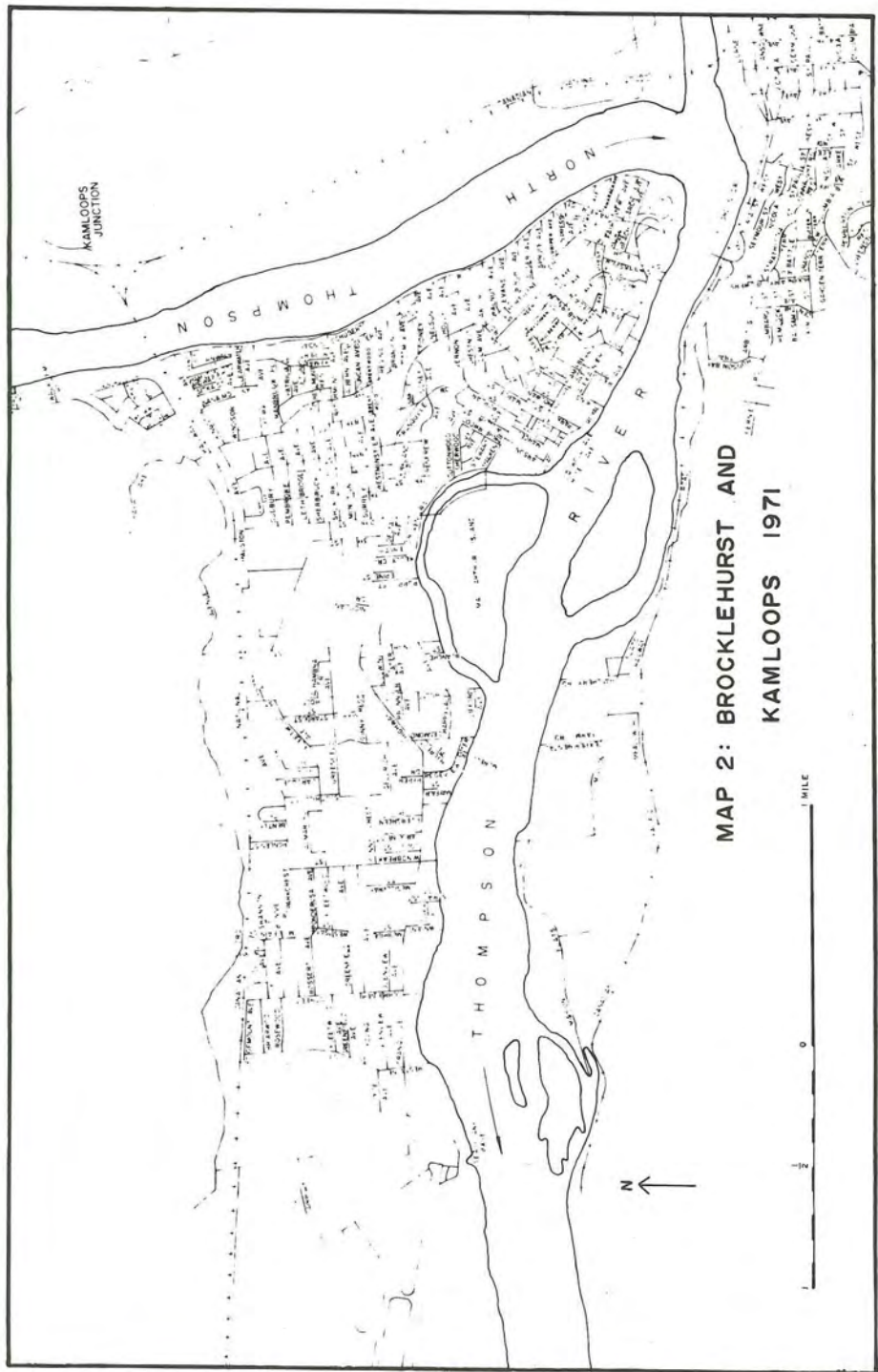
Louis Hartz in expounding his Fragmentation Thesis states in regards to immigrants: "A part detaches itself from the whole, the whole fails to renew itself, and the part develops without inhibition."²⁹ In the case of Brocklehurst it is difficult to apply this theory as well. First of all, the part that detaches itself from the whole was composed of various characteristics. It was not a very strongly unified part to begin with. Yugoslavian, Romanian, and Czechoslovakian elements were evident. Consequently, it was difficult to develop without inhibition. The settlers' faith, the Lutheran Church, was perhaps the only fragment they developed. It flourished and gave them strength. As in Puritan colonial settlements three hundred years ago the religious faith helped sustain the the group. Unlike the Puritans, however, the Church was not their sole reason for existence and did not dominate every phase of their lives. But it did give moral support when needed.

The people in Brocklehurst were unique. They did not attempt to reproduce part of the old homeland, nor did they build new institutions. Instead they adopted new patterns of living. They became socialized into the Canadian way of life, retaining only a few traits of their native culture. Thus they found their place in the Canadian mosaic.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 James B. Hedges, Building the Canadian West, (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1939), p. 358.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 360.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 362.
- 4 *Ibid.*, p. 364.
- 5 Letter from Rev. N.J. Threinen, Lutheran Council in Canada, Winnipeg, November 22, 1971.
- 6 Mrs. L.H. Stroesser and Mr. O. Mertz, who were among these families and were children at that time, helped to establish this estimate. The 30 families consisted of close to 100 people.
- 7 Carlton F.H. Hayes, History of Europe (New York: The MacMillan Co., 1956), pp. 810 – 827.
- 8 Interview with Mrs. L.H. Stroesser, 1781 Ord Ave., Brocklehurst, February, 1971.
- 9 Kamloops Sentinel, January 8, 1929.
- 10 *Ibid.*, July 8, 1930.
- 11 *Ibid.*, August 15, 1930.
- 12 *Ibid.*, January 14, 1930 – The building program is discussed further below.
- 13 *Ibid.*, March 25, 1930.
- 14 Interview with Mrs. L.H. Stroesser, Brocklehurst, February, 1971.
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 *Ibid.*
- 17 Interview with Pastor Meier, Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, Brocklehurst, March 1971.
- 18 Kamloops Sentinel, March 14, 1930.
- 19 Interview with Mr. Otto Mertz, 2340 Greenfield, Brocklehurst, February 1971.
- 20 Kamloops Sentinel, January 15, 1930.
- 21 Lease between B.C. Fruitlands Ltd. and George Braun, March 26, 1934.
- 22 Interview with Mrs. L.H. Stroesser, Brocklehurst, March 1971.
- 23 Kamloops Sentinel, September 3, 1930.
- 24 Interview with Mrs. Stroesser, Brocklehurst, March 1971.
- 25 *Ibid.*
- 26 Interview with Mr. Otto Mertz, Brocklehurst, November 1971.
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 Frederick J. Turner, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," Annual report of the American Historical Association, 1893, p. 201.
- 29 Louis Hartz, The Founding of New Societies (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1964), p. 9.





MAP 2: BROCKLEHURST AND
KAMLOOPS 1971

