

Stevens - River Lot 100

Richard Stevens was an English clerk hired by the HBC for duty at posts on James Bay in 1816. He was termed competent, but showed during the months of long winter to be "addicted to drink".

At the Union of the HBC and the Northwest Company in 1821, Richard was one of the 1300 employees laid off and scheduled to be sent back to London. The fact that he would leave behind a native wife and several children who would be completely dependent on the HBC for survival, played on the local Chief Factor's conscience. As well, Richard had accidentally shot off part of his hand and so, would have likely become a beggar on the streets of London.

So, as part of a change of policy for the HBC in 1824, Richard and his family were offered the chance to move thousands of kilometres away to Red River Settlement as pioneer farmers.

With much trepidation, Richard and his Cree wife, Meenish, accepted the offer and began the long trek with their children in tow. It is possible that during that arduous trip through the unmapped wilderness, Meenish gave birth to another child. Upon reaching Red River, Richard accepted a grant of land near the last of the rapids of the Red. (the future site of Lockport).

Stevens had virtually nothing except the belongings he carried, and many mouths to feed. Incredibly, the census of 1827 revealed that he already possessed a few horses, several cattle, a plough and had cultivated several acres. By the time he died, he had acquired two other River lots and even more of the things that made him a well-to-do farmer.

In 1870, Richard's family was still at Lot 100. His children had married well and were prospering. He had overcome the many barriers that afflicted his early life. The result is that Stevens Avenue is today the main street of Lockport.

For more information of the Stevens family, please go to: redriverancestry.ca, or the Memorable Manitobans section of the Manitoba Historical Society website: MHS.mb.ca.