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THE NAME "PORTAGE LA PRAIRIE"

The first Europeans, credited with the "discovery" of the Portage area, were Radisson and Groseilliers. They explored the region in search of furs between 1658 and 1690. Pierre Gaultier de Varnes Sieur de la Verendrye established Fort la Reine on the site of what is now known as Portage la Prairie in 1738. The name Portage la Prairie reflects this early voyageur heritage because it derives its meaning from the "Prairie Portage" that the early explorers had to endure when transporting goods from the Red and Assiniboine Rivers across to Lake Manitoba.

Fort la Reine became one of the chief trading posts of the French in western Canada until the cession of Canada to Great Britain.

In 1832 a British presence was felt in Portage for the first time with the establishment of a post by the Hudson's Bay Co. on the bank of the Assiniboine River.

The fort was later moved to the west end of the present city in 1866-67, and moved again in 1870 to Saskatchewan Avenue. It was destroyed by fire in 1913 and was not rebuilt.

In 1851 the Reverend William Cochrane (later Archdeacon Cochrane) began a new settlement at Portage la Prairie. Settlers, farmers, and tradesmen from Eastern Canada began to pour into the region in the late 1800's along the old Boundary Commission trail. With the prospect of establishing a rail link with the east, the community saw a period of rapid growth.

In the early 1800's the community itself was outside the District of Assiniboia so consequently the settlers formed their own local council. Businessmen such as Thomas Spence persuaded the local settlers to form their own republic. In 1867 the short lived "Republic of Manitobah" was established, which was dissolved one year later.

Portage la Prairie was incorporated as a town in 1880 with a population of 800 and in 1907 became the City of Portage la Prairie. We are one of the oldest communities in Manitoba.

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