

# Construction of bridges ended the era of crossing the Red River by ferry

(Continued from page 5)

In his ruling, Woods cited the fact that the only authority given for operating a ferry in Manitoba was by provincial legislation enacted in 1871, 1876 and 1878. In 1871, the provincial government, by an act of the legislature, had taken over authority over ferries from municipal governments, citing ferries to be continuations of public highways (roads).

The chief justice said the action of the defendant, Lynskey, was an "invasion of the plaintiff's (Tait) legal rights."

"The transit of goods and passengers over the Pembina branch of the C.P.R. to Winnipeg ends at St. Boniface . . ." said Wood. "Even assuming that their obligation extends to Winnipeg, they still have the same facilities as every one else by the public ferry."

Woods said the opposition ferry "has nothing to do with the traffic of the railway, but is an effort of some individuals — whoever they may be — to get their goods from St. Boniface to Winnipeg less expensively than if they were carried by the plaintiff (Tait)."

Woods did add that the federal government had the right to enact its own legislation or use its power to disallow provincial legislation in order to take over a ferry service, but a telegram from a federal minister was not sufficient to supercede the provin-

cial legislative authority then existing over Manitoba ferries.

It would take two more years before the CPR by other means broke Tait's monopoly. The city approved \$200,000 in funding for the construction of a railway bridge over the Red River between St. Boniface and Point Douglas. The Louise Bridge, although specifically built for the passage of trains over the river to lure the trans-continental CPR main line away from crossing at Selkirk, was also used for vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The first Canadian Pacific Railway train crossed the newly-built Louise Bridge into Winnipeg on July 26, 1881. Its destination was an "unassuming" 1-1/2-storey wood-frame depot at the corner of Main Street and Point Douglas Road (where the CPR tracks now run through the centre of Point Douglas).

The first purpose-built large-scale public bridge (a pontoon bridge was used in the early 1870s to cross the Assiniboine near Upper Fort Garry, linking the city to the south side of the river) spanning the Red River was erected between Broadway and Provencher Boulevard. Fittingly, it was named the Broadway Bridge, but just days after its opening in April 1882, it was severely damaged by ice, but quickly rebuilt and reopened in 1883. After the rail yards at The Forks were in

operation and cut off Broadway from the Red River — terminating the east end of the boulevard at Main Street — the Broadway Bridge was replaced at its present crossing by the Provencher Bridge in 1917.

With the arrival of the bridge-building era, the steam ferry service between Winnipeg and St. Boniface came to an end. Tait then sold the *Adelaide* to the Canadian government. He died in 1912.

On September 12, 1882, the *Free Press* reported that the *Adelaide* was steaming on the Assiniboine River when it sprang a leak at the St. James Rapids and sank. The St. James Rapids (also referred to as Bourke's Rapids) on the Assiniboine River were across from today's historic St. James Church, and were noted as a narrow and shallow stretch of water with continually shifting sandbars and rocks that were a hazard to steamboat traffic, especially at times of low water levels. In the early days of the Red River Settlement, the shallow rapids served as a ford to cross the Assiniboine River.

The last vessel of the ferry system between St. Boniface and Winnipeg had come to an inglorious end, but ferries on other stretches of the Assiniboine and Red rivers continued to operate for a number of years until they were also replaced by bridges.