

#1

Canadian coronation arch

Photograph taken in July 1902 shows the Canadian coronation arch erected on the ceremonial route from Buckingham Palace to Westminster Abbey to celebrate the coronation of King Edward VII and to advertise Canada to potential British immigrants. The arch was decorated with wood, grains and fruits and maple leaves, and on the side facing Buckingham palace, it says, "Canada. Britain's Granary [producer of grain]. God Bless Our King and Queen."

PRIMARY SOURCE
Prairie Immigration
and the "Last Best West"



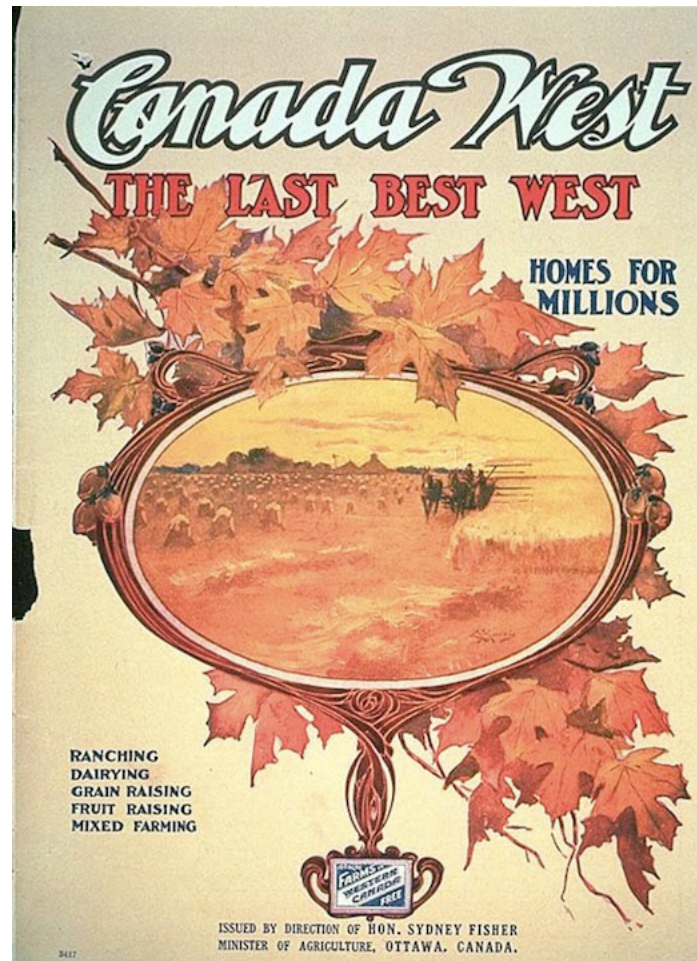
Underwood and Underwood, London, England, "Canadian coronation arch, Whitehall, London, England," Glenbow Archives, NA-1043-1, 1902

#2

Advertising pamphlet

This cover page from the 1909 edition of *Canada West: The Last Best West*, an annual publication from the Department of the Interior produced to attract and aid prospective agricultural settlers.

PRIMARY SOURCE
Prairie immigration
and the "Last Best West"



"Advertising in Britain, 1900–1916," Canadian Museum of Civilization: The last best west: Advertising for immigrants to western Canada, 1870–1930, National Archives of Canada File No. C-30620. <http://www.civilization.ca/cmhc/exhibitions/hist/advertis/ads3-08e.shtml> (Accessed August 19, 2011).

#3

Canada West: The Last Best West advertising pamphlet



Excerpt from Canada West: The Last Best West, an annual publication from the Department of the Interior produced to attract and aid prospective agricultural settlers. It contained maps and descriptions of each area of the prairies, answers to frequently asked questions and testimonials from successful farmers. It was translated into a variety of European languages and adapted for different English-speaking markets.

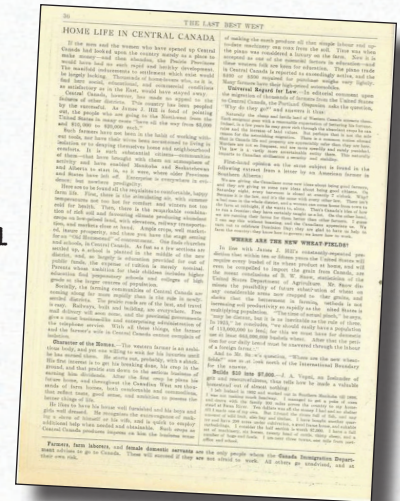
Comments in brackets are not part of the original document. They have been added to assist the reader with difficult words.

Home Life in Central Canada

Here are to be found all the requisites to comfortable, happy farm life. First, there is the stimulating air, with summer temperatures not too hot for comfort and winters not too cold for health. Then, there is the remarkable combination of rich soil and favouring climate producing abundant crops on low-priced land, with elevators, railway transportation and markets close at hand. Ample crops, well marketed, insure prosperity, and there you have the stage setting for an "Old Homestead" of contentment. One finds churches and schools, in Central Canada. As fast as a few sections are settled up, a school is planted in the middle of the new district, and, so largely is education provided for out of public funds, the expense of tuition is merely nominal (minimal). Parents whose ambition for their children includes higher education find preparatory schools and colleges of high grade at the larger centres of population.

Socially, the farming communities of Central Canada are coming along far more rapidly than is the rule in newly settled districts. The prairie roads are of the best, and travel easy. Railways, built and building, are everywhere. Free mail delivery will soon come, and the provincial governments give a most business-like and enterprising administration of the telephone service. With all these things, the farmer and the farmer's wife in Central Canada cannot complain of isolation.

... The western farmer is an ambitious body, and yet one willing to wait for his luxuries until he has earned them. He starts out, probably, with a shack. His first interest is to get his breaking done, his crop in the ground, and that prairie sun down to the serious business of earning him dividends. After the first crop he plans his future home, and throughout the Canadian West are thousands of farm houses, both comfortable and commodious (spacious), that reflect taste, good sense, and ambition to possess the better things of life.



"Canada west: The last best west," Persuasion: Print advertising and advocacy on the prairies (University of Saskatchewan Library Special Collections, p.36), http://scaa.usask.ca/gallery/persuasion/search/image_browse.php?ID=25706&part=30 (Accessed August 21, 2011).



#4

Description of the climate

Excerpt from a description of the climate of the Canadian west taken from the pamphlet *Twentieth Century Canada and Atlas of Western Canada* that was published by the Canadian government in 1906.



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Twentieth Century Canada and Atlas of Western Canada (1906)

Description of the climate of the Canadian West:

... During the winter warm woolen (sic) clothing is necessary. Because of the dryness of the inland climate, the cold is much less noticeable than a stranger might expect. Less snow falls on the prairies than in the East, and on account of the dryness of the air, it brushes off one's coat like dust.

Everywhere the appearance of snow is hailed as seasonable and beneficial. Sleighing parties of pleasure are arranged for the period of the full moon, and the sound of the sleigh bells is a merry one. The snow protects the autumn-sown wheat from the frost and aids ... the farmer in hauling his produce to market, and so contributes alike to business and pleasure.

“Advertising in the United States, 1900–1920s,” Canadian Museum of Civilization: The last best west: Advertising for immigrants to western Canada, 1870–1930, <http://www.civilization.ca/cmc/exhibitions/hist/advertis/ads6-04e.shtml> (Accessed August 19, 2011).

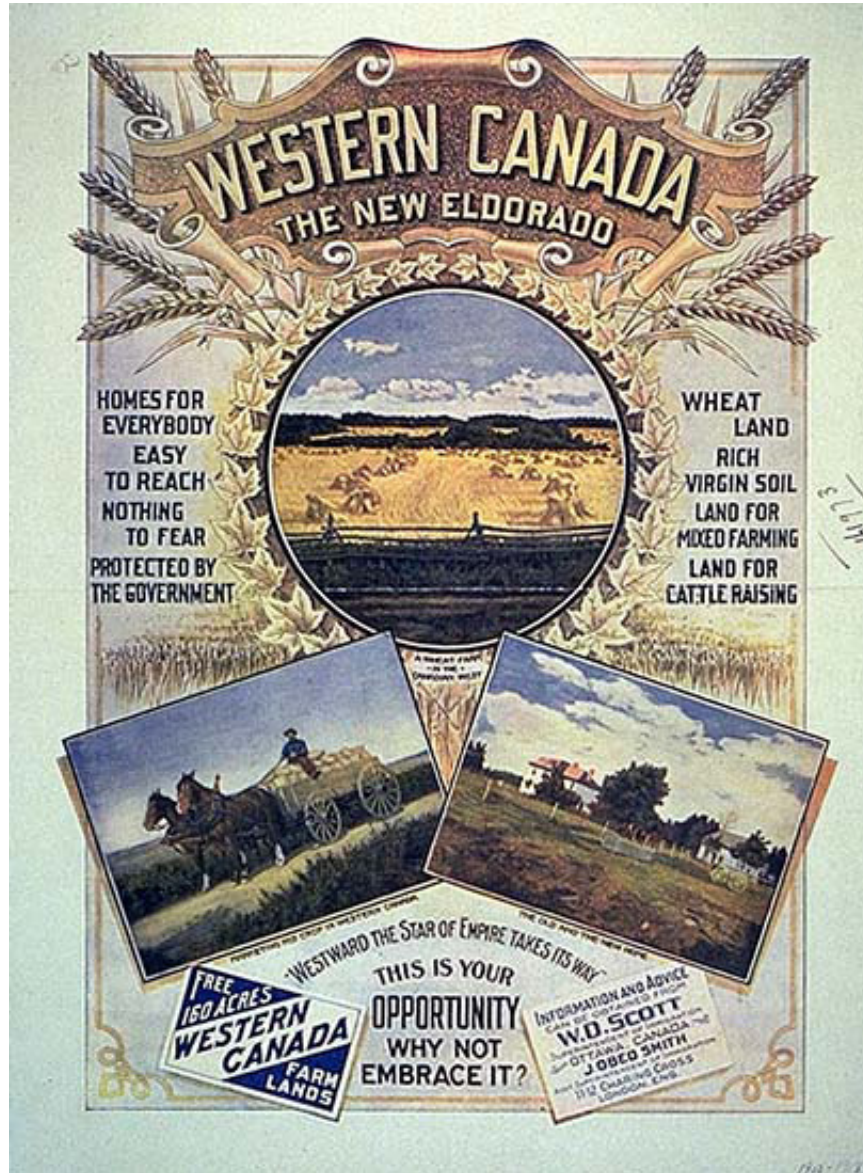


#5

Advertising poster for the New Eldorado

This cover page from the 1909 edition of *Canada West: The Last Best West*, an annual publication from the Department of the Interior produced to attract and aid prospective agricultural settlers.

PRIMARY SOURCE
Prairie immigration
and the "Last Best West"



"Advertising in Britain, 1900–1916," Canadian Museum of Civilization: The last best west: Advertising for immigrants to western Canada, 1870–1930, National Archives of Canada, Government Archives File No. TR 76/128, <http://www.civilization.ca/cmc/exhibitions/hist/advertis/ads3-09e.shtml> (Accessed August 19, 2011).

#6

"The Evolution of a Homestead"

Advertising poster published sometime after 1906 to provide information about establishing a homestead.

PRIMARY SOURCE
Prairie immigration and the "Last Best West"

160 ACRES FREE

The Evolution of a Homestead

THE WHEAT GROWING AREA OF WESTERN CANADA IS PLACED AT 171,000,000 ACRES. (DR. THUNDER'S 1906 EXPERIMENTAL FIND) IN 1806 LESS THAN 2,000,000 WAS UNDER CULTIVATION AND TODAY NOT MORE THAN 25,000,000 UNDER SETTLEMENT

THE HOMESTEAD ENTRIES
FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 1907-8 NUMBERED OVER 30,000, REPRESENTING MORE THAN 5,000,000 ACRES, OR AN AREA EQUAL TO ONE FOURTH THE TOTAL AREA OF EITHER SCOTLAND OR IRELAND

QUALITY OF THE WHEAT
Officially inspected at Winnipeg in one year
50.7 per cent graded Manitoba Hard
30.6 - - - - - No. 1 Northern
81.3 - - - - - of the total come within the two highest grades

IN 1906 (CENSUS YEAR) ONLY 1 OUT OF EVERY 20 ACRES OF WHEAT LANDS WAS UNDER CROP

CRUISING FIGURES OF WHEAT PRODUCTION IN MANITOBA, SASKATCHEWAN & ALBERTA
1881 1,153,328
1891 17,894,679
1901 23,555,850
1906 110,586,824

WITHIN 15 DAYS (from Sept. 1st to 15th 1906) OVER 1,700,000 ACRES OF LAND WERE TAKEN BY HOMESTEAD PRE-EMPTION AND PURCHASE, IN THE AREA MADE AVAILABLE BY THE NEW DOMINION LANDS ACT.

WHY? ARE PEOPLE COMING FROM ALL QUARTERS OF THE GLOBE BECAUSE NO OTHER COUNTRY OFFERS ANYTHING LIKE IT
A FREE FARM
A FINE CLIMATE
A FAIR CHANCE TO EVERY MAN - WITH OR WITHOUT CAPITAL.

A LETTER OR POST CARD WILL BRING FREE PARTICULARS TO YOUR DOOR FREE OF CHARGE. WRITE TO
W. D. SCOTT,
Superintendent of Immigration
OTTAWA, CANADA
OR TO
J. OBED SMITH,
West Dept. of Immigration
87-88 CHANCERY LANE, LONDON, E.C.4, ENGLAND.

"Advertising in Britain, 1900–1916," Canadian Museum of Civilization: The last best west: Advertising for immigrants to western Canada, 1870–1930, National Archives of Canada File No. C-126300, June 16, 2010, <http://www.civilization.ca/cmhc/exhibitions/hist/advertis/ads3-09e.shtml> (Accessed August 19, 2011).

#7

The land of the sugar maple tree

Poem used in a promotional pamphlet created by the Department of Agriculture in 1906.



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The Land of the Sugar Maple Tree

Come away, come away to Canada
Where the sugar maple grows so free:
Inhale the wholesome air of freedom
And sip nectar from the sugar maple tree.

Our fertile land of river, lake and prairie
Is the ideal place for you and me;
Where the birds are always sweetly singing
And our British law is Liberty.

We have spruce and pine in good and plenty:
Elm, ash and birch grow vigorously;
But the nearest one to our loving hearts
is the beautiful sugar maple tree.

The singing birds of brightest plumes
Find homes in all their branches.
You too can have a bower built
Where each one has such chances

Oh we are a mighty nation
And prolific with wheat kings.
We are filled with jubilation
That wealth and comfort brings.

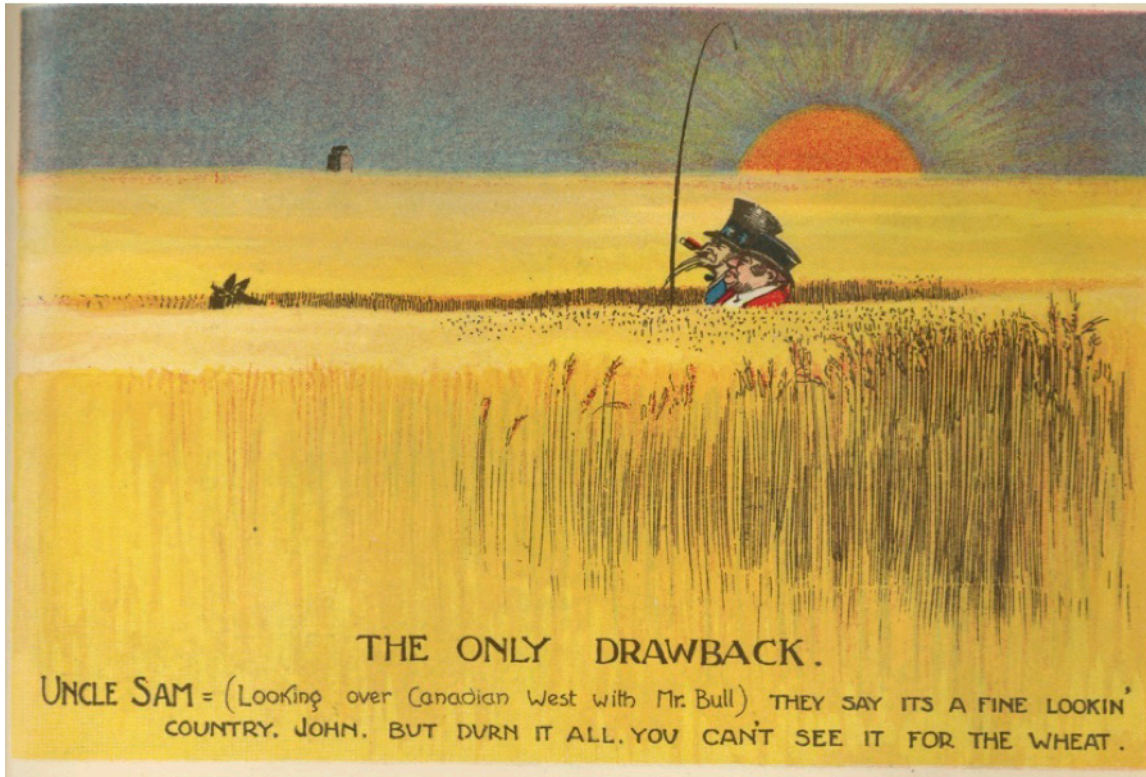
Bruce, Jean. The last best west (Vancouver, BC: Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1976), p. 18.



#8

The only drawback

Cartoon published in 1903 by the Department of the Interior as part of a cartoon book advertising the Canadian west in the United States.



The cartoon was accompanied by the following text:

“No grander or more beautiful sight can be witnessed during the summer months than the Canadian prairie, with its sea of red and golden wheat. In driving through various districts the traveller, as far as his eye can reach, beholds nothing but the waving grain. He is filled with wonder, love and praise.

In 1902 these prairies yielded nearly 70,000,000 bushels of wheat besides 30,000,000 bushels of oats, and over 12,000,000 bushels of barley. The wheat belt of Western Canada is about 1,000 miles long by 400 miles wide, yet only a very small portion of this tract is under cultivation.”

Department of the Interior, Canada: The Granary of the World, p. 15, December 1903, The Saskatchewan Settlement Experience, http://sasksettlement.com/assets/archive_document/R28_Canada_The_Granary_Of_The_World_Booklet.pdf (Accessed August 21, 2011).

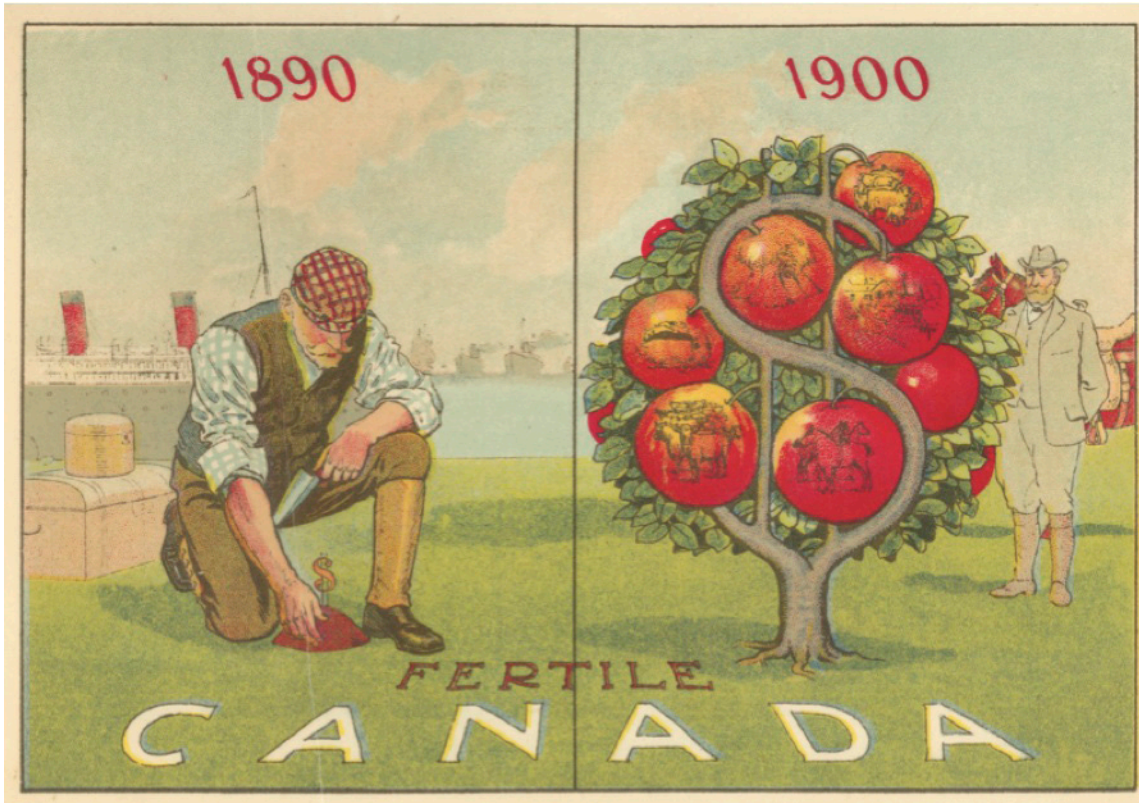
#9

Fertile Canada

Cartoon published in 1903 by the Department of the Interior as part of a cartoon book used to advertise the Canadian west in the United States.



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The following text was included under the cartoon:

“The Hindo [sic] juggler with much mummery [false ceremony] professes to raise a fruit-laden orange tree from the seed in a few minutes. But the whole performance is a fraud. In Canada the shrewd and sturdy settler who plants a little capital and cultivates it can, with due diligence in a few years, produce a competency. This is no fraud, but the actual experience of hundreds and thousands of agriculturists.

Canada is the country of rapid yet real growth; a country of illimitable [unlimited] possibilities.

Many a settler has paid for his land, implements, stock and all living expenses by the proceeds of a single crop of wheat.”

Department of the Interior, Canada: The Granary of the World, December 1903, p. 30, The Saskatchewan Settlement Experience, http://sasksettlement.com/assets/archive_document/R28_Canada_The_Granary_Of_The_World_Booklet.pdf (Accessed August 21, 2011).

#10

Now then, all together!

Cartoon published in 1903 by the Department of the Interior as part of a cartoon book, used to advertise the Canadian west in the United States.

PRIMARY SOURCE
Prairie Immigration
and the "Last Best West"



Department of the Interior, Canada: The Granary of the World, December 1903, p. 22, The Saskatchewan Settlement Experience, http://sasksettlement.com/assets/archive_document/R28_Canada_The_Granary_Of_The_World_Booklet.pdf (Accessed August 21, 2011).

#1

Central themes in “The Last Best West” advertising campaign

Excerpt from a book written by historian Donald Hall describes the typical themes used in “The Last Best West” advertising campaign.



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Aggressive salesmanship was crucial. “In my judgment,” he [Sifton] told the House of Commons, “the immigration work has to be carried on in the same manner as the sale of any commodity; just as soon as you stop advertising and missionary work, the movement is going to stop.” Under his direction, the department of the interior produced dozens of pamphlets in tens of thousands of copies and a variety of languages to advertise the advantages of settling in the Canadian Prairie West. These, in turn, are quite revealing of the vision of the West that Sifton wished to convey. Many of the pamphlets were heavily illustrated with photographs of prosperous prairie farms, often well-treed with gently rolling hills and well-watered; or there were maps, charts, and graphs, all outlining the remarkable growth and productivity of agriculture, transportation, and other economic activities in the West. The pamphlets fairly bristled with facts and figures to give them an aura of authenticity, and to try to answer as many questions that any prospective settler might have. Almost all the pamphlets contained testimonials from successful farmers or from journalists (usually from the United States or Britain) who had been sent through the country to report on its virtues; indeed some pamphlets consisted entirely of this sort of material.

Certain themes emerged consistently. One was climate, which was represented as invariably salubrious [health promoting]: “Malarial diseases are totally unknown, and contagious complaints are rarely heard of.” Winters were admittedly cold, but clear and with lower humidity than other countries. Manitoba, intending settlers were informed, was not subject in summer to “those hot, parching winds” that prevail “in that portion of the United States known as the American desert.”

... As time went on, the reports provided more detail and even greater enthusiasm. In 1904 one pamphlet reported that the water in northern Alberta (around Edmonton) was “ample and wholesome from a sanitary point of view,” while the air was found to be “clear, pure, and aseptic, containing a large proportion of ozone—the natural air purifier.” ... Not only was the climate healthful for adults, “but it seems to have a special influence in developing strong and healthy children.”

Hall, Donald. “Clifford Sifton’s vision of the prairie west,” in R. Douglas Francis and Chris Kitzan (eds.), *The Prairie West as Promised Land* (Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press, 2007), pp. 83–84.

#2

Assessing “The Last Best West” advertising campaign

An excerpt from an article written by historian Vivienne Hall describing the advertising in “The Last Best West” campaign.



Comments in brackets are not part of the original document. They have been added to assist the reader with difficult words.

... Before Sifton could convince any of these Europeans (whom he referred to as “stalwart peasants in sheep-skin coats”) to come and settle, he would have to dispel what notions they had of Canada (if they even knew where Canada was). It was most likely that these people understood Canada to be a frigid and largely unexplored wasteland, and Sifton quickly recognized that an aggressive sales campaign was needed.

... The great advertising promotions instigated during Sifton’s tenure included the printing of millions of elegant pamphlets in several languages. In full colour, the pamphlets extravagantly extolled the virtues of the Canadian prairies. The prevailing extremes of temperature were hidden in vague yearly averages. Descriptions of the “bracing” or “invigorating” western climate revealed little about the sub-zero reality of a winter on the plains. The “Garden of Eden,”... would have looked “seedy” compared to the images of the West dreamed up by the promoters. Such advertising had the desired effect. First a trickle, then a flood of eastern European peasants began to cross the Atlantic.

We know very little of what these immigrants expected when they first set foot in their new land. What is certain is that few could have anticipated their reality. The mythological images which had been presented to them were nothing but pure hyperbole [exaggeration]. Ronald Rees remarks that no one can argue with Edward McCourt’s statement at the time that Sifton and his colleagues’ advertising literature was “the purplest prose ever written” about western Canada. The Canadian government needed the West settled in a hurry, and the future of the region did indeed appear “golden” at the time. But Sifton’s pamphlets pretended that the golden age had already arrived. Immigrants soon found out that their opportunities would have to be wrested from the land through tremendous sacrifice and effort. Their abject dismay and immediate sense of dislocation [put out of place] is reflected, revealingly, in the pictures we have of family groups arriving at CPR stations in small western towns. Even the children and babies look sad and bewildered.

Hall, Vivienne. “Coming to Canada: Land of promise and cold reality” *Queen’s Quarterly* 104, 3 (Fall 1997), pp. 414–425.

#3

Assessing “The Last Best West” advertising campaign

Excerpt from an article written by author Graham Chandler in the August 2006 Canadian History magazine *The Beaver* describing “The Last Best West” advertising campaign.



Comments in brackets are not part of the original document. They have been added to assist the reader with difficult words.

With artistic covers portraying an idyllic prairie life of blue skies, golden crops, happy families, friendly neighbours, sunshine, and independence, Canada West was packed with advice for the prospective pioneer. Unlike our modern world of empty advertising spin, and though Canada West had purely promotional ambitions, its success hinged on providing practical information. Hints abounded, from “For the Man Who Has Less than \$300” (this man had better work for wages the first year) to “The Man Who Has \$600” (get hold of your 160 homestead acres at once and build your shack) to “What \$1,200 Will Buy” (this would provide fairly decent equipment and include one stubble plough at \$20). For the land-hungry homesteader, it offered detailed colour maps of each of the four provinces, growing in later editions to four-page foldouts, which included the checkerboards of surveyed township borders showing where new farmland was available and its proximity to rivers, towns, roads, and railways. Canada West contained everything the Canadian government thought the prospective farm owner needed to know. Issues repackaged the same message, often running the same kinds of articles every year: statistics on farm yields; information on railways, telephones, immigration, homesteading, schools, building materials, climate, cattle, and hog prices; river and lake access; land and customs regulations; different church denominations; freight rates; and much more. Issues always included a string of success stories and testimonials, such as one provided by an American newcomer who enthused, “I make five times per acre what I made in Iowa.”

Chandler, Graham. “Selling the prairie good life,” *The Beaver* 86, 4 (August, 2006), pp. 24–30

