

## *All that Remains of Fort Esperance*

CLIFF SHAW, Yorkton



This ancient fireplace, located on the Qu'Appelle River southeast of Welby, is possibly the oldest existing fireplace in Saskatchewan. Together with a few depressions, once cellars, it is all that remains of Fort Esperance, a distributing centre for the North West Company approximately 150 years ago.

From sketchy reports which still exist there is reason to believe that an earlier fort of this same name was located a short distance away on a flat closer to the river. Small trees and brush cover the fireplace on the knoll above the flat. Some of the shrubbery had to be cleared to obtain a photo. Gilbert Johnson, Marchwell, who is shown beside the fireplace, said that when he visited the site in the fall of 1948 he found the remains of 11 cellars, indicating an establishment of considerable size.

Looking out over the valley it is difficult for the visitor to try to reconstruct the scene, to conjecture as to the people, the conversations and

the decisions which centred around this fireplace or to visualize the great herds of buffalo to be seen from the bastions. Or the activity during the winter months as the hunters of the fort and the Indians brought in fresh or dried meat. Or how it would be mixed with fat and made into pemmican as spring approached and the rush to build boats to transport it to posts further east.

According to the late Dr. Norton who did so much research along these lines, the first fort was on the flat and then moved to higher land for reason of better defence during the troublesome times of the early 1800's.

Fort Esperance was built in 1787 by Robert Grant, a proprietor of the North West Company.

According to the journal of John MacDonald, who was in charge in 1810, the Indians murdered the caretaker of the horses and the fort was moved up the river to a small

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## A Rare Fish

By CLIFF SHAW, Yorkton



This odd-looking fish has the distinction of being the first of its kind taken in Saskatchewan. The fisherman was Emil Quinn of Yorkton who caught it in the White Sand river east of Canora, early in September.

Dr. D. S. Rawson, head of the biology department at the University of Saskatchewan, said that judging from the photo the specimen is one of the catfishes, probably the Black Bullhead "*Ameirus nebulosus*." Dr. Rawson is hoping Mr. Quinn, or another fisherman, will catch a similar specimen and preserve it in 10 percent formalin so as to be sure of the specific identification.

### FORT ESPERANCE

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lake. Difficulties with the Indians seem to have begun in earnest during MacDonald's administration and he may not have fully recorded the misfortunes. There is some evidence to presume the fort was destroyed and the inmates massacred.

About two years after the Hudson's Bay Company entered the picture and built in the same area as the North West Company, both parties agreed to move to a new site and live in harmony.

Only the first part of the agreement was carried out. A field of lodged grain, when the site was visited last fall, showed the outline of the North West Company fort where cannon were aimed at their rivals. The Hudson's Bay Company fort was eventually burned in the absence of the owners. It has vanish-

ed completely and thought to have been washed into the river.

Arthur Kelly of Welby reported recently that correspondence from the provincial and federal authorities indicated steps be taken to establish the site of Fort Esperance. He said if present plans mature a 25 acre park will be established and a cairn in the form of a fort chimney with a commemorative plaque built.

### FEEDING TRAYS

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are any special crumbs around they are taken out immediately to add variety to their diet of rolled oats, bread crumbs, and pieces of fat. Cake crumbs seem to be the general favorite but with a couple of Downy Woodpeckers and the Chickadees feeding continually during daylight hours the choice crumbs are soon gone.