

A TATSFIELD MYSTERY

A Tatsfield Mystery - Solved

Robin Jones writes: *Tatsfield had once been a thriving township but had now disappeared from the maps and from history! This was 'the other' Tatsfield, the one in Saskatchewan, Northern Canada. Ian Mitchell saw an article in the Parish Magazine by my daughter, Hannah Jones, describing her life in the Canadian Mounties and which mentioned that she is based in Saskatchewan. Ian asked me - could Hannah do some 'detective work' on the lost Tatsfield – what had happened to it – and can she turn up any explanation of how it got the name Tatsfield?*

Here is Hannah's story.

I was delighted to find that *Tatsfield, Saskatchewan* is still on Google Maps and even more delighted to see that it was not too far from my posting, a township called Onion Lake. According to Google Maps, *Tatsfield* was only a couple of hours away, which is nothing given the vastness of Canada (and Saskatchewan!).

In fact the journey took over five hours! I was accompanied by my friend Tracey and it was just before Christmas; the road conditions were icy, with snow blowing across the highway and temperatures truly frigid (and beyond the imagination of you folks back in England).



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Eventually the SatNav (Google Maps) told us we were getting close to 'Tatsfield' – but with the winter sun soon setting, it was a race against the clock as the sky was growing dark.

We reached a place called *Cut Knife*, and my heart was beating with anticipation as the next junction would be to 'Tatsfield'. This turned out to be an unmarked road, not much more than a track. And we eventually arrived at the spot which according to the map was 'Tatsfield' – but where was it? According to the satellite view there was supposed to be some sort of building, possibly a farm.

The light was now fast failing but yes indeed we could now make out a solitary barn. We headed to it although it was becoming clear we were probably driving across the farmer's private property. I was driving really slowly and just before we reached the barn we passed an upside-down cow, frozen solid with its four legs poised straight up in the air! I'd never seen such a thing. The snow was getting deeper and we were concerned about getting stuck. We decided we ought to turn around and go back. But at that moment we noticed a man working in the barn.

We parked and the man came over to us and asked if we were lost. I then saw another man, and a child, behind him. I told him we weren't exactly lost but were looking for 'Tatsfield'!

The man behind took an instant interest. "You're looking for Tatsfield?" he asked, with apparent delight. I told him my story, that I was from the English Tatsfield and that my dad had wondered if I could go and investigate the Canadian Tatsfield, as I'm based at Onion Lake.

The men finished up in the barn and welcomed us in to their house, where their wives were cooking up supper. A book was brought out, and a photograph and we listened as they told us all about the Canadian Tatsfield.

The Canadian Tatsfield

This is what we were told...

Tatsfield, Saskatchewan no longer exists.

It had been a farming hub. There were three grain elevators to serve the rural area, where all the farmers would bring their grain. The three elevators were: the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool (of which the farmer showed us an old sepia photograph, the Searle Grain Elevator, and the Scottish Cooperative elevator.

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The Searle Grain elevator

In the 1940s, one of these three grain elevators burnt down to the ground. The man told us of his childhood memories of the concrete foundation where the elevator once stood.

The Scottish elevator, which was built in 1912, was bought in 1930 by William Stonehouse, who then subsequently tore it down in 1932 and used the wood on his farm. The third elevator was also torn down at some point.

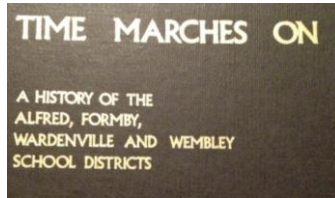
During Tatsfield's era two railways went through the area. One of them ("Canadian National railway") had a stop in Tatsfield and was a vital to the town's grain economy. The other, the Canadian Pacific, did not pass through the town but some distance away. The Canadian Pacific line went coast to coast and survived; Canadian National did not. The line went out of business and this had a disastrous effect on Tatsfield's viability. At the time, farmers did not have the use of trucks to transport their grain - horses and buggies were much more common. With the closure of Canadian National, and Canadian Pacific stations being too far away for horse drawn transport, Tatsfield's economy declined rapidly and over the decades the population dwindled away.

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All the buildings of what had once been 'Tatsfield' were eventually torn down and the land reclaimed and tilled, turned back to farm-land. The grain is nowadays taken by road to major centres with large scale elevators and processing plants. The farmer we spoke to, in fact, now farms those fields.

There's nowadays no marker or sign to signify that Tatsfield ever existed, bar a simple tree-line for those in the know. And of course it still exists virtually on Google-Maps!

The farmer's grandmother, who is now 92-years-old, is the only surviving member of the generation who would remember the grain elevator and Tatsfield as it once was. It was not possible for us to meet her on that trip – but we will try again, maybe in the spring!



He showed us a book called "Time Marches On – a History of the Alfred, Formby, Wardenville and Wembley School Districts", in which Tatsfield is mentioned on a couple of pages as it lists the "elevator agents" in Tatsfield and includes a photo of one of them, Robert McKinnon. (I looked it up, and you can actually view all the pages of the book online at <http://www.ourroots.ca/e/page.aspx?id=923826>).



Robert McKinnon, elevator agent at Tatsfield.

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This was an interesting quest, and we are glad that we stumbled across the farmer who had such a wealth of knowledge about the former Tatsfield, and was also kind enough to show us the book and photograph. Sadly, no luck finding out how the town got its name or whether there was some distant link with the 'original' Tatsfield, but we will keep trying!

My Mum and Dad are shortly moving to Burgess Hill. Maybe it too has a Canadian version – and maybe another historical quest lies ahead!

SASKATCHEWAN WHEAT POOL ELEVATOR AGENTS

Tatsfield

George Peterson 1926/30
J. M. Dyck 1930/31
L. Rayner 1931/32
M. W. Murray 1932/38
G. W. Greenwood 1938/40
V. C. Weller 1940/42
H. C. Kornder 1942/47
R. A. Larmour 1947/48
H. C. Kornder 1948/51
D. R. Vance 1951/52
R. M. Painter 1952/52
A. H. Carpentier 1952/57
D. J. Crittall 1957/72
B. W. Kuchler 1972/73
Elevator closed July 31, 1973.

SEARLE GRAIN ELEVATOR AGENTS AT TATSFIELD

Robert McKinnon	Elmer Gower
Monty Robinson	Robert McInnis
Holden Hodgins	Russel Boulton
Steve Schaefer	Owen Turriff

Searle Grain Elevator at Tatsfield was closed August 1, 1967.

TATSFIELD WHEAT SIGNERS 1926-27

SASKATCHEWAN WHEAT POOL

Original "Wheat Signers List" kept by Tom Hampson

Mr. Ernest Atkinson,
Notakcewan, Alta.
Mr. A. G. Beckett,
Cut Knife, Sask.
Mr. F. Beckett,
Cut Knife, Sask.

Mr. F. Beckett,
Cut Knife, Sask.
Mr. Harry Beckett,
Cut Knife, Sask.
Mr. George E. Beckett,
Cut Knife, Sask.
Mr. James Beckett,
Cut Knife, Sask.
Mr. Josiah Biggart,
Tatsfield, Sask.
Elizabeth G. E. Bingham,
Perdue, Sask.
Mr. L. M. Bingham,
Tatsfield, Sask.
Mr. Samuel F. Bingham,
Tatsfield, Sask.
Mr. Albert E. Brebner,
Carruthers, Sask.
Mr. Charles Brebner,
Tatsfield, Sask.
Mr. Charles Bullerwell,
Tatsfield, Sask.
Mr. Wm. F. Carr,
527-12th Ave.,
New Westminster, B.C.
Mr. Alfred E. Collins,
Tatsfield, Sask.
Mr. Angus B. Cook,
Cut Knife, Sask.
Ada Corney,
Tatsfield, Sask.
Corney Bros.,
Tatsfield, Sask.
Mr. Charles H. Corney,
Tatsfield, Sask.
Mr. Wm. Croelman,
Tatsfield, Sask.
Mr. Wm. Yeats,
c/o C. F. Campbell,
Nokomis, Sask.