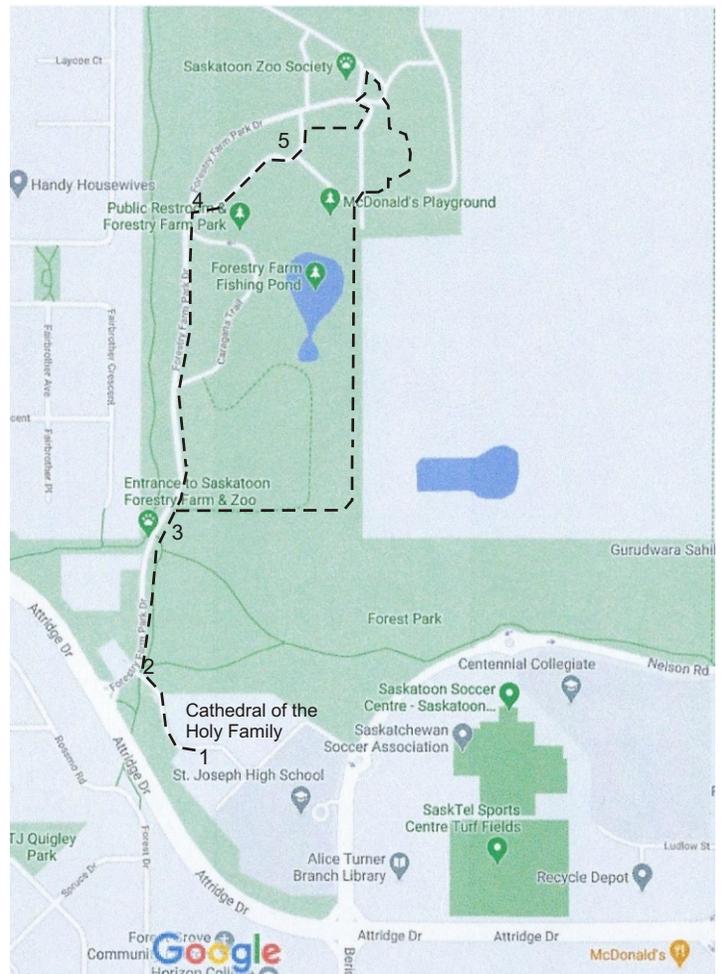


A Walking Tour of the Saskatoon Forestry Farm Park

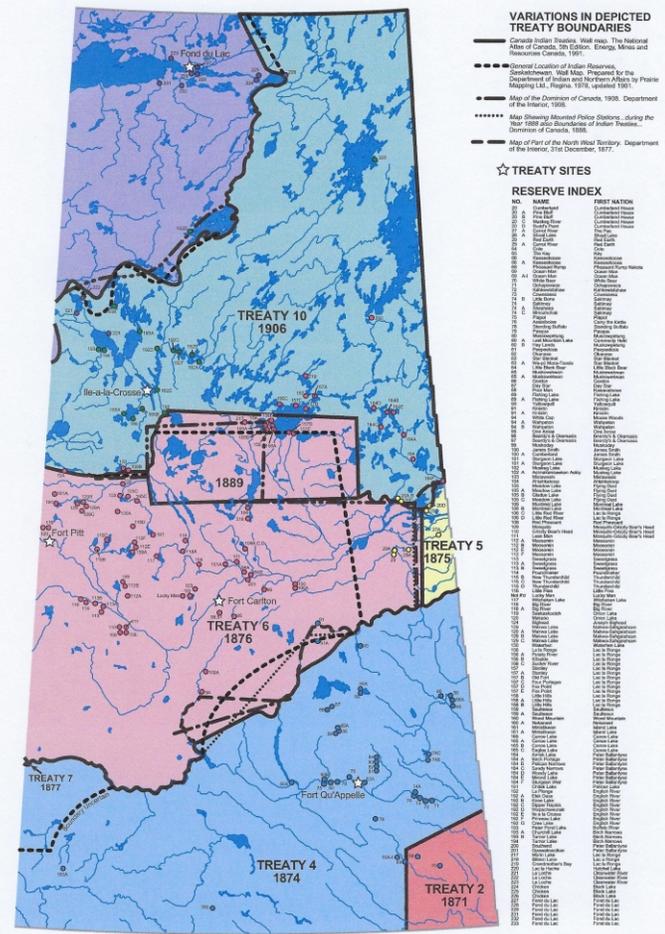
Prepared by Bernadette Vangool
for
Jane's Walk 2021



This booklet was prepared for educational purposes and may be downloaded and printed to take along on your walk. The walk is approximately 1.3 km and with stops along the way to admire the scenery, should take between 1 to 1.5 hours.



Treaty Boundaries, Location of First Nations, and Treaty Sites in Saskatchewan



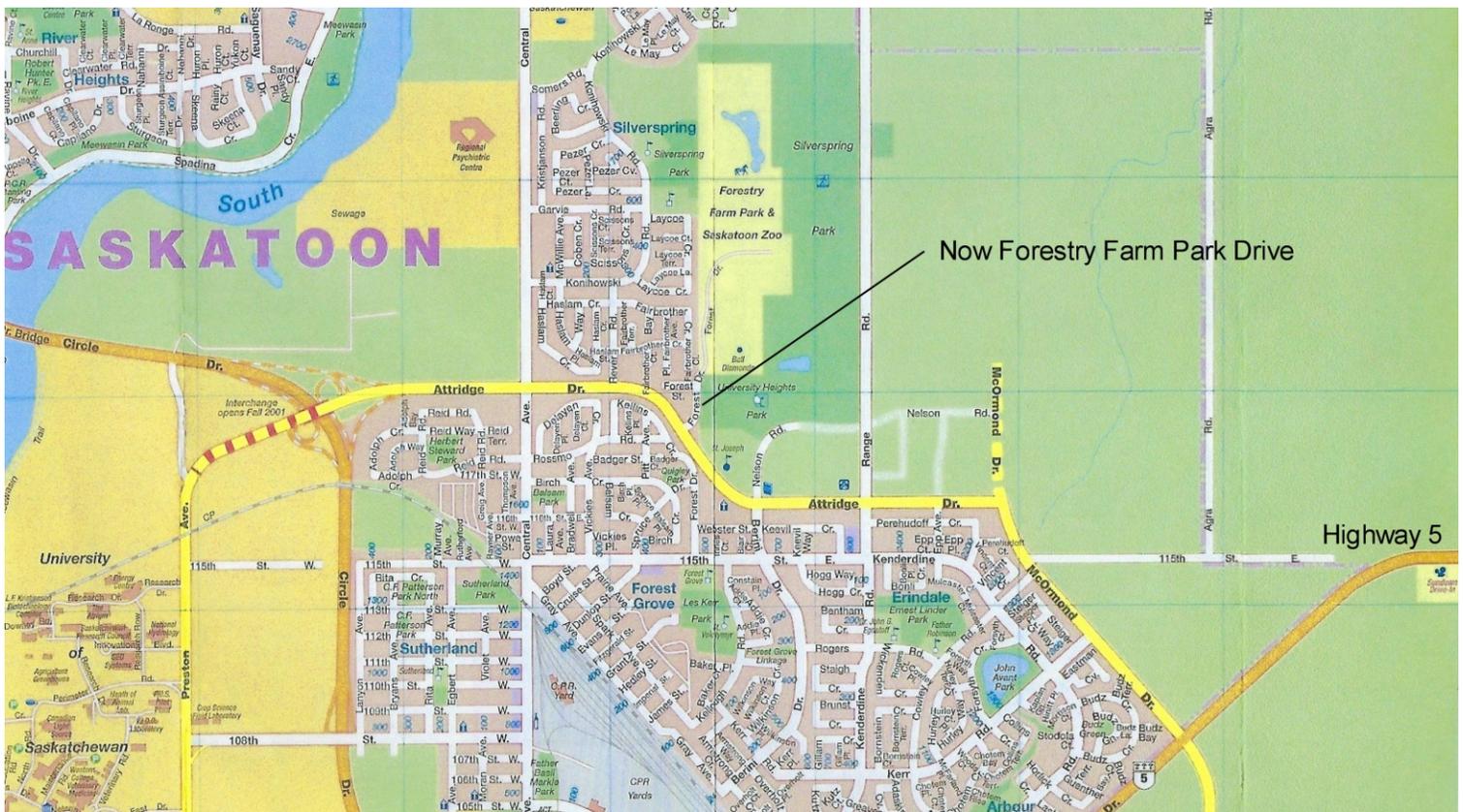
1.

We recognize that we are on Treaty 6 territory, a traditional gathering place for diverse indigenous peoples including the Cree, Metis and Assiniboine who have called this area home (light pink area on the map).

Treaty 6 was signed in 1876 in Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt by the Crown to allow the settler program to continue into this territory. The indigenous people signed for two major reasons. First, the coming of the white man had introduced smallpox and other illnesses and many communities were in dire need of medicines. Second, the buffalo, a major food source for the indigenous people were now being hunted indiscriminately for their hide and were quickly disappearing from the landscape.

In return for giving up their way of life and in reality their freedom, the indigenous people were promised health care and guaranteed a way of life, in which they would not be faced with starvation. (It was expected that they become farmers, an unfamiliar lifestyle for which they were ill-equipped.)

The indigenous people, a nomadic people who roamed the prairies and lived for the most part amicably with other first nations, could not then have foreseen the influx of peoples into their lands, nor the reality of not trespassing on private property, a concept not fully understood, as in their culture the land belonged to everyone.



Walk to Forestry Farm Park Drive. At the stop sign, look south along the walking path, across Attridge drive. You can clearly see the connection between Forestry Farm Park Drive and Forest Drive leading to 115th Street.

2.

The Saskatoon Forestry Farm Park was once the Sutherland Forest Nursery Station. In 1903 the Dominion of Canada developed a nursery station in Indian Head, to distribute trees to settlers, so they could plant shelterbelts around their properties. Because the Indian Head nursery could not keep up with the demand, a second nursery was started near Sutherland in 1913. The location was chosen because it was close to the railway to facilitate tree distribution and also close to a community that could provide an easy seasonal work force for the nursery. The CP rail yards are shown at the bottom of the map in light blue.

Until the 1960s, when College Street was extended to form College Drive, Highway 5 came into Saskatoon at 115th Street. Farmers who came to pick up trees at the nursery could turn right on Forest Drive without having to enter Saskatoon. The Forest Drive link with 115th street was broken around 1988 when Attridge Drive connected the Forest Grove community, which had developed east of Sutherland, to Circle Drive.

In 1905 Albert Hanson, a Saskatoon real estate agent, purchased the land that is now the Sutherland Industrial park. He sold part of this land to the CPR in 1907 allowing the railway station to be constructed. A settlement grew up around it and was named after William Charles Sutherland, a prominent politician who had also served on Saskatoon's town council.

The village of Sutherland was incorporated in 1909 and annexed to Saskatoon in 1956.



Courtesy Saskatoon Public Library, Local History Room



Courtesy Saskatoon Public Library, Local History Room. LH2890

Every spring, trees at the Sutherland Nursery Station were bundled, wrapped in moss and packed in burlap bags. Loaded on carts, they were pulled to the Sutherland railway station where they awaited the trains.

The first tree shipment went out in 1916. On average, 3 million trees were shipped from the Sutherland Forest Nursery Station each year until its closure in 1965.

Deciduous trees were free, while there was a small fee for evergreens. The recipient was responsible for shipping charges.

Proceed to the entrance of the Park.

3.

The entrance has seen some changes over the years. When Les Kerr was Superintendent (he served in that capacity from 1942 to 1965), his brother Howard lived in a log cabin near the entrance of the park where he operated a concession stand. This log cabin is said to have been the inspiration for the 1964-68 local CFQC TV children's series hosted by Jeff (Smokey) Howard.



Local History Room - Saskatoon Public Library
PH-SM-266 August 10, 1983

Jeff O'Brien, City of Saskatoon Archivist noted, that in the winter of 1970 Smokey's cabin rented out snowmobiles as per an ad in the Star Phoenix. In 1979 the cabin was in the news again when a fire broke out because of a malfunction in the heating system. The cabin was demolished shortly after the article below appeared in the Star Phoenix.



Entrance ca 1949 Courtesy Saskatoon Public Library, Local history Room LH-9495

By Leanne Woodhouse

Q: Jennifer Letrud of Allan would like to know what happened to Smokey's Cabin, a little confectionery near the Forestry Farm that had the "best chocolate ice-cream." There was also a local children's TV program with the same name.

A: The cabin operated as a confectionery from 1948 to 1969, although it wasn't always known as Smokey's Cabin, said former owner Ted Eadinger who sold it in 1977.

The cabin hasn't been used for years, and still stands, hidden in the bushes, by the entrance of the Forestry Farm. It is run-down and will probably be demolished, said Forestry Farm supervisor Barrie Meissner.

The children's show ran on CFQC from 1964-68. The cabin was used for the beginning and ending of the show, which was shot in a studio.

Eadinger used to be the production manager of the show. He's now the vice-president/general manager of CFPL-TV in London, Ont.

Jeff Howard used to play Smokey. The last Eadinger heard of him, he was doing promotion and broadcasting work in Alberta.



Star Phoenix 1992-07-22

Walk on the pathway that is adjacent to the main road into the park. On your right (facing east) there is a shelterbelt. This row of trees separated the driveway from the fields of seedlings. On the opposite side of the road, along the current fence-line, was the perimeter shelterbelt. Between these two shelterbelts leading into the park, lawns and trees were planted to create the scenic drive we see today.

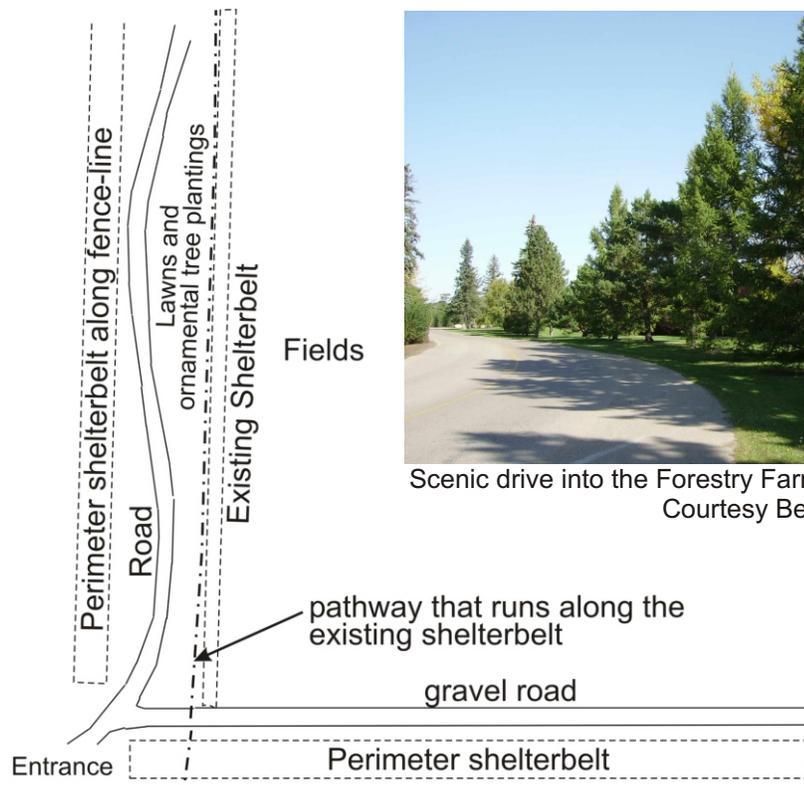
A shelterbelt consists of several parallel rows of trees and shrubs planted to catch the snow in winter, thus providing needed moisture in spring. As well, shelterbelts protect fields and farmsteads from drying winds and prevent soil erosion.

The Nursery did research on a wide variety of trees and shrubs, a diversity reflected in the current landscape of the park.

From 1881 to 1908, the southern portion of the site was part of the Temperance Colony Society's grant. The northern part, where the zoo is located, was homesteaded by William Stephanson in 1886. William built a well, a stone house and stable, but it is not known where on site these buildings were located.

In 1908 a prominent real estate agent by the name of F.E. Kerr purchased all of the land included in the Forestry Farm. J.C. Drinkle, his business partner, bought a 50% share in the land and it was subsequently sold to Hon. W.C. Sutherland who sold it back to the crown for a hefty profit for use as a Dominion Forest Nursery in 1912.

(This research was done by John Duerkop, a local historian, in 2001.)



Scenic drive into the Forestry Farm Park in August.
Courtesy Bernadette Vangool



Walk along the path next to the shelterbelt until you see a limber pine.

Limber Pine
(*Pinus flexilis*) is named for its flexible light grey branches. Needles grow in bundles of 3-6 and tend to crowd near the end of the branches.



Courtesy Bernadette Vangool

Branches grow nearly to the ground.

The limber pine bears distinctive 5 inch cones with hard scales.

The bark on young trees is light grey and very smooth, becoming darker with scaly ridges as the tree ages. It is at the highest part of its range in the foothills of Alberta.

There are several specimens within the park, but it was never on the list of species for distribution.

Courtesy Bernadette Vangool

Cross Caragana Trail, which leads to the picnic area at the south end of the park. As you look to the right when you cross the trail you can see the area that once held the fields of seedlings, also called the propagation fields.



Courtesy Bernadette Vangool

Norway Spruce (*Picea abies*)

There are quite a few Norway spruce sprinkled through the landscape of the park and they are fairly common in the city of Saskatoon. Norway spruce, native to Europe, is a tree that adapts well to our climate but was found to be unsuitable as a shelterbelt tree and was therefore never distributed from the Sutherland Forest Nursery Station.

It is recognizable by the weeping habit of its twigs. Needles appear a lighter green than other spruce. Cones are long and narrow with pointed, slightly toothed scales.



Courtesy Bernadette Vangool

Trees suited for shelterbelts need to establish themselves quickly, be relatively fast growing, able to compete with other vegetation and drought tolerant.



Courtesy Bernadette Vangool

Scots Pine (*Pinus sylvestris*)

Scots pine has distinctive orange bark on upper branches, with the main trunk leaning to grey. It can be upright like the one pictured below, or have a curved habit similar to the one you are passing by. Seed procured from trees in a cold climate similar to the prairies produced straight tall trees, whereas those received from southern Europe produced the more squat irregular forms.

Needles grow in pairs and are twisted. Cones are about 2 inches long and point back along the twigs toward the trunk.

Scots pine was distributed from the Station as early as 1920.

A 1933 report noted:

'The Scotch pine is especially adapted for wind-break planting on the prairies. It grows probably, more rapidly than any other evergreens, and is quite hardy.'



Courtesy Bernadette Vangool

In 1934, evergreens were sold for \$2.00 per one hundred trees. This small charge was to offset some of the extra cost involved in growing them. Seeds were sown in planting beds. When they were two years old they were transplanted to the fields and grown on for another two or three years before they were ready to be lifted and distributed. Over the years protocols for planting were streamlined. Even though Sutherland and Indian Head both did research on the growth habits and hardiness of trees, the growing of evergreens became centralized at Indian Head and the Sutherland Forest Nursery Station concentrated more on deciduous trees.

In spring, depending on the orders on the books, an exchange of trees took place between the two nurseries before orders to settlers were filled.



Courtesy Bernadette Vangool

Siberian Larch (*Larix sibirica*)

By May 1st the Siberian larch should look somewhere in between the summer and the late fall photographs shown here. The larch is a deciduous conifer. It turns a brilliant gold in the fall and loses its soft, flat, hair-like needles.

The bright green needles grow in clusters on short spurs, little knobby growths, as seen on the right.

Cones are small and roundish and held upright on smaller branches. They mature in one year but can remain on the tree for several years.

The larch was one of the trees used in the perimeter shelterbelt of the park.

They were shipped from the Station by 1937.



Courtesy Bernadette Vangool



Courtesy Bernadette Vangool



Courtesy Bernadette Vangool

Black Hills Spruce (*Picea glauca* var. 'Densata')

Black Hills spruce is a variety of white spruce introduced from the Black Hills Nursery in South Dakota. Because they came from a geographic region closer to our own they were better adapted here than seed tried from Eastern Canada and other regions.

White spruce has a conical form. Needles are blue green to dark green and slightly prickly. Needles are single along the twigs and shorter than on pine trees. They are four-sided and you can roll them between your fingers.

Young female cones near the top of the tree grow upright. Male cones appear near the bottom and are usually drooping.

5. Superintendent's Residence

Built of red brick with an open veranda and two dormer windows, the Superintendent's Residence was the focal point for the lawns, walkways, flower beds, and tree groupings planted at the Nursery Station. This landscape soon matured and created an oasis of green on the prairies that by 1930 could attract as many as 3,000 visitors on a pleasant weekend.

In its later life the Superintendent's Residence stood unoccupied and was in danger of demolition when a group of concerned citizens formed the "*Friends of the Forestry Farm House*" in 1996.



Courtesy Bernadette Vangool

The Friends of the Forestry Farm House undertook the challenge of preserving and restoring the Superintendent's Residence. Work commenced in the fall of 1998 and the project was completed in 2003. Volunteers and contractors worked together and the quality of workmanship and the authenticity of the restoration are clearly evident. Over 5000 hours of volunteer labour went into the renovation and continue with ongoing interpretation of the site. This revitalization has allowed the Superintendent's Residence to once again take its rightful place within the Saskatoon Forestry Farm Park.



The first Superintendent of the Sutherland Station was James McLean (at left), who from 1914 to 1942 oversaw the construction of buildings, planting of shelterbelts, and the growing and distribution of trees for the northern half of the province.

His successor, William Leslie (Les) Kerr (at right) continued to foster the growth of the Nursery Station until it closed in 1965. In 1966 a portion of the site was turned over to the city of Saskatoon to become the Forestry Farm Park.

This transfer of buildings and grounds resulted in the preservation of a piece of Canada's agricultural history and in 1991 it was recognized as a site of National Historic Significance.



Courtesy Saskatoon Public Library, Local History Room LH-9492

Courtesy Saskatoon Public Library, Local History Room LH-9463

Follow the road (Rosybloom Lane) to the east side of the house. Face away from the side entrance and you will see a path, now obscured somewhat by a couple of young Scots pines. This pathway was traveled daily by workers on their way from the bunkhouse to the Nursery office. The office was located in the Superintendence Residence and accessed by the side door.

If conditions allow, walk down the pathway until it meets the road. At the junction, look to the right and you will see the south entrance road used by those working at the Station as well as those who were picking up trees. This road, now outside of the fence-line, is part of the land owned by Agriculture Canada. It is referred to by interpreters as Ash Avenue. It was originally planted with evergreens and Ash, but the conifers were removed some time ago.

If you look left at this junction, you will see the main parking lot and buildings that made up the hub of the Nursery. Proceed to the parking lot and walk towards the greenhouse. Behind the green house and its connecting Header House is the old Blacksmith Shop.



Path to the bunkhouse Courtesy Bernadette Vangool



Courtesy Bernadette Vangool

Blacksmith Shop

The exact date of construction for this single story wood frame building is unknown. The date '1939' is cast into the concrete apron on its south side, but the type of siding suggests it is older, possibly dating from the late 1910s. It has cedar shingles, a brick chimney and asbestos sheets for insulation. The blacksmith was kept busy repairing implements and keeping horses shod. The forge was removed in the 1950s at a time when customized metal fabrication was declining. Today it is used as a storage shed.

Header House and Greenhouse

The latest of the historical buildings on site was constructed around 1951, during the tenure of Les Kerr, who was very interested in breeding fruit trees and ornamental plants.

The header house was equipped with a main floor workshop and potting room, a basement used for storage, overhead doors for shipping and receiving and office space on the second floor. The walls were lined with sheet aluminium to discourage rodents. Seedlings were easily transferred from the potting room to the attached greenhouse. The building is currently used by the City Parks Department.



Courtesy Bernadette Vangool



Courtesy Bernadette Vangool

Pumphouse

Built in 1913, this humble building was key to the operation of the site. Until 1929 the power for the Nursery Station came from a generator located here in the basement. The basement also housed two large water tanks. Lines with pressurized water ran from the pumphouse to the Superintendent's Residence, the bunkhouse, the tree packing shed, the original barn and three hydrants for watering gardens. The building was originally heated by coal.

To increase the water supply, most of the original buildings were equipped with rainwater collection tanks.

The main floor served as a gathering place for staff meetings and luncheons and is still in use for that purpose today.



Courtesy Bernadette Vangool

Tree Storage Shed/Hall

The purpose of the tree storage shed, built in 1949, was two-fold. The large open basement was designed for cold storage of trees and the upper floor as an auditorium and short-term tree storage and tree sorting centre.

Its historic use as a gathering place for entertainment weddings and other functions continues to this day.

The cold storage of trees was developed at the Sutherland Nursery and this technology was shared with other nurseries. Once seedlings had gone dormant outdoors in the fall, they would remain dormant in indoor cold storage until spring.

Packing Shed

The 1913 Packing Shed was the hub of the station. This is where the trees that had been heeled-in over winter were packed in peat moss and wrapped in burlap before being shipped. This building was also lined with sheet metal to discourage rodents.

In 1945 tree storage cellars were built on the north side of the building to eliminate the heeling-in process.

During its lifespan, the Nursery Station shipped out approximately 147 million trees.



Courtesy Bernadette Vangool

Prior to 1945 the majority of seedlings were stored using the heeling-in method, where the entire root system and part of the lower stem were dug in, best described by Norman Ross of the Indian Head Nursery: *'All lifting of broadleaf stock is done in the fall, the plants tied in bundles of 25 and then heeled in the open ground near the packing sheds for spring shipping. No winter protection of any kind is needed in the heeling-in plots. A system of shallow surface ditches, however, is very essential, made after stock has all been heeled in, to run off the surplus snow water as early as possible in the spring. This will permit getting the stock out for shipping several days earlier.'*

From *'Nursery Practices under Prairie Conditions'* by Norman Ross published in *The Forestry Chronicle*.



Courtesy Bernadette Vangool

Boarding House/Bunkhouse

The Boarding House was built in 1916 to accommodate labourers hired to work at the site. With no insulation and only one toilet and dish sink, the 6 to 10 men who could fit into the house would have found it far from cozy in the winter months. It was likely used by seasonal workers in fall when seedlings were lifted and again in spring for the sorting of trees and orders to be shipped.

The Boarding House was recently renovated and is currently used by an 'Artists in Residence' program.

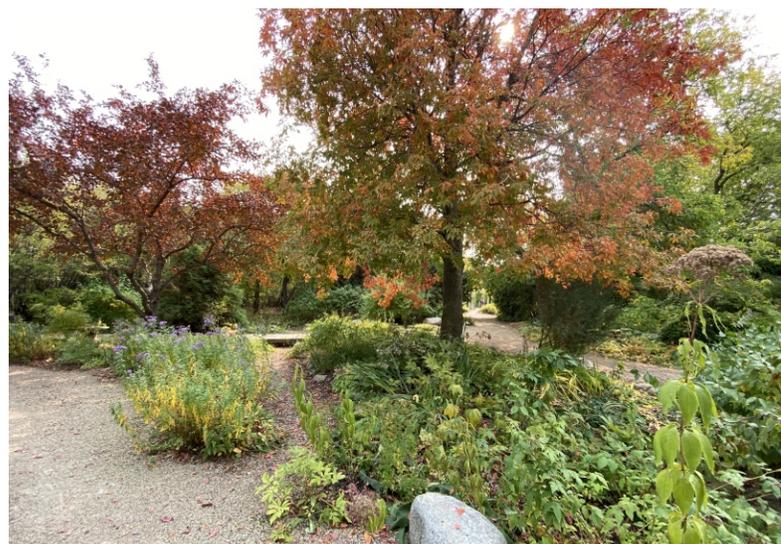
Walk along Foreman Road to the Robin Smith Meditation Garden. This garden was originally the site of the Foreman's house which was demolished because of ill repair in the 1980s. This garden is maintained by the Saskatchewan Perennial Society and in keeping with the mandate of the original nursery, showcases perennials and trees and shrubs that will thrive in our climate. Plant material is labelled where possible. The garden is enclosed on three sides by the original shelterbelts planted shortly after the Foreman's house was completed. The north and east sides consist of caragana. The south hedge shared with the Heritage Rose Garden is predominantly lilacs.



Courtesy Bernadette Vangool



Courtesy Saskatoon Public Library, Local History Room LH-9479



Courtesy Dorothy Thomson

Robin Smith was a landscape architect with the Meewasin Valley Authority and one time President of the Saskatchewan Perennial Society. He perceived the first concepts for the gardens, but passed away before his dreams could be realized. Grace Berg designed both the Meditation Garden and the adjacent Heritage Rose Garden.

The photograph (at left) depicts the 'Thunderchild' crabapple and Ohio buckeye trees in their fall glory. The 'Thunderchild' crabapple was introduced in 1978 by Percy Wright who lived in Sutherland and was a self-trained horticulturist.

The Ohio buckeye (*Aesculus glabra*) is a slow-growing long-lived tree. It has showy yellow flowers in spring, and a chestnut-like (but poisonous) fruit encased in a spiny shell in fall. It was listed as a 'test' species and distributed in 1957.

At right, a volunteer is weeding a border under the shade of a Manitoba maple (*Acer negundo*).

In 'A Horticultural History of the Sutherland Forest Nursery Station' Sara Williams mentioned: **'Stock available for distribution in 1917 at Sutherland included: 2,031,000 maple seedlings, 76,000 ash seedlings, 552,000 caragana seedlings...'** and **'All of the seed used in the Saskatoon nursery were collected, cleaned and sent from the Indian Head Station.'**

In our recent publication, 'Saskatoon Forestry Farm Park & Zoo, A Photographic History' Sara Williams noted:

'Manitoba maple was among the more popular tree species grown. In 1935, five hectares were sown to Manitoba maple, with the hope that one million seedlings would be available for distribution in 1937.'



Courtesy Bernadette Vangool



The Heritage Rose Garden with two 'Sutherland Golden' Elders Courtesy Bernadette Vangool



'Fuchsia Girl' in bloom, end of May
Courtesy Bernadette Vangool

The Heritage Rose Garden, located on the former site of the Foreman's vegetable garden, features the work of early plant breeders who introduced trees, shrubs, roses and perennials hardy on the prairies.

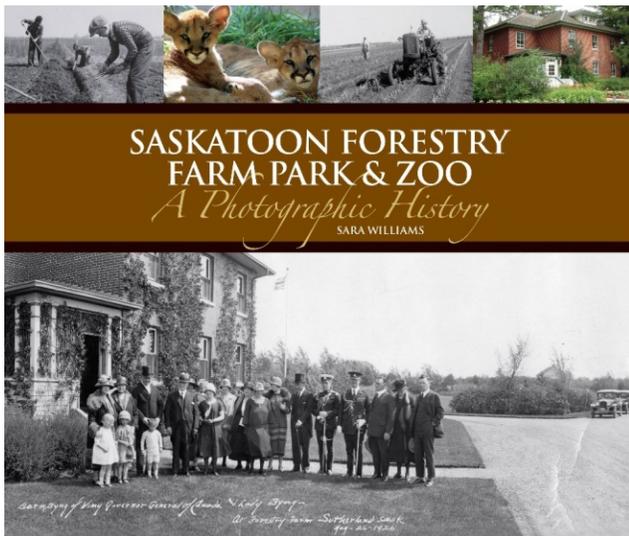
Three of Les Kerr's introductions represented here are the 'Sutherland Golden' elder, 'Goldenlocks' elder and 'Fuchsia Girl' crabapple.



Caragana in bloom
Courtesy Bernadette Vangool

The rose garden is enclosed by hedges that were planted around 1914. The east shelterbelt is caragana, the south shelterbelt is predominantly Manitoba maple and the west side consists of lilacs.

After your visit to the gardens continue along Foreman Road. At the end of the road you will see the gate and fence that divide the Forestry Farm from the land still owned by Agriculture Canada. Depending on the weather (this area tends to be muddy in inclement weather) you can walk along the fenceline or towards the pond and make your way back, through the area which once were the propagation fields, to the entrance. From this area you can still see sections of the south and east perimeter shelterbelts. Alternatively you may choose to go back to the Superintendent's Residence and retrace your steps to the entrance gate.



If you enjoyed this walking tour you may also appreciate

*Saskatoon Forestry
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by Sara Williams

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