

Native Orchid Conservation Inc.
Argyle & Grosse Isle Field Trip, June 6, 2015

The Interlake Pioneer Trail (IPT), formerly the Prime Meridian Trail, was once a rail line running through the Interlake region beginning in 1912. It is now a 116 km multi-use recreation and heritage trail running from Grosse Isle to Fisher Branch, and is a spur trail of the Trans Canada Trail. The ecological/environmental aspect of the IPT is extensive, containing over 240 species of flowers, 170 species of birds, 31 species of mammals, four species of amphibians and three species of reptiles. The trail acts as a land bridge between wildlife areas, providing a movement corridor for fauna, such as migrating warblers, and a continuous environment for many wildflowers and plants.

This first Prime Meridian of the Dominion Land Survey was chosen for this location as it marked the western limit of settlement; six other meridians were established in Canada afterwards. The first marker of the DLS was placed on 10 July 1871 about 0.8 km south of Argyle. This survey system extends across the prairies right to the Pacific coast, embracing more than 81 million hectares of surveyed lands in western Canada. It was the method used to divide most of the area into one-square-mile sections for agriculture and other purposes, and is the world's largest survey grid laid down in a single integrated system.

Argyle celebrated its 100th anniversary on July 28, 2012. The Argyle General Store (built in 1921) was the bus stop set in *The Good Life* movie, a Sundance Film Festival nominee. *Pioneer Quest: A Year in the Real West* was filmed entirely in the Argyle region and aired on History Television. The homestead is located northeast of the village and offers tours of the 19th century pioneer settlement. In 2003 the Brant-Argyle School (west wing built in 1914) became a Provincial Historic Site as a rare surviving example of the large and imposing consolidated schools constructed in many small communities.

Grosse Isle is a small community of ca. 500 persons. The community adopted the name given to the area by early French hunters (*Grosse Ile* = big island) as it was a large wooded tract of land surrounded by swamp which provided good hunting. Grosse Isle was above the floodwaters of 1852 and many area residents sought refuge here. The Canadian National Railway point was established here in 1904, and the town is now on the route of the Prairie Dog Central Railway.

The quarry in Stonewall operated until the 1960s. The towering “draw” kilns were capable of producing from six to ten tonnes of quicklime per day. The limestone was created during the Ordovician geological period (485.4 ± 1.9 and 443.8 ± 1.5 million years ago. (The quarries around Stony Mountain show the stratigraphy from ca. 440 million years ago full of ancient marine life: trilobites, bivalves, gastropods, nautiloid cephalopods, brachiopods and crinoids.) The Stonewall Post Office is an example of the prairie style of architecture which was popular between late 19th and early 20th century. It was built in 1914 using local limestone and used as a post office until 1979. Many of the town buildings are made out of this limestone.

Species list from scouting trip, June 1, 2015

Small white lady's-slipper (coming into bloom) – rare and endangered

Small yellow lady's-slipper (*C. parviflorum* var. *makasin*)

Early blue violet (*Viola adunca*)

Meadow rue (*Thalictrum dasycarpum*)

Golden alexander

Heart-leafed alexander

False solomon's seal (*Smilacina trifolia*)

Three-flowered aven (*Geum triflorum*)

Purple and white vetch

Sage

Snowberry

Goldenrod

Wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginianum*)

Aster

Chickweed/sandwort

Arrow-leafed coltsfoot

Hoary puccoon (*Lithospermum canescens*)

Red osiore dogwood

Purple prairie clover

Red windflower

Creamy peavine (*Lathyrus ochroleucus*)

Groundplum milk vetch

Nuttall's little rose

Bastard toadflax (*Comandra umbellata*)

Wild rose (*Rosa acicularis*)

Wolf willow

Alfalfa

Silverweed

Horsetail (*Equisetum* sp.)

Canada anemone *Anemone canadensis*

Blue-eyed grass (*Sisyrinchium montanum*)

Red-tailed hawk

Boreal chorus frog

Killdeer

Blackbird

Mourning dove