

I doubt you'll find me in a history book. And yet, I'm the one who prepared this venture. I volunteered to be sent here to set up a Land Titles office. Sent the request to the Prime Minister himself - had impressive references too. Now I'm second in command, working every daylight minute for the man who'll become famous. I'm Valmour Gauvreau, assistant to George Newcomb at what's known as Newcomb's Hollow. And, we're insanely busy.

I'm not ungrateful. I get to be in natural paradise. We're in a well-treed ravine along Turtlehead Creek that wanders its way northwesterly past the new village of Deloraine. As a sport hunter, though, I'd appreciate free time to go up the ravine, towards Turtle Mountain. Patience. Patience. The surge of land seekers will have to abate once the allotment is taken up. My time is coming.

This site was chosen because it's a well-used trail – used for centuries by Indigenous travelers and recently the boundary surveyors. Today, 1881, settlers are using it – by the hundreds - line up for days to claim their quarter sections.

Did I say 'We're' insanely busy? 'I'm' insanely busy. My boss, George Frederick Newcomb signs all the papers, for sure, and, he arranged for the office and his house to be built, and, he has his new wife and daughter to humour, but I'm the book keeper. I have to get the details right.

Like the folks who came from Wakopa yesterday. They have plans for a grand village. An industrious lot. They took a day to get here, then waited their turn for two days. It falls on me to make sure they're satisfied. One angry homesteader returned a while back. I'd given them land that was already taken. So, I'm vigilant. We're making history for Canada!

Our little office is authorized by the government to give away 2,700 surveyed square miles of prairie. First come. First served. So, there could be 2,700 times four equals ... 10,800 hopeful farmers coming by to take advantage

of this most unusual offer! I have to knuckle down. That's a lot of detail!



**George Newcomb built a two-story building out of which he conducted business and lived with his family. CREDIT: Deloraine History Book Committee "Deloraine Scans a Century 1880-1980"**

I don't call him 'Master' to his face. But he was the Grand Master of the Masons in Winnipeg. He's a serious fellow. I want to impress him. That's the game. Master was placed here personally by the Prime Minister. Sir John A [MacDonald] is a Mason himself. My family came from Quebec. We don't have a fraternity connection.

Last year I was an aspiring civil servant in Winnipeg. I saw advertising going to Ontario and anticipated a wave of settlers to the Southwest. The timing felt right to promote myself. Tsk! So close. Patience. My time will come soon.



**Louise Newcombe, the first white child born in Old Deloraine, later moved to the U.S. and had a distinguished career as a nurse.**

David Neufeld adapted 'Master Newcomb' from stories written for Vantage Points 1.