

Stop Time: Saskatchewan 1909

By Jane Petterson, West Vancouver

It is decided. The dreamers of Saskatchewan have closed their ledgers, starched collars crisp with anticipation of a civic marvel. No redbrick domesticity here, but Tyndall stone. Regina's pride – an eighth wonder – begins her rise from an infinite plain.

And so the builders come, as do the harvests. Farmers build. Magnificence takes root. Prairie earth absorbs the weight of the building's crown, piles driven into dirt, balancing a vision in muck. A Taj Mahal, a hanging garden, obscured at times by dust, snow: a mirage.

Across the universe, Europe sighs, alive with birdsong. Vimy Ridge is hill and meadow, rich farm earth, cats in the barn, ploughs in the shade. East to Auschwitz, little town. The Poles will build a handsome redbrick barracks there, with room for horses. Pride of Oswiecim. A cellist at the gates of hell, as yet unborn, will lean her head against those same red bricks, her soul against her cello's bow, and she will live to take these pictures in her head to show the world.

But now, for now, incongruous but calm, a dome begins to scrape the sky, the massive sky that hangs above Saskatchewan. It is bold. And it is fine. Wascana Lake will come alive with Bruegel skaters, awash with roaring boating parties, all dancing and floating before this dream on prairie earth. Things yet to come have not yet come. For now, there is this alone: a dream of order, beauty, forming on a howling plain.