

Kerr and Stan Hanson called "three years of delirious boom" during which intense land speculation took place.¹¹ Wildly optimistic predictions of population growth for Saskatoon led to the creation of 25,000 subdivided lots outside the city's boundaries.¹² Many of these lots, far from the city centre, were sold for up to \$350 before the "bust" that took place between 1913 and 1915.¹³ When the anticipated urban growth did not happen, these Saskatoon subdivisions reverted to the Rural Municipality of Cory. Many of the private owners of individual lots, however, paid their taxes over the years and thus held on to their properties. The land that the VLA chose as the site for the veterans' small holdings project--to be named Montgomery Place--was one of the old 1910-1912 subdivisions, originally named River Heights.

On July 11, 1945, the VLA purchased from the R.M. of Cory 2,115 lots on 230 acres located half a mile west of Saskatoon.¹⁴ The original subdivision plot divided this land into five blocks (Plans G.40, G.41, G.42, G.156, and G.250 located on the NW corner of Section 24, Twp. 36, Rge. 6, W3M). There were actually 2,158 lots in the River Heights subdivision; however, forty-three lots were owned by private individuals, residing mainly in eastern Canada. Because of the presence of these privately-owned lots, the VLA had to purchase the land to create Montgomery Place on a lot-by-lot basis rather than on an acreage basis. They paid \$6.00 per lot, for a total purchase price of \$12,690.

The VLA was then faced with the problem of obtaining title to the lots held by the absentee owners. In the spring of 1945, letters were sent to the private owners informing them of the purchase of the lots from the R.M. of Cory for the "present-day value" of \$6.00 per lot and asking them to sell their lots to the VLA. Title was obtained from most of the owners; however, several individuals wrote back asking \$100 to \$200 per lot. R.C.T. Smith of Hamilton, Ontario responded:

Since 1940 the city of Saskatoon have [sic] been charging me \$2.00 per year... [Y]ou are willing to give me back the taxes I have paid for the last six years... If you want my two lots I will sell for \$100--that is about half what they cost me--otherwise I will hold my two

lots.¹⁵

In total, eighteen private owners refused to sell their lots. The VLA therefore decided on a replotting scheme whereby the old River Heights subdivision was cancelled, the land re-subdivided and the old, privately-owned lots exchanged for new lots located at the western edge of the new subdivision.¹⁶ The replotting scheme proved to be a long drawn-out legal process. It was not until early in 1947 that the "non-consenting" private owners were served with the notice regarding the change in the location of their property at Montgomery Place. These eighteen lots eventually held up the expansion of the neighbourhood. As late as 1962, inability to obtain title to the property from absent or missing landlords prevented the VLA from further development of the project.¹⁷

Establishment

VLA administrators were generally pleased with the Montgomery Place site. According to J.P. Nottingham, the Regional Supervisor, it had several advantages.

It is located on a high piece of ground...well-drained and very suitable for the installation of sewer and water. It has, on the North side of it, a hard surface road leading to all the main roads West of Saskatoon...It has gravel roads on the East and West of it, and there are gravel roads which have been graded...through the actual block itself, so there is ample means of travel in all directions...[I]t has a good soil type, one which is very suitable for the growing of gardens, and it [is] situated on the West side of Saskatoon where I would say the majority of work which most of the men would require [Union Stock Yards, Intercontinental Packers, and the Government Elevator] is located.¹⁸

The Montgomery Place subdivision was surveyed and laid out by the Saskatoon firm of Underwood and McLellan in 1945. 363 half acre lots were plotted; several acres, situated approximately in the centre of the project, were set aside for playground and park space or school grounds. Wide, gravel-coated streets and avenues with