

The Bone Trail

A trail route used by Métis, First Nations and in the late 1800s by settlers, and buffalo bone traders became known as the Bone Trail. This trail was important in the development of Saskatoon and area's early economy.



Pile of Buffalo Bones possibly along 1st Ave. Saskatoon circa 1890 - Photograph LH-2823 courtesy Saskatoon Public Library - Local History Room

Buffalo bones were collected in the area, and traders used this route to bring bones to Saskatoon before being shipped, mostly to the United States, to be ground into fertilizer or used for colouring agents in paint and ink.

Between the year 1890, when Saskatoon got its first railroad, and 1893, the bones of an estimated one and a half million bison were shipped out of Saskatoon.

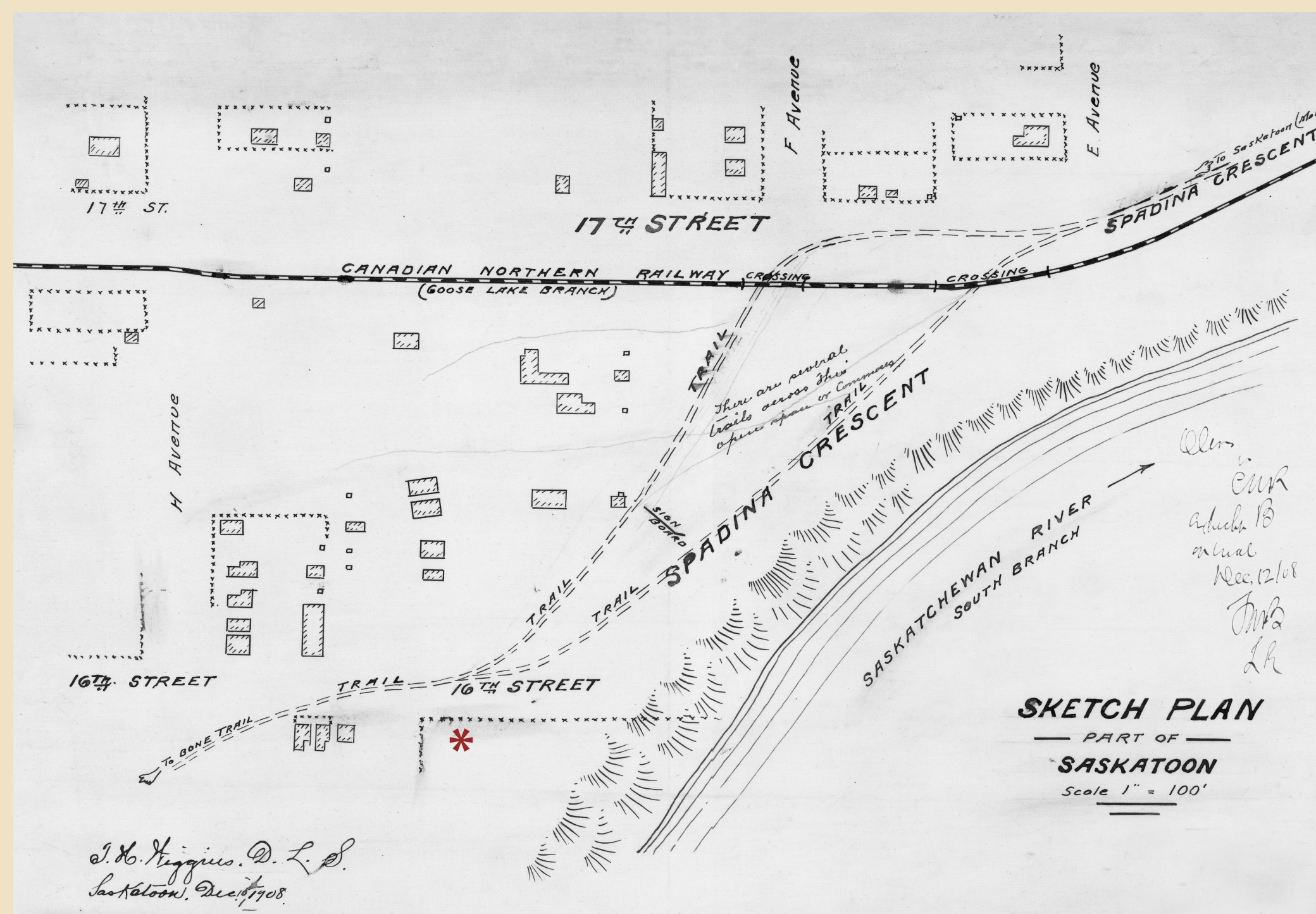
The collected bones were remnants from the rampant buffalo hide industry.

This trade continued into the early 1890's, when the animals became virtually extinct from hunting and the introduction of bovine diseases carried by the cattle brought in by settlers. More than half of the post-contact bison population were killed in only ten years, while the elimination of the other half, prior to 1870, took over 100 years. Homesteaders replaced bone traders on the trail after 1900. The trail was a relatively short but familiar route that connected smaller outlying areas to Saskatoon. Before the

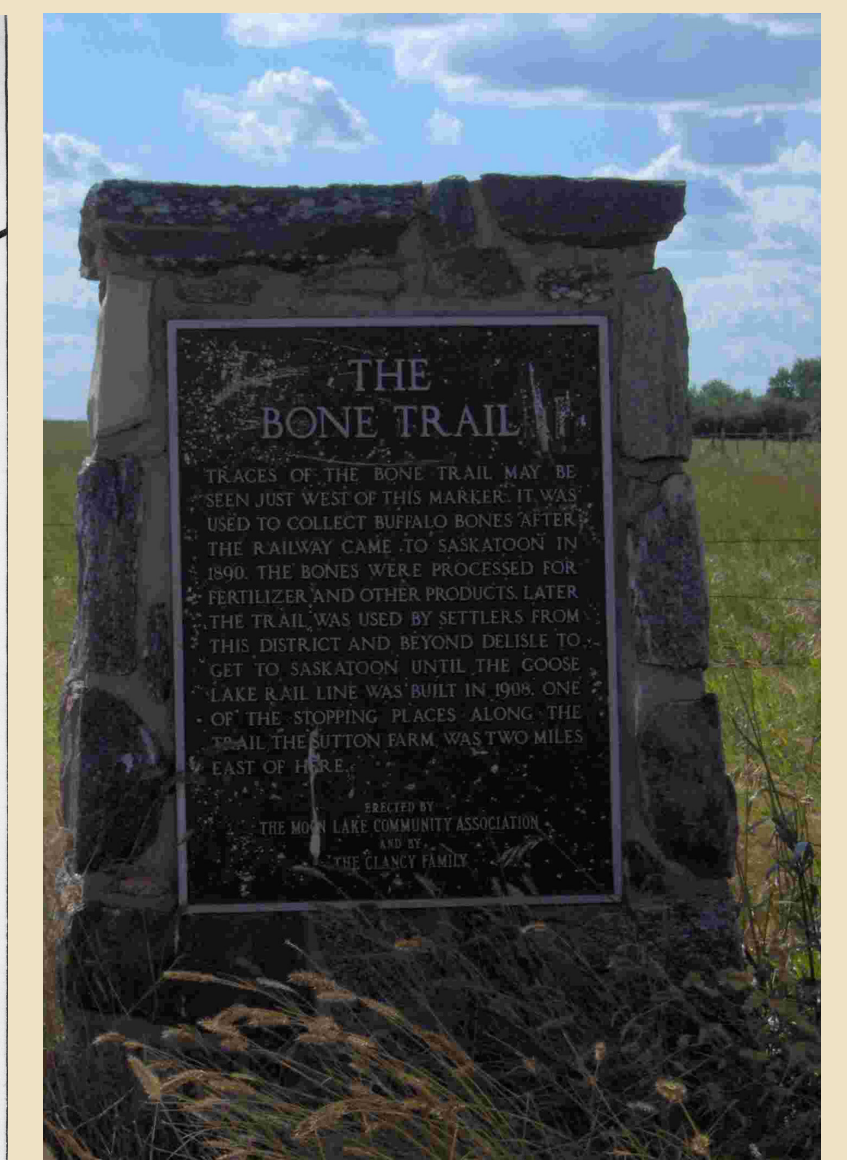
building of railways south and west of Saskatoon, homesteaders heading out to the areas around Vanscoy and Delisle used this trail.

It is estimated that 10,000 settlers travelled the Bone Trail regularly between 1904 and 1905. Stretches of prairie trails continued to be used extensively as local routes, even after the railways arrived.

A section of The Bone Trail located in the Rural Municipality of Corman Park No. 344 was designated as a Municipal Heritage Property in 1981. (Source: Rural Municipality of Corman Park Bylaw 12/81.)



Map of Victoria Park 1907-1915. Courtesy City of Saskatoon Archives. The Bone Trail ran through the City of Saskatoon north of the Gardener's Residence.



The Bone Trail - Photo courtesy of Julia Adamson.