

Here in Anola

By Al Simmons

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*Between the prairie field
And the Canadian Shield
You'll find a bunch of folks
Who are very well-heeled*

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No wheat fields or nickel mines ¹
Just swamps and fields of rocks, I don't mind
Everyone knows that I collect Rocks ²
I put them in a bag; I put them in a box

Each acre of this land is strewn
With stone and rock and boulder
And each and every one of them's
A billion years or older

When the glaciers had all melted
And Lake Agassis receded
The Ojibway Nation
Had everything they needed

Long before a farmer thought
Of putting up a fence.
Life for them at home it seemed
Was always in-tents

Then the Europeans settled
That's when everything got changed
As the prairie population
Was completely re-arranged ³

In eighteen hundred seventy
Louis' dream became Riel-ity
And the postage stamp province begat
Springfield Municipality ⁴

Real-estate speculators
From Freeport Illinois ⁵
Came up, looked around and said,
"Boy, oh boy,"

"We're from the U.S.A.
And we're prepared to pay
'Cause the price is really great
For this prime real estate."

They discovered no gold, it
Was decided to just hold it
To the Grand Trunk Pacific
They turned around and sold it

Pioneers began arriving ⁶
And a few settled down ⁷
In what became known
As a railroad town. ⁸

I tell ya, we got artifacts
And if you may want to see 'em
You'll find them on display at the
Anola and District Museum

Sports and entertainment ⁹
Are Anola's big story
With a Simmons named Al ¹⁰
And a Koskie named Corey ¹¹

For commuters, Anola
Is the perfect location ¹²
Just 45 minutes
From their occupation.

If you want to have some ice cream
You can find it soft or hard
We can fill your hardware needs
At the local lumber yard

What's the population?
Well you can take a look
We fill four pages
In the telephone book

Anola NOT Enola Gay
The B29 that dropped the bomb
Not Onanole or Altona
Both of those are also wrong

No, this town is Anola
You might just stop and visit ¹³
On the way out to the Whiteshell
Don't blink or you will miss it.

Here in Anola Footnotes:

- (1) During World War I, at the corner of PR 207 and Hwy 15, there was a factory, which used locally mined cordite to manufacture hand grenades.
- (2) Al's song, "I Collect Rocks," is from his *Something's Fishy* CD. The debut of his touring show for that album was held as a fundraiser for the Anola Community Club in 1993. The song "I Collect Rocks" was turned into a one-hour movie. It was shot in and around Anola in 2005. The DVD's world premier was, once again, held as a fundraiser for the Club.
- (3) The Brokenhead Ojibway Nation Reserve is located near the southern edge of Lake Winnipeg.
- (4) Springfield was the first rural municipality in Manitoba, established in 1873.
- (5) Anola was originally called Freeport but in 1912 the name was changed. Apparently the road-master of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway's last name was Anola and it was named after him. It has been pointed out that there are towns in Finland called both Elma and Anola —coincidence?
- (6) In the 1920's times were hard and in order to survive local farmer William David Cook had to sell the topsoil from his property, which is now the Anola Elementary School playground area, to the CNR. The soil was used to make the Minaki Lodge golf course.
- (7) Electricity first came to town 1947.
- (8) Around the turn of the century a private railway from Elma to Winnipeg was built and operated by an entrepreneur named Mr. McArthur.
- (9) In 1918 *The United Farmers of Manitoba Dance Hall* charged 25 cents admittance. You could dance all night and have a free lunch at Midnight. The place was packed on weekends.
- (10) In 1975 Al and Barbara Freundl moved to Anola where they raised their three boys, Karl, William and Bradley. They manufactured and sold *Anola Granola* for couple of years in the late 70s.

Al Simmons says, "I live here to be close to nature. We get to watch the deer eat the tops off all the carrots in the garden and feel the wood ticks crawling under our pant legs. I have made a careful study of wood ticks. Did you know that each one has a unique pattern on its back? Just like snow flakes, no two are alike. On a hot summer day I like to look at them under a magnifying glass—in the bright, bright sun. My favourite time of year is the autumn when the mosquitoes change colour and fall out of the trees."



(11) Corey Koskie was born in Anola on June 28, 1973. He played baseball for, among others, the Minnesota Twins, Toronto Blue Jays and the Milwaukee Brewers. Al has never played catch with Corey and Corey has never sung harmony with Al.

(12) Anola is 30 km East of downtown Winnipeg, Manitoba. It is on the edge of the prairies, on the way to the Canadian Shield and the Whiteshell Provincial Park and is situated half way between Beausejour and Steinbach at the junction of Highways 12 and 15.

(13) In the 1950's, while a CNR train stopped in Anola, a woman gave birth to a baby girl and named her Anola. No other details are available.

