Views of the Van Horne/Searle Farm complex. None of these buildings stand today.

A Huge Operation

The Van Horne/Searle Farm

The Van Horne/Searle Farm provided employment for scores of people in St. Clements, and the accounts in this project attest to the importance of the farm. The huge farm operation was inaugurated in the late 1890s by Sir William Van Home, President of the C P.R., and was turned into an experimental farm for growing wheat. In 1902, James Yule took over management of the farm, and the decision was then made to establish a herd of Shorthorn cattle with a view to assisting the livestock industry and give a lead in diversified farm operations in the province of Manitoba. Van Horne allowed Mr. Yule to buy the best cattle he could find and assemble a great herd, making a splendid contribution to the Shorthorn breeding on the prairies. In 1936-37 the Searle Family took over the operations. Cattle also played an important role at Searle Farms, beginning with a registered Shorthorn herd. The field operations were mainly geared to forage production to supply the requirements of the beef and dairy cattle herds. Approximately 2,200 acres were in alfalfa-grass, 250 acres in corn and 200 or 300 acres in oats. The remaining land was used for pasture.

Gordon Barron Burnett

Ferryman, Constable, Farming Advocate, Farmer

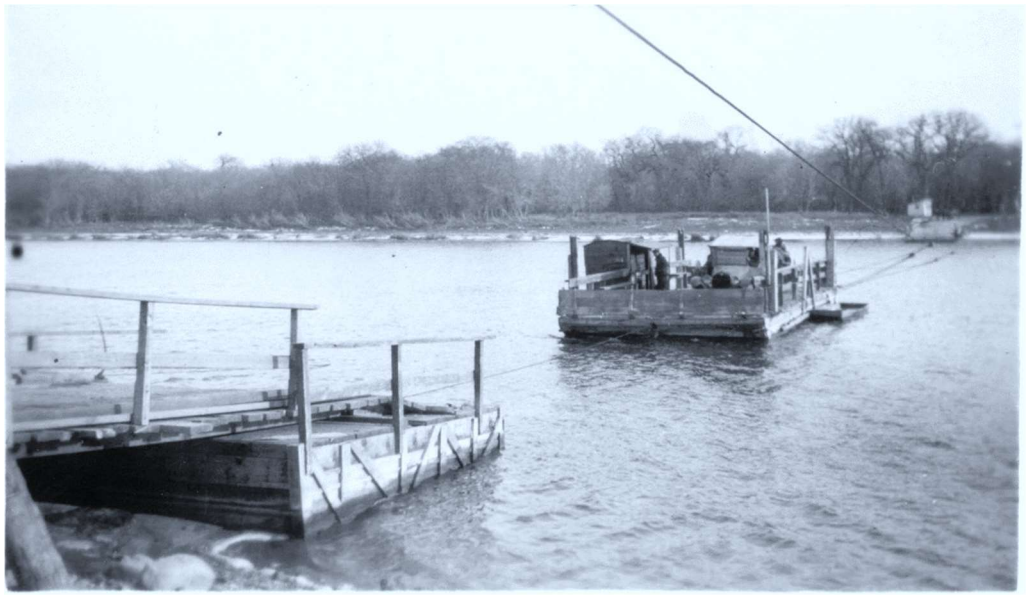
Gordon Barron Burnett was born on October 7, 1906, the son of John Burnett and Jessie Veitch. Gordon lived in the Mayfield area of St. Clements most of his life and attended the Mayfield School. In 1923, Gordon married Myrtle Young and they raised a family of four daughters. Apart from farming, Gordon also operated the Selkirk Ferry for three years, and served as a Constable for the Town of Selkirk Police Force for about 12 years. When his father passed away in 1936, Gordon and Myrtle returned to the family farm and continued to operate it up until 1979 when Gordon passed away.

Myrtle, the wife of Gordon, added to the attractive landscaping scene by the planting, cultivation and care of flowering beds and borders. The begonias in the planter near the north side patio were especially luxuriant each year as were the borders of petunias and marigolds. In the year 1977 Gordon and Myrtle were presented with the "Birks Dingwall Cup Award" for the "Best Farm Home Grounds in Manitoba."

Gordon was involved with the Manitoba Pool Elevators and served on the local Board for over 30 years. He also was a breeder of registered Hereford cattle and travelled to the East, where he showed his stock at the Toronto Royal Fair. Gordon purchased his first registered Hereford cattle in 1944 and continued to sell breeding stock.

Gordon's father, John Barron Burnett, had been active in municipal government, serving as Councillor of Ward 3 from 1910-1915 inclusive. He was also elected Reeve in 1939, retiring in 1947. He made an outstanding contribution to municipal life in the district during those difficult years. He ensured that many market roads were built for the farmers and was instrumental in the introduction of electricity in the municipality.

Gordon Burnett and daughter Mildred, 1933.



View of a typical ferry crossing in 1923. The first and most primitive ferries had long paddles or poles. The second and most common method of powering a ferry was by using a cable which was connected to both sides of the river. The ferryman pulled the raft across the river along the cable, using a winch-type machine. It was common for the local handyman and volunteers to build the ferry. Supplies were purchased with the $200 government grant, but some municipalities later raised extra money to buy ready-built ferries from major steel and engine companies. The platform for the ferries usually comprised keel joists overlaid with several 4 x 8 foot wooden planks placed in parallel sequences. Guardrails were also placed on the edges of the platform to prevent people, goods, and vehicles from falling overboard. Aprons were attached to the base platform; they were wooden planks reinforced from underneath with metal hinges to raise or drop the planks on to the muddy banks for easy loading and unloading. They also acted as guard rails on either end of the ferry.

Ferries on the Red

In St. Clements, the ferry system was crucial in the everyday activities of its citizens, particularly for maintaining communication and flow of goods and services between West and East Selkirk. These raft-resembling crafts were located at numerous sites along St. Clements's western municipal boundary, the Red River, moving people, goods, vehicles, and animals to the other side. The major function or advantage of a ferry was its ability to transport heavier items, such as horse-drawn wagons or herds of livestock. The ferry provided a link between local roads and highways which were divided by rivers that were impossible to ford. By allowing passage across the rivers, access to services such as the local post office, school, and church was readily available. The local residents using the ferry could, by paying a small fee of about 15-25 cents, deliver livestock, produce, and grain to the railroad or market without having to travel a great distance to a fording site.

George Gowriluk

Market Garden Farmer

George Gowriluk was born on June 23, 1894 in Dobrenivtsi, Bukovina, Austria (Ukraine). He came to Canada with his parents, John and Waselena in 1896. They settled in Gonor, where he helped his father with farming. In September, 1914, he married Mary Koterla, the daughter of Peter and Abtokia Koterla. She had arrived with her parents in 1902, at age of seven, from Kitsman Bukovina, Austria. George and Mary made their home at Lot 205 St. Clements, where eight sons and one daughter were born and grew up.

Lot 205 was ninety-nine feet wide and four miles long, forty-five acres, extending east from the Red River. Some of the land was wild hay and willows. Mostly, it was bush, consisting of birch, poplar, spruce, a few oaks, as well as saskatoon, chokecherry, pincherry, plum and hazelnut trees. George Gowriluk cleared most of the land by hand, using an axe and grub hoe. The spruce trees were hewn into logs with which a new home was built in 1926. Four horses, pulling a fourteen-inch breaker plow, were used to break much of the land. The remainder was later broken with a tractor.

Their chief source of income was from market gardening, with the help of the whole family. Many long hours were spent in the fields with little remuneration because vegetables were cheap during the Depression years. For example, potatoes sold at 35 cents for a 90 lb. bag. Farmers hauled their produce to Winnipeg with horses during the early 1930s, a four-hour trip one way. The older sons sought to supplement the family income by picking cucumbers at neighbouring gardeners for 75 cents a day and by working at harvest time for farmers whenever there was spare time from their own work at home. In l946, sons Alex, Matt and John formed Midland Fruit Company Limited with meagre finances. Their warehouse was located on the corner of Stella Avenue in Winnipeg. George Gowriluk, after selling most of his farmland, began working proudly alongside his sons. He was in charge of the packaging of fruit and vegetables, a position which he faithfully and efficiently fulfilled. Occasionally, he was happy to drive a truckload of produce to Kenora or to Red Lake. After 28 years of successful operation the business was sold to the Codville Food Distributors. George Gowriluk passed away in 1973. Mary continued to live in their home at Lot 205 until 1975 when she moved to the Holy Family Home in Winnipeg.

The humble potato, easy to grow, hardy, and also easily preserved, was a godsend for pioneer farmers throughout St. Clements – not only for their own personal use but as a cash crop that would be sent by the wagonload down to outdoor Winnipeg markets. The potato is native to South America, and was only introduced to European culture in the 16th century. It was subsequently conveyed by European mariners to territories and ports throughout the world. The potato became an important food staple and field crop that played a major role in the great population boom in 19th century Europe.

Market Gardening Views: Top harvesting potatoes, below right picking beets and below left of Winnipeg's North End Market.

More Market Garden Memories

Andrew Peterson

Andrew and Margaret Peterson had twelve children, seven sons and five daughters. Andrew worked at various times for the R.M. of St. Clements in the area of law enforcement. He was one of the founders of the Manitoba Vegetable and Potato Growers Association. This association helped organize the farmer's market which was located on Main Street in Winnipeg for many years. Andrew also did custom sawing of lumber and wood in the Narol area. On March 16,1963, the community held an "Andrew Peterson Day" as a tribute to his many years of service. He received a plaque in recognition of his work. He died May 17, 1974. His wife, Margaret, lived in her own home until January 1983.

More Market Garden Memories

Aniela Parfaniuk

Aniela Olexyn, was the eldest daughter of Wladislaw Olexyn. She married Kiryk Parfaniuk, who had come to Canada as a young man of 18 years in 1894. Kiryk and Aniela had 12 children.

Aniela was a business woman who used to go with her son William to Beausejour for chickens, eggs and butter, which they would sell in Winnipeg's North-End markets. Although they had a 1927 Ford truck, they still went with horses and sleigh in winter because often as not, the roads were heavily drifted with snow and the sleigh would easily go over a big drift and the load would not spill. Aniela made many trips to David's market on Dufferin and King Street where she was paid 25 cents or 35 cents for a stall and put the horses in David's barns for the day. You also brought your own hay. It was a terribly long ride into town, sitting in the heat at the market all day, and then the long trip home. However, her children never heard their mother complain. Aniela had a fast-running pony, one of the fastest horses, and no one could drive him but Aniela. This was her favorite horse and she visited her parents at Lockport driving this pony.

The log house at Lot 259 had two small rooms. The living room and bedroom was one room and it had a baby's home-made crib in it, an old Raymond sewing machine, a bed and a cast iron heater, as you entered the kitchen. In the upstairs attic was where all the children slept. That is where all the children were born. With the help of Mrs. Malazdrewich, the mid-wife, the children were brought into the world. In the attic, the cooking onions were stored, loose, under the beds for winter. There were no stairs to climb, just a ladder. The kitchen had a homemade wooden table and chairs, a cast-iron stove and a few cooking pots and utensils. There was a trap door leading to the clay dug-out that served as a basement. In the basement the vegetables, jams and preserves were stored. This log house was plastered with clay and sometimes the chinking and clay fell out and it had to be filled in again before winter set in. The log building was white-washed inside and out at least once a year, usually in spring or in the fall after all the work was done. There was no indoor plumbing, and so you either went out to the barn or the outdoor toilet, regardless if it was 30 to 40 below zero or not.

Images of local market garden activity; top of a harvest of cabbages and below picking potatoes.

More Market Garden Memories

Uskiw Family

The years 1937, ’38 and ’39 were very grim. It was the last part of the Great Depression which began in 1930 and was ended by the Second World War which began in 1939. Most of our production of grain, potatoes, hogs, poultry or milk products was sold for cash. Some of our production was consumed at home but the emphasis was to sell as much as possible for cash so that we could buy tea, coffee, sugar, flour, etc., and of course clothes and household furniture.

While farmers sold their cattle for $10-$15 per head and potatoes for 10 cents per bag, Mr. Uskiw got 20 cents per rabbit. The family grew about seven or eight acres of potatoes, which Mrs. Uskiw and the children worked by hand. Potatoes were a cash crop which yielded as little as 10 cents for a 100-pound bag. The potatoes were harvested late in the fall, usually in October when they were matured. They were stored outside in many piles of 100-200 bags to a pile. Pits were dug, about 10 inches deep and large enough to hold 100-200 bags of potatoes piled about four feet high above the ground. The potatoes were covered with about 12 inches of potato tops over which there was applied about a 10-inch cover of soil. The Uskiws were always careful to leave a small opening at the top centre of the pile to allow heat to escape in order to avoid overheating of the pile. During cold winter days one could see steam billowing out from each pile. In April these piles would be opened up, and the potatoes bagged and marketed.

Trucks finally made the laborious work of picking and loading produce quicker and easier.

Peter Pewarchuk

Tailor, Farmer

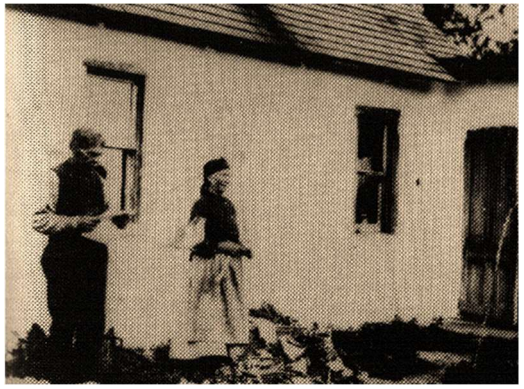
Peter Pewarchuk and his wife Anna came to Canada from the Ukraine in 1902. They were one of the first families to settle along the Red River in St. Clements, not far on the east side of the river from Lower Fort Garry. With them came their son Michael, and his beautiful and kind wife Mary. They brought their first-born child, Rosie.

Peter Pewarchuk and son Michael settled on a farm in Narol, Lot 258. They farmed together for quite a few years. Peter and Anna had a very small house of their own on the same yard as Michael and Mary. Peter later got a job as caretaker of the first Donald School. He loved to go to church. He always helped the priest at the altar. Michael often led the singing of the hymns, as he was the Cantor. This was the first Greek Orthodox Church, at one time called the Russian Orthodox Church.

Peter and son Michael were really tailors. They used to sew lovely clothes for the children, and even for others in the area. Before they came to Canada, Michael had worked as a butler for a wealthy lord, and so was well-versed in types of fabrics and even of styles and fashion.

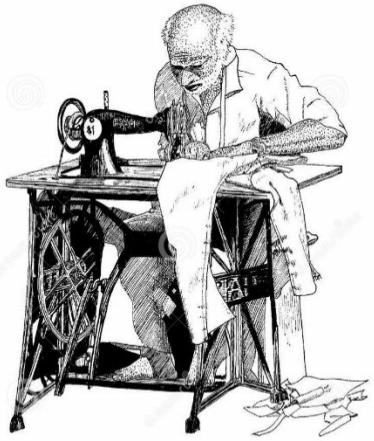
Peter Pewarchuk was often called “Shnarivech,” because he came from a village called Shnarev. Anna was a midwife. She brought all her grandchildren into the world, as well as a lot of other children in Narol. She also seemed to have a cure for many illnesses. When Peter died, Anna went to live with Michael and Mary.

The Pewarchuks were a very proud family. Some of Michael’s children were very talented. William and Steve were natural artists. William and John were musicians. William played the violin and John played the banjo. They played in a band. All the rest of the family loved to sing, and of course Leon would always yodel western songs, while doing daily farm chores. The most memorable time was Ukrainian Christmas Eve. The whole family would all go to Peter and Anna’s for supper, and enjoy all the lovely traditional food that Anna prepared. After supper they would all sit around and drink cherry cider, and sing all those lovely Ukrainian Christmas carols. Next morning all the older children would walk to church, no matter how cold the weather was.



Peter and Anna Pewarchuk

Michael and Mary Pewarchuk



Top: A group of tailors. Below left: Young workmen ca. 1914, wearing wide-wale corduroy trousers, chore jackets and caps made in various wool patterns. Below right: A man at a sewing machine, ca. 1925.

Making Your Own Clothes

In the early 21st century, it is received wisdom that tailoring is often stiff in image and form. A tailored jacket and trousers are for the office or special occasions – a wedding or a funeral. It is denim that is the preferred material for the workplace. And "off-the-rack" denim at that.

But in the latter decades of the 19th and early years of the 20th century, workwear was tailored. Men typically wore a tailored jacket as much to dig roads as to file accounts; archival images of pit workers—begrimed with soot, leaving the colliery to head home—are striking today for the fact that they seem to show men in suits, albeit battered ones.

And in this environment the need for a good tailor was common – whether on a fashionable high street in London, or at a small-town Main street haberdasher, or even in a farmhouse where a skilled operator was ready with a sewing machine and various measuring tapes and tools.

Diengot Recksiedler

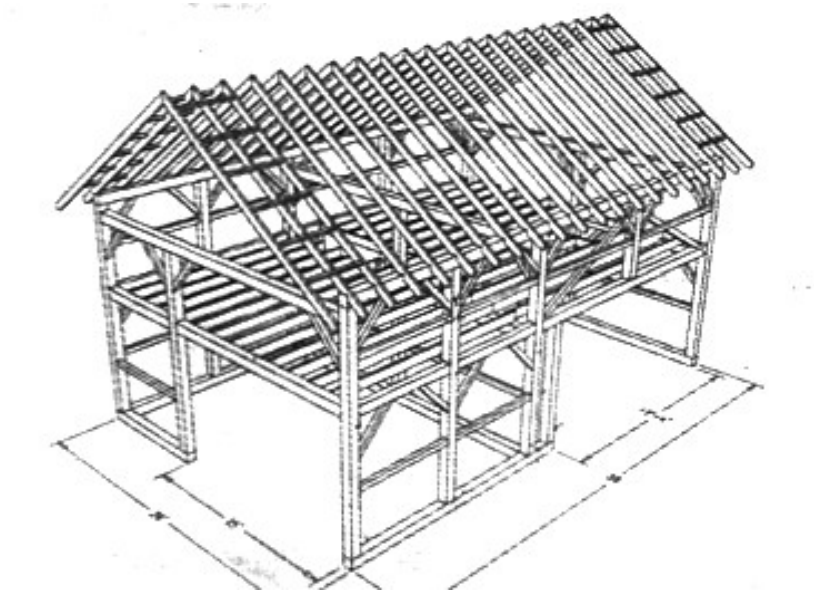
Builder, Craftsman, Farmer

Diengot Recksiedler and Henrietta Yabush were born and raised near Wolhynien, Russia, where they married and started their family. They came to Canada in the early 1900s and first settled in Saskatchewan. They planted crops and suffered a loss when their crops froze. They heard Manitoba was the place to go. Diengot built a wagon with a wooden cover. They loaded their belongings and started for Manitoba. They settled in Greenbay, near Beausejour. They had very little so they first lived in a root cellar type house.

Diengot was a handyman and craftsman. He built a sawmill, and built the family house from the lumber produced at the mill. Diengot also built a windmill and was able to grind his own flour and feed for cattle. He made needles from course pig hairs and wove the hairs together with thread. He tanned leather and was able to make horse harnesses with the leather and the needles that he had made.

Diengot also taught Sunday School in a Lutheran Church. There was only one minister for three churches, so when the minister wasn't at the church, Diengot filled in as a lay reader. He read from the Bible and held the service. Many of the Recksiedler children, as adults, moved to Jackfish Lake, near to Grand Marais, where they homesteaded, and continued their families. They continued in the pulp business which Diengot, the grandfather, had started with his family and his sawmill.

A man holding the typical tools of the carpentry trade.



This technical drawing of a barn under construction suggests the technical ability that builders like Diengot Recksiedler and Jacob Ozol would have brought to their craft, with the results an enduring legacy.

Jacob and Dora Ozol.

More Builder Memories

Jacob Ozol

Jacob Osol was born in 1869, later changing his last name to Ozol. He immigrated to Canada in 1894. He worked in a stone quarry in 1900 for about two years. Jacob applied for a homestead in 1905 and built a house, a smithy, a root cellar and a well. In 1907, Jacob bought a quarter section of land. In 1909, he married Dora Shainook and raised a family of three children. It has been noted that when the CN Railway came through there was a need for a name for its station and also for the post office. Jacob noted that the few people who lived close by were mostly Latvian or German, and as most of them left the Old Country through the Russian Port of Liepaja that the name should be the Anglicized version of that word: Libau. Besides his farming activity, Mr. Ozol was well known as a carpenter, and many of the buildings be constructed are still to be seen in the Libau area.

John Bunio

Mechanic, Bridge Builder

John Bunio, son of Michael and Katherine Bunio, who left Starawa, Moschiska, Galicia, in April of 1903, settled on a farm east of Libau. In 1913, when the Bunio family moved to Walkleyburg, John was only one year old. John lived on the farm for 53 years. He could speak three languages.

Most of the pioneer houses were all hand-made from trimmed logs and wooden pegs.

Learning to drive was an experience John never forgot, although cars were scarce in those days. John says, as a teenager, he bought a Model T Ford for $10.00.

There were no roads, so John got stuck in many mud holes, and fixed many tires. He got to be the local handy taxi, with the only problem being that most people must have figured that his car ran on air. John also learned to fix the car by himself. He has noted that some people figured what he was doing was a waste of time, yet in later years when they had trouble with their engines, they came to him for help.

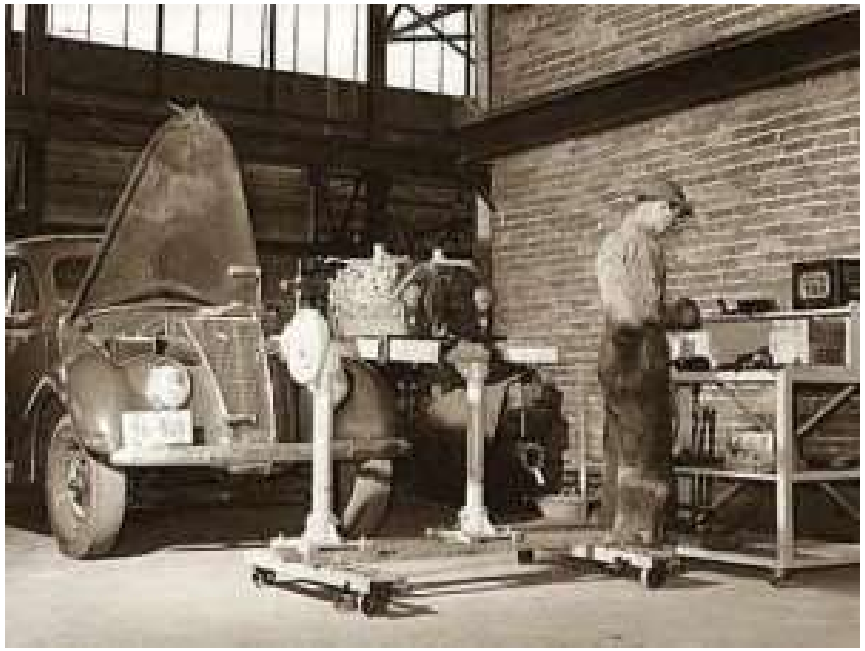
In the fall of 1937, John talked to Mr. George Nolman (the local Minneapolis-Molina agent) about buying a thresher. He agreed it was a good idea, although the company was leary of him, as he did not have enough cash, but the agent disagreed. John bought the thresher, which they hooked up to his new tractor and drove all night. When he went to pick up his used tractor, the agent said, “Pay me when you have the money.”

In 1938, John bought a breaker plow and for the next five years, broke land. In 1941, he built a home across from the old homeplace. From then on he did mostly carpenter work. In 1950, after the flood, he got involved with bridge construction, and built and repaired many small bridges throughout the municipality. In 1954, he got his first contract with the province, to build bridges over the Brokenhead River, Hazel Creek, Netley Creek, Cook’s Creek, and many more. In 1939, John married Annie Hladuik, and they had two children.

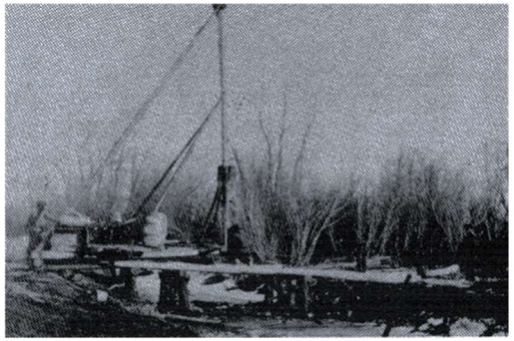
A Day in the Life of a Mechanic

When automobiles became available just before the beginning of the 20th century, there were a myriad of manufacturers making hand-fitted vehicles. Production runs were low and spare parts difficult to obtain. For the early car owner, there were no auto repair businesses. If the owner himself maintained their vehicles, they would seek out a bicycle mechanic, machinist, plumber or blacksmith to repair or fabricate parts. Wealthier car owners employed chauffeur-mechanics as servants who would drive and maintain their vehicles.

By the 1920s, motorized vehicles were commonplace and, as manufacturers like Ford used standard interchangeable parts, it was possible for the vehicle repair industry to grow, either as independent companies or as dealerships for a specific automotive maker. Mechanics were paid by the hour or day and repairs were billed for the actual time taken.



Repair shops with good mechanics had a big advantage, as repairs were quicker and therefore cheaper. Even within the same shop which mechanic was assigned to a job could make a big difference in the cost. To introduce some stability to the market, standard times for set repair jobs started to be used for billing.



Besides his work as a mechanic (and woodsman and thresher operator), John Bunio built small bridges, as did other entrepreneurial men in the municipality. This image shows the bridge-building technology of the day, used throughout St. Clements to build small culvert-type bridges. Note the pile driver used to sink main vertical supports.

John Rokosh

Roadman, Farmer

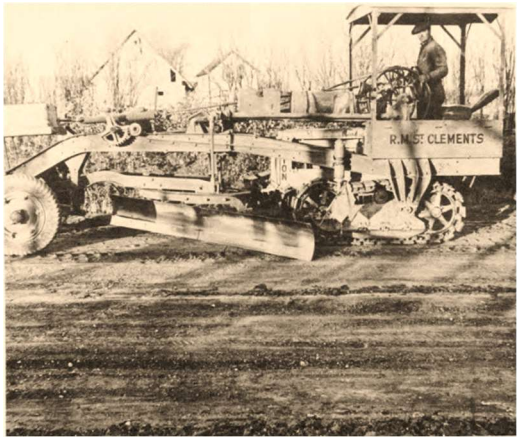
John Rokosh Sr. married Eva Tashekowski in Poland in the late 1800s. John Rokosh Sr. was in the cavalry regiment in Poland during the Polish War. He was an expert horseman. They came to Canada in the very early 1900s and settled in Libau. After a few years, they moved to East Selkirk and settled on a farm. They had five children.

In the early years, there were little white houses on the property where Aboriginal families lived. The Rokosh home was built very close to the creek and many Aboriginal families would stop and buy cow's milk. In return, the Aboriginals gave Eva Rokosh a beaded button bag, moccasins and a little oblong roaster (which was burnt black as they must have roasted their meat over open fires).

The Rokosh's had three teams of working horses and a riding horse, named Minnie. John Rokosh Sr. was often seen proudly riding his saddle horse to inspect his farm at the corner of Colville Road and Highway 59. Minnie was a buggy horse in the summer, and a cutter horse in the winter. John Rokosh Jr. recalls racing Minnie down Ferry Road and jumping, beautifully clearing the wooden gate to their property. All the field work was done by the horses.

Custom work was done for different people such as plowing, seeding, hauling sheaves, and hay, digging potatoes and bindering grain. John Rokosh Jr., and his brother, Bill, hauled gravel for the roads with the horses in the winter, and graded these same roads during the summer. They covered Libau, Lockport and East Selkirk. Many old-timers in the area recall picnics held on the farm. There was fund-raising for the church, dancing on a platform and all the children had their wedding receptions here. Beer was 10 cents a glass, as well as hot dogs. A Model A Town Sedan was bought in 1930. In 1933, John Rokosh Jr. took his parents and Mrs. Kologinski to Chicago to see the World's Fair and to visit his brother, Mike, and wife, Sophie.

Developing the Municipal Roads



An important issue in Council in the late 1930s was the question of acquiring road building equipment. The municipality owned a small road patrol, powered by a track-type tractor. It was inadequate and worn out. The power unit was replaced by a model "M" Formal tractor with the front suspended within the frame of the patrol. Due to war-time restrictions on tires, the machine operated for some time with steel wheels on which were installed angle-iron grips. Finally, rubber tires were acquired on the grounds that the municipally-maintained roads were to essential industry. Road construction was usually contracted out. Road repairs were usually done by local farmers. This was a source of income, so competition was constant.

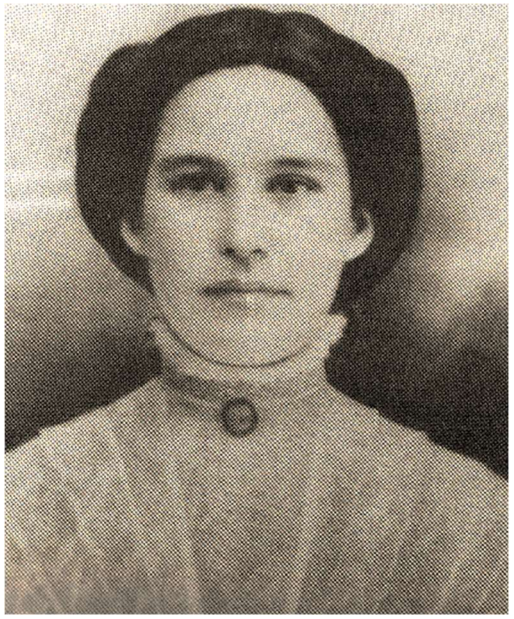
More Roadwork Memories

Peter Karandiuk was the son of John and Catherine Karandiuk who arrived in East Selkirk in 1902. John and Catherine had five children, but only Peter, born in 1907, survived past infancy. By 1924, roads were linking the various towns in the area and their maintenance became the job of young Pete. He and his team of horses were paid the princely sum of 23¢ an hour for working on ditches and grading, 8¢ more than men working without horses. In 1936, technology, in the form of a motorized grader, arrived in the municipality. It was Pete Karandiuk's pride and joy, but it was a brutal machine to operate. Pete had to stand on a metal cover directly over the engine and burned his feet badly. But he was being paid 35¢ an hour and usually worked 18-19 hours a day. Pete serviced all the roads in the St. Clements area and received several awards for maintaining the best road in Manitoba, an 18 mile stretch of the Henderson Highway between East Selkirk and St. Paul.

Top: A grader levelling a road bed.
Below: A work gang establishing the roadway.

Agnes Monkman

Postmistress



After the death of his wife in 1890 Philip Monkman came to Scanterbury in 1904 from St. Peters to take over the Post Office at Scanterbury. With him he brought his young family. His youngest child at that time was Campbell (age 14) and the other son was Charlie Monkman. There were three daughters Jessie, Isabella and Hattie.

Mail used to be brought in by horse and buggy in summer and horse and cutter in winter before the railway was constructed. Philip would meet the train to pick up the mail bags, using horses year-round. The mail was delivered those days once a week and the post office was about 1 ½ miles from the train station.

In later years Philip's daughter-in-law, Agnes, took over as post mistress and had that job for over 35 years until her retirement in 1961 at which time she moved to Selkirk.

In the early years (before 1945) there was no highway through Scanterbury. The gravelled municipal road ended at Poplar Park and from there on it was mud roads in the area. If it rained, and it did plenty, and someone was travelling, they were sure to get mired down in the mud and mostly always came to Campbell Monkman and he would hitch up his team and go pull their car out of the mud and he would never take any money for doing that.

People looked forward to winter then because that was a busy time for the men and a time for them to make money by hauling cord wood for which there was a great demand. Wood was an important fuel in those days and in great demand by the people of Selkirk and Winnipeg. In winter the roads were frozen and thus passable. Teams hauling wood were travelling constantly. The wood was hauled to the train station, loaded onto boxcars and shipped to towns and to Winnipeg.

Postal Service in Canada

It was at St. John's, Newfoundland on August 3, 1527 that the first known letter was sent from present-day Canada. Mail delivery within Canada first started in 1693 when the Portuguese-born Pedro da Silva was paid to deliver mail between Quebec City and Montreal. Official postal services began in 1775, under the control of the British Government up to 1851. The first postage stamp (designed by Sir Sandford Fleming) went into circulation in Canada that same year. It was not until 1867 when the newly formed Dominion of Canada created the Post Office Department as a federal government department headed by a Cabinet minister, the Postmaster General of Canada. The Act took effect April 1, 1868, providing uniform postal service throughout the newly established country. Prior to rural mail delivery, many Canadians living outside major cities and towns had little communication with the outside world. On 10 October 1908, the first free rural mail delivery service was instituted in Canada. The extension of residential mail delivery services to all rural Canadian residents was a major achievement for the Post Office Department. For many communities, the local post office was not only an important place to receive and send letters and packages, it was also a major site for social interaction.

More Postal Memories

Fred Fuller

Fredrick Charles Fuller was born in Kent, England on October 17, 1884. By age thirteen he was a restless young man and took to the sea. Discouraged with navy life, he left the service in Vancouver in 1909. He made his way to a farm near Emerson and worked there for a time. In Winnipeg he took his driver's test and received a license to chauffeur. In 1914 he married Catherine McGlinchey, born in Airdrie, Scotland in 1890, who had come to Canada at age 21. In 1930 the family moved to East Selkirk to begin country living. He planted a huge garden. In 1937, the municipality of St. Clements approached Fred to ask him if he would consider running the post office out of his home because there was such a need for one in that area. He agreed, and on January 11, 1937, Andrew Zabogruski delivered the first mail down from the post office in East Selkirk. Catherine Fuller often commented that in the winter Mr. Zabogruski delivered by horse and sleigh and in summer, by bike. It was seven miles that the man had to make two times a week, on Tuesdays and Fridays. Fred passed away October 1966, and Catherine passed away September 1973.

Julius Block

Builder, Dairy Farmer

Julius Block was born on April 28, 1880. He left Russia, after his father died (Julius was only 16 years old at the time). Julius came to Canada and to Beausejour in 1902. He got a job at the sandpit, which supplied sand for the local glass factory. Emilie Schwark was born on February 7, 1888, the daughter of Julius and Ernestine Schwark. They came to Canada in 1903, from Volhynia, Russia. Julius and Emelie were married on December 25, 1904 in Zion Lutheran Church in Beausejour. They lived there 10 years.

Next they moved to Thalberg, 24 miles north of Beausejour. They lived in six different spots, and vacant shacks. Neighbours took them in and shared meat, milk, etc. Emilie sewed and did laundry and helped in return for their kindness. Julius cut wood at 50¢ a cord, and cleared bush to make land for $1.00 a day. The children attended Thalberg School and the Trinity Lutheran Church which Julius helped to build.

Julius and his sons built many homes, barns and stores in the area. In 1922 Julius and sons built their first home, a small 14 x 28, two-room house. Sawdust was used for insulation as it was cozy and warm. From here the children attended School in Beaconia. Classes were held at Klatt's Store, later at the School No. 2162.

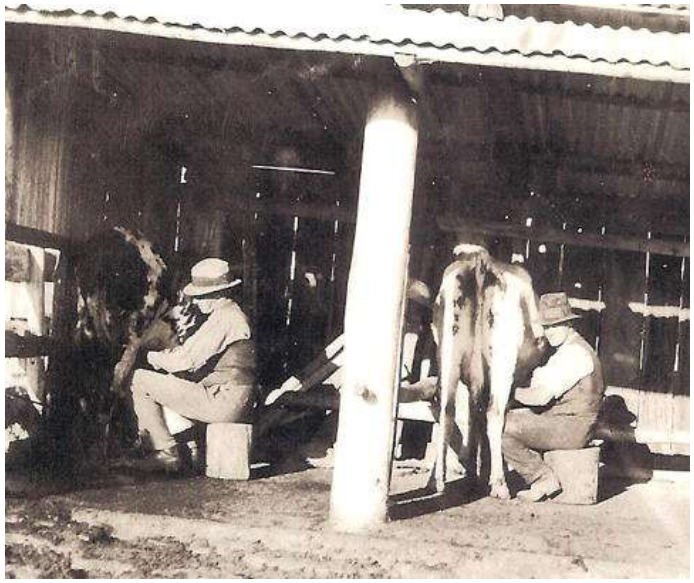
The Blocks also had a dairy business, delivering milk, ice, meat and vegetables every morning at 8:00 during the summer, to cottage owners of the northeast side at the Gull Lake Resort. From the homestead, they purchased a bigger farm, and moved there in 1939. They continued to deliver milk from there. They did this over 20 years.

Julius and Emelie celebrated their 50th Anniversary in 1954. Julius died on September 12, 1958, at 78 years. Emelie died on October 22, 1968, at 80 years of age. Both are laid to rest in the Thalberg Trinity Church Cemetery.

The Dairy Farm

Although any mammal can produce milk, commercial dairy farms are typically one-species enterprises. In developed countries, dairy farms typically consist of high producing dairy cows. While cattle were domesticated as early as 11,000 years ago as a food source and as beasts of burden, the earliest evidence of using domesticated cows for dairy production is the seventh millennium B.C. - the early Neolithic era. Dairy farming developed elsewhere in the world in subsequent centuries. In the 19th century larger farms specialising in dairy alone emerged.

Centralized dairy farming developed around villages and cities, where residents were unable to have cows of their own due to a lack of grazing land. Near the town, farmers could make some extra money on the side by having additional animals and selling the milk in town. The dairy farmers would fill barrels with milk in the morning and bring it to market on a wagon. Until the late 19th century, the milking of the cow was done by hand. In the United States, several large dairy operations existed in some northeastern states and in the west, that involved as many as several hundred cows, but an individual milker could not be expected to milk more than a dozen cows a day. Smaller operations predominated.



For most herds, milking took place indoors twice a day, in a barn with the cattle tied by the neck with ropes or held in place by stanchions. Feeding could occur simultaneously with milking in the barn, although most dairy cattle were pastured during the day between milkings.

More Dairy Farm Memories

Mary Ann Thomas

Mary Ann Thomas started selling milk at Grand Beach in the early 1920s. Around the middle of May she would move her herd of 12 to 15 cows from Stoney Point to Grand Marais along the lake shore as there was no road. This was a day's journey. She would drive down the streets with a horse and buggy and holler "milk." The campers would hurry out with their containers, and she would use a quarter measurer to measure the milk from 10-gallon cans. It sold for 5 cents a quart. By 1929 she was bottling the milk. In 1930 she moved her herd to Victoria Beach. She would go as far as her son Reuben's place at Balsam Bay in one day and carry on the next day. She sold milk at Victoria Beach until 1935. Mary Ann also had a grocery store at Stoney Point, between the years 1925 and 1943.

Ada (Brooke) Rowley

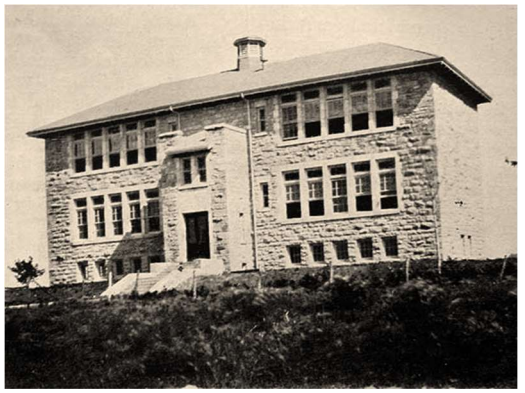
Teacher

Ada Brooke was born in England in 1900, and was a teacher from 1920 to 1926 at Happy Thought and Walkleyburg schools. Ada married Samuel Rowley in 1929.

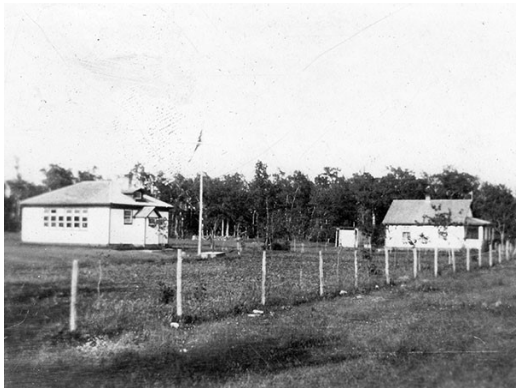
Sam Rowley and Ada live in a lovely, cozy home at 321 Eveline Street in the town of Selkirk. You can see the east side of the Red River from their front window, the Bridge and the Steam Plant structure. Sam was the son of Alexander Butler Rowley and Margaret Anne Rowley. His father had come to Canada» in the early 1880s and had been involved in the 1885 Rebellion.

In 1933/34, Sam started working on the brushing and clearing of the C.I.L. property. Sam continued to work for C.I,L. when the plant opened for operation. He was their first Plant Foreman, a job he was to continue for the next 30 years, retiring in 1965. Sam attended the Kitchener School and recalls Mrs. Hail and Principal Stokes. As he outgrew Kitchener School, he went across the river by boat and ferry every day to Selkirk, where he attended the Central and Old High School. He completed his Grade 11. In winter he crossed the river on ice. It was tricky crossing the ice during spring break-up and in the late fall and early winter.

Sam and Ada had one son, Cecil, who was educated in Selkirk and at the University of Manitoba. He worked in Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto for the Dominion Patent Office.



Happy Thought School, 1917-1989. This very fine stone building was designed by Winnipeg architect E.D. Tuttle.



Poplar Park School and Teacherage, built in 1913. This is an excellent example of the kind of one-room school setting in which most children in St. Clements would have experienced.

A Day in the Life of a Teacher

A teacher's duties in the late 1800s and early 1900s were many, varied and difficult. Many teachers walked a mile or more to work every morning, and home in the evening through farmer's fields, herds of cows, rainstorms, or blizzards. Some had the luxury of riding horses for lengthy distances. Upon arrival at school, the new teacher drew pails of drinking and washing water from the well, then set them up just inside the front door of the school. If it was a cold morning she would gather wood from the woodpile and start a fire. If it was hot she would see to it to open the windows and door. She might sweep the floor and wipe off the rough-hewn plank chairs and desks. She would check to make sure the "privies" or outhouses were tidy and sanitary, and make sure that her black-laquered plywood blackboard was washed. Next, she dealt with the arrival of her students, many of them immature and ignorant. The male students could be much larger than she, and even older in years—and some resented being there at all, away from farm work. There could be jeers and jibes, truancy, and general disobedience. Many 19th century female teachers complained that teaching was especially hard when "big boys" flirted, teased or defied them. The curriculum usually included reading, writing, basic arithmetic, a little geography and history. Books were scarce and teaching tools few. The texts often took the form of moral tracts or primers of childish virtues and sometimes children were even asked to bring whatever books were at home, such as an almanac or old textbooks. The blackboard proved essential as she printed and wrote lessons while students copied notes onto slates. Most students had to furnish their own supplies including writing slates and chalk. It would be some years before scribblers and pencils came into use, and only when there was money to buy them. In rural schoolhouses, apart from overcrowding, practical solutions had to be sought to overcome darkness and poor ventilation.

Emil Greening

Merchant

Emil Greening was born on September 4, 1880 in the Town of Janufka in the district of Wolynien in Poland, which at that time was a province of Russia. Emil was of German parentage and one of twelve children. The family arrived in Canada in the spring of 1900. Emil got a job in Winnipeg building the huge chimney of the Royal Crown Soap Co. near Higgins and Main Street.

In 1901 Emil decided to take a 160-acre homestead one mile east and one mile south of the present Village of Libau. It cost him $10.00. In July of 1907 he married Bertha Ziegenhagen. By September that year one room of the farmhouse was remodelled to serve as a kind of "Store" and a business was started. To get his supplies he would hook up his yoke of oxen to a sleigh with two cords of wood and in four hours he would be in Selkirk, 14 miles away, where he would sell the wood and pick up the groceries, flour and feed that had been shipped to Selkirk from Winnipeg for him. By midnight, mostly walking to keep warm, he would return home. In March, 1912, with the help of several neighbours with teams of horses, the store and home were loaded on sleighs and moved to Libau. He then commenced adding a big store and warehouse to the old buildings. All this moving was done because the railway was building a grade from Winnipeg to Grand Beach and it was coming through Libau. This meant no more long oxen trips to Selkirk all winter long.

In 1914 the first train passed through Libau and shortly thereafter it became known as the Canadian National. During the war years, with no controls or rationing, business in Libau really flourished. Soon Libau was boasting six general stores, all buying cordwood, baled hay and furs such as rat skins, mink, fox and wolf, mostly brought in by Aboriginal trappers. Following the War came the Depression and so there wasn't enough business for the six stores. One cold winter night Knelman's store burned down leaving only Shline, Petznick, Journal's the Libau Supply Co., and Greening's. One year later Shline's store burned down followed by yet another fire at Libau Supply. After that, Journal's closed shop. This left Greenings. Emil was elected as Councillor for the Rural Municipality of St. Clements, representing Ward Six. He also was the Postmaster for the Town of Libau for a good many years.

A Day in the Life of a General Store

The small-town general store, also known as mercantiles and emporiums, were an essential aspect of commercial activity in small-town life, and saw their heyday in the period between 1880 and 1930. These establishments served the rural populations of small towns and villages and the farmers in the surrounding area. Besides selling dry goods, farming equipment and other supplies, they sometimes also served as the local post office, drugstore and undertaker. They were also a popular meeting place for socializing and news gathering. The storekeepers stocked their establishments with merchandise procured from salesmen who represented wholesale houses and manufacturers found in larger cities. Merchandise selections were often large and varied, though most of the items available for sale were those of necessity. As people and businesses prospered in the economy during the 1890s, more luxury items were introduced into the store inventories. The expansion of the railroads, the advent of mass production and technological advances such as the refrigerated railcar to transport perishable foods all combined to escalate the national distribution and variety of goods that were available in the stores. Most of the wall space in a general store was taken up with shelving to store and display the merchandise; likewise the floors were crowded with barrels, wooden boxes and crates. Store counters were good for holding display cases for the smaller items, a coffee grinder, scales and a cash register. Many stores had a display window or two in the front of the building. Cellars, basements and second floors were used for storage of merchandise and displays. Food and consumables included coffee beans, spices, baking powder, oatmeal, flour, sugar, tropical fruit, hard candy, eggs, milk, butter, local fruit and vegetables, honey and molasses, crackers, cheese, syrup and dried beans, cigars and tobacco. Dry goods included bolts of cloth, pins and needles, thread, ribbon, silk, buttons, collars, undergarments, suspenders, dungarees, hats and shoes. Essential items such as rifles, pistols, ammunition, lanterns, lamps, rope, crockery, pots and pans, cooking utensils and dishes, farm and milking equipment and even coffins could be found. The apothecary sections of the stores were well represented with a surprisingly large number of patent medicines, remedies, soaps and toiletries and elixirs.

John Machewski

Merchant

In 1911, the nephew of John and Ksanka Machewski, also named John, immigrated from Horbkow, Austria to East Selkirk. His wife, Theodozia joined her husband shortly after. John at times had to leave his wife to the task of looking after their family while he went off to earn a living. He had worked at many different jobs – clearing bushland, farming, and also working at the Van Horne Farm, and practically any job that was available.

The couple took an interest in their community and in 1920 John was one of the founding members of the Ukrainian Reading Society. He also held office for a number of years. This society served to maintain the culture and tradition of the Old Country, as well as assisting the newcomers to the culture and language of Canada. During this time there was a great need for a place of worship, and he amongst a few others were instrumental in establishing the Ukrainian Catholic Church, built in 1914.

Theodozia sadly passed away in 1922, at the age of 32. In 1924, John married Amelia Ostopchuk. John and Amelia were well known in East Selkirk and served the village well. In 1929, they opened the J & E Machewski General Store. Times were difficult then, and much of their transactions were done in bartering; during that era it seemed to be a common practice. They both worked hard and were compassionate to others less fortunate: Many a time the folk would gather at the store, first to get their needed supplies, and then they would sit huddled near the box stove discussing problems, current affairs, or just socializing. The original building is still in existence although it has been renovated in recent years. At present it is called the "Lighthouse."

Machewski's General Store.

Morris Sharp

Merchant, Justice of the Peace

Morris (Scharfe) Sharp came to St. Clements around 1917 and opened a small general store, which he operated for over thirty years. He married Rose Zelig on September 18, 1918 and they came directly to East Selkirk to begin their future. Both Mr. and Mrs. Sharp were born in Romania; Morris in Bessarabia, and Rose in Vilanu. Rose's brother Isaac was a pioneer participant in the North Winnipeg Farmer's Market.

Mr. Sharp loved East Selkirk and Canada, because he never forgot how wonderful it was to live in a free country. He found in this community people who judged a person on their merits and ability. He was very proud of being elected during 1933 to 1939 inclusive as Reeve of St. Clements. Early in the 1940s he was appointed Justice of the Peace, to arbitrate small claims. His place of business was more than a shopping centre. At night, international politics, ills of the world, medicine and all topics of the day were discussed late into the evening around a pot-bellied stove.

During the day, as customers came in, if they were accompanied by children, the kids were escorted to the candy bins to make their selections "on the house." Few, if any, were refused credit. Thousands of dollars were carried on the books. The family often questioned his rather loose business dealings, to which he had one stock answer, "The money I came with from Romania I still have," or "It will take me two more weeks to become a millionaire."

A yearly summer ritual of his was to load all the children who wanted to go onto trucks and send them to Winnipeg Beach to enjoy the rides and goodies of the day. In the early days of the Great Depression many people were in jeopardy of losing their land and all their possessions to the mortgage companies for non-payment. Many of these people were not versed in the English language and chose Mr. Sharp to be their spokesman before the judge in the city courts. He spoke nine languages, being extremely fluent in Polish and Ukrainian. In the early 1930s Mr. Sharp became active in the purchasing and exporting of potatoes. What began as a small sideline became a very lucrative business – and Mr. Sharp became known as the "Potato King of Manitoba."

Views of Morris Sharp's store (top) and of Nick Nova at the gas pump (below).

Mary Gunn

Nurse, Restaurateur

Mary Gunn was the daughter of John Gunn and Emma Garrioch and was born in the year 1864, one of eight children. She lived most all of her life on the Donald and John Gunn property on Lot 163, on the east side of the Red River in the Gonor area.

Very early on in life Mary became interested in a nursing career. She graduated from the St. Paul, Minnesota County Hospital School of Nursing in 1897. Mary was a very enterprising young lady and put all her effort into the completion of projects. When the Locks were being built at Lockport, Mary had a fairly large restaurant built on the east side to supply the needs of the workers. She put out first-class meals and it wasn't long until she and her partner, Omer Upper, had built up a super reputation for supplying the "inner wants" of man. They operated the business between them for several years. Omer used to cook on the boats and had worked on the dredge at the mouth of the river and also at the St. Andrews Dam site, the year the dredge came down to the rapids to assist in the dam channel.

Mary Gunn in front of her East Lockport house.

Gunn's restaurant was built like a large cottage. It had living quarters complete with two bedrooms. The building had a large screen-enclosed verandah with tables and chairs where patrons could eat in the fresh air, while viewing the busy activity of the Lockport Corner. Inside was a large dining room with many more tables and chairs. Heat was supplied by a wood stove, which also was used for cooking. Water was by pump and located outside the cafe. Mary ran this business for many years. As time passed she used to lease it out to others. In the early 1930s Jake Davis and his wife Mabel ran it for a few years. It was called the Davis Restaurant then.

Mary remained single all her life. She was an enthusiastic individual who kept things humming around the old Gunn homestead. She ruled with an iron hand and knew more about horses and cattle than most of the men in the family. The running of and care of the Gunn homestead mostly fell to Mary. Her nurse's training kept her in demand and people came to rely on her knowledge and help during troubled times. Mary made a lot of trips to many homes when the call for help was relayed. Mary passed away in 1948 at the age of 84 years, and had led a most useful and energetic life. Mary was laid to rest in the Gunn family plot at the Little Britain Churchyard Cemetery.

A view of Mary Gunn's Lockport restaurant.

Fast Food – 1920s Style

The 1920s was an important decade because it marked the birth of the modern restaurant industry, and an emphasis on low-price, high-volume food service. More people ate out than ever before. Famous pre-war restaurants closed, while cafeterias, luncheonettes, and tea rooms thrived. Female servers began to replace men. While critics bemoaned the demise of fine dining, the newborn industry and its patrons celebrated simple, home-style, "American" fare. Sandwiches, soups, hamburgers (for 15¢) and French fries were common items on the menu.

Left: Adeline ("Blondie") Nowell, ca. 1915.

More Restaurant Memories

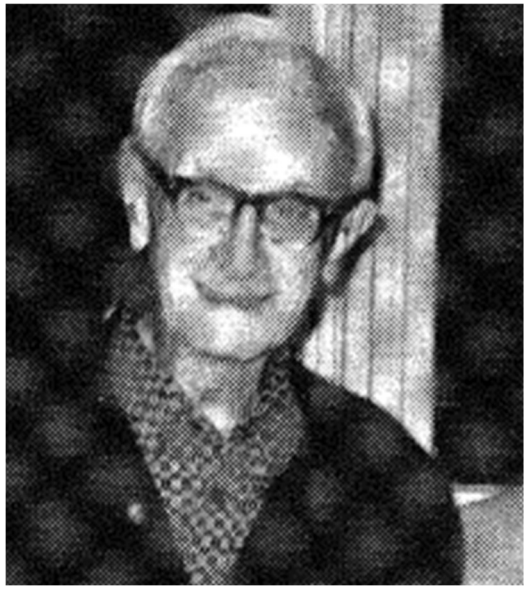
Adeline Nowell

Adeline (Neuman) Nowell was born in Volhynia, Russia, on July 14, 1894. In 1911, Adeline and the family travelled to Liverpool, England, and sailed on the ship *Teutonic*, and arrived in Portland, Maine. On December. 8, 1911, they came by train to Beausejour.

Adeline worked in Winnipeg and then she married Jim Nowell. Jim went to the Army during the Great War, and came back to Canada after the war was over. Jim then became a streetcar driver in Winnipeg. Adeline worked in restaurants, and later in 1936, she opened up a small coffee shop in Grand Marais known as Blondie's Cafe. Adeline operated this cafe until 1953. Adeline remained living in Grand Marais after Jim died. She celebrated her 89th birthday in July 1983, and was well known as "Blondie."

Reinhard Schneider

Rancher

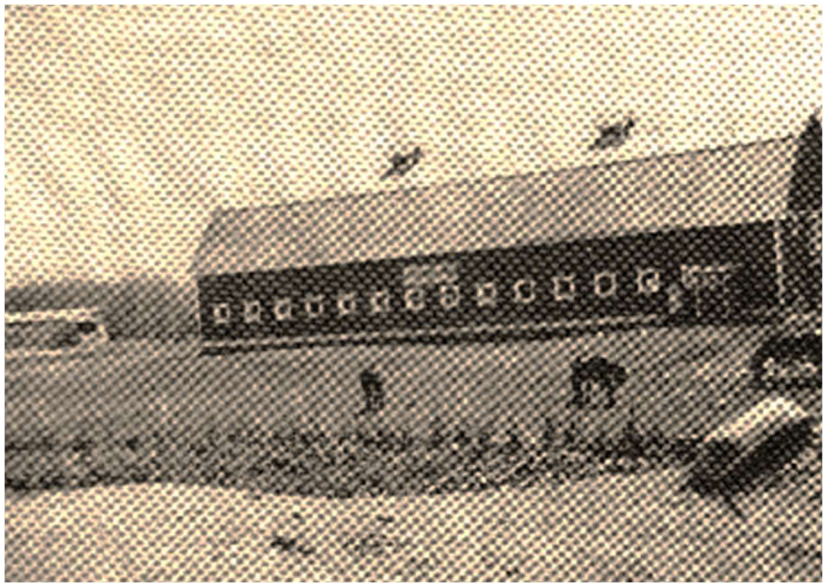


Some three miles north of Lockport is the home of three generations of Schneiders. At one time, their farm, with its two big red barns, the larger of which could hold 70 milk cows, was a landmark on Henderson Highway. The barns have long since been torn down and the cows and horses which used to enliven the scene have disappeared, another example of the changing scene and life styles of the area. Only the original house remains though much altered through two major expansions and several renovations.

In 1933 when Mr. Reinhard Schneider bought the farm and moved in with his wife lrmgard and their daughters and son Hans, the house had no basement and was heated by means of a woodstove in the middle of the living room. Before the Schneiders came, it was the home of Harry and Anna Verheul who, at that time, managed the farm for the Sifton family of the *Winnipeg Free Press* fame and who later moved to their own farm, a quarter of a mile south.

In 1933 and for many years thereafter, the Schneiders place was called “Glenarma Farm,” a name which appeared in the pedigrees of the purebred Ayrshire cows which the Siftons raised on the farm, along with their string of polo ponies and thoroughbreds. “Glenarma Farm” originally had been part of the large land holdings of Judge Haney. It was he who had built the house and barns and later sold the place to the Siftons. The Schneiders took over the farm with the cows; some of the riding horses were also left behind by the former owners. This was the height of the Depression of the 1930s, and there were not many buyers for thoroughbreds and polo ponies, not even among the Sifton’s affluent friends. The Schneider children, of course, were greatly pleased, and for many years afterwards enjoyed riding these fine animals. Another favorable circumstance for the children was the fact that Kitchener School was just across the road. It was a typical one-room school built in 1921 with a pot-bellied stove in the back and a pump under a spreading elm tree in the front yard.

The Schneiders came to Canada in 1927 from Emmendingen in the Black Forest region of Germany, together with some 100 other immigrants who settled around Little Britain in the R.M. of St. Andrews. In 1983, Mr. Reinhard Schneider was 96 years old; his wife lrmgard was 91.



The Sifton Horse Barn (above) was the grand feature of “Glenarma Farm.” Its exceptional size and impressive construction made it a landmark in the St. Clements area. The barn housed work horses but also the prized polo ponies of the original owners – the Sifton family of Winnipeg. The farm was also well known for its herd of Ayreshire cattle (right), whose brown and white colouring gave the animals a regal appearance.

The Verheuls

Harry Verheul, born on April 15, 1897, was from Utrecht, the Netherlands. He always had an interest in hunting and the great outdoors, and this was the main reason that brought him to Canada. In 1927 he married Anna Van Hartevelt. In 1926 Harry had moved to the “Glenarma Farm” as the Manager. It was owned by Jack Sifton, brother of Victor and Clifford. It was a real show farm. They raised polo ponies, Ayrshire cattle, angora rabbits and had chickens. An Arabian stallion was used to breed local horses for the low price of ten dollars. When Jack Sifton died in 1933, Harry Verheul was forced to look for a change of employment. He purchased some land adjacent to the Sifton property, and built his home there and expanded his holdings to 304 acres. The famous *Winnipeg Free Press* agricultural writer, E. Cora Hind, often visited the farm and wrote many articles about it. Harry Verheul was a School Trustee at Kitchener School for 23 years. He also served as a Municipal Councillor in 1943 and 1945.

Clifford Sawchuk

Musician, Carpenter, Farmer

Clifford Sawchuk was born on August 18, 1894, the son of Paul and Alexandra Sawchuk in the Parish of Tartakow, District of Sokol, which was ruled by Austria at that time. As a young lad, Clifford Sawchuk arrived in Canada with his parents in 1904.

Paul and Alexandra, with the help of their son Clifford, built a home in East Selkirk, as Paul was a carpenter by trade. Clifford went to work at an early age, due to his father's illness, and continued to support the family and supplement the family income during the difficult times.

Clifford was active in the community along with his parents. Soon he and his friends organized an orchestra under the direction of Mr. Uhryniuk of Winnipeg. This was one of the first major bands in the area and consisted of Clifford on the trombone, Michael on the saxophone, Fred Kordalchuk on the coronet, Nick Kunitz on French horn, Fred and Bill Karanko who alternated on drums, and finally, John Karanko who played violin. The orchestra organized dances and concerts in the village to raise money to build a hall in East Selkirk.

Clifford Sawchuk held various positions on the hall committee and while President, held Sunday night dances to help pay off the building debts. He was a charter member of the East Selkirk Hall all his life. Clifford and his parents were instrumental, with many others in the community, in building and raising the needed monies to furnish the St. Michaels Greek Orthodox Church in East Selkirk. The Church was established in 1918.

Swing Time

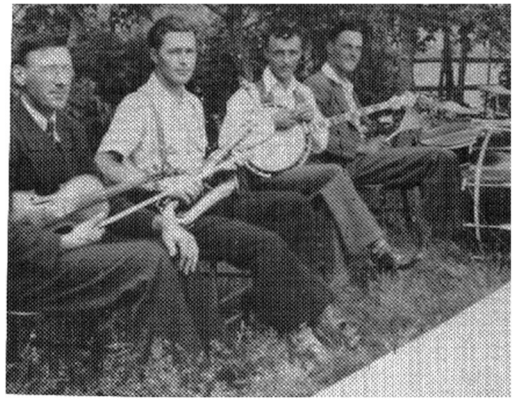
The 1920s and 1930s were the heyday for Big Band music, and the musically-inclined in St. Clements were up to the challenge.

One of the earliest local bandmasters was Claude Macfie. He started his brass band in the late 1870s and in the early 1880s was playing to large crowds on both sides of the Red. Practices were held in the Macfie homestead on the east side and people used to walk all the way from Selkirk to join him. In winter they followed the river trail down and in summer they took the ferry across. By 1884 they were playing to packed crowds in the surrounding area, at skating carnivals, costume balls and other festive occasions.

The “Moonlight Orchestra” was formed in 1916 in Gonor School, where some of the boys were making their violins from cigar boxes or apple crate boards. Bill Dubowits and George Koterla decided to form an orchestra. George sold his bicycle and bought a used cornet for $15. 00. Another boy, Harry Praznik, had a clarinet and the band began to practice in Bill’s house. At that time some of the numbers they played were “Margie,” “Peggy O’Neil,” “Last Nite on the Back Porch,” “Ramona,” “Barney Google,” “Yes, We Have No Bananas,” and “Why Should I Cry Over You.” About 1918, Bill bought a tenor banjo and Harry bought a tenor saxophone. Mike Dubowits played the drums. The band’s first dance job was in 1919 and they played at the Gonor Hall. Later on they played in surrounding districts at dances, socials, weddings and at picnic grounds.

“The Sailors Orchestra” was formed in the 1930s, and played at local community halls, or at their country homes. Dancing platforms usually were built, if the wedding reception took place at the country home. Many was the time when the orchestra had to entertain the wedding guests outdoors. The orchestra members wished they had three arms, two arms to master their instruments, and one arm to wave off the mosquitos. The orchestra was usually paid $1.50 per musician.

Michael “Sax” Sawchuk.



The Sailors Orchestra.

Catherine Kolmatiski

Poultry Farmer

John and Xena Kolmatiski (who had come to Canada in 1892 from Husiatyn, Galicia, Austria in what is now Western Ukraine) had six children: four sons and two daughters. One of these was Michael. Mike was 19 years old when he came to Canada. In 1919, at the age of 21, he married a 19-year old country school teacher, Catherine Stashyshyn. They were married at the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Tyndall. Catherine was the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Paul Stashyshyn of Gonor.

Mike and Catherine, in the "Dirty 30s," started with very little money. After clearing around 200 acres of bush land, they mixed-farmed and grew all types of grain. At first, they planted 30 acres of potatoes and as the years went on, they increased their acreage to 60 with the help of their children.

Catherine's main interest was in raising chickens and turkeys. She raised approximately 1,500 laying hens and 500 turkeys each year. Mike had a contract with the "Kenora," a boat now located in the Selkirk Marine Museum, for every Monday morning for a delivery of 95-110 pounds of broilers. They also had a contract with the Marlborough Hotel about one week before Christmas each year to deliver and dress about 450 to 500 turkeys. They also held a contract with the Selkirk Mental Hospital to deliver 75 dozen fresh eggs every Saturday.

The Kolmatiskis, along with Mr. Robert Sharp, General Merchant, East Selkirk, made their living income from buying any and all available poultry and livestock in the area. Mike and Mr. Sharp had a potato contract with "Proctor and Gamble" at Fort William, Ontario.

John Chorney

Volunteer, Farm Activist, Farmer

John Chorney was born in Belzec, Poland on May 5, 1883, the eldest of the eight children of Michael and Anna Chorney. In the spring of 1903 John, with the money he had saved, bought a ticket to go to Canada. He worked in Winnipeg building roads with horses and scrapers. Within one year he had saved enough money to purchase property in the Sandihill area. On January 22, 1907 John married Nellie Teichman who had come from Lubaczowa, Poland in 1904 at the age of 18. They built their first home. Three years later John sold the farm to his brother Peter and moved to Brokenhead. Here they lived until October, 1918, when they purchased a farm in Walkleyburg.

In 1932-1933 grasshoppers destroyed the farm crops. John cut hay in the Libau Marsh to provide feed for his cattle and horses. To eke out his income he built roads and three bridges for the R.M. of St. Clements. During the Depression John baled straw and shipped it to Saskatchewan by the carload. By 1934 the family farm had grown to 2,300 cultivated acres. This was worked with one Hartt-Parr tractor, 40 work horses and 10 hired men. John provided purebred sires for Percheron horses and Shorthorn cattle for his farm and farmers in the community.

The Chorneys were active in the community. John helped build the St. Stanislaus Roman Catholic Church. He was a director of the St. Andrews and St. Clements Agricultural Society for many years and was very active in organizing the Manitoba Wheat Pool. During the war he sold victory bonds with Jim Nelson. John and Nellie retired in 1946 when John got ill and moved to Selkirk. Here John died on July 10, 1947. Nellie lived alone in Selkirk until her death on October 20, 1966. Both are buried in the East Selkirk Roman Catholic Cemetery

John and Anna Chorney.

George Koterla

Photographer, Restaurateur

Peter and Eudokia Koterla immigrated from the Ukraine and entered Halifax in March 1903 with their three children, and finally settled on a farm in Gonor. At the age of 14 their son George decided to quit school and go to work. He went to Hyas, Saskatchewan, to work in a general store. But he got homesick, and came home to Gonor, along with some money, clothes and a copy of a Stradivarius violin.

In 1919 George Koterla formed a four-piece orchestra with Bill Dubowits on violin, Mike Dubowits on drums, Harry Praznik on clarinet and tenor saxophone and Mr. Koterla on cornet. It was called the Moonlight Orchestra, and they played in and around Gonor, Narol, Rosedale, at weddings, socials and picnics until 1924.

In 1926, George went to Detroit, Michigan, working at the Chevrolet Division as a tool grinder. In 1927, he operated a photo studio in Detroit. In July 1929, he returned to Gonor and married Mary Fegol of Narol.

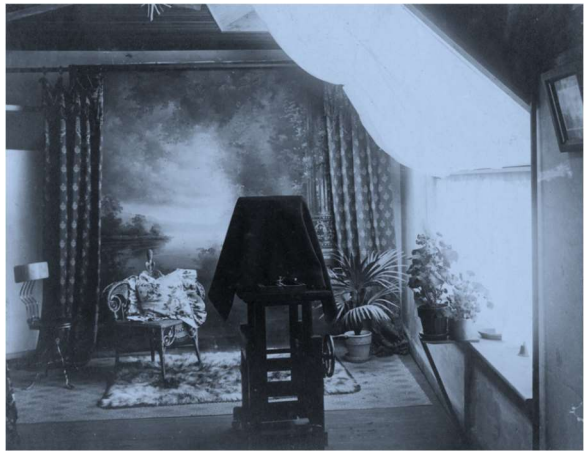
They went to Grand Beach and started the first photo developing business in Grand Beach/Grand Marais. George built a shop that was 10 x 4 feet of rough local lumber which cost about $20.00. This was for the photo shop. Two years later he built a lunch room which was named George's Fish and Chips. He also built the first drug store in Grand Marais, and rented it out to Henry Pasco. A few years later George bought two more lots with business buildings on them. One building was operated by Harry Blake-Knox as the first movie theatre in Grand Marais. The second building was a grocery store and the third building was a barber shop and sleeping quarters.

The Koterlas eventually quit the film developing business and only operated the restaurant, George's Fish and Chips. In 1944, they bought a river lot in Gonor. They built a new house and in two years it was all paid for. George went into the washing machine business.

A Day in the Life of a Photo Studio

By the time George Koterla was involved the photography business at Grand Beach, in the 1920s and 30s, the processes and technologies of cameras had evolved at a rapid pace. Experiments with photographic practice had been undertaken through the 17th and early 18th centuries. In the 1830s, Frenchman Louis Daguerre was developing camera images directly onto a mirror-like silver-surfaced plate that had been fumed with iodine vapour, which reacted with the silver to form a coating of silver iodide. The result appeared as a positive when it was suitably lit and viewed. Exposure times were still quite long until Daguerre made the pivotal discovery that an invisibly slight image produced on such a plate by a much shorter exposure could be "developed" to full visibility by mercury fumes. This brought the required exposure time down to a few minutes under optimum conditions. The so-called “daguerreotype” proved popular in response to the demand for portraiture that emerged during the late 1800s. In 1888 the Kodak Film Company introduced the first box camera, which simplified photography and allowed for more amateurs to take up the hobby. And then in 1900 Kodak began selling its famous “Brownie” camera for just $1.00, and a revolution in photography was underway.

But many people still preferred a professional at the helm of the camera, and so around the turn of the 20th century a whole “industry” of photo studios sprang up. These studios were often located on the top floor of a building and had huge glass roofs or windows to allow for plenty of daylight. In order to take a photograph, the lighting conditions had to be perfect and obviously there was no artificial light at this time to help out. Every studio had a darkroom, as the meticulous preparation of the silver-coated copper plates required complete darkness when treated with chemicals to render the plates sensitive to light. The studio space was also a means for the photographer to present his work. Portraits of politicians and other important people were often displayed on the walls and served as a sort of portfolio.



Views of an old photo studio. Above, of the photographer’s office and supply area; and below of the portrait area – often hung with curtains and panoramic backdrops.

Mabel Davis

Bus Driver

When Mabel Donald was scarcely 15 years old, she influenced her father, George Donald, busman and boatman in Lockport, to teach her the art of driving his bus. She was already accomplished at handling the reins of the horse-drawn bus, which was a carriage body, enclosed, seating about 15 people and driven by a team of matched sorrels. However, Mabel was more ambitious, she was determined to conquer the art of the motor vehicle and received instructions from a gentleman her father brought out from Winnipeg. Shortly afterwards she received her chauffeurs license.

By her 16th birthday, Mabel was able to drive any motor vehicle she tried her hand at, and was the pride of her father who no doubt wondered where this ambition of his only child was heading. Since 1913, when the Lockport Bridge had been transformed with approaches and road way, Mr. Donald had been crossing and carrying passengers with his team. With much urging and enthusiasm from Mabel, her father had contracted to have a new bus built. When Mabel got behind the wheel of the new bus, early in 1917, it was the "pride of her life" and she was to continue her daily runs every year until the bus was retired in 1931.

The fare to ride the bus remained the same from 1917 to 1931 being 25¢ for a return trip and 15¢ one way. The route was from the Lockport Station of the W.S. & L.W. Railway to the east side of the river in the R.M. of St. Clements. Mabel says most of her passengers, apart from the tourists enjoying the summer outings at Lockport, were mostly all from the east side, wanting to connect with the electric railway.

The bus frame was steel and the wheels had iron rims with wooden spokes and solid rubber tires. The upper portion was a wooden frame with roll-up brown canvas curtains, like awnings, that were tied down by straps when the weather was inclement. The bus held 21 passengers, 10 on each side, and one could also sit with the driver. The entry and exit on the bus were from a single door at the back. Mabel married Jake Davis in 1922, a union of love and dedication that lasted almost 60 years. Jake passed away on New Years Eve, December 31, 1981 at the age of 84 years.

Mabel Davis was very patriotic and this showed up in the choice of her uniform; which was khaki. Mabel designed it herself and had seven made - one for every day of the week. It was of post World War I style of tight, knee length knickers, shiny silk stockings, long tunic jacket and a cloche hat.

More Bus Memories

As time progressed, George Donald moved with the times and converted his bus, bringing about greater safety regulations and comfort for the passengers. He had the solid rubber tires changed using new inner tubes. Two new doors were added, one on each side, made of black oil cloth with mica windows. Above the two large headlights at the front of the bus were two small coal oil lamps that were lighted up when parked at night, a familiar sight for weary travellers returning home from a night on the town.

Mabel remembers carrying many interesting passengers, and one time early in her bus driving career, she recalls two women especially. They were from Washington, D.C., and had heard of Mabel and her fame as "Canada's first lady bus driver." They made the trip to Canada to especially talk to her. They offered her a job as their chauffer to drive them around Washington. She would have three, shiny steel limousines at her disposal, room and board provided and a very handsome salary. But her parents, George and Catherine Donald, advised that "you are our only child: No way."

Joseph Blackner

Hotel Owner, Dairy Farmer

Joseph Blackner came to Canada from Austria in 1907, and Regina Blackner came about two years later with their first born son, John. Mr. Blackner worked at odd jobs such as hauling bricks for 10¢ an hour, and also did carpentry work. They lived in a two-storey house in Winnipeg, where three daughters and another son were born. About 10 years later Joseph acquired some land known as Lot 9, Old Kildonan. On these acres they built a home, barns, milk house and chicken house. Here, another three daughters were born.

With hard work this developed into a dairy farm known as “Sun Dial Dairy,” with about 25 to 30 cows. Milk was delivered to Winnipeg. In 1922, Mr. Blackner built the Lloyd George School on McPhillips Street. in Old Kildonan.

In 1927, he built the Star Hotel in East Selkirk, which officially opened in 1928. He hired Mike Sul as barman, and Mrs. Blackner did all the cooking for the restaurant. There were 12 rooms upstairs; one of which Miss May Kenny rented. She was a teacher at the Happy Thought School. There was a pool room in the back part of the hotel, which held four big pool tables.

Then came the hard times, the “Dirty 30s.” Beer sold at 10¢ a glass, but few customers could even afford that. Joseph came off the farm to replace Mike Sul as barman and the four younger children also came to East Selkirk and attended Happy Thought School. This is where they learned to swim in the little muddy creek beside the St. Clements Council office, and where Joseph did his skinny-dipping after the hotel closed for the night.

Joseph Blackner passed away on July 1, 1948, and Regina Blackner passed away on August 10, 1973. They were blessed with eight children, 21 grandchildren and 25 great-grandchildren.

Joseph and Regina Blackner in front of the Star Hotel.

A Day in the Life of a Small-Town Hotel

Running a small-town Manitoba hotel in the early 1900s was hard work. The hotel staff usually consisted of at least two chambermaids and a cook who worked from morning till night, cleaning the guest rooms, doing the laundry, and washing dishes. The maid's work day usually started at 6:00 a.m. and ended at 9:00 p.m. for which she was paid $10 per month, plus room and board. Porters not only assisted hotel guests with their luggage; they also washed dishes, milked the cows that supplied the milk for the hotel and did all the odd jobs. The upstairs maid also polished the silver and glassware and kept everything shining. All members of the hotel owner's family had to share in the work of running the hotel. "One of the duties of the kids was to help with the housekeeping and at noon you had to take your turn at washing the dishes before going back to school. My sister, Irma, served as a waitress in the dining room when she was barely taller than the table tops." "The years in the Hotel were busy ones for all of the family. It was the boys' job to fire the wood-burning furnace. This meant rising about three a.m. and again at six to stoke the furnace. … We were responsible for bringing in blocks of ice and snow to melt for the daily wash. … We hauled our drinking water from the town well." Wash days – usually Mondays – were an ordeal, especially in winter. Washing bedding and clothes was often a two-day proposition. Water had to be hauled and then heated in tubs the night before. Start-up time was set for five or six a.m. and the laundry process quite often ran into the afternoon. The next day, one of the maids would run the clothes and sheets through a mangle, a machine used to wring water out of wet laundry. Most hotels did not get running water until the 1940s or 1950s, so water had to be hauled from a well in the summer. In the winter, hotels used melted ice and snow, or water that had been collected in rain barrels during the previous summer."

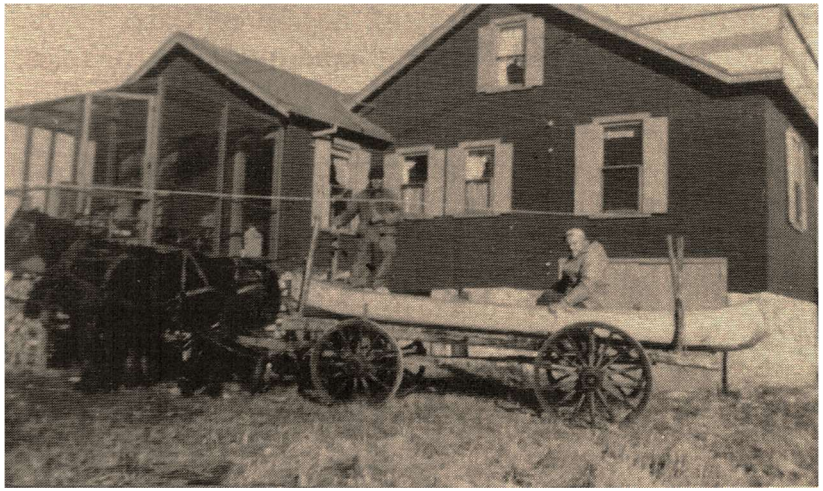
Lieutenant-Colonel Sullivan

Lawyer, Hunter, Conservationist

Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Sullivan was born at Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island on September 3, 1881. He was the son of Sir William Wilfred Sullivan, who was Premier and Attorney General of P.E.I. and later became Chief Justice of the Province for 30 years. Arthur was called to the Bar of P.E.I. in 1904 and the Bar of Manitoba in 1905.

He joined the C.E.F. as lieutenant and served in France and Belgium during the First World War. Arthur married Miss Fraser Moffat of Winnipeg, in 1907, and they had two daughters. Colonel Sullivan became Senior Partner of the law firm of Sullivan and Turner. He was also Director of the North American Wildlife Foundation. Colonel Sullivan was a big man physically, being over 6 feet tall and weighing about 200 pounds. His hair was snow white since the First World War. Apart from his involvement with his vocation, community and business interests, Colonel Sullivan had another passion, that of naturalist and botanist. He fell in love with the Libau Marsh area when he was but a young man, and spent almost half a century studying and cultivating it.

Colonel Arthur Sullivan had a hunting lodge (35 acres) originally and jointly owned by the Honorable Bob Rogers of Winnipeg (Rogers was a major political figure at the provincial and federal scene). The Lodge was located seven miles north of Libau and 1 ½ miles from Whittles Point. Col. Sullivan first started hunting out in the Libau Marsh probably in the late 20s and early 30s, and he soon discovered the pleasure, beauty and solitude of this part of Manitoba that he came to love greatly. Col. Sullivan's first lodge burned, but he soon had a fine lodge built to replace the burnt one. You will note the enclosed screened porch, which was both front and back, plus look-out tower. It had an underground cistern whereby the rain water was stored and thus provided running water by hand-pump in the kitchen. This cistern was made of galvanized metal with a capacity of 1,000 gals. and never seemed to run dry. The lodge consisted of two bedrooms (12x12) a living room (20x26), and a large kitchen. He also had his own power and battery system (powered by windmill) and thus stored power by battery.



Views of Col. Sullivan's Libau-area hunting lodge.

More Memories

Col. Sullivan's living room had eight windows so he could view ducks from almost every direction, see the sun come up, and the beauty of the sun setting. The foundation for the main lodge was made of fieldstone and was seven feet high and about 24" thick. This also besides providing for cistern, furnace etc., also housed his vehicles as well as underground garage. During the dry years, Col. Sullivan arranged to have a road built from Whittles Point, going east across the marsh to his property, a distance of about 1 ¼ mile. From the edge of the road to his property, he built a fieldstone road to the lodge door.

In about 1938, he started banding ducks, which was to prove to be one of his most enjoyable hobbies. He soon built a duck-banding trap where he pursued his life long interest.

Col. Sullivan lived to be 77 years of age and died on October 21, 1957. His last trip to the Libau Marsh was during 1956 where he travelled, in spite of his illness, to the area he had come to love with a passion. Before he died he sold his lodge to Mr. Maytag of the United States.