

Chapter 8 - Health Care and Education at Theodore

Theodore's Drug Store

The history of the Theodore Drug Store dates back to August 1906 when an item in the Theodore news column of *The Yorkton Enterprise* stated that Mr. W. A. R. Mason, of Markham, Ontario, was visiting with L. A. Wylie who was looking for a suitable location for a drug store and considered Theodore to be as good a place as any.¹ It does not appear that he followed through in his intention because the next mention of a drug store in Theodore comes at the end of October when another announcement stated that Mr. Malone, Theodore's latest arrival intended to open a drug store in the village.² According to *The Theodore Tattler* the business was owned by Martin, Bowle, and Wynne Co. of Winnipeg and managed by Mr. H. E. Malone.³

By the end of January, 1908 the Theodore Drug Store under the management of Mr. Malone who was said to have had years of experience in England and Canada, was in operation with a full line of drugs, stationery, and school books.⁴ According to *The Theodore Tattler* Mr. Malone left the village for Winnipeg and was succeeded by a Mr. Vance, who after a short while, sold the business to Dr. Ekins.⁵

In the fall of 1908 Dr Ekins erected a new building on Main Street to house both the drug store and his offices.⁶ It is interesting to note that there is no mention of a pharmacist in the Theodore news column during the years Dr. Ekins owned the business. There were, however, a number of local people who were employed to serve customers who were buying things other than drugs. Among those mentioned in the Theodore news as "looking after" the drug store were Clara Larson, A. D. Eckhardt, and Alvin Reese.

In the fall of 1920 Dr. Ekins sold the drug store to McIntyre and Sanders from eastern Canada.⁷ One of the new owner of the drug store, Thomas Sanders, was a graduate of Ontario College of Pharmacy, and had more than eight years experience before moving to Theodore, where he soon acquired the reputation of being an obliging and accommodating merchant, willing to serve his customers at all hours.⁸ Thomas Sanders operated the Theodore Drug Store into the mid 1950's.

Other Health Professionals

In spite of several announcements in the Theodore news to the effect that, there would appear to be a good opening here for a first class dentist who will make Theodore his home, the village never had a full-time dentist living in the village.⁹ However, from time to time a dentist from Yorkton would open an office in Theodore and provide care one or two days per week. It is likely that visiting dentists and opticians would arrive in Theodore on the morning train from Yorkton and return home on the evening train.

One such dentist was Dr. Herbert Lake who opened an office at Theodore in the fall of 1919.¹⁰ The office was located "in the building two doors east of the drug store."¹¹ He began by offering his services every Wednesday but soon found that there was enough business to justify opening on Tuesdays as well.¹² Several years later, another dentist, Dr. McDonald, opened an office in Theodore.¹³ He was followed by Dr. Rabinovitch, of Yorkton, who spent his Fridays in Theodore.¹⁴ The first indication that an optician visited Theodore did not appear until 1927 when it was announced in the Theodore news column that, Mr. E. J. Bridgeman of Saskatoon optician, spent Friday here in the practice of his profession.¹⁵

Contagious Diseases

As in every other community, children living in Theodore often suffered the effects of a variety of illnesses. Outbreaks of some diseases such as measles and mumps were reported in the Theodore news column on a regular basis year after year, and while people could get very sick, these diseases were not usually considered life threatening. In the spring of 1916, for example, there was an epidemic of measles that caused the postponement of a school concert because so many people had contracted the disease, and a year later there was an epidemic of mumps in Theodore that played havoc with school attendance.^{16 17}

Generally the usual response to cases of measles and mumps seems to have been to let them run their course and prevent their spread. Infected people were often quarantined at home, the school was sometimes closed, and as indicated above, public meetings and events could be cancelled if the outbreak was severe enough. According to the Theodore Correspondent, “Of all sad words of tongue or pen the saddest are these, “I’m quarantined.”¹⁸ Quarantine played a very important role in addressing other diseases that were considered to be much more serious.

Influenza 1918 - 1920

As the Great War was drawing to a close a new disaster appeared on the horizon. Named the Spanish Flu because of the high number of deaths reported in Spain in the spring of 1918, this strain of influenza eventually killed between twenty and forty million people world wide.¹⁹ It is estimated that 50,000 Canadians died during the epidemic, almost as many as had died on the battlefields in Europe (60,000) .²⁰

Theodore, like every other community in Canada, experienced the effects of the flu, and

the first reports of the flu in Theodore appeared at the end of October, 1918 when it was reported in *The Yorkton Enterprise* that Dr. W. J. Ekins and Sam Kreklewics had contracted the disease that the schools in the area had been closed.²¹ Two weeks later it was reported that, a great number of new cases of Flu have developed here within the last week, and that the deaths of A. E. Edge, the local butcher and William Peterson had occurred ²² It was also reported that, "A great many people of this district are being inoculated as a preventative for the Flu."²³

The people of Theodore responded to the threat of the flu by offering whatever services they could wherever they were needed. Mrs. McNicoll, a former teacher at Theodore died at her home in Wadena, after contracting the disease while nursing flu patients in Wadena.²⁴ Miss Mabel Hansen left Theodore to nurse flu patients in Foam Lake.²⁵ She returned after two weeks and reported only a few cases at Foam Lake.²⁶

During the last few weeks of 1918 life began to return to normal in Theodore. Harold Walker returned to his job at the post office. Louis Thompson returned to the bank, and A. D Eckhardt was said to be improving. Miss Dora Tracey returned to her teaching position at Biggar. On 19 December 1918 it was reported that there were no flu cases in Theodore.²⁷ Except for a few cases of influenza in February and March, the year 1919 seems to have been relatively free of the disease.

In 1920 the influenza epidemic that had swept across the world returned to Theodore. The first report of influenza appeared in late January when it was reported that, grippe has been rampant here lately and is still at work.²⁸ Within a week of that report the school had been closed by Dr. Ekins, the local medical officer, and the building was converted into an emergency hospital.²⁹ It was also reported that there were thirteen patients in the Theodore hospital under the

care of a Nurse Logan.³⁰ Two extra nurses were hired to take care of the patients in the hospital.³¹

As in 1918 the people of Theodore once again pitched in to help whenever and however they could. Alvin Reese looked after the drug store while Dr. Ekins tended the sick.³² His sister, Mabel Reese, assisted in the bank during the manager's illness.³³ Fred Ashdown, and many others brought donations to the hospital which were all thankfully received by the committee in charge.³⁴ Miss B. Creasy, one of Theodore's teachers, was presented with a gold watch and chain by the school board and the town council in appreciation of her services during the influenza epidemic.

As the month of January progressed into February conditions began to improve, and it was reported that all the patients who were in the hospital were making good progress.³⁵ Before the month of February was out the epidemic had passed.

The end of this week should see the close of the emergency hospital, provided no new cases arrive before that time. At present writing there are five patients lying there, well on their way to recovery. This is the lowest number since the fine brick building was commandeered for this purpose. A couple of weeks ago nearly thirty patients were being treated there, and we are safe in saying the action of the village council in opening this hospital as promptly as they did has been the means of saving at least half a dozen lives. We congratulate the Mayor and Council; also the staff of trained and volunteer nurses for the success that has attended their efforts. We also wish to tender our thanks to the kind ladies in Beaverdale, Caldervale and surrounding country for their many contributions of butter, eggs milk, etc. Also for other acts of kindness shown the sick. The expense of operation has been heavy, but the Council has a promise of help from the provincial government, and with some assistance from adjoining municipalities we hope to get clear.³⁶

While rejoicing with those who have been restored to health our thoughts also turn to those firesides where one or more are missing. And we offer to the bereaved our heartfelt sympathy.³⁷

While the influenza pandemic was by far the most serious disease, other contagious diseases also took a toll on the residents of Theodore as outlined below.

Although Theodore never again experienced anything as devastating as the outbreak of

the Spanish Flue, one can only imagine the fear that must have prevailed in the community every time an outbreak of influenza was reported in the newspaper. The years 1924, 1925 and 1927 all saw outbreaks of this dread disease.

Small Pox

In November, 1921 an outbreak of small pox in Yorkton and surrounding areas caused the closure of several local schools and the Yorkton Collegiate. Schools, businesses and private residences were disinfected and several other preventative measures were taken immediately. A strict quarantine was placed on every home where there were small pox patients, public meetings and gatherings were banned, and people were vaccinated.^{38 39} Commercial travellers were reluctant to stay in Yorkton and came to stay at the hotels and boarding houses in Theodore and other small communities where there was no small pox.⁴⁰ People in Theodore were reminded to make appointments for vaccinations.⁴¹

In mid January, 1922 one case of small pox and several cases of diphtheria were reported near town, and while there were no cases reported within the village, Dr. Turner immediately began vaccinating people in order to prevent the spread of these diseases.⁴² Within a matter of days, however, the one case of small pox became many cases and those who had not been vaccinated were strongly urged to do so.⁴³ As a further precautionary measure the School Board, in early February, issued instruction that all pupils who had not been vaccinated were to remain at home until they had been immunized, and a local carnival was postponed till a later date.^{44 45} This first outbreak of small pox at Theodore appears to have passed with out any loss of life, as did another outbreak in the Creekside district which closed the school the following August.

Tuberculosis

According to Janet MacKenzie tuberculosis was the leading cause of illness and death in the early years of the twentieth century. In 1908 tuberculosis accounted for 129 deaths in Saskatchewan, but because the reporting procedures at that time were unreliable, it is estimated that as many as ten times that number could have been attributed to TB.⁴⁶

In 1907 it was shown that people could get tuberculosis by drinking milk from cattle infected with the disease, and by 1909 both Regina and Saskatoon had bylaws dealing with cleanliness in the dairy industry and on the farm. The commercial pasteurization of milk was not practised at this time, and it was not until 1911 that the Moose Jaw Dairy Company made the first commercially produced pasteurized milk and butter.⁴⁷

Like so many other places in Saskatchewan during these early years, Theodore suffered the effects of tuberculosis. There are however, very few references to cases of tuberculosis in the Theodore news column until after the First World War, and during the 1920's a number of the district residents became infected and several people died from it. In February of 1922, the Village Council began to consider passing a bylaw to regulate the sale of milk within the village, and enforce testing of dairy cows for tuberculosis.⁴⁸ A month later (March, 1922) a bylaw was unanimously passed by the council under which all milk vendors were required to obtain a license, show proof of the absence of tuberculosis, keep their dairies in a sanitary condition and have their herds inspected by the medical health officer.⁴⁹ All cows supplying milk for the village were to be tested for tuberculosis before the first of June, and proof of exemption from this disease was to be forwarded to the Council.⁵⁰ Among the dairy cattle tested in 1922 was the herd owned by Fred Leonhardt, one of Theodore's largest dairy farmers, which received "a clean bill of health."⁵¹ Later,

in January 1923 more dairy cows in the Theodore district were tested and very few infected animals were found.⁵²

Because there was no cure for tuberculosis in the early twentieth century, the general practise was to isolate those who were infected with the disease. Plans for a sanatorium at Fort Qu'Appelle began prior to World War I but construction was not completed until 1917. Fort San, was a self-sufficient institution with vegetable gardens, livestock, a power house, and an extensive library intended to house 358 people. It has been described as a medical purgatory where hundreds died and thousands suffered in isolation, loneliness and pain.⁵³ Until 1929 when Saskatchewan became the first jurisdiction to implement universal free diagnosis and treatment of tuberculosis, the cost of treatment appears to have been born by the communities from which the patients came.⁵⁴ In 1927 it cost the Theodore's Village Council more than \$1,000 for the treatment of one resident at the Sanatorium.⁵⁵

In the summer of 1923 the women of the Lutheran and Union Church in Theodore joined forces to help the people of Saskatchewan deal with this dread disease. An item in *The Yorkton Enterprise* described the devastating effects that tuberculosis was having in the province, and what the women in Theodore were planning to do.

Four hundred mothers of families have died in the homes in Saskatchewan from Tuberculosis during the past four years. During that time these mothers were lying at home surrounded by their children, thus exposing them to infection. One hundred children have also been allowed to die in the homes, with little done to save them.

Help your less fortunate sisters by attending a supper to be served under the auspices of the Lutheran and Union Church Aids in the Kitzul Hall, Theodore. Saturday June 16th 5:30 to 8 p.m., admission 35c. The funds will be given to the "Every Woman's Fund" now being raised by the Provincial Council of Women. With this Fund it is proposed to provide treatment for fifty mothers at a time and where possible to protect their children from breakdown with tuberculosis.⁵⁶

The supper was served on Saturday, June 16th from 5 to 7 p.m. and admission was 35¢.⁵⁷

In the spring of 1929 the Saskatchewan government passed a bill that provided free treatment for all the tubercular patients in the province. The government paid the capital cost of the sanatorium and provided a grant of one dollar a day for each patient receiving treatment, and the municipalities paid the balance of the cost.⁵⁸ Unfortunately for Theodore, the formula for determining the cost of treatment favoured the rural municipalities over the towns and villages. The cost of treatment for tuberculosis assessed to Saskatchewan's cities towns and villages was almost three times the cost to rural municipalities.⁵⁹ In 1930 the cost for treatment for tuberculosis to Theodore was four times what it had been in 1929.⁶⁰

It appears that the first large scale testing for tuberculosis in Theodore occurred in the fall of the 1938 when Doctors Ferguson and Banting of the Saskatchewan tuberculosis sanatoriums arrived with an X-ray machine to test all school children attending the Theodore and Creekside schools. The testing was free of charge to the children and their parents as funding was provided by the Anti-Tuberculosis League of Saskatchewan, and the Homemakers' Clubs at Beaverdale and Theodore.⁶¹

Other Contagious Diseases

There were, of course several other contagious diseases that threatened Theodore on occasions. In 1911 there was an outbreak of typhoid fever in the village that was believed to have come from the water in one particular village well and people were advised to boil all water used.⁶² Several people died of diphtheria in 1922 and in the spring of 1923 the local School Board, acting on the advice of the Department of Public Health, arranged to have Dr Turner

inoculate every pupil against diphtheria free of charge.⁶³ A case of infantile paralysis (polio) was discovered within three miles of the town in 1930 that left the victim “rather badly crippled.”⁶⁴ There were also outbreaks of scarlet fever in 1920, 1921, 1922, and 1923. Infectious diseases frequently forced the closure of the school for indefinite periods of time, sometimes days, or in some cases weeks.

Notes:

1. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*, 29 August, 1906.
2. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*, 24 October, 1906.
3. "Trade Talk," *The Theodore Tattler*. Theodore, Saskatchewan Canada. 15 October, 1921.
4. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*, 31 January, 1907.
5. "Trade Talk," *The Theodore Tattler*. Theodore, Saskatchewan Canada. 15 October, 1921.
6. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 26 November 1908.
7. "Trade Talk," *The Theodore Tattler*. Theodore, Saskatchewan Canada. 15 October, 1921.
8. "Trade Talk," *The Theodore Tattler*. Theodore, Saskatchewan Canada. 15 October, 1921.
9. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 10 February 1921.
10. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 9 October, 1919.
11. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 17 June, 1920.
12. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 20 November, 1919.
13. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 12 January, 1923.
14. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 19 November, 1929.
15. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 11 October, 1927.
16. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 6 April, 1916
17. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise* 17 May 1917
18. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 17 February 1921.
19. "The Influenza Pandemic of 1918" downloaded 6 September, 2016 from
<https://virus.stanford.edu/uda>
20. "Influenza Pandemic, 1918–1919" downloaded 6 September 1916 from
<http://www.historymuseum.ca/cmce/exhibitions/hist/medicare/medic-1h10e.shtml> Date
Created: March 31, 2010 | Last Updated: April 21, 2010
21. Theodore, *The Yorkton Enterprise*, 31 October 1918

22. Theodore, *The Yorkton Enterprise*, 14 November 1918,
23. Theodore, *The Yorkton Enterprise*, 14 November 1918
24. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*, 21 November 1918
25. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*, 5 December 1918
26. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*, 19 December 1918
27. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*, 5 December 1918
28. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 22 January, 1920.
29. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 29 January, 1920.
30. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 29 January, 1920.
31. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 12 February, 1920.
32. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 29 January, 1920.
33. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 29 January, 1920.
34. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 29 January, 1920.
35. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 5 February, 1920.
36. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 19 February, 1920.
37. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 19 February, 1920.
38. "Small-Pox Epidemic Threatens District - Fifty Cases Now in Yorkton," *The Theodore Tattler*. 26 November, 1921.
39. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 1 December, 1921.
40. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 24 November, 1921.
41. "The Local News," *The Theodore Tattler*. 3 December, 1921.
42. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 12 January, 1922.
43. "The Local News," *The Theodore Tattler*. 21 January, 1922. p. 8
44. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 2 February, 1922.

45. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 2 February, 1922.
46. MacKenzie, Janet. "Saskatchewan Leads Canada, North America and the World in the Fight Against Tuberculosis," *Winning the Prairie Gamble*. Saskatchewan Western Development Museum. 2002. Retrieved 31 March 2017 from:
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48. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 23 February, 1922.
49. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 9 March, 1922.
50. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 4 May, 1922.
51. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 17 August, 1922.
52. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 23 January, 1923.
53. Wikipedia https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fort_San,_Saskatchewan
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55. "Theodore Municipal Affairs Reviewed by Retiring Overseer," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 4 January, 1927.
56. "Supper At Theodore For Every Woman's Fund," *The Yorkton Enterprise*, 12 June, 1923.
57. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 22 May, 1923.
58. "Free Treatment for Sask., T., B. Patients Is to Be Provided," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 18 January, 1929.
59. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 3 June, 1930.
60. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 25 April, 1930.
61. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 29 September, 1938.
62. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Times*. 5 October, 1911.
63. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 27 March, 1923.
64. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 14 November, 1930.