# Chapter 5 - Theodore's Businesses Community

## Businesses Related to Agriculture

### Theodore's Elevators

Among the first businesses related to agriculture to be established in Theodore were its four elevators. About a month before the first train went through Theodore, the Beaverdale correspondent to *The Yorkton Enterprise* reported on a recent visit to the Village of Theodore. He stated that among the many new buildings in the village was a large elevator belonging to the March Brothers and Wells, a Winnipeg company, that ran several different enterprises out of Winnipeg.[1]

The Export Elevator Company owned by March Brothers & Wells was incorporated on May 20, 1903 with a capital of five hundred thousand dollars, and by the end of the year had built one of its first elevators at Theodore.[2] By 1906 the Export Elevator Company owned twenty-five elevators in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, giving it a total capacity of six hundred thousand bushels and had several more under construction.[3] Each of the company's elevators offered what at that time were the modern conveniences of cleaners, crushing and feed mills.[4] The Export Elevator Company was purchased by the Canadian Elevator Company in the summer of 1906.[5]

The Canadian Elevator Company Limited was formed in Winnipeg 1902 by a group of American businessmen.[6] It began with a capital of $1,000,000 and quickly established itself in thirty-eight different towns in Manitoba and Saskatchewan where it operated both elevators and lumber yards.[7] The Canadian Elevator Company soon became the largest handler of grain in Canada by 1910,[8] having more than one hundred elevators.[9]
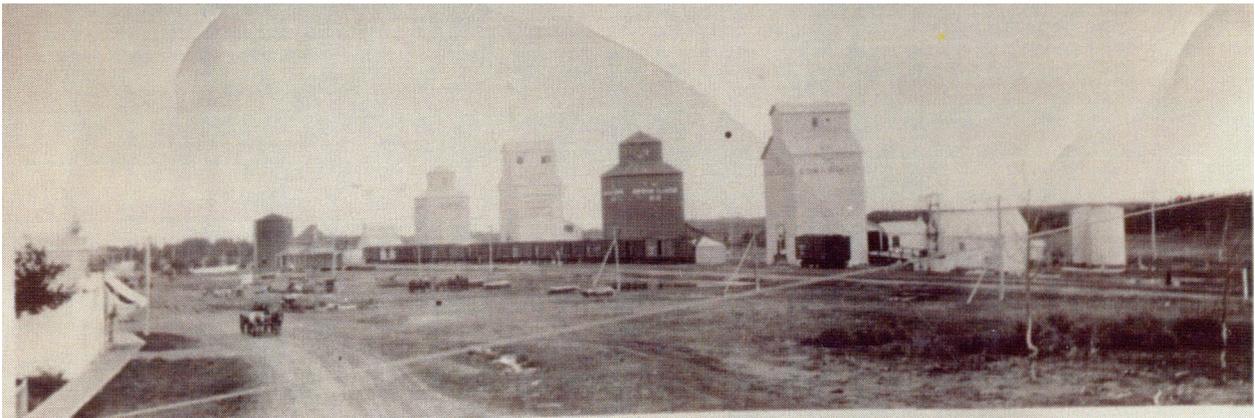
Theodore's Grain Elevators 1926 Courtesy: Bruce Frederickson



Theodore's Grain Elevators 1976

On 22 August, 1906 the Theodore correspondent to the Yorkton Enterprise reported that, "The foundation of the Great West Trading Co. Elevator has been laid and the carpenters will commence work in a few days."[10] The Great West Trading Company that build Theodore's second elevator had its beginnings in 1903. James Brown Gibson and Thomas Meredith formed

The Great West Trading Company and opened retail stores in Yorkton and Sheho.[11] Gibson, who, along with some other businessmen in Yorkton had organized the James Brown Gibson Elevator in 1902 and had built Yorkton's second elevator, bought out Meredith's share of the business and by 1905 had closed the retail stores. The company changed its focus from retailing to building and operating grain elevators.[12] There is very little information on the James Brown Gibson Elevator company, other than that in 1921 it merged with the Peaker Brothers. The firm became known as the Peaker Gibson Grain Company and eventually became part of the Federal Grain Company.

According to the Theodore correspondent to *The Yorkton Enterprise* 194,256 bushels of grain of the 1906 crop were shipped through Theodore's two elevators by the end of July 1907. The production of cereal grains continued to increase as more and more people settled in the Theodore district and began farming. The ability of the first two elevators to handle the amount of grain that was being produced was soon reached. On the 22nd of October the year 1908 the Theodore correspondent to The Yorkton Enterprise reported that threshing was almost finished and that the elevators had been very busy handling the grain.[13] The need for another elevator at Theodore was becoming more and more obvious.

The third elevator at Theodore was built, owned, and operated by the N. Bawlf Elevator Company. In 1909 Nicholas Bawlf a leading grain merchant in Winnipeg and a founding member of the Winnipeg Grain and Produce Exchange, together with his son William formed the N. Bawlf Elevator Company.[14] One of their first endeavours was to build Theodore's third elevator which was completed in the fall of 1909 with A. E. Brown being the first grain buyer.[15] The elevator had a capacity of 35,000 bushels.[16] By 1918, the N Bawlf Elevator Company had grown to more than 100 grain elevators, and was eventually taken over by Federal Grain in 1940-1941.[17]

Part of Bawlf expansion occurred at Theodore when it was decided that the Theodore district was producing enough grain to justify the building of an elevator annex at Theodore. In the spring of 1923 the Theodore correspondent to *The Yorkton Enterprise* reported that:

> A carload of material for construction of a storage elevator for Bawlf Grain Co., arrived here Friday and is being unloaded. This material is composed the old Peaker elevator at Yorkton which has just been torn down. And, good material will be utilized in erecting the new elevator here. This point is recognized as one of the best from a grain merchant's point of view and the fact that there are already four elevators here, would seem to bear out that contention, The Bawlf Co. have done tremendous business here since the management of their elevator has been in the hands of Henry Kletsky, who is considered one of the best grain men on this line. His long experience in the grain trade and his personal popularity accounts for the large business done by his firm at this point, and warrants the present extension.[18]

A second report stated that, "A large gang of men are rapidly erecting the Bawlf storage elevator here. Already the walls are some 25 feet in the air, and it is expected that another ten days will complete the job.[19] The new Bawlf elevator was completed at the end of April, 1923.[20]

Theodore's first elevators may be considered small by later standards. In 1967, for example, the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool replaced one of its elevators at Theodore that had a capacity of 31,000 bushels with an elevator that had a capacity of 91,000 bushels.[21] According to various items taken from the Theodore news column printed in *The Yorkton Enterprise* those first three elevators handled a large amount of grain in the years prior to World War I. By the beginning of August, 1907 the Theodore correspondent reported that the village's two elevators had shipped 194,256 bushels of grain from the 1906 crop.[22]Another report from October 1910 stated that, "Mr. F. Reese, buyer at the Great West elevator has already purchased nearly 60,000 bushels of grain. When we consider that there are three elevators at this point it will give an idea of the volume of grain coming in, as yet threshing has only begun in this district."[23]

The last elevator to be built in Theodore in the early decades of the twentieth century was that of the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Company (SCEC). The province formed the SCEC in response to years of complaints and agitation by farmers about what they saw as unfairness and lack of genuine competition among the existing "line" elevator companies.[24]

The need for a fourth elevator at Theodore had been apparent for some time before a meeting of the Co-operative Elevator Company was held in Theodore early in 1915.[25] The results of the meeting were reported in *The Yorkton Enterprise*

> A farmers meeting was held on February 5th, with a view to getting the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Co., to establish an elevator at Theodore. This representative gathering of the farmers of the district listened with a great deal of interest to Mr. R. Robinson, the organizer for the company.
> The farmers seemed to agree with him that the Saskatchewan Co-operative Elevator Co., is doing good work for the agriculturalists of the province, as at the close of the address one hundred and twenty shares out of one hundred and eighty necessary to establish the local elevator, were taken up and several more since then.
> Application for the balance of the shares may be made t the Union Bank, Theodore, and the deposit per share is only $7.50 it is hoped that any farmers, or farm owners, who have not availed themselves of the opportunity to become connected with this strong progressive farmer's movement will do so without delay so that the desired elevator may be purchased or built in time to handle this year's crop.[26]

By the end of May, 1915 local farmers were hauling gravel to the site of the new elevator.[27] The actual construction of the elevator began in June.[28] In mid December it was announced that, "The Farmers' elevator, under the management of H. S. Swallow, is doing big business this year and farmers are well satisfied with both the grading and the prices."[29] The elevator had a capacity of 31,000 bushels (843 tonnes). In 1926 the Co-operative Elevator at Theodore became part of the newly formed Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. The Wheat Pool's Take-over of the Co-Operative Elevator Company's facilities was reported in *The Yorkton Enterprise,* but was not mentioned in the Theodore news column, suggesting that most of Theodore's farming

community had few if any objections to the move. With the addition of a 3,000 bushel annex built in 1944, the elevator served farmers at Theodore until 1967,when it was replaced by a much larger structure.[30] [31]

**Real Estate Agents and Auctioneers**

In every community it was necessary to have someone who could facilitate the transfer to a business such as a farm or a store from one owner to another. The transfer of the land and the buildings of a business were facilitated by real estate agents, of which Theodore had at least two. Theodore's boom in the first decade of the twentieth century, and its continued growth through to the late 1920's ensured that there was enough business for both of them. Sales of property in the village and surrounding area were frequently reported in the Theodore news column.

The transfer of other property from one owner to another in many rural communities was and still is often facilitated by the local auctioneer. Theodore had two auctioneers in the years following the Great War, William Wylie and Clayton B. Ungar. The following announcement of an auction held in the spring of 1919 will give the reader on idea of the variety of items sold at a farm auction of that period.

> **Auction Sale at Theodore**
> Having received instruction from L. Saper and D Dachis, who will be leaving the farm, will sell by public auction on Wednesday, April 2nd Commencing at 11 o'clock a.m. sharp at their farm three miles east of Theodore, the following:
> Horses
> 4 dark grey Percherons horses, weight 1600, 6 years old; bay Percheron horse weight 1300, 7 years.; bay Percheron mare weight 1400, 5 years; bay Percheron horse 1500 lbs. 7 years; sorrel chestnut Percheron mare, 1500 lbs. 5 years old; bay Percheron horse 1600 lbs. 5 years; brown Percheron mare, weight 1100, 4 years old; team black Percheron horse 1600 lbs each 6 years old.
> Cattle

Black cow, 8 years old, (in calf); black cow, 5 years old (in calf); red and white cow, 5 year old (in calf); red and white cow, 6 years old, with calf at foot; roan cow, 5 years old (in calf). All the above cows are good milkers. 3 pigs

Harness

8 sets of double harness almost new and in excellent condition: double driving harness; single harness; 6 extra work collars; 2 western saddles.

Machinery

Massey-Harris binder, 8 ft; McCormick binder 8 ft.; I.H.C. scrub plow: 3 mowers; 2 rakes; 4 Cockshutt riding gang plows; Massey-Harris riding gang plow; Cockshutt drill, single disc; Massey-Harris hand packer; 2 discs; cultivator; 10 harrows; 2 double trees for harrows; large buggy with pole; buggy with shafts; 3 wagons; 2 trucks; 4 sleighs; cutter; water tank; 2 hay racks; 5 large feeding troughs; feed boiler; grader; 3 sets new plow shares 12 in.; fanning mill.

Seed Grain and Feed

300 bus. seed barley (tested); 1000 bus. seed oats; 30 tons good hay.

Household Furniture 6 iron beds with mattresses and springs, almost new; dresser; kitchen cabinet; writing desk; lounge; 4 kitchen tables; 10 chairs; cream separator, 2 cream cans; kitchen range; 2 heaters; 6 blankets; churn; dishes.

Terms – Under $20 cash; above $20 approved joint lien notes, due Nov. 1, 1919, interest at 8 per cent. 5 percent discount for cash.

Wm. Wylie, Auctioneer.[32]

Auction sales were always popular, and when held during good weather were a magnet

that attracted people from miles around. Such was the case in 1922.

Monday was one of the busiest days in Theodore for many moons. The fine weather and the auction sale brought out great crowds and our streets presented a scene rarely noted in a town of 300 population. The old ladies with their boxes of eggs, farmers with loads of grain, potatoes, wood etc. The young fellows with their sweethearts and old fellows without any, kept our merchants hustling all day.[33]

In addition to the farm auctions there were, of course, numerous estate sales and sales of

household effects whenever someone moved away from Theodore. Occasionally, there would be

an "Everybody's Goods " sale such as the one held in Kitzul's Hall in the spring of 1924, and

billed as "a splendid means of disposing of unnecessary articles found around every farm and

household."[34]

**Blacksmith Shops**

Because the local blacksmith was one of the few people in a community who could repair or make the tools necessary for homesteading, he was an essential member of the business community in any town or village. Theodore was fortunate in that it could usually boast of having several blacksmith shops operating in any given year. Among the first blacksmiths in Theodore was George Yeman, originally of Rat Portage, who built a blacksmith shop at Theodore in 1903 and was prepared to do all kinds of blacksmithing.[35] Two other blacksmiths mentioned in a description of Theodore dated 1903 were Messrs. Winchcomb and Yemen.[36] Other blacksmiths include: Anton Frederickson who built and operated a blacksmith shop on Railway Avenue about 1904. William Wylie who opened his blacksmith shop in Theodore in 1906. W. A. Layng and Thomas Windjack were also among Theodore's early blacksmiths.[37] [38] [39] It is not known how long these shops remained open, but a number of other blacksmiths were always ready to open shop in Theodore, and it seems that there was always plenty of work for them to do.

> As an evidence of the activity on the land surrounding the village, we might say 3 blacksmith shops are running full blast from morning till night, six days per week and one of the proprietors of these shops had on hand at one time recently over eighty [plow] shares for sharpening, in spite of the fact that he was working at full speed.[40]

In 1920 Charles Bonney and Fred Seaman who came to Theodore from England opened a new blacksmith shop on railway street next to Thompson's auto repair shop.[41] It is interesting to note that when they erected an addition to their building in 1934, they used material from Anton Frederickson's old blacksmith shop which was being demolished at that time.[42] This blacksmith shop remained open until Bonney and Seeman left Theodore during the Second World War. After the war it was converted into Theodore's legion Hall.

Bonney's Blacksmith Shop courtesy Theodore Museum
The men have been identified as Arthur Thompson, C. B. Ungar and William Hanson

In addition to doing regular work for which blacksmiths were widely known, the shop owned by Messrs. Bonney and Seeman became known as an institution where inventive genius held sway. These two gentlemen had for some years been turning out tools of various kinds, invented and manufactured in their shop. One such tool was a device for pruning raspberry, currant, and gooseberry bushes that seemed to work to perfection, and relieved one of the need to stoop in order to prune the bushes. They also manufactured large steel shears for cutting grass,

weeds, and so on, and turned them out at half the price charged by regular manufacturing concerns. Many of the machines used in the shop for cutting iron sheeting, tin, and other material, were all been made by these Bonney and Seeman.[43]
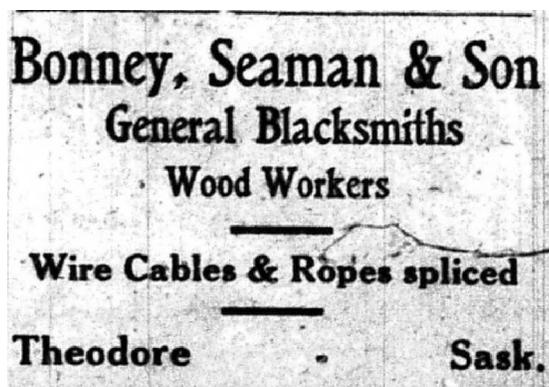


*The Theodore Tattler.* 17 September, 1921

**Theodore's Flour Mill**

During the winter of 1893-1894 it was announced in at least two newspapers that plans had been made to build a grist mill on the Seeman farm. The idea was that the mill would be for the use of both the ranch and the settlers in the district.[44] A Regina newspaper, *The Leader,* asserted that the mill would be a great boon to the settlers, as there was not another mill within 60 to 80 miles of Theodore.[45] No evidence has been found to suggest that the grist mill was actually built on the Seeman farm, and it wasn't until 1915 that a grist mill was built in Theodore.

In the fall of 1915 it was announced in the Theodore news column that an up-to-date flour mill of 50 barrel capacity was to be erected in the village, and would be ready for business later in the fall. The mill was being build by the Bokofsky brothers, local merchants and entrepreneurs.[46] There were also plans for an elevator to be build adjacent to the flour mill, but these never

materialized.[47] The Bokofsky Bros. Flour mill opened for business on Friday, November, 12th. The first miller was Walter Merkley who had, at one time, been in charge of the flour mill in Yorkton, and was respected among the farmers for both the quality of his flour and his fair business practices.[48] Another early miller with long experience was Mr. Lerman.[49]

Although the mill was not in operation twelve months of the year, it was a very busy place during those months it was in operation. There are reports of the mill running eighteen-hour days and sometimes twenty four hours a day.[50] [51] During the post war recession of 1920-1922 many farmers in the surrounding area discovered that wheat which would bring but a small price if sold, made  good flour for their own use.[52] There are stories of farmers lining up for blocks with their team to deliver their grain to the mill.[53]

In the fall of 1922 the Bokofsky brothers sold the Theodore flour mill to the Gellert brothers, who continued to produce flour that could "compare favourably with the output of the larger mills."[54] According to news items from the 1920's the quality of flour produced at the Theodore mill was as good as any produced in the province. Some farmer would travel long distances to patronize it.[55] [56] One farmer who lived between Orcadia and Yorkton brought a load of wheat to Theodore in 1928, a distance that would have been about twenty-five miles or more.[57]

Theodore began to feel the effects of the great depression in the spring of 1930 when local farmers tried to sell the wheat they had kept over the winter in the hope of better prices than they had been offered in the previous fall. During the months of March and April of that year J. S. Anderson, Theodore's correspondent to *The Yorkton Enterprise* made several references to the low wheat prices in the Theodore news column and his support for the Theodore flour mill.

With No. 1 wheat at 85¢. on Tuesday last, one wonders why it should be necessary to consumer (sic.) something over $4,00 for a sack of flour. Twenty-five years ago the same wheat was worth 95¢, but the writer has no recollection of flour passing the $4.00 mark. There is no doubt that the public is being held up on every sack of flour sold at prices that have prevailed this winter and still prevail, and there is good grounds for an enquiry into the method of setting prices as practiced by our big milling companies. When one considers that these companies use chiefly No. 3 wheat, it can readily be seen that unfair profits are being taken somehow, and we feel sure the fault is not the retailers. Many in town and country would welcome the entry of the wheat pool into the milling business.[58]

Why buy flour at a high price when you can get cheap and good flour from your own wheat by taking it to the mill and having it gristed? Besides the flour, you get bran and shorts. Just do this by taking a load to the Theodore Flour Mill. For particulars write to G. Gellert, Theodore, Sask.[59]

Farmers, Attention! Why not take a load of wheat to the Theodore Flour Mill, to have enough flour and bran for all summer, before the snow melts. Start now for the Theodore Flour Mill.[60]

With further reference to the high cost of flour and low price of wheat, your correspondent called on the local miller today and was given the following information which would seem to prove that the present price of flour as manufactured by the large milling companies is a way out of line, and farmers and others will save nearly fifty per cent by gristing their own wheat. Here are the figures given:

| | |
|---|---|
| 30 bushels of wheat, No. 1 | $50.00 |
| Gristing charge | $15.00 |
| Total | $65.00 |

This is what you get: 1800 lbs of flour; 1100 lbs. bran, shorts and middlings, for a total value of (at store prices) $96.50. Saving to the farmer, $31.50. Would it pay the Wheat Pool to enter the milling business? It might further be said that good milling wheat can be purchased for about 85 cents and we are pleased to learn that one of our merchants has decided to try the experiment of gristing local wheat and selling flour.[61]

It is difficult to determine with any certainty the effect Mr. Anderson's promotion of the

mill had on farmers, but reports in the Theodore new column for the1930s regularly mentioned

the fact that the flour mill was almost always busy in the fall of the years.

News reports from the fall of 1930 describe what appears to be a typical situation. The

mill was overhauled in September in anticipation on a busy season and by the end of the month it

was operating at full capacity.[62] [63] By late October and early November, 1930 the mill was operating day and night, and farmers traveled as far as twenty-five or thirty miles to bring their wheat to Theodore.[64] [65] It was noted at the time that the presence of so many farmers in the village was of great benefit to the local merchants.[66]

That business remained good at the Theodore flour mill for several years during the great depression is evidenced by reports of new machinery being installed and updated. In the spring of 1931, for example the old steam tractor engine that had powered the mill was replaced with a new diesel engine, and the installation of new machinery that fall made it possible for the mill to produce flour of even higher quality.[67]

In 1961 the end of Theodore's flour mill was recorded by Mrs. Harold Eriksson, the Theodore correspondent to *The Yorkton Enterprise.*

> Theodore's oldest landmark, the grist mill, is being torn down. It brings back many memories to people around Theodore. It was a very busy place in its time and served the community well. Thousands of farmers in the area sent their winter wheat to the mill and one of its owners can still smell the odor of the winter wheat being milled when he thinks of it. It was built about 1916 by Moses Bokofsky who came to Theodore in 1910 and opened a general store. He was also the owner of what Theodore people know as the Henry LeSann place. Mr. Bokofsky came to Theodore from Winnipeg, an ambitious man because of the three places he owned and ran – the farm, the store and the mill.
>
> Adolph Markel, father of Mrs. Bill Swanson helped build the mill. It is known that he did some inside finishing and built bins for [the] mill. People remember Walter Merkley, a miller by trade, who was one of the early workers at the mill.
>
> In 1922 Gus Gellert and John Kuzenberg cam from Yorkton and became the new owners of the mill. There were always at least four men employed at the mill at one time, and "Old John" tells of Mr. Gellert and himself sleeping in what was the office those first days in their new enterprise. The mill ran 24 hours a day and closed its doors around 1953 because of the death of one of the owners, Mr. Gellert, in 1943, and because Mr. Kuzenberg became ill himself.
>
> Mr. Kuzenberg, who still lives in the yard adjoining the mill, proudly took the Wolf Cubs on a tour of the old mill last summer and told the young lads the history of the mill. He told them about the steam threshing engin that was the power for the mill and the chugging of the engin could be heard for quite a distance. Farmers often lined up for

blocks to unload their grain. Rye was also milled and in later years, before the mill was closed down, custom chopping was done for farmers.

When the roads to Yorkton were improved and cars and trucks were used by farmers the grist mill was no longer needed and became just a landmark that soon will be a thing of the past.[68]



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Advertisements for Bokofsky Brothers' Flour Mill and Store *The Theodore Tattler.* 1921

**Harness Shops**

In an age when horses were gradually replacing oxen as the primary source of power on the farm, it seems strange that the first mention of a harness shop in the Theodore news did not occur until the spring of 1907, five years after the village was founded. It was announced that Gus Chandrey was opening a harness shop and the opinion was expressed that, this filled a long felt want.[69] While Gus Chandrey may have owned the first harness and shoe repair shop in Theodore, he did not have a monopoly on the business. Within a week after the opening of Chandrey's shop was announced, it was reported that Frank Reese was also interested in the harness repair business and was erecting a building for such a shop.[70] It is unclear as to exactly how many harness shops may have existed at any one time in Theodore, or how successful any of them were, or what became of them. It appears, however, that the making and repairing of horse harnesses, while essential in a farming community, does not seem to have been the type of business that survived very long as nothing further has been found about the shops opened by Gus Chandrey or Frank Reese, It is possible, if not likely, that there was no harness shop in Theodore in 1910 because in the fall of that year the author of the Theodore news column expressed the opinion that there was a splendid opening for a harness making and repairing shop in the village.[71] This opportunity was seized by A. F. Gardener & Co., who opened a harness shop in Theodore in 1911 and claimed that they kept a full line of team harness in stock and would provide harness and shoe repairs at reasonable prices.[72] Again, it is not known how long this harness shop remained open.

In 1913 Messrs. George H. Layng and Thomas. F. Learmonth, the former manager of the Union Bank in Theodore, opened a hardware store in a building which had formerly been

occupied by one of the harness shop.[73] Two years later, a fire destroyed the business and Mr Learmonth left Theodore shortly after. The closure of one harness shop in 1913, however did not deter Charles Essar from opening another one in that same year.[74]
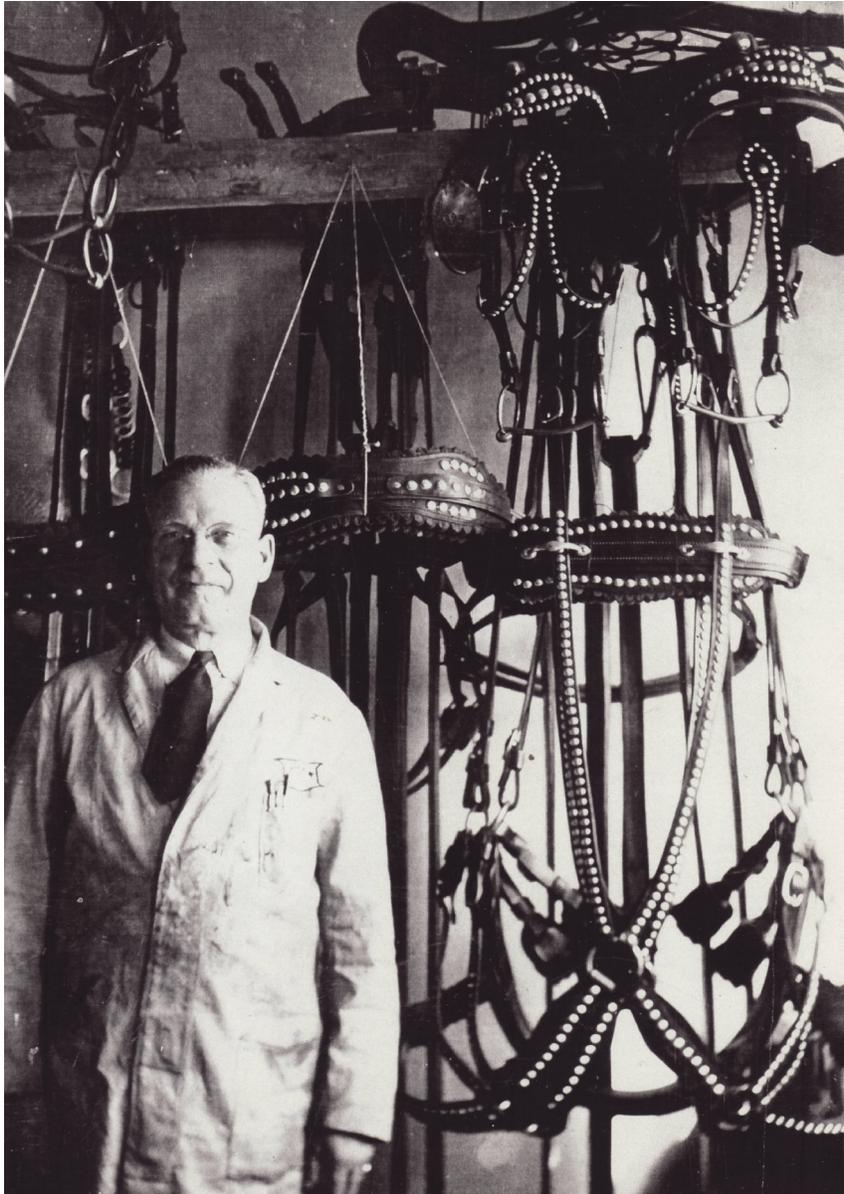


J. A. Laing with the last complete set of harness made in Theodore in the early 1950's
Courtesy daughter Lorna Russell.

In 1927, after fourteen years in business Charles Essar sold his harness shop and business to J. A. (Jack) Laing and his father-in-law, John Hooge. It was reported at the time that Mr Laing had many years experience in this work and that he came to Theodore highly recommended.[75] The harness and repair business of Hooge and Laing was dissolved in the spring of 1934. Mr. Laing continued to operate the business out of William Mercer's building on the corner of Main Street and Yorkton Avenue.[76] In 1935 the business was moved to the Pishker block on Henry Ave., and in 1940 it was moved back to the corner of Main Street and Yorkton Avenue.[77] [78] The business remained on the corner of Yorkton Avenue and Main Street until 1942 when Mr. Laing enlisted in the air force.[79] [80] Jack Laing returned to Theodore following the Second World War and for a few years resumed the harness making business until there was no longer a need for harness. In the early 1950's Mr Laing completed the last full set of harness to be made in Theodore.

**Implement Dealers**

As the number of people living on homesteads grew so did the demand for farm implements. Newspaper reports on the number of farm implements sold in Theodore give one a good tool for measuring the growth of the village at this time in its history. In July 1906, for example, it was reported that several railway cars of farm machinery had arrived in Theodore in time for the harvest, and that forty-nine binders had been sold in Theodore by the middle of August.[81] [82] Also a news item from 1907 states that the implement dealership owned by Frank Reese and Louis Kelson, sold three railway cars of farm equipment my mid April 1907, but failed to mention how many car loads of machinery had been sold by the other dealers in the village.[83]

Among the first implement dealers were A. D. Tracey, and Thomas Ferguson, the first Massey-Harris agent in Theodore, who built an implement warehouse in 1908.[84] [85] Frank Reese and his business partner Louis Kelson also operated a thriving implement dealership and sold three railway carloads of farm implements by mid April 1907.[86] Wallace Anderson also owned a large implement warehouse which he rented to Mr. M. Mills, of Sheho in 1911.[87] Account books kept by the Anderson family show that the price of a new mower was $45.00, a new binder cost $150.00, and repair bills seldom exceeded one dollar.[88] Finally, there were the Merkley brothers who in 1908 sold at least eight threshing outfits to farmers in the Theodore area.[89]

Frank Reese operated the longest lasting implement dealership in Theodore, being in business from the early 1900's until his retirement in 1940. He was already well established in the business when he sold a half interest in it to Mr. J. S. Anderson in 1906.[90] In 1907 he built a large implement warehouse on the corner of Railway Avenue and Henry Streets, across the road from the Leland Hotel.[91] Writing in 1940, J. S. Anderson stated:

> We will always remember that building because every time we passed it on a windy day we feared lest it might collapse on top of us - a one board structure without floor. It has a decided lean to the east and finally had to be pulled down.[92]

For the most part Theodore's implement dealers also operated garages in the village. The exception was the Massey-Harris dealership which in 1931 was transferred from A. P. Swallow to P.C. Larson.[93] Both men were hardware merchants.

From as early as 1906 when it was estimated that more than thirty thousand pounds of binder twine would be required for the harvest, the Theodore correspondent reported on the amount binder twine sold in the village.[94] While this may seem to be strange information when taken by itself, it became a useful tool in estimating the size of the crop when used in conjunction

with other information available. The following report from 1933 illustrates the relationship

between the size of the harvest and the amount of twine needed:

> The crops throughout this whole neighborhood are the finest for many years, and we
> expect to hear of a good number of forty bushels to the acre averages when threshing gets
> under way. In the old Beaverdale district some of the heaviest stands of grain, and farmers
> there are using from three to four pounds of twine per acre to tie their crops One farmer
> with two hundred acres of wheat, oats and barley has taken out seven hundred pounds of
> twine, and may still require more.[95]

When, in 1923, it was reported that, Frank Reese, the agent for the Massey Harris Company, had

disposed of nearly two carloads of twine, and still had orders coming in daily, local farmers were

able to conclude that the crops were generally very good that year.[96] Other information available

later in the year confirmed that conclusion. Another example comes from the year 1931 when

crops were ravished by drought and one farmer is said to have spent a day and half cutting his

grain and only used one ball of binder twine.[97]



North American Lumber Yard on the corner of Main Street and Railway Avenue
Courtesy Colleen Bilokreli at Prairie Mapping, Theodore.

**Livery Barns**

In an age when local transportation was primarily dependent on horse power, the livery business was a practical and important part of the community. People visiting a community for any number of reasons such as potential homesteaders wishing to examine a particular piece of property could rent horses and wagons at the livery barn. A news item from 1906 stated that the livery men and rigs were being kept busy as commercial travelers and pleasure seekers were on the move.[98] Additionally, farmers who traveled into the village for shopping or on business often needed to stable their horses at the livery barn, especially during the winter months when cold and stormy weather prevailed.[99]

As with many other agriculturally related businesses, it appears that there were several livery barns in Theodore. News items from 1907 state that a Mr. McInnes had taken over a livery stable from Julius Hansen, that F. Reese had bought out Mr. Fernie's interest in a livery business, and E. P. Freeman was building an addition to his livery and feed stable.[100] [101] [102] No other information has been found on these businesses.

One of Theodore's livery barns was located on Henry Avenue, and was at one time owned by Mr. W. Hope, who in the fall of 1907 sold it to Mr. H. Anderson.[103] In the spring of 1908 it was reported that "Mr A. E. Gregory has rented Anderson's livery barn on Henry avenue and is open for business."[104] Mr. Gregory operated this livery barn until 1911.

Another livery barn, owned by James and Fred Prouse was located on Railway Avenue, and in the fall of 1907 it was enlarged to cope with the increased trade.[105] It appears that this business was transferred to Mr. Sam Green sometime before the spring of 1915, when it was damaged by the fire that destroyed the nearby Leland Hotel in the spring of 19195.[106] The next

owner of this business was William Delay who purchased it in December 1919, and in February

1920 sold it to John Borutta.[107] [108] By the spring 1924 the business, which was still known as

Green's Livery Barn but owned by William Hockman, was destroyed by fire.[109]

It is difficult to overstate the importance of a livery stable on the commercial life of a

community in the 1920's. Horses were still the principal means of transportation, and while there

was a growing number of automobiles, they were, for the most part driven only driven in the

summer months. The livery business was so important to the community that in 1921 the

Theodore Village Council passed a by-law, regulating how much a livery business could charge

for the various services it provided. Under the provisions of the by-law, hay and oats for one team

cost 50¢, livery was 25¢ per mile one way, it cost $6 per day to rent a team and buggy, and $10

per day for team and a light flatbed farm wagon with two or more seats known as a democrat.[110]

It is also not surprising that withing a few weeks of the fire that destroyed Hockman's

livery barn the following item should appear in the Theodore news column.

> There will be need of a livery and feed barn to replace the one burned in the big fire of
> May 16th before winter rolls round again, and we trust the village council will make it a
> point to see that some back street is chosen for its site. A livery stable is a dangerous risk
> to be mixed up among other mercantile establishments.[111]

In early August 1924, it was announced that William Hockman had erected a splendid

large livery barn had been erected on Henry Avenue opposite the school.[112] Mr. Hockman and his

livery barn served Theodore until sometime in the 1950's when there was no longer a need for the

business.

**Oil and Gasoline Dealers**

The first mention of the Imperial Oil Company's presence in Theodore occurred in 1911 when it was announced that two large oil tanks had arrived and that they were to be erected beside the company's new warehouse.[113] At some point Frank Reese, one of Theodore's earliest entrepreneurs was the local agent for the Imperial Oil Company. When he resigned the position in 1920, the agency fell under the management of Joseph Conn who upon his arrival in the village bought one of A. E. Gregory's houses and had it moved to his property south of the railway tracks.[114] [115] He was also responsible for the erection of the office and engine house in 1922.[116]

The price of petroleum products was frequently mentioned in the Theodore news. In the fall of 1921, for example, the price of cylinder oil (used to lubricate the cylinders on steam tractors) fell to $1.00 per gallon, a price that was 50 cents lower than the previous fall. Gasoline was selling for and coal oil (kerosene), used for lighting cost 24½ cents a gallon.[117] An increase in the price of gasoline in 1931 prompted the following comment in the Theodore news.

> A raise of one and one-half cents per gallon on gasoline prices became effective here on Tuesday, and farmers and motorists in general are wondering why this increase should be necessary when gasoline is reported to be selling across the line for nine cents per gallon, which price includes the tax. In conversation with one of the inspectors of the large oil companies represented here, your correspondent was assured that his company was selling gas over the line at that price, and asked why the price in Western Canada should be three times as much as in the western States. He failed to give any reason, so it would appear that oil companies in the west are levying all that the traffic will bear. Under present trying conditions that prevail, one might think that the public is justified in looking for a reduction in the price of this commodity, rather than a further increase at the season of the year when large quantities are required for threshing purposes, and it would appear to be an excellent opportunity for the government to interfere on behalf of those interested, whose burdens are already greater than they can bear.[118]

The price of gasoline went up another cent in 1932 and the Saskatchewan government increased the tax on gasoline by one cent as well.[119]

In 1931 some of the local farmers expressed a interest in using a new tractor fuel known as distillate which was a much cheaper fuel than gasoline[120] Essentially, distillate was a low grade form of tractor fuel produced between gasoline and diesel in the traditional distillation of crude oil, and was commonly used in some areas until World War II when it was gradually replaced by more useful fuels.[121] However, since neither of Theodore's petroleum dealers sold distillate Theodore's farmers had to do the best they could with the higher priced gasoline.[122]

During the early years of the twentieth century the Imperial Oil Co. was the only bulk petroleum dealership in Theodore, and as such, did a very large business in the district as its agents were kept busy filling the farmers' needs for oils and gasoline.[123] [124] By the summer of 1935 two other companies, North Star and Prairie City Oil Company, established bulk outlets in Theodore, but do not appear to have stayed in business very long.[125] By 1958 Imperial Oil's only competition came from the local Co-Op.[126]

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