

Chapter 5 - Theodore's Businesses Community

Theodore's Garages

Mickelson and Thompson's Big Garage

Between the years 1915 and 1919 several of Theodore's merchants became automobile dealers. O. A. Thomas, the owner of the local lumber yard, appears to have been Theodore's first dealer opening for business in that line in the spring of 1915, and it appears that he enjoyed great success selling Ford automobiles as well as lumber.¹ One possible reason for his success was that he also had Theodore's first automobile repair facilities on his premises.²

In 1917 P. C. Larson, who appears to have been Theodore's second automobile dealer, unloaded a railway carload of Ford automobiles.³ Many more carloads of automobiles were to be delivered to Theodore over the next few years and the Theodore correspondent to *The Yorkton Enterprise* stated that automobiles sales were evidence of Theodore's war time prosperity.⁴

Before the end of World War I another automobile dealer had set up business in Theodore. Messrs. Markham and Walker became the third Ford dealership in the village and announced plans to erect a garage on Henry street in the spring of 1918.⁵

In 1919 Arthur Thompson, one of Theodore's local blacksmiths engaged a mechanic, A. C. Crumpler, from Winnipeg to look after the motor trouble department in his shop.⁶ Mr Crumpler was particularly interested in the electrical working of the automobiles focusing his attention on battery and magneto repairs.⁷ Automobile mechanics were in high demand during the early 1920's, and in 1922 Mr. Crumpler returned to Winnipeg with his family, where he secured

work in one of the city's large garages.⁸ It appears that a number of other mechanics were hired from outside of Theodore to work in the Big Garage.

It appears that Mr. Thompson had a thriving automobile dealership. And were bringing car loads of automobiles into Theodore on the CPR. In 1920, for example it was reported that he had unloaded two carloads of Chevrolet automobiles during the previous week. At that time it was also announced at that time that he would be selling the popular McLaughlin automobile and that he already had one on display in his warehouse.⁹

During the early spring of 1920 Mr. Thompson entered into a business partnership with Mr. A. C. Mickelson of Insinger, and purchased the property on which Charles Essar had built his harness shop on the corner of Christopher Street and Railway Avenue. He began the construction of up-to-date brick garage. It was expected that a full line of all kinds of motoring accessories would be carried, and that repair work done as well.¹⁰

Construction on the new garage began as soon as the weather permitted, and the work was closely followed by the Theodore correspondent to *The Yorkton Enterprise* who regularly reports on the progress in the Theodore news column.

Thomson & Mickelson have commenced the erection of their fine brick and time garage on the corner of Railway and Christopher streets. This building, when finished, will be a credit to the town.¹¹

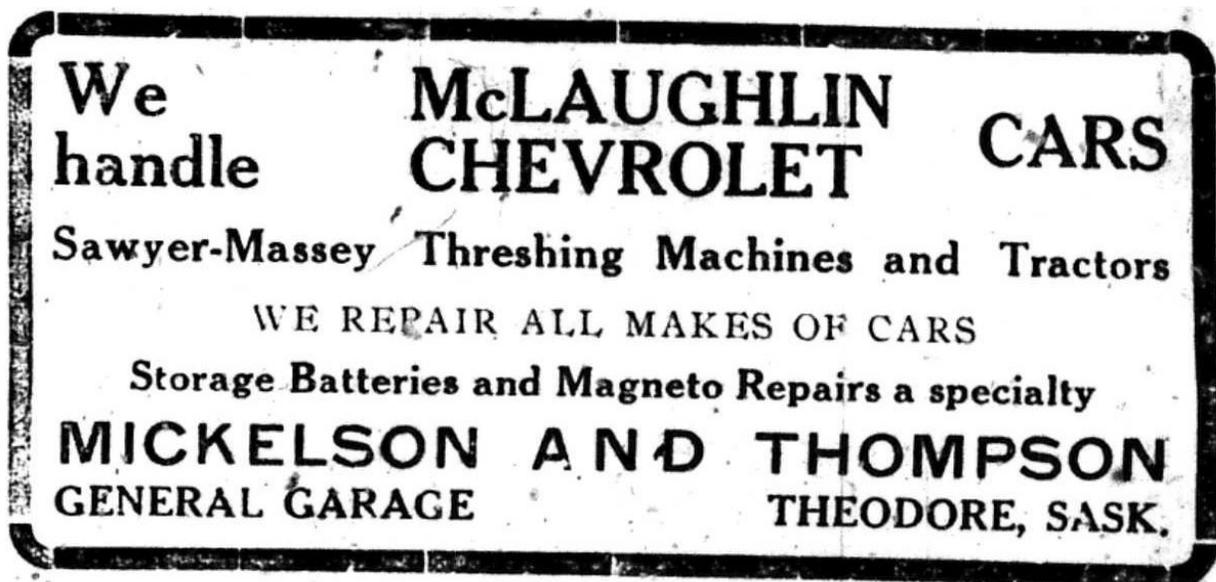
The walls of Mickelson and Thompson's new garage are up and building will be complete as soon as balance of material arrives.¹²

With a floor space of over 3800 ft Messrs. Thompson and Mickelson are completing on of the best garages and work shops in this part of Saskatchewan, fitted with up-to-date machinery and capable workmen the public are assured of a first class hospital for sick cars.¹³

In a 1921 article describing the business, *The Theodore Tattler* listed three outstanding features of the new building. It had room for 30 cars, it had its own electrical plant powered by a large Cadillac motor, and it had facilities to accommodate acetylene welding.¹⁴ In addition to selling Chevrolet, and for McLaughlin cars, the firm was also Theodore's local agent for Fairbanks Morse lighting plants.¹⁵ The building became known as "The Big Garage."

The new business of Mickelson and Thompson continued to thrive, sometimes selling as many as five cars the previous week.¹⁶ By 1923 the firm was also selling Ford products and by early June of that year had received two carloads of Fords.

Mickelson and Thompson remained in business in Theodore until the summer of 1924 when Arthur Thompson has withdrawn from the firm.¹⁷ The Big Garage continued under the name of A. C. Mickelson. At the beginning of June 1925 A. C. Mickelson disposed of the garage to the Dominion Motors of Winnipeg who took possession at once, and at some point the property was acquired by Mr. C. G. Cowan of Cannington, Ontario, who in turn sold it to the North Star Oil Company of Winnipeg.^{18 19}



In the spring of 1923 Chris Peterson rented Thomas Windjack's garage on Henry Street, and in 1925 his brother Cyril had joined the business.^{20 21} In the summer of 1925 the Peterson brothers leased the big west end garage, formerly occupied by Thompson and Mickelson and closed the Henry street garage.²² In 1927 another Peterson brother, Harry, was appointed agent for the Chevrolet car, and occupied the garage beside Smith's store on Henry street.²³



Theodore's Big Garage operated by Chris Peterson about 1925 - Courtesy Bruce Frederickson

One of the first things the Peterson brothers did after obtaining the lease on the building was to have it painted by Imperial Oil Co., and decorated with the company's various advertising signs.²⁴ The move from their Henry Street location to the Big Garage seems to have been

advantageous for the Petersons. In addition to operating a service station, the Peterson brothers added a Ford dealership in 1926 and sold five new cars within the past few weeks in 1926.²⁵ More cars were sold in the following years and in the spring in 1930 the Petersons also became dealers for the International Harvester Company. The Peterson brother operated a garage on this site between the years 1925 and 1931 at which time they relocated their business to the south side of the railway tracks and on the recently completed Highway #14.²⁶

It appears that the Big Garage remained vacant after the Peterson brother moved out in 1931. An item in the Theodore news column from the spring of 1933 states that Henry Bates who had recently operated a service station across the highway from the Peterson's new garage had leased the Big Garage and was expected to open for business shortly.²⁷ It does not appear, however, that Henry Bates opened his service station because only a few weeks later it was announced in the Theodore news column that Elmer Bates was opened a furniture manufacturing and repairing shop in the Big Garage.²⁸ Elmer Bates conducted his business in the Big Garage until the spring of 1935 when he opened a wood working shop on Railway Avenue.²⁹

In the Spring of 1935 the Fichtner Brothers, of Foam Lake, leased the Big Garage from C. G. Cowan, and opened up an up-to-date garage and sales room for Ford cars.³⁰ In 1936 W. E. Fichtner took over the Texaco service station and operated it as well as his garage.³¹ Fichtner left Theodore in the fall of 1938, stating that he did not expect to open his garage in Theodore again.³²

In 1939 A. A. Brown, who had been the local agent for the John Deer Plow Company took over the Big Garage that had recently been purchased by the North Star Oil Company with the intention of carrying on his implement and oil business in the new location.³³

Henry Reese

The Peterson brothers were not alone in seeing the business potential that a service station located on the highway offered. In November, 1930 Henry Reese had leased an acre of land on the west side of highway 14 and erected a small building which he intended to use as a filling station and oil warehouse.³⁴ By the spring of 1931 he had gasoline pumps and was distributing Texaco products.³⁵ In August, 1931 it was announced in the Theodore news that Mr. Henry Reese was moving a large barn on his property to a site beside his filling station, and would convert it into a garage.³⁶ Winter road conditions in the early 1930's were such that automobile owners usually stored their vehicles for the winter, forcing the closure of garages and service stations to close for the season. Henry Reese re-opened his service station on Highway 14 in April 1932, and was ready for the usual passers by along that popular route.³⁷ It appears, however, that some difficulty arose and a Mr. Newman of Yorkton who was in charge of the business of the Texaco Oil Co., arrived in Theodore sometime in June, 1932 and by the end of July the Texaco Filling Station on Highway #14 was being operated by the Bates brothers.^{38 39} It is not known how long the Bates brother operated the Texaco service station by the spring of 1937 the Peterson Bros were operating both service stations on the south side of the tracks.⁴⁰

Chris Peterson's New Garage

As mentioned above the Peterson brothers moved their service station operations to the south side of the railway tracks in 1931 and were located directly across the road from the service station operated by Henry Reese.⁴¹ The bright white service station with bright red trim was ready to meet the need of travelers by mid August 1931.^{42 43} It appears that business in the new location

was good because in 1933 Cris Peterson is erected a garage and workshop beside his filling station.⁴⁴ By the summer of 1934 Chris Peterson was also selling large quantities of fertilizer.⁴⁵ In 1938 Chris Peterson moved his International Harvester agency from his Henry Street property to his service station on the highway.⁴⁶ Chris Peterson continued to sell Imperial Oil products until his retirement in the early 1970's.

Notes:

1. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 6 May, 1915.
2. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 13 May, 1915.
3. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 29 March, 1917.
4. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 17 May, 1917.
5. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 28 March, 1918.
6. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 26 June, 1919.
7. "Trade Talk" *The Theodore Tattler*. 29 October 1921.
8. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 2 February, 1922.
9. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 11 March, 1920.
10. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 11 March, 1920.
11. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 15 July, 1920.
12. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 19 August, 1920.
13. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 11 November, 1920.
14. "Trade Talk" *The Theodore Tattler*. 29 October, 1921.
15. "Trade Talk" *The Theodore Tattler*. 29 October, 1921.
16. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 15 July, 1920.
17. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 5 August, 1924.
18. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 5 June, 1925.
19. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 17 November, 1938.
20. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 24 April 1923.
21. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 5 May, 1925.
22. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 7 August, 1925.

23. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 25 March, 1927.
24. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 21 August, 1925.
25. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 6 July, 1926.
26. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 25 July, 1931.
27. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 15 June, 1933.
28. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 27, July, 1933
29. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 4 April, 1935.
30. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 28 March, 1935.
31. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 20 August, 1936.
32. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 17 November, 1938.
33. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 23 March, 1939.
34. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 28 November, 1930.
35. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 14 April, 1931.
36. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 28 August, 1931.
37. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 22 April, 1932.
38. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 28 June, 1932.
39. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 26 July, 1932.
40. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 29 April, 1937.
41. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 4 August, 1931.
42. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 25 July, 1931,
43. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 14 August, 1931.
44. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 29 June, 1933.
45. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 2 August, 1934.
46. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 31 March, 1938.

