

THE STORY OF STURGIS

1912 - 1987

A Glimpse into
The Town's Early Days
and a
Few Current Statistics

THE STORY OF STURGIS, 1912 - 1987

75th Anniversary Edition

June, 1987

Researched by

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Eva ("Pud") Mitchell [*née Laing*]

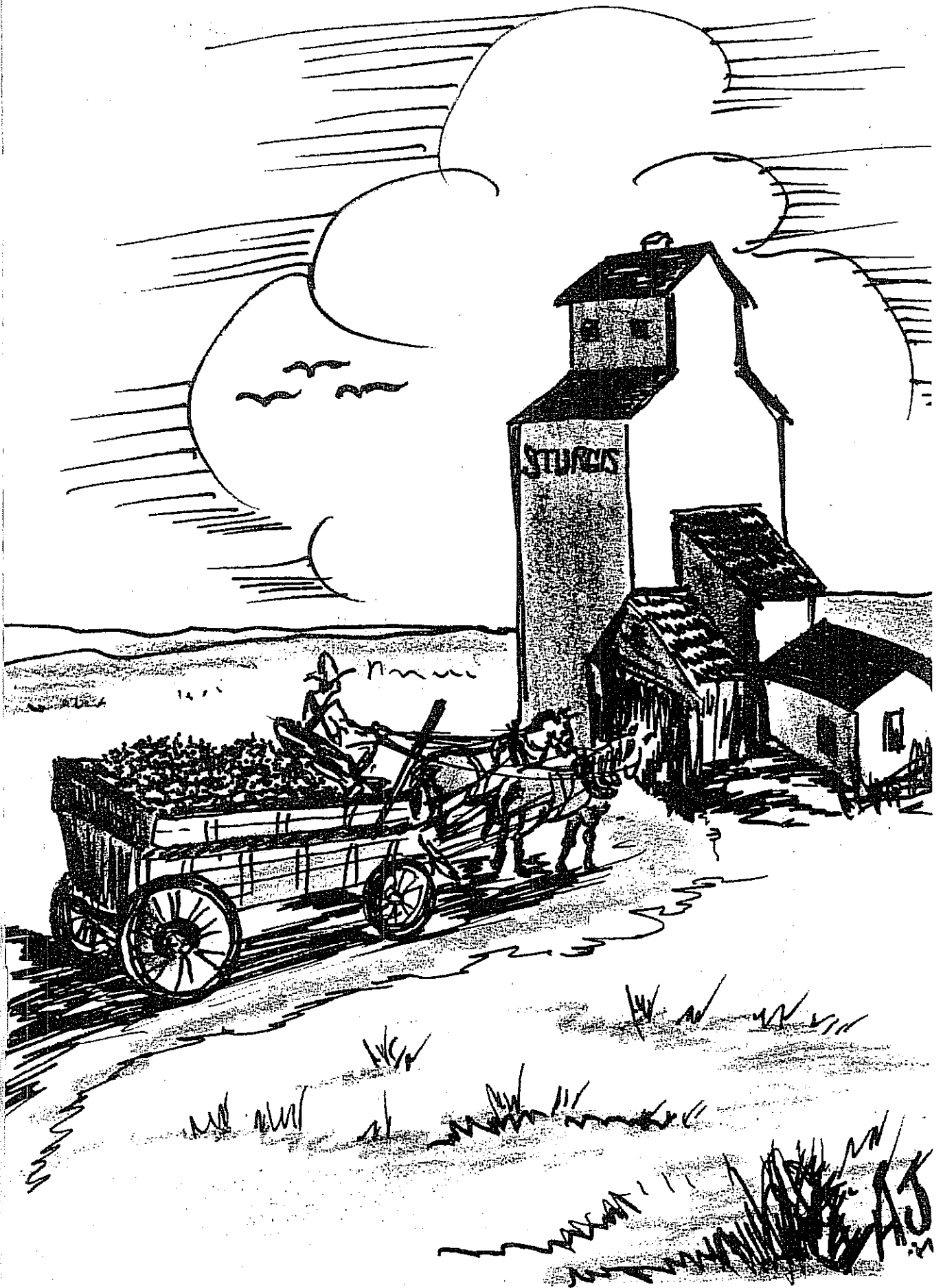
Amy Palmer

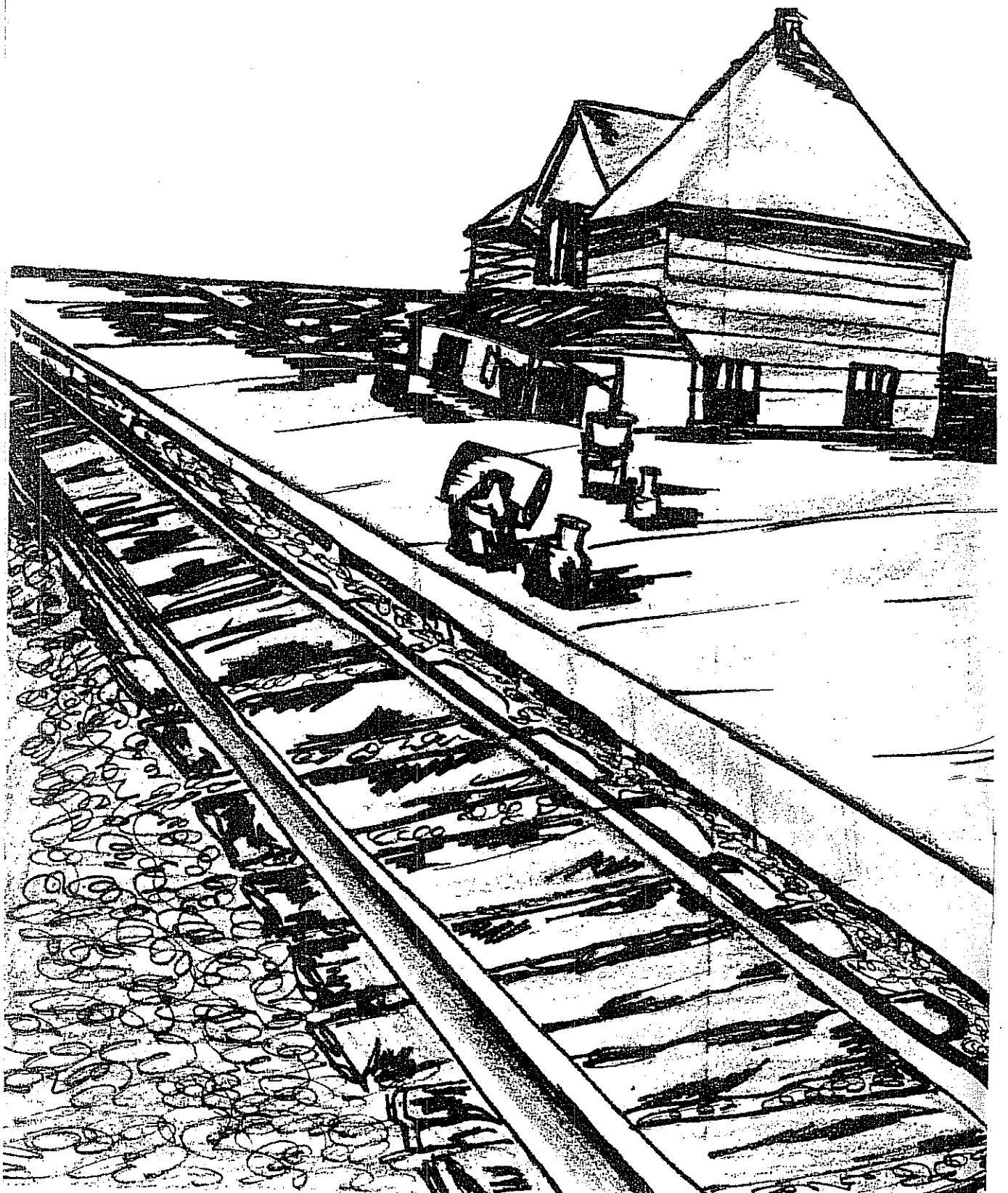
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THE STORY OF STURGIS

We late comers into a pioneering area, when we attempt to research history, find ourselves again and again coming, not to the beginnings of things, but to spots where the trail peters out and is lost in the grassy wastes of forgetfulness. Early settlers in what is now Saskatchewan were concerned with details of basic survival: What will be our next meal? How can we find shelter? They had no time for, and indeed no thought of recording their daily doings. Few indeed were those who understood that they were making history and that their story would one day be important. Those who formed social groups--boards, committees, organizations--usually kept only sketchy records, and too often made scant provision for preserving them. Unexpected fires and even deliberate discard have taken their toll of Sturgis records.

Faced with this vacuum, a researcher seeks out the few old-timers still left and delves into their memories. Oh, they remember! Unfortunately, though, human memory is not as reliable as a record written on the spot. Old-Timer A and Old-Timer B remember the same event quite differently--the time of its happening, the location, even sometimes the identity of the main actors.

The past is gone forever, and the future will all too soon become the past. Today's historian believes that sifting through the mass of records, fragmentary though they are, and delving into octogenarian memories will provide a story more accurate than any that can be written later when more of the sources of information have been lost. Hence we sift through what we have, make our choices, and, having given the reader fair warning, proceed to recount the story of Sturgis as it seems to us.

The City on the Hill

by
Elizabeth Healey ←

(No history of Sturgis seems complete without this poem written by Mrs. John Healey when she was 73 years of age. According to our information, "she placed first over a great many other contestants in a poetry contest held in connection with the Convention of the Saskatchewan Homemakers Clubs on July 18, 1933." Mrs. Healey was, no doubt, our first published author.)

All above the winding river, the dark Assiniboine,
Where the pussy willows quiver in the chill of
 early dawn,
High above the clanging railroad with its busy,
 rushing thrill,
Stands the little Town of Sturgis, the City on the
 Hill.

Where the Indian hunter stalked his prey in the
 days of long ago,
Where the rancher watched his flocks and herds to
 full completion grow,
And where now the busy farmer his rolling acres
 tills,
To swell the tide of progress in this City on the
 Hill.

This famous little city for learning holds the sway,
The Athens of Saskatchewan, as many people say,
And students, long departed, come wandering back
 at will
To greet their Alma Mater in this City on the Hill.

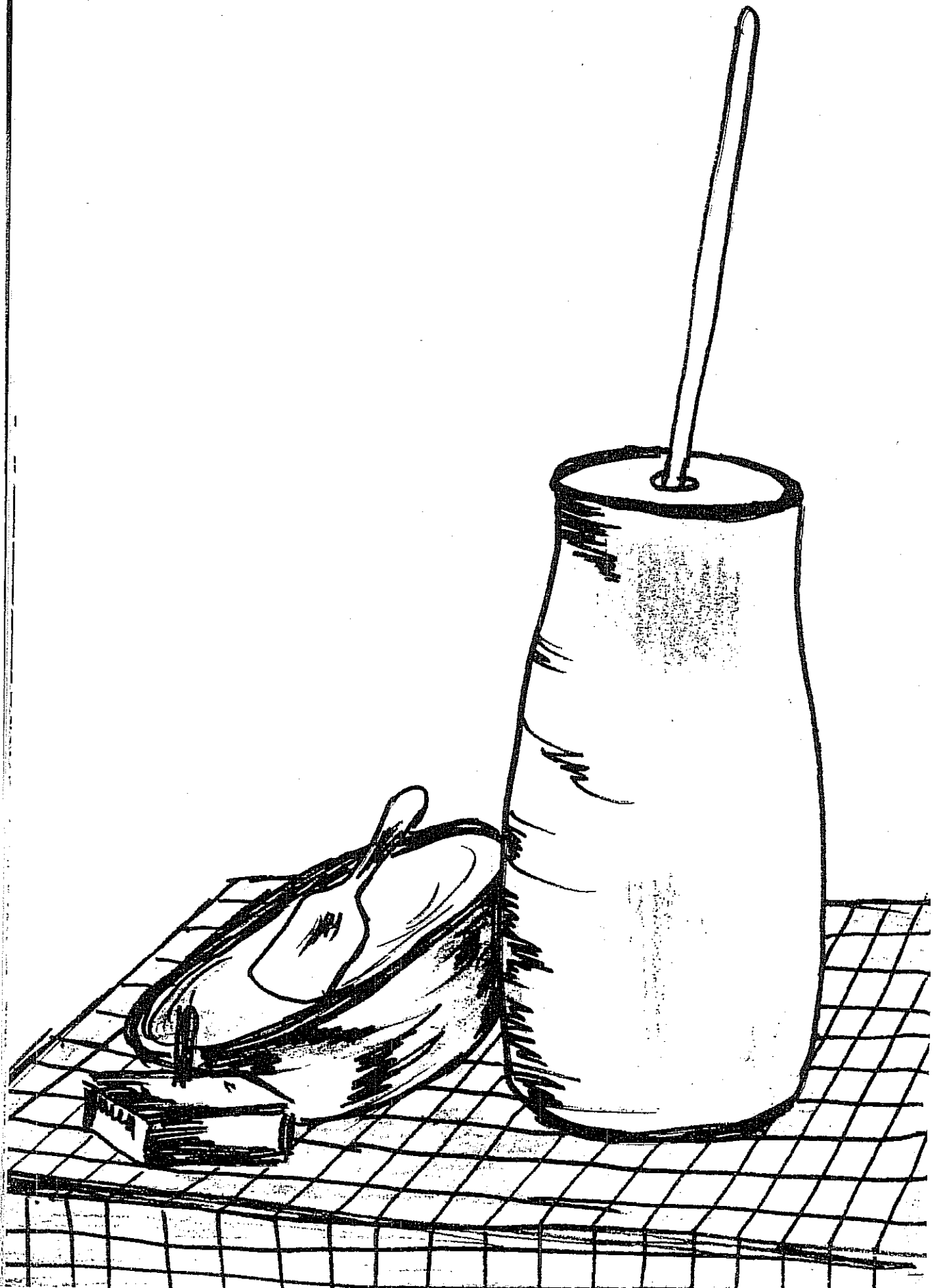
Happy days and nights of merriment, a pleasing
 change afford,
But in our day let no man say that we forget the Lord.
Our Sunday school and churches with worshippers we
 fill
And with prayer and song we bless His Name in our
 City on the Hill.

In this charming little city (within and yet apart)
Dwell a group of willing workers, doing good with
loyal hearts,
We are called the Sturgis Homemakers, and to every
sister true
We afford a royal welcome this happy day to you.

Caed Mille Farthe, that is Irish, and a thousand
welcomes, too.

In Swedish 'tis Velkommen, and in French Bien Venue.
But in good old Anglo-Saxon, with its homely,
honest thrill,
It is welcome all, thrice welcome, to our City on
the Hill.

May our friendship long continue, may our aims
remain the same,
The good of God's dear creatures, until we meet again.
May no envy come our lives to mar, nor hate our
bosoms fill,
And some happy chance bring each one back to our
City on the Hill.



In 1895, a rancher named Jack Shewfelt moved his operation to the elbow of our river in what was then the Assiniboine Territory. He seems to have been the first white settler. The discovery of arrowheads and other evidence proves without a doubt, of course, that the present site of Sturgis had long been a place of temporary camping for nomadic Indian tribes. In 1901 Owen (Pat) Carragher, who had been ranching at Devil's Lake, bought Shewfelt's buildings (apparently neither man owned the land) and became the earliest settler here that our informants remember. When the railroad came a decade later, some insist that the survey ran it between house and barn, and the Carragher house had to be moved to accommodate it. This, however, has been disputed by others, and it does seem unlikely since a sod-roofed log shack could hardly be moved.

When Townships 33 and 34 were surveyed in 1902; the local picture changed. Homesteaders and land speculators flooded into the territory, coming from the United States, Ontario, the Maritimes, England, Sweden, Poland and the Ukraine. As settlement grew, the railroad reached toward it. By 1910, steel was laid from Swan River, Manitoba as far west as Pelly, Saskatchewan. The following year saw the beginning of a town here.

*
x It is at this point that the first challenge to our story appears. Leo Lubiniecki⁶, whose photographs and written records form an excellent source for early history, seems to have been responsible for the often-repeated statement that this first settlement was named Stanhope and that it was situated-- not on the present site--but a short distance north on land presently owned by Nick Lesanko. Though the origin of the name "Stanhope" has been lost to memory, Lubiniecki has preserved the popular legend that the early settlers explained it by saying, "We just stand and hope that the railroad will come!" Fred Brooks, who lived there in 1908 when mail was first officially delivered into the area from Plateau Post Office (site of the present George Walker farm), was the first postmaster.

Here, however, we run into difficulties. The Annual Report of the Postmaster General in Ottawa records the establishment of Sturgis Post Office in 1908 and has no record of Stanhope at all. Clyde Brooks, son of Fred, on a recent visit to Sturgis insisted that there never was a Stanhope Post Office and that it was named Sturgis from the first. His mother, he said, named it after her South Dakota home. Martha Schoenke insists that there was a Stanhope because she can remember her mother speaking of trips to Stanhope in the very early days. If Stanhope was not a post office, what was it? Perhaps we shall never know the truth of the matter.

As a corollary of this dispute, Clyde Brooks remarks in an interview recorded in 1985 that he was born in the Sturgis Post Office on his father's land in 1908 and so was probably the first baby born in Sturgis, Saskatchewan. The Enquist offspring, frequently named as the first Sturgis baby, was not born until the townsite was established in 1911.

While on the subject of post offices, we might record that Pat Carragher apparently ran the first one of this area. It was called Whitehawk and was situated south of and between the present towns of Preeceville and Sturgis.

Let us move once more onto solid ground. As the railroad crept westward, it became obvious that the post office must be moved. Everyone agrees that there was a town begun and a Sturgis Post Office set up along the railroad by 1912.

* According to Lubiniecki's story, the townsite was surveyed in 1911 and buildings began to spring up. Laverne Hollingsworth, who lived in the area as a child, (she is now Mrs. Houghton of California), in an interview taped in 1983 tells of a dispute over the actual location of the new town. Frank Rex, it seems, owned land on the hilltop but Pat Carragher had his property below along the riverbank. For a time heated arguments took place: "Who will stand Pat," they asked each other, "and who is for Rex's Bluff?" Eventually the "Bluffers"

carried the say, and Sturgis was built on the hilltop overlooking the river.

The area from Rongve Street east beyond the Roman Catholic cemetery, we are told, was originally George Durham's homestead. We have a record, July 25, 1913 of the Town paying him \$20 per acre for a road running through NE 1/4 20-34-4-W2 into town on the north side of the railway; and in 1914, \$80 for a road four rods wide on the same quarter section. For \$18.25 an acre, 72 acres of SW 20-34-4-W2 were bought from Jonas Elander. In April, 1947, the Town bought more of that same quarter from A. Morken (E 1/2 of NE 1/4 20-34-4-W2). Karchie land was bought October 24, 1935 to protect our water supply. More recently still, zoning has been done on the western limits between the Co-op farm buldings and Highway 49.

One of the first houses was a temporary place constructed for Laverne's mother "on the flat down below the top of the hill" where she boarded the carpenters under whose hammers the town came into being. Later the permanent Hollingsworth home was set on the hill where, often identified as one of the earliest of the town, it stood until recently. For many years it was known as "the old Gillespie house". Mrs. Gallant's home is on that site now. Other early homes were the tin house of Frank Rex, also standing until recent times, located where Val Vewchar now lives; Edgar Theriau's home (lot now occupied by A. Palmer); and the Andy Peterson house (lot now owned by James Ball). These three homes overlooked the river on what is now Railway Avenue. The Peterson house was standing until 1986.

H. S. Hutchinson became postmaster, locating the Sturgis Post Office in his general store; Fred Brooks started a Case implement business. Pud Mitchell still has the sign that advertised Case. Frank Weikle had the first hardware store; Charley Carragher the first livery barn and feed stable; F. B. Reusch the first lumber yard. Mrs.

→ Stennes and her son-in-law Ed Healey opened a restaurant and boarding house. A. H. Peterson and his brother Pete built a store in 1911 which was



Handwritten signature or initials.

later sold to L. Gelmon. Alva Rex owned the poolroom. D. Campbell and William McDonald opened a Cockshutt implement business.

Sturgis was incorporated as a village on September 18, 1912. William McDonald was the overseer. Councillors were: A. H. Peterson, and C. J. O'Brien. They were paid 75¢ a meeting in 1913, reduced to 50¢ in 1916. Frank Weikle, the secretary, started at an annual salary of \$25 which was doubled in 1914.

In 1921, the first year for which we have figures, the population of the village was 179 souls. By 1941 it had risen to 346 and to 364 in 1946. In 1951 it reached 640.

On March 12, 1951 Sturgis was incorporated as a town. Our first mayor was H. S. Naduriak; secretary-treasurer was W. L. MacNeill. History was further made by the election of Amy Palmer, first woman councillor. Other members of that original town council were: M. N. Kuzik, D. J. Berg, D. T. Galbraith, Leo Prekaski, and Joe Rogstad.

Before we leave this part of our reminiscence, let us remember a few of the very early deaths as recorded on headstones in our two cemeteries: In the Town Cemetery: Hugh Theriau, 1914 (age 1 year, 11 months); Allen Peterson, 1915 (age 4 months); Charlotte Walker, 1917 (age 54 years); and Harvey Houghton, 1918. In the Roman Catholic Cemetery: Pat Gibney, 1910; Tim Gibney, 1912; and Owen Carragher (1832-1914).

The Railroad

The first activity that follows surveying for a railway is laying the roadbed. According to Tom Durham, an early resident now deceased, the first railbed was laid and elevated by a crew of between 100 and 125 men who worked with wheelbarrows under their foreman, Charley Armstrong. Other sections were made with fresnos drawn by mules, the terrain being too wet for horses. A man named Munson had the contract. The first C. N. R. foreman was Edgar Theriau. Steel

reached Sturgis from Pelly in 1912 and from Canora in 1924. The first depot was a boxcar, but soon a more permanent station house was constructed. (It is now the Sturgis Museum.) We are told that the boxcar in which Fred Brooks's first shipment of Case implements arrived was then used by Frank Weikle for the first oats ever shipped out of Sturgis. The first permanent station agent was Walter Hughes.

Until the 1950's, when rail traffic began to decline, Sturgis hummed with CNR activity. C. B. McGregor wrote in 1928: "Sturgis has the best train service in Saskatchewan or Manitoba, with 42 passenger trains weekly, six to eight freight trains daily." He noted that Sturgis was "a Canadian National Railways junction point." A coal dock was built in 1928 beside a long-established water tower, both now gone. Passenger travel here in 1987 is limited to infrequent trains from and to points in Manitoba, and we no longer have either a station agent or a depot.

Today transportation by private automobile and truck has taken over much of the work of the railroad. As well, the Saskatchewan Transportation Company now provides Sturgis with convenient daily bus service to and from Regina and Saskatoon with connections further afield.

Violet Wright's poem commemorates the passing of picturesque railroad days:

The Coal Dock and the Water Tank

by

Violet Wright

By the railroad track at Sturgis just below the
townsite hill
Stood two structures, long companions side by side.
They were faithful, always ready for the caller day
or night;
On their service many patrons had relied.

They could not lay claim to beauty such as might an
artist paint

Nor architect look at in awe,
But they gave the needed service, and they held a
special place.
How they did the job was what the people saw.

Early trav'lers at the station for that Flin Flon
Flyer south
Listened for that long, shrill whistle at the dock,
For they knew that coal and water would be taken on
the train,
And they'd have about ten minutes on the clock.

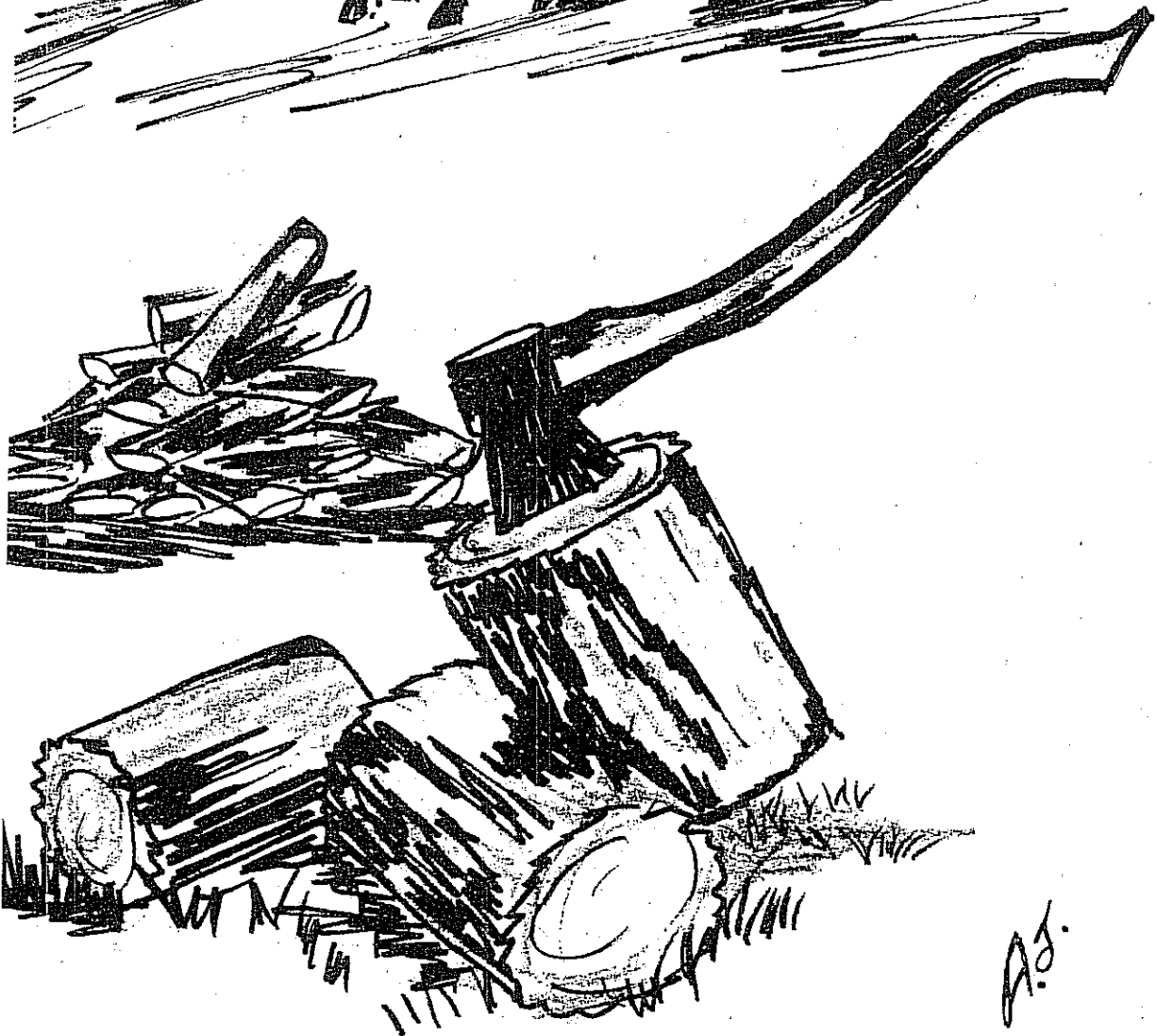
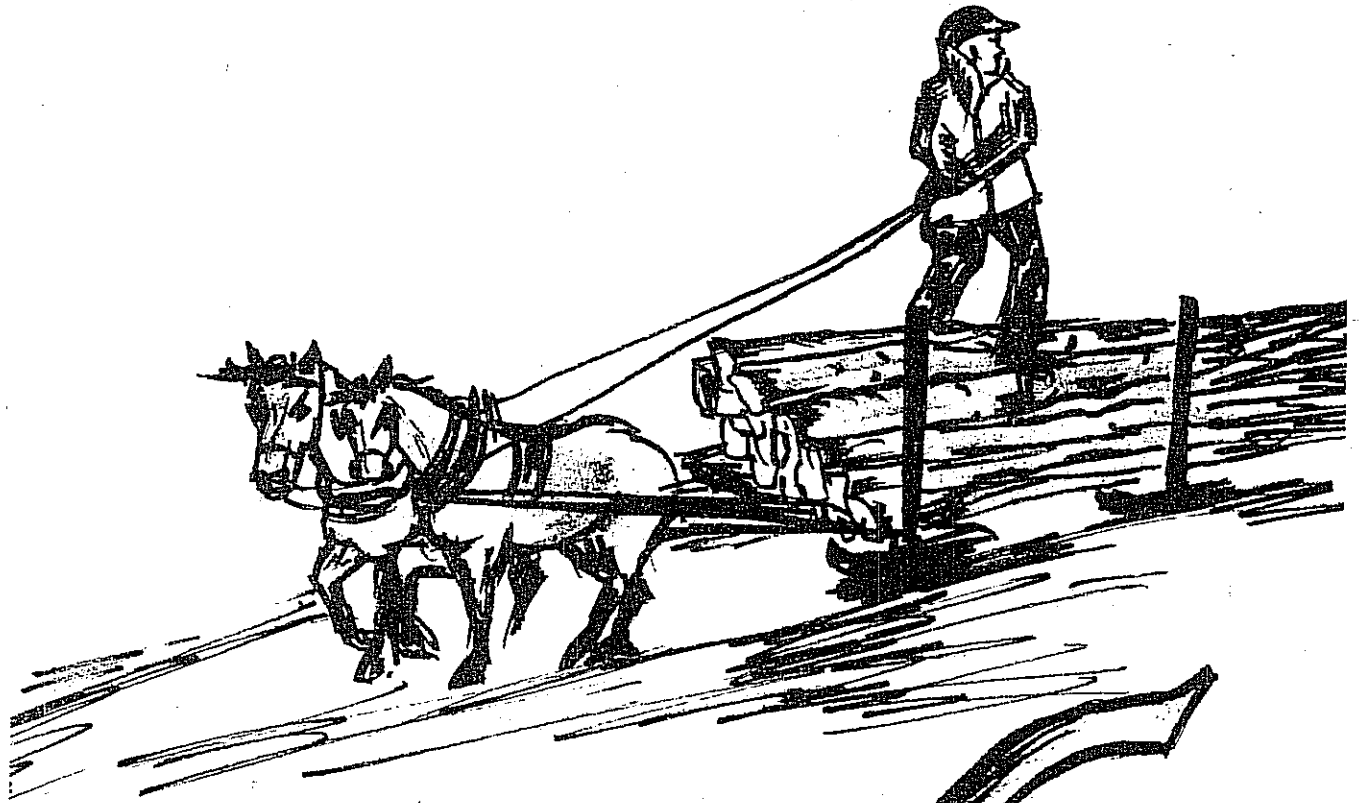
Now these structures, long companions, prairie
sentinels of yore
Leave behind no mark, but mem'ries of the past.
Like old houses, trains, old horses, they are set
aside for change,
But in our minds they can forever last.

Education:

Although most children lived in the village, the first school was placed in the centre of the Division in 1912, unfortunately across the river. It was called Melrose No. 2635. The first teacher, a Mrs. Gilbert, put up a tent and lived for a time in that location. Children were rowed across the river morning and afternoon by Ernie Derbyshire in a boat owned by Frank Reusch. Alice (Ball) Hamilton and Laverne (Hollinsworth) Houghton vividly recall those boat trips. When an early spring flood made the crossing dangerous, permission was sought to change the location, and school was temporarily held in Reusch's lumber yard office.

* Leo Lubiniecki found that that some of those first pupils never did attend Melrose, but went instead north to Kopje School taught by a Miss Ford.

In 1913, C. J. O'Brien built a two-room school with the new name of Bandle on NE 1/4 20-34-4-W2, still the location of our elementary school. This structure was destroyed by fire in 1919 (some say 1920), and for a time classes met in the hotel and a cafe. Unfortunately, school records were destroyed in that fire.



A.S.

By 1921 a four-room brick building, now called Sturgis School, was ready for occupancy, and it served all educational needs here until recent times. Miss Hazel Gibney was teaching Grade One in 1921-22. Two of her pupils still reside in Sturgis: Eva Laing (better known today as Pud Mitchell) and Adrian Peterson. Still resident in Sturgis as well are these long-time teachers in the Sturgis Elementary School: Jessie Rongve, Amy Palmer, Hilda Boen, Nick Smandych, and Hudson Armstrong. Although a modern school was built in front of the brick structure in 1967, it was still used as well until 1983 when, in spite of considerable public protest, it was demolished in favour of an addition to the new school.

High School classes were taught under the same roof as elementary grades until Sturgis Larger School Unit No. 45 was organized in 1945. W. L. MacNeill became the first secretary; chairman was H. M. Foster; other board members were: T. A. Holm, W. Panagapko, Fred Anaka, and W. Zbitnew. H.T. B. Jolson was the superintendent. The Sturgis Composite High School (the first of its kind in the province) was constructed on a 7-acre plot donated by the Village of Sturgis, and high school classes began there in 1948. The first teachers in the composite school were: K. Berger, principal; J. H. Cumming; John B. Neufeld; Glen Amy; Miss Sherry MacEachern; and Miss Mary Evanishen.

An RCAF building from Yorkton was converted to a dormitory beside the new high school; but it was a short-lived venture. Buses became a regular feature of educational life, and it was no longer needed. After a time it was torn down and a parking area replaces it.

We should remember one other phenomenon of education in Sturgis--the arrival in town of rural school buildings which served as "satellite" rooms to accommodate the "baby boom" pupils who passed through our schools following the Second World War. School enrolment has since diminished to a point where the main buildings house all students enrolled.

Communication:

We have previously mentioned postal service, which was present from the beginning, and today continues with six-day-a-week arrival and departure of mail, a resident postmistress and additional staff who work in a modern building.

Telephones were a later service. On July 26, 1920, the Sturgis Telephone Company was organized. Verner Soderlund built the exchange building in the village. As time went on, the service grew by amalgamating Stenen in 1947, part of Tadmore in 1949, Lady Lake in 1951, and Danbury in 1958. Cradle phones replaced the old wall telephones in 1951; and in 1963 Sturgis changed to the dial system and "hello girls" were no longer needed. In 1978 Sturgis Rural Telephone Company became part of SaskTel, and the company was dissolved. The local operators, who provided a personal service to the community which automation can never duplicate or replace, were these: Mrs. R. Hay (1920-22); Mrs. J. Elander (1923); Emily Dunford (1924); Mrs. McKenna (1925-6); Myrtle Holmberg (1926-31 and 1949-62: a total of 20 years); Alice (Mrs. Albin) Johnson (1932); Gena Hamilton (1938-45; 1948-54, 1955-59); Verna Graham (1945-50); Kay Tymiak (1949-51); Helen Peterson (1951); Alice Williams (1951-56); Lois Martin (1952-54); Jean Slinn (1952-58); Margaret Nunn (1958); Nellie Babiuk (1955-63); Norah Walker (1957-63); Margaret Kalenchuk (1958-63); Irma Robertson (1958-63); Connie Hamilton (1958-59); Florence Noble (1959-63); and Nels Holmberg (1959-63).

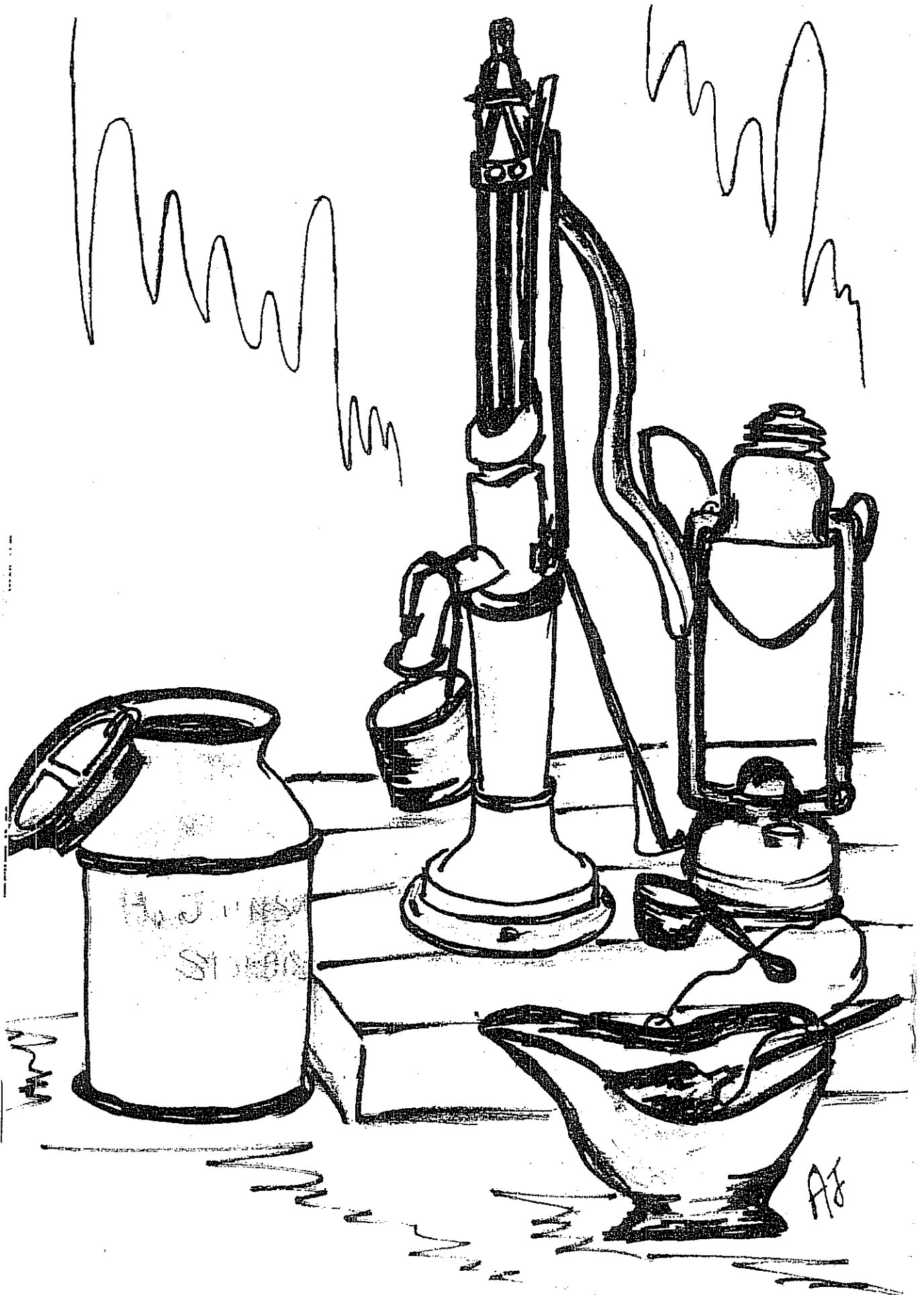
Another means of communication, unfortunately one which has not thrived in Sturgis, was the local newspaper. In 1948 J. Losie owned and operated THE NORTH EAST REVIEW here. His building was destroyed by fire in 1949, but publishing continued in another location at least until 1952. THE REVIEW has long been out of business, and no Sturgis printing operation has so far succeeded it.

Heat, Light and Power:

The first light plant was owned by O. Soderlund and J. Rogstad, and it began serving the village in 1920. Now the Saskatchewan Power Corporation supplies electricity to the town and district. The water supply came from a number of local wells until 1961 when a water-and-sewer system was set up, plumbing became a reality in Sturgis homes, and the ubiquitous backhouses disappeared except for one or two which are still in service. In early times homes were heated by wood or coal. Later a number of citizens had oil furnaces. In 1961, natural gas was piped into the town and it is the usual source of heat, though some citizens use electricity instead.

* Sturgis suffered many disastrous fires in the early days. There was a big one in 1926. Lubiniecki recorded: "A blaze in the early 1930's wiped out a cafe, hardware, and general store. In October of 1949 a Sunday morning outbreak levelled a cafe, printing shop and newspaper office, bakery and store. The loss was estimated at \$75,000 in this latter outbreak. About a year later, as a climax to a successful Sports Day in Sturgis, the village power plant went up in smoke." Jim Ness owned that power plant. There was only a bucket brigade to battle that blaze--a chain of volunteers from well to fire. Many tales are told of fighting those early fires with only ladders, axes and bottles of chemicals to aid the firemen. The first fire engine was bought in 1915; it was a two-wheeled relic with a 4'x2' steel chemical tank on top. The chemical supply was usually exhausted while the fire still raged. The first fire chief of whom we can find mention was Harry Hamilton in 1938.

* In 1951 the Emergency Measures Organization was active and Alex Pozium became the director and was appointed fire chief. At the time, the E.M.O. loaned the town a large city fire engine for one year, and a volunteer fire brigade came into being. Since that time, Sturgis has operated two fire engines and has trained volunteer firemen. They serve not only the town, but the R.M.'s of Preeceville and Buchanan, half of the R.M. of Clayton, and one division of the R.M. of Keys. Recent bad fires at different times have taken a UGG elevator, the skating rink (both soon rebuilt) and Wagar's Garage (now in a different location).



For a time, fire warning was given by means of a bell on the Memorial Hall as well, of course, as "general rings" on party lines by telephone operators. The bell fell into disuse when the fire engine came since it was equipped with sirens. Today firemen are alerted to trouble by means of an emergency telephone number.

The Police:

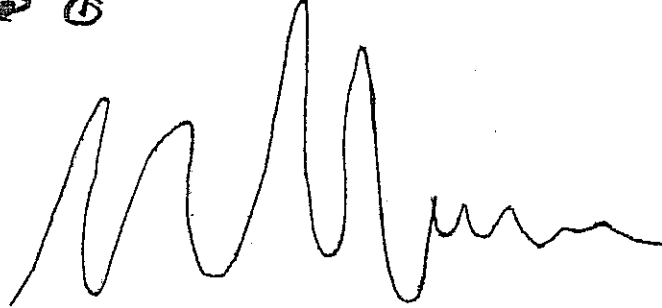
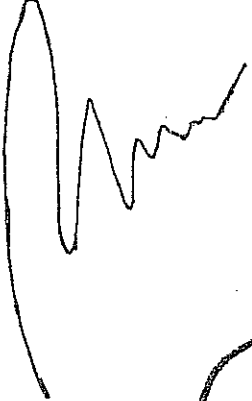
→ The village and later the town hired Tom Healey as constable in 1912. Billy McDonald was another early constable. The first police were a mounted provincial force. In 1930, a detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police was transferred to Sturgis from Preeceville and has continued here since then.

The first police barracks were in Lizzie Weikle's house onto which an addition was built. their mounts were stabled on the same lot. In 1966, an R.C.M.P. headquarters building was constructed here, containing office space and jail facilities. the first jail was a one-room 12x14' shack purchased in 1914 for \$109.65, later sold to Peter Olson for \$150. It served as well as a "pest house" for communicable diseases and also as a fire hall. It seems to have been located approximately where the Blue Grass Motel now stands. (the small building sold to Peter Olson sat in various locations about town.) For many years thereafter, there was a holding cell attached to the Legion Hall.

Churches:

Sturgis has five church buildings with their separate congregations.

St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church dates back to about 1895 when it was a mission attended by Fr. Jules Decorby, O.M.I. The original church was built 1912-13, the rectory in 1940-41, and the present church in 1962.



Grace United Church was built by Lutherans and Presbyterians jointly in 1920. Greatly involved in the project were Tom Rongve and Dan Campbell. The first preacher was a student minister, Mr. Hardy, and the first ordained minister, Mr. Fish in 1925 (given names not available).

The Sturgis Ukrainian Greek Orthodox community was first organized January 17, 1937 under the name of St. Michael. Presiding at the organizational meeting was Rev. Leonid W. Diachyna. There were twelve members at that time, and meetings were held in homes until the congregation outgrew such accommodation. In December of 1955 the first service was held in the present church building.

Edwin Wright served as pastor to The Christian and Missionary Alliance at Hassan 1939-42, during which time services were held in Sturgis as well. Later the congregation moved to a building situated between the hotel and the poolroom. Eventually the Charley Theriau home was purchased and moved to the present location where it was renovated and served as a church until a new one was built in the late 1950's. In 1983 this church became independent and is now known as the Sturgis Evangelical Church.

The most recent church structure is that of the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Organizations:

One feels overwhelmed when faced with the task of listing active organizations in Sturgis. There are over fifty of them presently in operation!

There has always been a council since Sturgis became a town. Recently a Chamber of Commerce has been formed and it has been actively promoting civic activities. Sturgis had a Board of Trade from 1913 to 1950 which, unfortunately, made little progress controlling fires (many of which were arson attempts to collect insurance), and seems to have been hampered in introducing new businesses

into the town by the reluctance of the existing businesses to face opposition. C. B. MacGregor was the lawyer in Sturgis then; but since his death the town has had no resident lawyer. The Board did secure a fire truck eventually under E.M.O. and had an airstrip for a time, but this was lost when a timber mill was set up on the site. Both mill and airstrip eventually went elsewhere. By 1948 there was so little public interest that the Board of Trade could not get a quorum at meetings, and it was abolished.

A few items from its Minutes might be of interest: "1915: F. Weikle--one dog tag #2 named Ike, black & white spotted--\$1.00". "1922: January 17, correspondence re securing a doctor, a drugstore, and a hospital. George Durham offered to donate land for a hospital site." "1922: Suggested building a War Veterans' Memorial Hall." "March 28, 1922: Ladies complained about improper control of cattle on our village streets." (Bill Hrushka recalled at one time forty cows owned by Sturgis residents, many or perhaps most of these running at large.)

Early Entertainment:

Margaret Johnson writes: "The big event of the summers of long ago was the annual Sports Day held for many years on July 4 as so many of the new settlers had come from the U.S.A. The Sports Day was held in different places, one of which was the area where the present Post Office stands. Cora Boen and Adrian Peterson both remember a Sports Day being held on the prairie across from the graveyard. There was always a refreshment booth covered at the top with newly-cut poplars. Holes were dug on each side of the street where freshly-cut poplars were planted for the occasion. Red, white and blue bunting was strung across the street from roof top to roof top. Lizzie Weikle had much to do with this activity. Baseball was always popular.

"Seniors and children alike had their favourite swimming holes at the river, and of course there

was always Crystal Lake where people could go with their picnic lunches. They called it Sturgis Picnic.

"The big event of the long ago winters was the Ski Tournament which took place on the big hill back of the present Sports Grounds. The hill covered with people was a beautiful sight. The men would build a good-sized ski jump not too far from the top of the hill. James Weikle vividly remembers Knut Grimsrud from Norway as the star of this event. Older boys always tried out the ski jump while younger children competed in toboggan races. A dance in the evening, usually held in the hayloft of the livery barn, climaxed the event.

"In winter, as in summer, the river was put to good use. The older boys would clear off the snow from the ice for skating and build big bonfires on the shore.

"The Literary Society was very active, putting on programs with local talent. Ed Theriau almost always favoured us with a French Canadian poem. The older folks also put on plays even back to the time of Bandle School."

The first location of entertainment activities (parties, plays, debates, singing, readings) was a room above Elanders' store which was always filled to capacity. This upper floor was even used for dances until a building was purchased from Dan Pakaluk in 1915 for use as a town hall. This was rebuilt in 1922 or 1924 and known then as the Memorial Hall. In 1970 this structure was taken over by the Sturgis Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion which operates the hall at present.

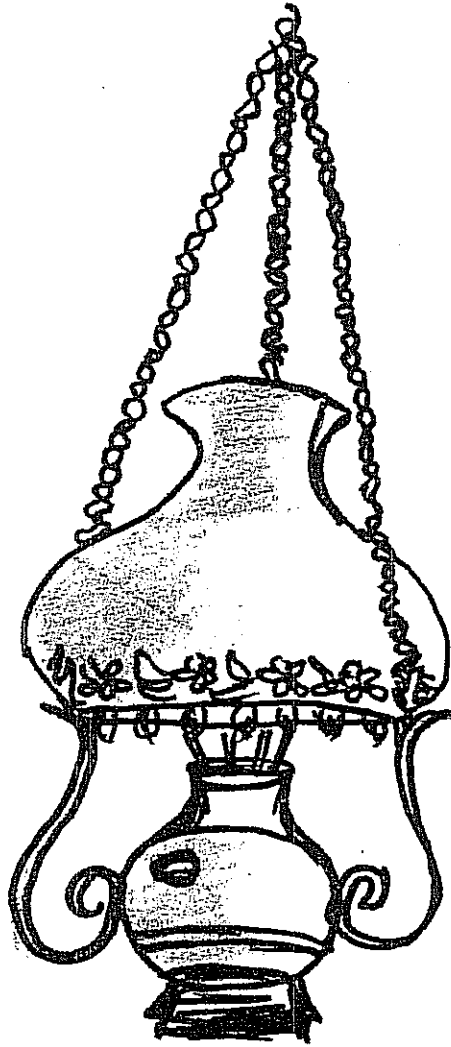
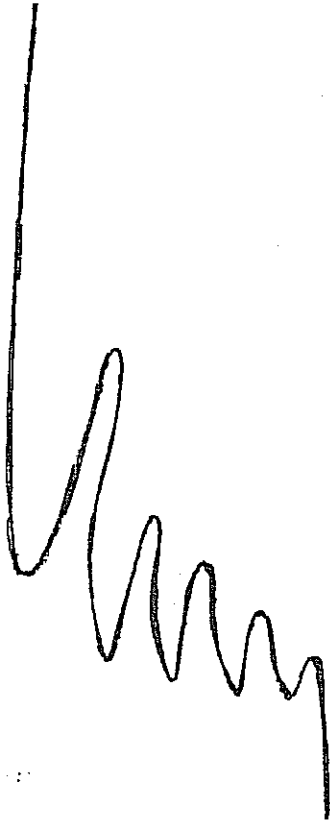
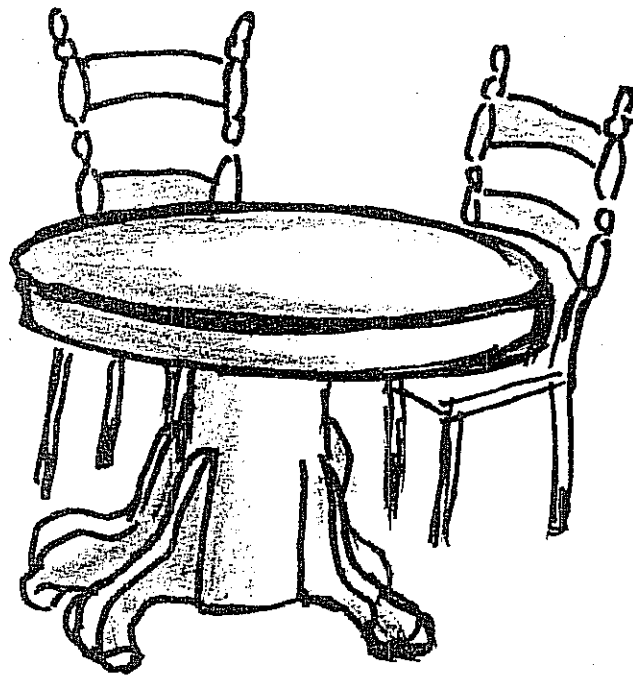
Dances, local talent plays, school Christmas concerts and silent movies were popular sources of entertainment in the early days. When the town hall was renovated in 1928, Bill Hrushka became caretaker, and held that job for over twenty years. Among other duties, he ran the silent movies three nights a week. Following that, we had the Regal Theatre run by Buster

Grass and later Sam Holmberg. Now that source of entertainment has been replaced by a bowling alley. School concerts were moved from the school to the town hall to accommodate the crowds, and eventually discontinued for lack of room.

Skating at first took place on the river, and later on outdoor ice in different locations. Sturgis had a covered rink eventually, but it burned down in 1955. It was rebuilt into the present structure which has been used, not only for ice skating, but for roller skating, floor hockey, horticultural shows, various social gatherings, and even for emergency classrooms. The curling rink came later. It has three sheets of ice, and as well it accommodates the Kin Hut.

Sports Day, as we have seen, was an important event from early times. In 1972, its date was changed from the American July 4 to Dominion Day (July 1). It is the biggest event of the year, attracting crowds many times the size of the Sturgis population, and bringing in financial returns of benefit to the whole community when--as usually happens--the weather is favorable. It features popular rodeo now as well as baseball, a horse-pull, a midway, and many booths manned by local volunteers. While one hesitates to list the many willing workers who, over the years, have helped to make this event a success, mention must be made of C. H. (Buster) Grass who could be called the father of the modern Sturgis Sports Day.

* This brings us to our Regional Park which exists only because of the vision and labour of Buster and Jessie Grass who hewed it out of a wilderness. A beauty spot, it accommodates tourists, and as well is the site of community picnics and gatherings, and is the haunt of much wild life. Lubiniecki's school history supplies an interesting detail: "On August 21, 1945, ten beavers were placed in the Sturgis area in the Assiniboine River by Messrs. C. K. Perrin and Alex Grosselin of the Department of Natural resources. These beavers built four large



dams in the river in a year and a half, and many smaller dams were in evidence." Beaver are at work in the park still.

Sturgis Industries of the Past:

No doubt in every small town there are men with great ideas that flourish and later die. So it has been with Sturgis.

At one time we had a Timber Board that kept many small, independent sawmills busy in the northern bush. We had a busy planing mill. We had a one-man cement block factory run by Frank Berdine, some of whose handiwork stands today as the framework of our small Heritage Building. Andrew Meroniuk operated a flour mill (1917-19) located where Ron Wagar's home now stands. After losing his wife in the influenza epidemic, he moved the mill to his farm where he continued to operate it. Bill Hrushka was a Sturgis shoemaker for a number of years. Alex Sambroski bought that shoe and harness repair shop from him. After a fire, Alex rebuilt and in 1953 sold this second structure to Tom Cholod who rented and later sold it to the Toronto-Dominion Bank. We had a creamery, and several local milk delivery services. Ray Olson had a cement block industry and later a lumber yard (1947-60). Another independent worker in cement, John Chimko, single-handedly erected a store cum rooming-house above an intricate pillared basement which is still a source of puzzled wonder to the community in its present state of disrepair. At different times we had a druggist, a dentist, a lawyer, two resident doctors, a blacksmith, a drayman, a bricklayer. Once we had a brick factory. Some Sturgis parents even fondly remember tree-houses constructed in the woods on the edge of town by children long grown and living elsewhere.

Honour to These Citizens:

Sturgis, a small settlement which even in 1987 cannot count 900 residents, has produced many outstanding people and can boast of a number of unusual accomplishments.

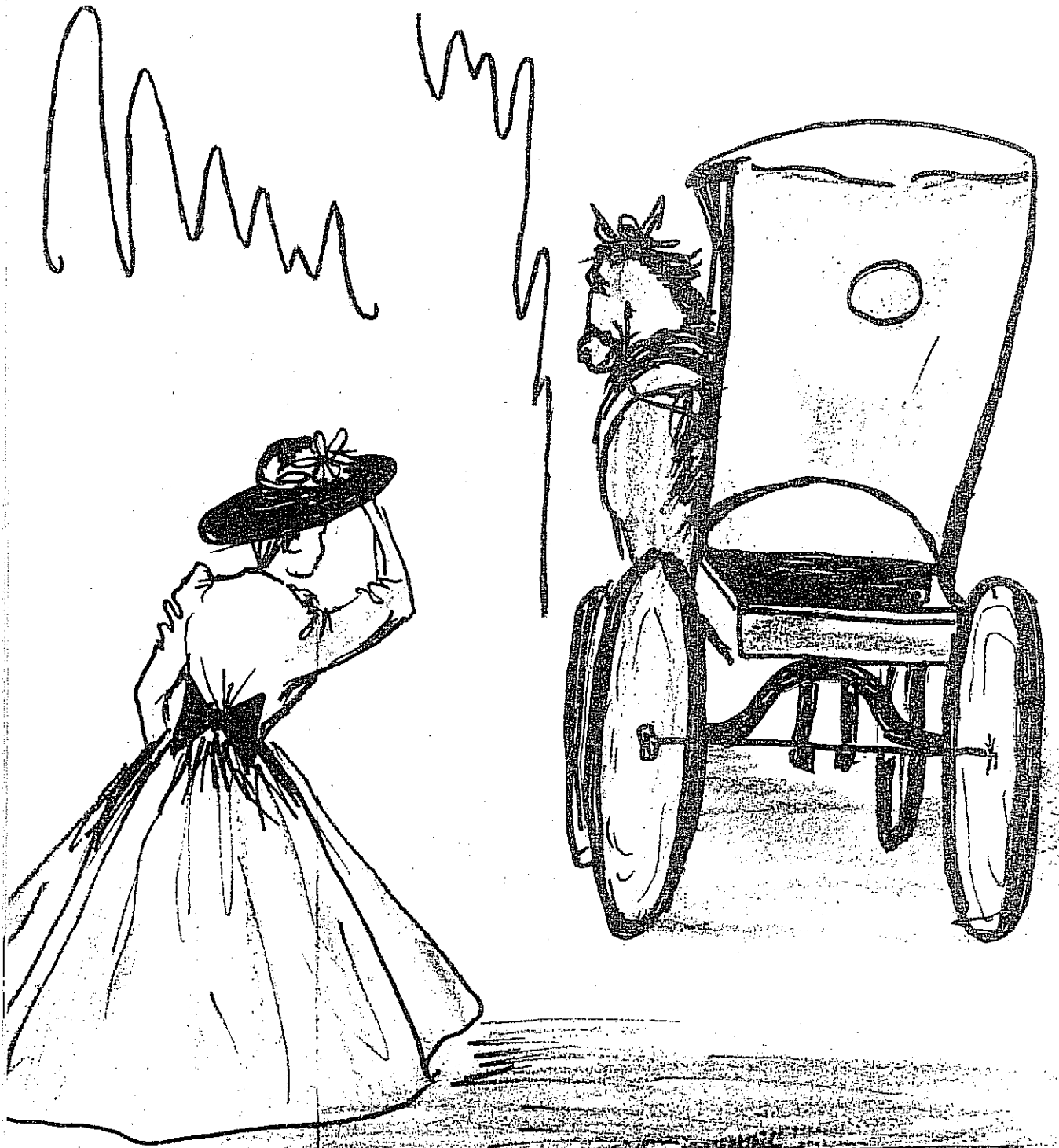
We sent Anton Morken to Regina as our Member of the Legislature (1929-34). A. M. (Sandy) Nicholson was Member of Parliament for several sessions and also an M.L.A. Charley Mitchell, among many other honours, was awarded the Order of Canada. Elmer Sjolie served for a long time as a Saskatchewan Wheat Pool Director; and W. G. (Bud) Morken has served on the Board of the United Grain Growers since 1972.

Among non-residents, one remembers many who grew up in Sturgis and went on to achieve in other places and in various fields. Perhaps the most outstanding of these, at least in global importance, is James MacNeill who is currently Secretary-General of the World Commission on Environment and Development, headquartered in Geneva. Indeed, young people have gone from Sturgis as experts in almost every field of endeavour. We remember them proudly, one by one, but lack the space to record all their names.

Then there are activities that did not leave our district. The Co-op Farm on the western outskirts of Sturgis was a first in the province, and it flourished for many years. Its founders were these men and their wives: Charley Mitchell; Sandy Nicholson; Elmer Sjolie; Hugh Mitchell; Ted Moritz; and Sam Sookocheff.

One remembers, too, the Composite High School which was built when to put practical skills and academic training under the same roof was a daring experiment, and which successfully served a wide area and made possible a higher degree of education locally than had ever before been possible. The school flourishes today.

That Sturgis is a good place to live is well attested by at least three residents who passed the century mark in it: Tom Rongve, who died at the age of 103; Lizzie Weikle who is now 101; and Stella Laing who achieved her hundredth year on June 3, 1987.



W.A.S.

A P P E N D I X

A Few "Firsts":

The township was surveyed in 1902. Lots for the village were surveyed in 1911. The Village of Sturgis was incorporated in 1912. Here follows a partial list of "firsts":

- First Overseer: W. M. McDonald, 1912
- Councillors: J. O'Brien & Andy Peterson
- Secretary-Treasurer: F. M. Weikle
- Assessor: J. Kinney, 1913
- Mill rate: 10 mills
- Speed limit: 12 m.p.h., 1912
- Auditor: D. H. Robertson, 1914
- Doctor: Dr. Bussey from Penhold, Alta., 1913
- Town Constable: Tom Healy, 1913
(2 pair handcuffs, 1 badge)
- Dog Catcher: Tom Healy, 1913
- Pound Keeper: D. H. Robertson
- Jail: 1914
- Cemetery: 1915 - 1 1/2 acres bought from Mike Thomas for \$55 and surveyed by Phillip & Stewart
- Fire Engine: 1915 -- chemical engine bought from Oberagam & Boyer Co. for \$425.
- Post Office: 1904-11, Fred Brooks
- Hotel: 1913, manager Cohen. Destroyed by fire, 1926
- Steel Bridge: 1914
- Town Hall: 1915
- Case Implement Dealer: Fred Brooks, 1912
- Cockshutt Dealer: Dan Campbell & W. McDonald, 1912
- Poolroom: Alva Rex, 1912
- Barber: Billy Wood
- Stores:
 - Hutchison Clothing, 1912
 - Pete Peterson, 1912
 - Frank Weikle, Hardware, 1912
 - Charlie Carragher, livery barn, 1912
 - F. E. Reusch, lumber yard, 1912
 - Mrs. Stennes & Ed Healy, restaurant, 1912
 - Tom Nichols, blacksmith, 1912

First Elevator: Saskatchewan Elevator Co., 1911
(next elevator, UGG, was not until 1917)
Justice of the Peace: Billy Jones
School: Melrose, 1908
Teacher: Mrs. Gilbert, 1912 (hers is first
name available to us)
Light Plant: Soderlund & Rogstad
Boat Across the River: Elmer Phillips, 12 1/2
days, \$2 a day
Gravel Dealers: Brown & Ryel, 1923
Sidewalk on Main Street: 1916. A man and
team earned 50¢ an hour, a man alone
25¢, and a cement man 35¢.
Bank on the corner of Main Street: 1924,
Toronto-Dominion
Flour Mill: Andrew Meroniuk, 1917-19
Ball Team: 1915
Road to Preeceville was on the south side
of the railroad track
R.C.M.P.: 1930
Lawyer: Jim Fraser, 1930. C. B. McGregor was
another early lawyer
Board of Trade: 1933
Homemakers Club: 1928
Suggestion of a Hospital: 1929 (R.C. Church)
School Unit: 1945
Co-op Farm: 1947 - Half of the SW 1/4 of
29-34-4 W2
Co-op Store: 1946
Anniversary celebration: 25 years in 1937
(with a dance)
Rink Caretaker: Eric Pollock, 1935
Fire Chief: Harry Hamilton: 1938
Daylight Saving Time: 1942
P.F.R.A. Dam: 1950
First Woman Councillor: Amy Palmer, 1951-9
Carol Service: 1952 - A.M. Nicholson was
chairman. Raised \$30.
Horticulture Show: 1951
Regional Park: 1955
Visiting Governor General: 1957, Vincent
Massey (F.W. Bayliss was mayor then)
Kinsmen: 1971
July 1 Sports Day: 1972
E.M.O. Building: 1966



THE ROARING TWENTIES

(The Charleston)

First Library: 1973 (Daisy Johnson, librarian)
Trailer Court: 1976 (Skogen)
Senior Citizens' Organization: 1974

Overseers of Sturgis:

Wm. McDonald	1912-13
J. J. Kinney	1913-14
E. J. O'Brien	1915-15
Dan Campbell	1915-16
H. S. Hutchison	1916-17
F. C. Brooks	1917-22
Louis Gelmon	1923-27
T. H. Hamilton	1927-29
T. Atckinson	1930-31
F. M. Weikle	1932-32
T. Atckinson	1933-36
R. E. Gillespie	1938-40
F. M. Weikle	1941-44
W. H. Armstrong	1945-56
W. Rongve	1947-50

Mayors of Sturgis:

H. S. Naduriak	1951-52
W. H. Armstrong	1953-54
J. J. Ness	1955-56
F. W. Bayliss	1957-64
A. C. Palmer	1965-65
J. Koroluk	1965-65
A. Pozium	1966-70
J. Koroluk	1971-83
F. W. Bayliss	1983-85
W. G. Morken	1985-

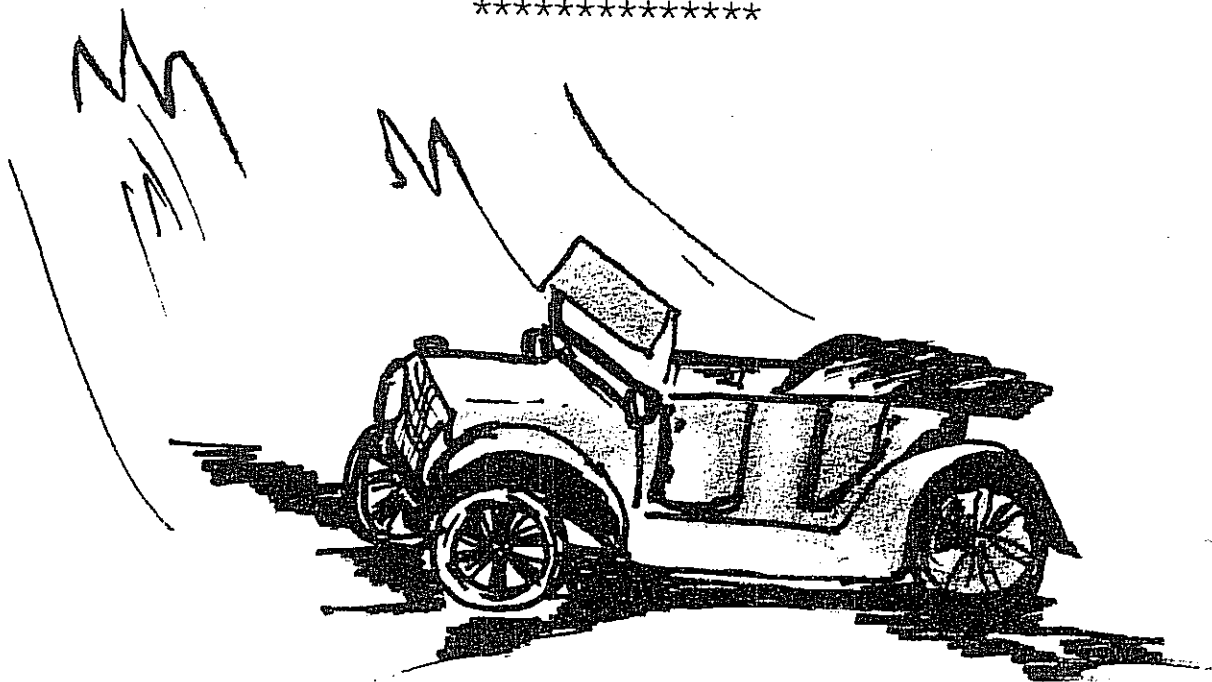
WHAT IS A LITTLE TOWN?

- A little town is where you don't have to guess who your enemies are: Your friends tell you.
- A little town is where everybody knows everybody else's car by sight and also when and where it goes.
- A little town is where few people can get away with lying about the year they were born. Too many other people can remember.
- A little town is where the ratio of good people to bad people is like 100 to 1. That's nice to remember.
- A little town is where you can get the wrong number but you can talk for fifteen minutes anyhow.
- A little town is where it is hard for anybody to walk for exercise because it takes too long to stop and explain to people in cars who stop, honk and offer a ride.
- A little town is where city folks say there is nothing to do, but those who live there don't have enough nights in a week to make all the meetings and social functions.
- A little town is where everyone becomes a neighbour in time of need.
- A little town is where business men struggle for survival against city stores and shopping centres.
- A little town is where those same business men dig deep many times to help with countless fund-raising projects.
- A little town is where it's nice to be when raising a family.

A little town is where you don't have to lock
your door every time you leave the house.

A little town is where many teenagers say there
is nothing to do -- and then are surprised
to learn that their bit city peers are
saying the same thing.

A little town is, when all is said and done, a
NICE place to live.



SOURCES CONSULTED FOR THIS HISTORY

Saskatchewan Provincial Archives
R.E.A.D. Magazines (1974-87)
→ Leo Lubiniecki's booklet in the Sturgis Library
Files in the Town Office
"Nine to Four": Elementary School History, 1983
Memories of various local seniors



