

DID YOU KNOW.....

A look back at early area history as found in the archives of the Enderlin Historical Society and Museum by Susan Schlecht

The Enderlin Museum contains many interesting items and artifacts from the Sheldon area, also. The following are excerpts from a paper entitled *EARLY HISTORY OF SHELDON, RANSOM COUNTY, NORTH DAKOTA* prepared by **Ed Pierce** and read at the **Old Settlers' Picnic at Sheldon, ND, in July 1906**.

(Continued from last week)

Mr. Pierce states concerning the railroad through Sheldon: "Those of greatest influence in starting the Fargo and Southwestern Railroad were B.D. Wilcox, O.F. Kindred and A.W. Harwood. They surveyed the line in 1880, passing then about five miles north of its present location, but later changed the route to get the benefit of the traffic from the rich valley of the Sheyenne. It must be remembered that 30 years ago it was believed that the high prairie was a desert and the man who settled more than a mile from the river and timber was looked upon with a good deal of suspicion as to his sanity. The survey was completed, however, in the fall of 1880, although slightly changed in the spring of 1881. Goodman and Greene moved out from Fargo and established a store three or four miles east of Sheldon expecting the town to locate there. On June 22nd, 1881, Wilcox had secured the location of the present townsite by the railway company, bought this section 17 for \$3,200, but had no money to pay for it and let it go to E.E. Sheldon three weeks later for \$3,840. Sheldon plotted the village and sold off a few lots, deeded half of the plot to the railway company for locating the town here, and in February, 1882, sold what was left to Horton and Detlor for \$8,000".

"The first train, a construction train laying track, reached Sheldon on Nov. 4th, 1882, and Lisbon on Dec. 22nd of the same year. A mixed train was run off and on through the winter and regular train service was inaugurated on April 1st, 1883. Quite a large railway crew wintered on the present depot site in tents and the N.P. Elevator Co. had a flat house ready to take grain, in charge of Adam Goodman, on the site of this park, before the rails reached it. During that fall and winter, nearly 300,000 bushels of wheat was marketed and the rule was to get in line at the elevator before breakfast and get unloaded after supper. Adam did not hurry then any more than he does now!"

Mr. Pierce continues, "In passing, there is food for thought in the treatment we received from and accorded to railroads in those days and in later years. At that time we were paying 5 cents per mile for travel and 15 cents per bushel for hauling wheat to Duluth. Highland township farmers offered to donate the right-of-way and to pay bonuses of \$50 to \$500 in work to get the railroad in. Years later, when the Soo came, fares had been reduced 40% and freight 30% and yet we taxed them from \$20 to \$50 per acre for right-of-ways and in many instances made them fight to get it at that."

(More excerpts from Mr. Pierce's speech will be included next week when we get his thoughts on the first business, churches and schools in the Sheldon area.)

Sue's comments: As I read this, I couldn't help but compare the plight of those early farmers to the current situation when hauling grain! Waiting in line was evidently always part of the farmers' plight, although I doubt that we would blame the speed of the elevator manager nowadays! Hopefully, Adam Goodman had a good sense of humor and was on friendly terms with Mr. Pierce!

Watch for more history next week!