

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

Following are more 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 continues by stating: "The first general business house established at Sheldon was the store of Karl E. Rudd, which opened on Sept. 15, 1881, although the store of Goodman and Greene was in operation for several months previous a few miles east of town, and was moved in and opened for business on the old Goodman site a few days later. Our first banking institution was opened by I. C. Gaylord at the present post office site on July 9<sup>th</sup>, 1883."

"One of the most important of public utilities, and on which the village for over 20 years has had every reason to congratulate itself is the Sheldon opera house, opened by its present owner, Chauncy Durgin, on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1885. No town in the state with Sheldon's population has as commodious and as useful a building for the accommodation of public gatherings of all kinds, and our obligation to Mr. Durgin ought to be recognized much more substantially than it is."

Mr. Pierce continues, "In church societies, the first services were held by the Catholics in the Jenksville settlement by Father Stephan, one of the most noted of the middle-day missionaries, and now occupying an important post in the administration of Indian affairs at Washington, although nearly ninety years of age. In 1878 and 1879 his journeys from Moorhead were generally made on foot, and services were held in the cabins of the early settlers, many of them driving 20 miles to attend and rarely with sufficient room indoors to permit them all to enter. Beginning with the fall of 1881, services were held occasionally in Fowlers hall, until the fall of 1883 when the first half of the present church building was erected under the Administration of Rev. Father Tierney."

"Jenksville was also the birth place of the Presbyterian society organized by the Smith, Patterson, Fowler and other families in the early spring of 1883 and supplied at first by Rev. Pollock, a missionary, holding services in the school house at Jenksville, and later in the Sheldon school house, no regular ordained minister being assigned until 1884 when the society was placed in the charge of Rev. Edgar W. Day who served them for many years and whose departure was so keenly regretted by every person in the community."

"There seems to be no very accurate data as to the early history of the Methodist church at Sheldon, although the society was large and active from the beginning of the settlement. To Rev. Gram appears to be most of the credit for the work accomplished prior to statehood, the period to be covered by this history, and the church building was not completed until 1892."

“As usual all over North Dakota, the cause of education received early attention and the school district was organized before the advent of the railway, the school house constructed early in 1882 and to Miss Jennie Gram belonged the credit of opening Sheldon’s first school day on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 1882.”

(More excerpts from Mr. Pierce’s speech will be included next week when we get his thoughts on the saloon business.)

**Sue’s comments:** You will note that the Goodman - Greene store was first established several miles east of town because that is where they thought the railroad would be located. Once the railroad route was determined, they had to move their business. Trying to second guess where the railroads would go was evidently quite common because other settlements such as Lucca also began somewhere else and then moved. Also, can you imagine walking out from Moorhead across the prairie to conduct church services in the small settlements? Would anyone nowadays make such a commitment?

Watch for more history next week!