

Brandon Sun

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Elevators

One in Ipswich handles its last load . . .

by FRED McGUINNESS

Ipswich had never seen a crowd like this before: Ipswich will never see anything like this again, for there won't be any more Ipswich.

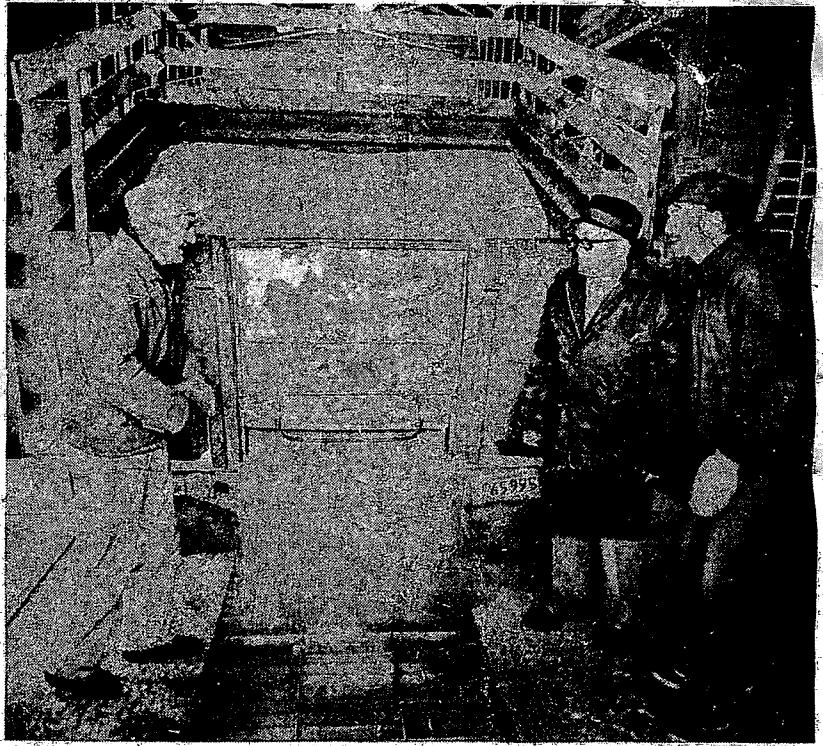
Friday afternoon nearly 75 district farmers gathered at the Ipswich elevator of Manitoba Pool, located northwest of Brandon, to say a fond farewell to a faithful old friend. By order of the Pool board of directors this elevator is being decommissioned, a decision the area grain producers accept with considerable bitterness. These men, some of them with their wives and children, ringed the angular old structure and its annex with grain trucks and half-tons, gathered in little knots on the roadway and in the manager's office to talk about what they feel is an ironic Christmas gift. After an informal reception, with doughnuts and coffee, they moved into the unloading area where Norman Jack put his name in the history books as the last man to draw a load to Ipswich. With him was grandfather, E. S. Currah, who was the first.

The peaceful demonstration was organized by Kenneth Rapley, reeve of the RM of Strathclair, and Gordon Harvey, a Strathclair councillor, and vice-president of the MPE local committee. Between them these men spearheaded the local objections which began three years ago when the closure was first forecast by the Pool board. When Rapley and Harvey found that direct appeal to the Winnipeg head office was proving unsuccessful, they took their case to Brandon lawyer Glen Williams to learn if they had a case in law. This proved not to be so.

The Ipswich elevator once was locally-owned and controlled. Some of those present Friday had gone farm-to-farm in the mid-1920s collecting pledges for the foundation equity funds. The local Co-op Elevator Association opened its doors in 1928.

Rapley says the local owners signed over their ownership to Manitoba Pool, "because we believe in pooling principles. Let me give you an example: in the years we were making six cents a bushel profit, we were prepared to pool that profit with other elevator associations who that year might be in a loss position. Perhaps they would help us next year if our loadings were off because of a poor crop. We've always done better than break even, but now we can't be sure of exactly where we stand, for now all the country elevator receipts are consolidated into one report so we never know where we stand."

Gordon Harvey feels the farmers are being stick-handled into making deliveries to a new Pool elevator at Shoal Lake. His information states that Shoal



Historic grain

Bill Ruddick, Manitoba Pool grain buyer at Ipswich, samples the last load of grain to be delivered to his elevator. This load had historical significance. It belonged to Norman Jack, right, grandson of E. S. Currah, centre, who in 1928 made the first delivery.

Lake needs 500,000 bushels a year to break even, and he doubts this year they'll hit a quarter of that mark, and for that reason they want to direct the Ipswich grain to the new facility. Ipswich, with a capacity of 100,000 bushels, is frequently filled, and to prove this point several farmers showed up Friday with loads of wheat which grain-buyer Bill Ruddick had to refuse.

The farmers also have a passionate interest in the affairs of the Ruddick family. Ruddick, 61, prefers early retirement to a transfer to another point, but thus far he has been unable to learn if he can stay on in the manager's cottage. The peaceful protestors anticipate that when tenders are called for the sale and removal of the elevator, the cottage will go as well. In their opinion, Ruddick's years of efficient service warrant better treatment than this.

Most of those present Friday readily admit that they personally will not be too hard done by when Ipswich elevator closes, for they have alternate points within reasonable haulage distances. Rapley, who now hauls one mile (the elevator is stationed on a corner of his farm) will haul five; Harvey now hauls 4.5 miles and his alternate point is 7.5 miles distant.

The nub of their objections lie in what they say is the failure of Pool officers to level with them, to state the reasons for the closure, to reveal either the losses or the earnings of the local elevator.

As a townsite, Ipswich simply never got going. At its zenith it

had a population of nine, and that was when there were two elevators, one owned by the local co-op, one owned by N. M. Paterson, which the Pool eventually purchased. In its hey-day there were two grain buyers' residences. Still, it was headquarters for a good farming district stretching 14 miles north and south, six east and west. A number of young farmers have begun operations in this area in recent years and they too were present Friday at what some of them called a wake.

For years Prairie travellers have been accustomed to the ever-present grain elevators. They knew that as one set was fading in the rear view mirror, another set would soon be popping up out of the horizon. That day soon may pass. And when the Ipswich elevator is removed, a Manitoba placename disappears, for there are no other local geographic features bearing the name of the English village, birthplace of the Stevenson family which first settled the territory.

Practical people these farmers: they also know that in the past the Ipswich elevators paid an estimated \$2,000 annual in taxes to the RM of Strathclair. In the future they can expect to pick up this shortfall. It was a grim-faced group which met with Pool district supervisor Art Godfrey, of Russell, when he showed up to pick up Bill Ruddick's keys and relieve him of his duties, and take delivery of the facility and its inventory.

It was a solemn requiem for Ipswich.

. . . while another springs up in Deloraine

by GARTH STOFFER
Sun Associate Editor

Not too many years ago, grain elevators were always located next to the railroad tracks, and communities grew up around the elevator.

In Deloraine this week, as in Shoal Lake and Harte earlier this year, Manitoba Pool Elevators opened a modern new grain elevator . . . but in the Deloraine case the new facility is located about half a mile out of town in order to provide it with both trackage and highway access.

Robert Moffat, general manager of Manitoba Pool Elevators, told The Sun Friday that the new elevator — the fourth new one opened this year — will have a storage capacity of 160,000 bushels of grain and capability of handling from 2 million to 2.5 million bushels a year, depending on conditions.

Built to replace three old elevators that had outlived their usefulness and which were being phased out, the new elevator provides more than sufficient handling capability for the Deloraine area, although it is expected that there might well be times when the new elevator

is plugged with grain because of lack of railway scheduling to move out the cereals as they arrive.

Old elevators at Leighton (about six miles northwest of Deloraine) and in Deloraine have been phased out, the Leighton structure three years ago and the old Federal elevator owned by Manitoba Pool in Deloraine more recently, and a third elevator in the area will be closed shortly, at Dand, some 10 miles north of Deloraine.

The old Federal structure, as a matter of fact, burned recently, but there had been no plans to use it again at any rate.

All three — the former Federal elevator and the elevators at Dand and Leighton — were considered too old to be worth modernizing, says Mr. Moffat, but the other Pool elevator in Deloraine is only about 20 years old and is in sufficiently good condition to be continued in operation.

As at Shoal Lake and Harte, where new and modern elevators have been opened this year to permit the closing of older and less efficient elevators in the immediate areas, the Deloraine elevator is electrically operated

and can be handled by a manager and one assistant.

James Deveson of Arden, vice president of Manitoba Pool Elevators, officiated at the opening, which came with the elevator about half filled with grain.

In order to have good connections to both highway and rails, Manitoba Pool Elevators had to build about half a mile of side trackage to permit grain cars to come off the Canadian Pacific line at one end, reach the elevator, and continue back to the CP trackage at the other end, without the necessity of backing cars onto the line.

Canadian Pacific, says Mr. Moffat, has not even made application for consideration of abandoning the track serving the new elevator and the rest of the area at Manitoba's southernmost extremity, but the facilities of the new elevator will make it useable regardless of whether the future belongs to the truck or the train.

The new elevator, complete with annex and soon to have all farm supplies available in another attached shed, has cost Manitoba Pool Elevators in the area of \$500,000.