

Chapter 3 - Communication and Transportation

Newspapers

News about and for the residents of the Theodore district began to appear in some Winnipeg newspapers as early as 1892, the year Richard Seeman established his farm. Although these news reports continued with some degree of regularity into the twentieth century, the Winnipeg papers do not appear to have been the primary source of news for the Theodore district.

News from and about Theodore appeared in *The Leader*, a newspaper published in Regina. After the year 1900. However, the Theodore news column began to disappear from *The Leader* after *The Yorkton Enterprise* began publishing in 1896. Unfortunately, the earliest editions of the Yorkton paper are no longer available.

Coverage in all the newspapers is somewhat spotty, and sometimes there would be no reports from Theodore for several months. In the case of *The Yorkton Enterprise* this situation gradually improved over time, and when Mr. J. S. Anderson became Theodore's correspondent in the early twentieth century it was not unusual for the Theodore news to fill a full column in the paper.

Reporting the News

Every early news paper seems to have had someone in each town, village or rural community who would serve as the local correspondent and report whatever events he or she

though would be interesting and appropriate. Perhaps one of the best descriptions of the local correspondent's job is found in the following poem by J. S. Anderson.

There doesn't seem much to write about t times in this old town;
 While some try hard to help you out, while others call you down
 And when you think you've found some news you find it's all a lie;
 That Kelson did not cut his throat, nor did Willie Ungar die.
 Your correspondents all around in every little city
 Are boasting of their fertile ground and think it is a pity
 That Theodore tho old in years should be so void of news
 So now if I can reach your ears, I'll just express my views,
 To start this stuff I don't know where, but guess there'll be no harm
 To mention this that Harold Hare, who bought the old Pirt farm
 Has raised a dandy crop of spuds and wheat and oats galore.
 And would not wish to stack duds in Ontario any more.
 While John Hooge and Young Nels Larson who came here some years ago
 Have claimed more cash that I or you would feel entitled to.
 And Doctor Oscar Turner with his broad and gentile smile
 Is daily welding fractures, growing richer all the while.
 John Smith and Andy Simpson, both farmers of renown
 Are threshing thirty bushels where only one was sown
 Tho' this report may seem o'erdrawn, and some parts read quite funny
 There's nothing in the world can keep good men from making money.
 To prove this tale till you believe, to gently lead you on.
 I point my finger proudly at Brother Joseph Conn.
 When Joe cam here some years ago, he did not have a cent.
 Now Joe has lots of money left when he has paid the rent.
 The filing of this narrative would never be complete.
 Unless we should make mention of our hardware merchant Pete.
 If there is anything in hardware that the housewife seems to lack
 She can go to Pete's and buy it and she'll get the right change back
 Jim McCrea, our chubby barber, fondly tells you of his woes
 While you hope his razor will not come in contact with your nose.
 Jim hands out a line of chatter that would make a chipmunk blink
 And he thinks it doesn't matter if he drives his friends to drink
 While he's handicapped with whiskers one can still discern the smile
 On the face of Mr. Ashdown as he stops to chat a while.
 He tells you of the days gone by and all his early pranks
 And ends up selling you some pails and winter water Tanks
 There's our old friends Willie Ungar and Handsome Charlie Bell
 The former lost his business when his plant fell down the well
 It is were not for the Wheat Pool, Charlie Bell could buy some grain

But he says that Johnnie Hanson boosts the grades like one insane.
 However, being Scottish, Charlie keeps the lid on tight
 And when he buys a bushel, rest assured, he buys it right,
 If you feel disposed to spend a dime to learn about the law
 We've the cutest little lawyer that your uncle ever saw.
 No matter what your crime may be, or how the ill winds blow
 Just take this tip, there isn't much that Alex doesn't know.
 If your chimney catches fire and your wooden shack burns down
 You'll wish the you had called upon insurance agent Brown
 Of all the boys in Theodor of happy, cheerful mien
 George Stanley cops the biscuit and licks the platter clean
 Some say they never was a time when Louis Kelson worked
 But Louie says he does not think that he has ever shirked
 Some men were made to labour, be content with meager gains
 But Louie says its only those who haven't got the brains.¹

Boosterism

The Theodore new column not only provided the people of the district with information, but like most other small town news column, was also a means of extolling the advantages of their communities. This enthusiastic promotion of a community, known as boosterism, was the stock in trade of every local correspondent and Theodore's correspondent to *The Yorkton Enterprise* was no exception. Extolling the advantages of Theodore could be just a simple statement such as the following"

A farmer who has recently been going to Yorkton for his requirements informed your correspondent yesterday that he found he could buy just as cheaply in Theodore. Of course he can.²

On other occasions boosterism could take the form of an entire article that described the Community in some detail. Several of these articles appeared in various newspapers over the years and a least some of them appear to have been commissioned by the community leaders. A

Glowing article about the town of Yorkton published in 1906 by *The Manitoba Free Press*, for example, was accompanied by the following notice:

Full particulars regarding the cost etc., of a Special Illustrated Edition of the Free Press dealing with any town or village in Western Canada may be had on application to *The Manitoba Free Press* Winnipeg Man.”

It is very possible that the following 1926 10 article, published by *The Yorkton Enterprise* was paid for by Theodore’s business community.

Theodore, A Thriving Western Community

The town of Theodore is located in the heart of the famous mixed farming district of northeastern Saskatchewan on the Winnipeg-Saskatoon-Edmonton branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Theodore started into life at its present location when the Manitoba & Northwestern division of the, Canadian Pacific Railway was extended westward in 1903. It has grown steadily from a tiny settlement to a flourishing town of 300 people.

The fertility of the soil is the town’s main claim to fame. No less than half a million bushels of grain will be shipped from this point this year. Theodore, like other prairie towns, has had bad years. but a total crop failure in the district never been known.

The landscape in the country near and tributary to Theodore is undulating, and while the soil is of the choicest, the park like character of the land affords excellent facilities for the mixed farmer. Without certain natural advantages, mixed farming in Western Canada becomes a difficult task, but the bluffs and occasional slough in this district give shelter and water requisite for successful stock raising.

While Theodore is peculiarly suited to mixed farming, it is also as fine grain growing district as there is in the province. The water supply is good and in most cases easy to procure. High grain prices have often proved an incentive to many farmers to grow more grain and raise less stock, but the deeper knowledge of intensive farming has shown gratifying results. The annual returns from hogs and cattle shipped from Theodore average over \$1000,000 and the shipment of cream is increasing rapidly.

The banking business of Theodore is carried on by the Royal Bank of Canada which is capably and efficiently managed and every co-operation given the business man or farmer.

In the last few years a live community spirit has been fostered by the Community Club which includes in its numbers businessmen and other citizens interested in the welfare of the village. It is non-sectarian and all-Canadian. The Community club has for the most part catered to athletics and as a result of its efforts no seasonable sport is neglected. Last year a skating rink was erected and a Sports Day carried on under its auspices. In summer baseball and soft ball derive a large patronage. The Tennis Club has

carried on under its old organization and is one of the most successful clubs here.

A six acre park called the Sports Ground was secured for the town by the efforts of the citizens and the town council donated an annual sum towards its upkeep. It is expected that a grand stand and exhibition building will be erected in the near future.

The town boasts of a brass band which has become quite popular in the district.

As to fraternal societies, Theodore has a Masonic Lodge consisting of 44 members. The town is not without their organized clubs for girls and boys, there being the C.G.I.T. and Trail Rangers.

There are three spacious and attractive churches, United, Scandinavian Lutheran and Anglican, but the children of all denominations unite for a combined Sunday School service

Each church has an energetic Ladies, Aid. The influence of these church organization cannot be exaggerated in the social and spiritual life of the community.

The whole district is well supplied with rural schools and in the town there is a modern four roomed brick school with full equipment and a spacious playground. The scholastic curriculum includes both public and high school work.

Among the prominent places of business contributing to Theodore's prosperity are two large general stores carrying a complete line of up to date merchandise, maintained by D. Dashefsky and John Smith.

A. C. Tracy conducts a modern meat market and handles provisions.

A. B. Austin has a growing trade in fresh and cured meats and groceries.

Frank Reese sells Massey-Harris implements and twine.

Charles Enter is an expert harness maker.

Kelson and Hayes sell I. H. Co. Implements, twine and groceries.

An excellent confectionery and ice cream parlor is maintained by L. L. Larson.

Alf Ashdown, an old timer of this district, is proprietor of a tinsmith shop.

The North American Lumber Company has a yard here under the management of G. Trithart.

George Brown, one of the first comers, conducts a real estate, loan and Insurance office.

Grover Darruck is proprietor of the Theodore Hotel.

H. L. Joe Yees is proprietor of a first class restaurant and lunch counter. John Hanson is grain buyer for the co-operative Elevator Co., and Joe Conn for the Bawlf Grain Co. Manley Austin dispenses law, Forbes Sproule is the station agent, Messrs Barsky and Pishker, General Merchants.

The medical dispensary, with a complete line of drugs, stationery, etc., is maintained by T. Sanders. Peterson's Garage is a place where one can rely on expert mechanics and always find a complete stock of accessories, tires, etc.

E. H. Reese conducts a billiard hall and barber shop. Thos. Windjack is proprietor of a modern blacksmith shop. R. J. Bell is the grain buyer for the Canadian Elevator Co. Alex MacDonald is a barrister and solicitor.

Theodore district has no free homesteads but there are a number of the choicest improved farm for, rent or lease and any interested settler will always receive the glad hand here.³

Theodore's Very Own Newspaper: *The Theodore Tattler*

In early January 1921 the Theodore correspondent to *The Yorkton Enterprise* reported that the village secretary had received a letter from a newspaper publisher who was considering possibility of publishing a Theodore newspaper, and the advisability of locating in the village.⁴

Nothing more appears in the news regarding a local newspaper for Theodore until the fall of 1921 when *The Theodore Tattler* made its appearance on the 3rd of September. Its appearance was greeted with the following reports:

The first issue of Theodore's newspaper the Tattler," is at hand and reflects credit on the energy and enterprise of the publisher, W. H. Austin, a Theodore Boy. That Theodore merchants are right behind the venture is indicated by the substantial volume of advertising. There is a field for such a publication in Theodore and district, and *The Enterprise* extends a welcome and wishes the new arrival in the journalistic field all success.⁵

One of the latest enterprises to be launched there is a weekly newspaper, the first issue of which will make its appearance on Saturday Sept. 3rd, and every Saturday thereafter. This will be an eight page, six-column paper carrying local and general news and advertisements. W. H. Austin, a local man, will edit the paper.

Little doubt is felt that this venture will prove a success. Local advertisers will shortly be able to note a change and increase in patronage and will find, as merchants in other towns have found, that money spent in advertising is well spent. Advertising, particularly in local papers, which are read more closely than any other kind of publication is beyond the experimental stage.⁶

The Theodore Tattler was an independent newspaper not connected with any other newspaper in any way.⁷ It was edited and managed from Theodore but printed in Foam Lake.⁸

At the time of its publication, there were a number of other newspapers being published in the area that had once been served exclusively by *The Yorkton Enterprise*.⁹ S. N. Wynn, editor

and owner of *The Yorkton Enterprise*, wrote to the editor of *The Tattler*, wishing him and his paper success.¹⁰

In the first edition of the paper, W. H. Austin, the editor and publisher, stated that the paper had been established in Theodore in response to requests from several citizens for a local paper, and that its first goal was to further the interests of the village and promote what it considered would be improvements. It promised to furnish its readers with “good clean news” of the community, promote improvement in the community, “aid in the furthering of interest in sports, such as baseball, football, hockey, tennis etc.”¹¹

The content of *The Tattler* included several regular features. First, there was news from the districts around Theodore.¹² Second, there was “The School Bulletin,” a weekly column written and edited by the pupils of the Theodore School.¹³ Third, there was a weekly article called “Trade Talk,” which featured one of the local businesses. And, of course, there was a column devoted to news of the local residents.

The editor welcomed letters from the paper’s readers, and stated that, “Expressions of opinion if put in letter form can reach hundreds of readers, and will create interest in the subject about which they are written.”¹⁴ However, he did insist that the writer sign the letters stating that, “A letter that is not worth signing is not worth printing.”¹⁵

According to the Theodore correspondent to *The Yorkton Enterprise* a regrettable feature of the first issue of *The Tattler* was a misstatement regarding *The Enterprise* and a request to have it corrected.¹⁶ A correction was apparently made and nothing further was said about the issue. The editor of *The Tattler* made every reasonable effort to respond to any concern that were

expressed by the readers. When for example, Jem Fiedler, objected to her name appearing in the paper the editor wrote:

Miss Jem Fiedler says she does not like to see her name in the paper. We won't have Miss Jem Fiedler's name in the paper only when Miss Jem Fiedler has visitors or does something out of the ordinary. Sorry! Miss Fiedler.¹⁷

The editor was, true to his word, a week later, when Miss Fiedler did do something he thought newsworthy, he wrote, "Miss Jem Fiedler returned on Thursday from Winnipeg, having spent a few days with Mrs. Gratch there."¹⁸ In the same way, when someone thought that he had made a disparaging remark about the Ruthenians, as many Ukrainian people were then called, he responded, saying:

The Tattler feels that there are very few "foreigners" in our province. A man who is being a good citizen and who is doing his best to live a good life and help our country and is learning the English language is a "*Canadian*" irrespective of where he is born.¹⁹

In mid January, 1922 the following item appeared in *The Tattler* which may be an indication the paper was facing difficulties.

Your local Paper works for you. Do you work for your local paper? Get your friends to subscribe - use the Classified ads - send an account of the happenings in your district weekly. The staff alone cannot make the paper a good one. It needs your help.²⁰

Just over a month later the Theodore correspondent to *The Yorkton Enterprise* wrote:

The Theodore Tattler has suspended and Editor Austin has notified his subscribers that it has been absorbed by *The Yorkton Press*. The Press will carry a page devoted to Theodore and district, and will be mailed to Tattler subscribers until subscriptions expire. The general opinion is that *The Enterprise* would be more welcome.²¹

In August of 1922 W. W. Cooper, editor and publisher of the Foam Lake Review, visited Theodore in an unsuccessful attempt to re-establish another weekly paper in Theodore.²²

Radio

The first report of anyone in Theodore owning a radio occurred on 6 January 1926, when Dr. Turner and Tom Sanders, the local druggist, purchased one.²³ By the middle of the following February it was reported that radios were becoming so common that some were at a loss to tell the difference between clothes line and aerials.²⁴

It is difficult to say exactly what impact the radio had on the social life in Theodore. It did, in some ways, expand the horizons of people who could now receive news and information from distant points. In 1927, for example, James Seaman, local Blacksmith won a six-tube radio receiving set from an American station that offered it as a prize to the listener who had received its signal from the greatest distance.²⁵ Joe Conn installed a radio in his office at the elevator and was able to keep in touch with the grain markets of the world. Presumably that information was shared with local farmers.²⁶ Those who were interested in world events got up early to hear the broadcasted speech of King George and delegates to the Peace Conference in January 1930.²⁷

Notes:

1. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 18 October, 1927.
2. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 15 October, 1929.
3. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 6 July, 1926.
4. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 13 January, 1921.
5. "Theodore" *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 8 September, 1921.
6. "How Others See Us" *The Theodore Tattler*. 3 September 1921. (Reprinted From the Western Review, Foam Lake)
7. "The Theodore Tattler" *The Theodore Tattler*. 3 September, 1921.
8. "The Theodore Tattler" *The Theodore Tattler*. 3 September, 1921.
9. "Theodore" *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 8 September, 1921.
10. "Town & District" *The Theodore Tattler*. 10 September, 1921.
11. "The Theodore Tattler" *The Theodore Tattler*. 3 September, 1921.
12. "Town & District" *The Theodore Tattler*. 10 September, 1921.
13. "The School Bulletin" *The Theodore Tattler*. 10 September, 1921.
14. "Notes," *The Theodore Tattler*. 26 November, 1921.
15. "Notes," *The Theodore Tattler*. 26 November, 1921.
16. "Theodore" *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 8 September, 1921.
17. "The Local News," *The Theodore Tattler*. 26 November, 1921.
18. "The Local News," *The Theodore Tattler*. 3 December, 1921.
19. "Editorial Comment," *The Theodore Tattler*. 17 December, 1921.
20. "The local News," *The Theodore Tattler*. 14 January, 1922.
21. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 23 February, 1922.
22. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 24 August, 1922.

23. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 9 January, 1925.
24. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 19 February, 1926.
25. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 7 October, 1927.
26. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 11 October, 1927.
27. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 21 January, 1930.