

Recollections of 1930's - written in 1960 - published here 1992.

"I never came to town except to get a tooth pulled or have

Had a notion to take a look back at the issues for the year that I came to town - 1960 - and see if I could remember what I was doing about this time of year.

Sure enough when I opened up the files to the first issue in May in 1960, I found that I had just been elected a director of the local Kinsmen Club! Actually the story was a short one announcing that George Charlton had just been elected president of the Kinsmen to succeed Herb Sinclair. Harold Hanna was vice president, Heinz Goldbach secretary, Ed Schultz treasurer, Mel Stevenson bulletin editor, and directors were Gerry Harvey, Ted Slusar, Morris Smetaniuk and Bill Dyer.

Main story on the front page was the trustees getting the green light to go ahead with construction of anew million dollar hospital here after years of dispute. An overflow crowd in the old North Peace High School auditorium re-elected Howard Travis and Keith Dixon with large majorities over candidates proposed by the North Peace Ratepayers Association. Each voter had to sign a written affidavit as to voting status.

But as I leafed through the paper, I recalled more clearly what I had been doing just prior to that week. I had been contacting businesses throughout the community to advertise in a special section devoted to the thirtieth anniversary of the Bowes & Herron Garage. And in that section was a gem of a story by Vera Loucks on her memories of early days in Fort St.

realized that I made a couple of trips for other reasons.

My first visit to Fort St. John was in the early fall of 1931. . . My husband was in Fort St. John . . . but I had instructions to send somebody in for him on a certain day. Mr. and Mrs. Salzberg had come to the country with us so we decided that we would make a picnic of the trip bringing my two boys with us. We had an early dinner, packed a lunch for supper hitched a team of mules to the democrat and were on our way.

We cound Bill (her husband) at Bowes & Herron garage where Fletcher Fell an old friend from Saskatchewan was working. Fletcher had a homestead in the Sunrise district but lived from Monday morning until Saturday in a tent beside the garage. He invited us into his tent where we picnicked together. All that I remember of Fort St. John that day is Bowes & Herron's garage and Fletcher Fell's tent and the image of them is rather hazy.

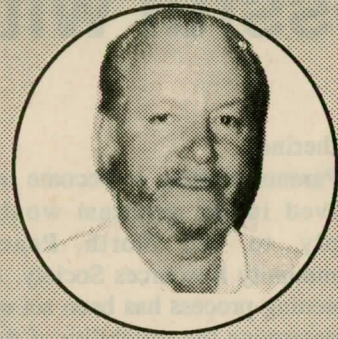
My next visit to Fort St. John must have been when my daughter was born.

'Horrors!' I can hear the modern mother say. 'Weren't you in for a monthly check-up by the doctor?'

I can't recall of ever being to see him. I think my husband came in on horseback and informed the doctor and the hospital when to expect me. As one of my friends remarked to me a short time ago, 'Some of us lived and some of us died and that's all there was to it.'

GLANCING BACK

by Bill Dyer



interested in how we paid our doctor and hospital bills. Oh no! Not with money! There wasn't any, at least not in circulation amongst the homesteaders - perhaps Bowes & Herron, Mr. Finch and a few others knew what it looked like.

Well the Sisters of Providence lived up to their name and accepted anything they could use. We had several good milk cows so the Sisters said they would take one for the bill. They looked at the cow, decided that she was worth \$50, the bill was \$44 so they gave us \$6 change. Six dollars in cash! A fortune!

Dr. Brown's bill was \$15. For that we gave him one butchered pig. So we paid for our baby girl with one white-faced cow and one pig.

My next recollection of Fort St. John was about two years later. My sister was in the hospital with a new baby and I wanted very much to see her. Bill was bringing a load of wood to the hospital. This was a donation load of which he brought several that winter so I decided to go along.

A very early start was necessary, about 6:30 in the morning, so I roused my children from their cosy beds and took them with us as far as the Ouelette home. Mrs. Ouelette had kindly offered to look after them, sending the oldest one to school with her children and keeping the other two.

It was cold. How cold I can't remember but I was warmly dressed, the outer layer being an old

black fur coat which could be recommended for its weight and warmth but not its beauty. When I got cold I got off and walked or rather trotted beside the sleigh. It didn't take long in that heavy fur coat to improve the circulation.

We arrived at the hospital at noon. While Bill delivered the wood, I visited with my sister and admired the new baby; no set visiting hours then and no babies under glass.

Then we proceeded downtown to have a celebration! Lunch, no, it was dinner in those days, in a restaurant! Mrs. Bob O'Brien had a restaurant in the building now occupied by Slyman's store. She served a complete dinner for 25 cents. It wasn't fancy but it was filling.

We got back to Ouelette's about 6:30 p.m. where we had supper, collected our family and went home. It must have been a long day. Sometimes I tell modern mothers that I never had a baby sitter. Now I realize that is not exactly true. Mrs. Ouelette, Mrs. Jim Cassidy and Mrs. Frank Hislop helped me out occasionally receiving nothing but my sincere appreciation.

1930's

a baby..."

A few years later, I had a terrible toothache late in the fall. We sent the two boys to school, dressed our little girl in her best and came to St. John.

Dr. Szilagyi and Dr. Kearney then had offices on the second floor of the building that now houses Mark Wah's cafe. The wind was blowing a regular gale and I prayed as I climbed those stairs that it would not blow me off. Dr. Szilagyi relieved me of the offending tooth and we went to the Carmichael hotel for dinner.

This was a rambling log structure set back from the street. I believe the log structure is still part of the now imposing Fort Hotel, at least the Fort Hotel occupies the spot.

The meal was served family style on a round dining room table in one corner of a restful dining room. My foggy memory seems to tell me that two other people had dinner there that day.

Oh yes! One other early impression! I used to stand in the hospital window and look down over the town to Dr. Brown's house so far out of town. The building was about three blocks south of Centre Avenue!"

John. It fitted so well with the story I did last week on Norman Armstrong and the cash crunch of the thirties that I just had to reprint part of it here.

Headed "Down memory's lane to the early thirties - A Two Rivers' farm wife's memory of 'town'", the story went :

"When the editor asked me to write of the early days in Fort St. John, my immediate reply was , 'Goodness! I know nothing of the early days in Fort St. John. I never came in except to get a tooth pulled or have a baby.' So she said, 'Write about that.'

In gazing down memory's lane, I

She and I belonged to the same group that lived as evidenced by the fact that we are still here.

I came in the second day after Christmas, travelling that 16 miles by team and bob-sleigh. Bill got a bachelor neighbour to stay with the boys while he brought me in. He took me directly to the hospital, such a large, clean, bright building, the only one this side of Dawson Creek with electric lights and indoor plumbing. Here I was able to stay for \$1 a day until the baby was born.

My baby put in her appearance on January 4, 1933.

Perhaps newcomers would be