

❧ Indian Scare ❧

On November 17, 1890 the Sims area residents were advised by the Military to gather on the highest hill and fortify themselves against a Sioux uprising. The Indians had been performing ghost dances on the streets of Mandan and Bismarck, which had been interpreted to mean war.

No. 18, 1890—There are grave fears of an uprising among the Indians of Standing Rock and other agencies. Settlers are now becoming alarmed lest the redskins break loose and go on a campaign of pillaging. General Roger's visit to Standing Rock apparently had little effect on the Indians and they seem more determined than ever to engage in warfare with Uncle Sam's troops.

Cartridges are in great demand in Mandan.

Rifles and ammunition were supplied by Fort Lincoln. It has been said that between 50 and 75 rifles were delivered to Sims. John Steen of Carson, who spoke at the Old Settlers's Picnic in Almont in the 20's, said he had delivered the rifles to Sims, and also stated that there were 450 "able-bodied" men in Sims at that time.

Nov, 19, 1890—The Tribune has not yet deemed it advisable to send its war correspondent to the front, though the excitement increases with each hour at Mandan. The newspaper correspondents have evidently loaded down the wires with glaring pictures of the terrible result of an outbreak among the Sioux as the Western Union office was pretty busy receiving telegrams from people in the east who were very solicitous for the safety of their friends and relatives out west. A half a dozen or more families from Hebron and New Salem came down to Bismarck yesterday for protection. Captain Gregg's big load of guns and ammunition was shipped to Mandan on the morning train but in what manner the gallant Mandanites disposed of them has not been learned.

Families came from all directions to seek protection, including those from the Heart River. They gathered on top of "Staale Heie," the hill northwest of the Sims Church, so

named because it was on Staale Johnson's homestead. A U-shaped trench was dug on the top of the hill and a sod shelter was erected in the center of the U. Food and water was stockpiled in the fortification. Women and children were housed in a mine below the hill top, until they realized the Indians might start a fire at the entrance of the mine, and they would die of suffocation. They all moved to the top of the hill where they nervously waited to see what would happen. John Peterson was the watchman. Laura Ims Holritz said the people who lived in Sims did not go up on the hill, but did not undress at night, so were ready to go at anytime.

Mrs. Elisabeth Johnson did not wish to leave anything for the Indians that she could possibly carry, so she wore all the skirts she owned. She was later known as Pettiskirt Elisabeth.

During the alert, a rider on a pinto horse was sighted coming from the west; some wanted to shoot, but Pete Hoovestol asked them to hold their fire until the rider could be better identified. They were glad they did, as the rider was Hans Benson, who lived up the Curlew Valley.

The Indians never came. A Bismarck Tribune article, dated November 20, 1890, stated that the Indian scare subsided almost as quickly as it was born.

Other towns in the area were also warned of the Indian uprising. New Salem people gathered at the top of Moltzen Hill, about three miles northwest of town, and Hebron people were fortified on Ft. Sauerkraut, just west of town. I've always thought the hill at Sims should have been called "Fort Lutefisk!"



"Fort Lutefisk" at Sims

❧ HISTORICAL FACT ❧

In 1871 there were only 76 "whites" living in what is now North Dakota.

❧ Homesteading ❧

On May 20, 1862, President Abraham Lincoln signed the Homestead Act. It provided that any American citizen could acquire 160 acres of free land by establishing residence for five years, and cultivating a minimum of 10 acres. Five acres had to be plowed the first year, and another five acres the second year. There was a filing fee of \$14 and after five years, there was a \$4 charge for "proving up." A minimum of seven months residence each year was required. Two witnesses were needed to verify that the homesteader had carried out his obligations. A patent was issued to the homesteader, signed by the President of the United States; this document served as a deed.

There was also a pre-emption provision. By paying a \$2 filing fee, and after living on the land for six months, one could later purchase the land for \$1.25 per acre. This system was used by those who were not yet of age. Otto Feland of this community was too young to homestead, so used the pre-emption rights.

In 1873 the Timber Culture Act was added. This provided the granting of a Tree Claim, if one could show a total of 675 healthy growing trees, at the end of eight years. This also required a \$14 filing fee, and \$4 charge for final proof. The Act was repealed in 1891. There were 29,000 Tree Claims filed in North Dakota, but only 8,000 met the requirements.

Before the land was surveyed, in 1879, it was possible to get Squatters Rights. All that was necessary was to mark the desired location.

The Homestead Act was amended to allow the Montana homesteader $\frac{1}{2}$ section of land instead of $\frac{1}{4}$ section, and only three years residency was required. Several from this area filed in Montana.

The Department of Interior shows that 1,622,077 U.S. homesteaders made final entry. It has been said that only one homesteader out of three stayed long enough to get his or her patent. There were several instances of this in our area. Harry Meek filed two miles south of Sims, and James Pugh filed about five miles south of Sims (southeast of the present Almont Cemetery). Neither person stayed the required five years as there is no record of a patent at the County Register of Deeds office.

Unmarried women could also homestead, if they were of age (21) and a U.S. citizen. After filing, many women married, which was permissible. In western North Dakota, 25% of the homesteaders were women.

The first homestead filing in Dakota Territory was in the early 1860's; the first in this area was in the early 1880's. A person wishing to homestead would usually contact the local land agent or "locator," as he was called. He had information on available lands, and would take the interested party to see the various sites. When the choice was made, a rock pile or a post was used to mark the spot. A trip to the District Land Office to register the claim was then necessary.

We do not know who the early homestead land agents were. E.E. Templeton came to Sims shortly after 1900 and served as land agent for the Heart River Land Company of



Grace Jacobson in doorway of her homestead shack as it stood in Grant County, 10 miles south of Almont. Now in Sig Peterson's back yard.

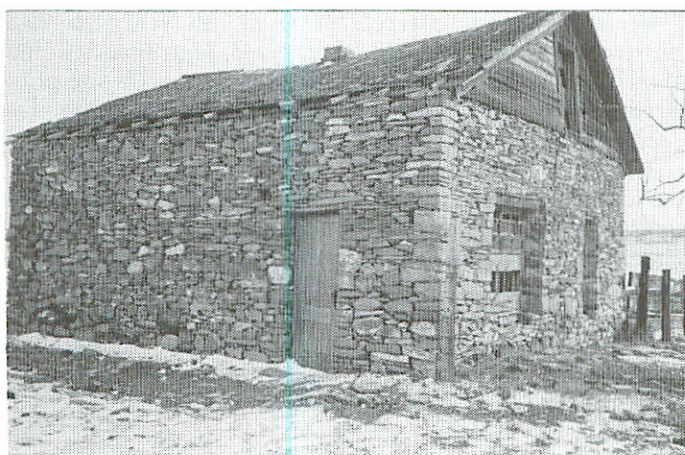
St. Paul. When Almont was founded in 1906, Templeton moved to Almont and was in the realty business there. N.E. Becklund and G.H. Anderson joined him in establishing the Western Dakota Land and Loan Company. Almont homesteaders were fortunate to be able to make the final proof of claim locally. G.H. Anderson was appointed U.S. Commissioner for the Bismarck Land Office; he was the only



Log house — John DeLange at Heart River — 1905.



Homestead house of Staale Johnson on the Larvel Anderson farm - Sims. Occupied until about 1940. Picture taken in 1988.



Francois Schollaert homestead. Two story sandstone house three miles north of Sims. Occupied until 1942. Picture taken in 1988.

commissioner between Bismarck and Dickinson. We have been told that in other areas, homesteaders stood in line waiting for the office to open — some waited all night.

Homestead shacks were constructed of various materials, and the size had to be a minimum of 12 x 12 ft. A homestead shack of lumber could be built for about \$100. If a larger dwelling was desired, it could be built for an average cost of \$350.

A sod house was the quickest and cheapest to build. The walls were made of sod blocks, cut from the prairie ground. Openings were allowed for windows and a door. The roof was usually made of lumber, with a tin covering, or of tree branches covered with sod; some were covered with brush and earth. Sod houses were quite comfortable, as they were warm in winter and cool during the summer. The inside walls were sometimes plastered with a gumbo-type clay for wind-proofing; the walls could then be painted with white lime to give a brighter and cleaner look. The mice and rats also enjoyed living in these houses!

Homestead houses were also built of rock; the walls were about two feet thick and were usually plastered. The west wall of the Alvin Peterson farm home is still of the original rock construction, and has been kept in good repair. There were quite a few rock houses built in the rural area southwest of Almont; some of these were made of sandstone. The ledges of sandstone rock in the hillsides in that area, made the material easily accessible.

Digging a shelter into a hillside made a warm house. In

some instances coal would be found as they dug into the hillside; this provided the homesteader with fuel as well as shelter. I remember such a house in the Sims area, occupied by an older couple; he could mine the coal for the stove as it was needed. The house faced east so was well protected from the cold northwest wind. One wall inside the dugout was lined with empty whisky bottles — an indication that the old gent liked his liquor! An interesting sidelight about this couple: Thorvald Barstad told of walking past their dugout as he walked to work in the Sims coal mines. The couple would ask him to come in to either read or write a letter to their daughter, who lived in the eastern part of the state. The couple, who were from Norway, could neither read nor write, but the man would dictate the letter, lying on the bed with his head covered so he could concentrate. His dictation was all in rhyme! (Maybe he was related to Cowboy Poet Rodney Nelson of Sims!)

A mixture of clay and straw made satisfactory material for homestead walls. The straw would be tramped into the wet clay with bare feet, and then placed between a framework of boards. The floors were usually of dirt, but with all the traffic in a small space, the earth became hard and was easy to clean (questionable).

Lumber houses were preferred, even though they were not as warm as those of sod. There would usually be a dugout under the board floor, which was called a cellar, and used for storage. The cellar was accessible by a trap door in the floor and a ladder down to the dirt floor. The cellar would keep perishables cool in summer.

Homesteaders who were married, soon found that their 12 x 12 shack was too small to accommodate very many children. The table and chairs would have to be moved out of the shack at night to make sleeping room for the family. Today we enjoy so many comforts and conveniences, we are prone to forget the many trials and tribulations which our pioneering forefathers had to endure. The hardships included extreme temperatures, blizzards, droughts, floods, grasshoppers, prairie fires, sickness — and in many cases, much loneliness, especially among the women, who did not have an opportunity to get out and mingle with others. Some of the farms were situated several miles from a neighbor and many miles from a doctor. The mortality rate was very high, especially among children.

In areas where there was no coal or trees to burn for heating the shacks, they resorted to other methods to provide fuel for heat. "Buffalo chips" were in abundance and seemed to burn quite well, and some mixed manure and straw together, let it dry, and stock piled it for winter use. I'm sure there was a distinct aroma in the shacks that burned that kind of fuel. Twisted long slough grass was also used for fuel. A young man went to call on a neighbor girl, and was put to work twisting grass — not too romantic! I wonder if he ever went to see that girl again.

In pioneer days, no one ever locked their doors when they left home — it was an unwritten law. Anyone drifting through was welcome to help himself to food and shelter. This practice did save a few lives during snow storms or adverse weather conditions. If a house was locked, it could easily be opened with a skeleton key, which defeated the purpose of locking.

Following the building of the railroad, homesteaders came in great numbers to this area. Most of them came by rail — some directly from Europe, and others (from eastern states)

in immigrant railroad cars, with their household goods, machinery and livestock. Immigrants, laborers, farmers and tradesmen learned of the free land, and were lured to the New American Northwest through extensive advertising, in this country and Europe, by the railroads and U.S. Government. The NP Railroad had an agency in Liverpool, England.

Quite a number of German-Russians settled southwest of Almont. That area was referred to as the Russian Flats. These immigrants were originally Germans who had been under Russian rule for about 100 years. Russia was drafting young men for the army — this was at the beginning of the 20th century, and the German-Russians did not want to fight for the Russians. It was not easy to escape from Russia — they endured many hardships to get here. They were a very ambitious people, and were soon well established here. Some of the stone buildings and fences they made are still standing.

Several pioneer families came by covered wagon to the Sims area. On July 4, 1884, the Jonas Ims family arrived in Sims in a covered wagon, pulled by oxen. It had taken them seven weeks to come from Inwood, Minnesota. They had stopped every third day to rest the oxen for a day and wash clothes. In 1887 five families, in five covered wagons, came from Lake Benton, Minn. and settled in the Heart River area. In the caravan were Mr. and Mrs. Hans Anderson and two children, Albert and Amelia; Mr. and Mrs. Hans Bjorum and son; Mr. and Mrs. Tronson and family; Mr. and Mrs. Langdon and family and Andrew Anderson. These pioneers also stopped for a day of rest, and to wash clothes and bake bread (no rest for the women!). They had a small stove with them. The immigrants always had at least one milk cow.

The availability of water was very important in choosing a homestead; locations next to streams or springs were the first choice. Carrying water in buckets for household use was common, and sometimes the distance was quite far. Before well drilling machines became a reality, wells were dug by hand, and usually curbed with rock. A pail on a rope was lowered into the well to get the water. The wells were also used to keep milk, cream and butter cool for household use.

Later hand pumps were installed. There was, of course, a limit to the depth that it was feasible to dig. Well diggers had to be careful of cave-ins, and also gas. A lamp would be lowered down the hole; if the light went out, it would indicate there was gas — which could not be detected by smell. Sacks or other objects would then be lowered and raised, causing the gas to move out of the well.

Homestead sites were sometimes hard to choose, especially

in winter months. One homesteader chose the smoothest and most level land he could find; after the spring thaw, he found it was a swampy slough. Some were not satisfied with their first choice of land; my grandfather, Gabriel Peterson first chose a homestead by the Muddy Creek, but relinquished it and chose another site, three miles southeast of Sims. His original homestead site was later chosen by Fred Hoeger.

Sometimes a homestead shack would be built right on a section line or quarter line. In this way, one homestead shack could qualify for two homesteaders, such as two brothers, or maybe a man and his fiancée. One would sometimes see four shacks on one section; the density of homesteads depended much on the location. Raising a large family on one quarter section seems impossible now, but such was often the case, and they had a comfortable living.

Most of the homesteaders started with no capital; it was necessary to borrow money, and banks were charging about 7½% interest; some charged 2% per month. When they had borrowed as much as the bank allowed, loan sharks would show up offering money at 25% interest; and if the principal was not paid at the end of the year, foreclosure proceedings were started. These loan sharks showed no mercy!

As far as we know, Grace Jacobsen Nelson was the last person in this area to homestead. She filed in 1912 on a quarter section, about one mile southeast of her father's claim, in Grant County. She received her patent in 1917, signed by President Woodrow Wilson. Her 12 x 12 shack was built from leftover lumber from her father's new barn. My wife, Margie, born in 1914, lived in the shack with her mother; her dad, Lawrence Nelson, was serving in the U.S. Navy during World War I. One summer Margie's Mom took care of two young boys, Wallace and Howard Hyde, who lived with them in the shack. Grace's sister, Carrie, also had a shanty on her claim, about a mile away, and the two girls commuted between the two places (on foot). Grace's land was sold, and the shack was sold and moved to Almont where it provided living quarters for the Oscar Feland children while they attended high school in Almont. John Koba bought the house from Felands, and lived in it until his death. We were able to buy the shack after his death, and moved it out to our ranch, where we have tried to restore it to its original state, which greatly pleased Grandma Grace. We enjoy this "memory of the past" and visitors enjoy it too — it is a great "conversation piece." It is hard to realize now that it was possible to live in such cramped quarters. There was a lot of "togetherness" in those days!

In 1884 Morton County Sheriff Harmon was requested by Marquis DeMores to come to Medora to arrest two men who had threatened to kill the Marquis. Before the sheriff arrived, one of the men had been shot and killed; the Marquis and two men were charged with the murder. A jury trial was held in Bismarck and the accused were found "not guilty." Steve Weakes was a Morton County deputy sheriff at the time and was of the opinion that the jury had been bought.

Almont

E. W. Hyde and J. W. Burt, two enterprising young business men from South Dakota, representing the C.H. Chase Lumber Company, were interested in opening a business in western North Dakota. They had checked out the area in May of 1906, and decided that Sims would be a promising location to start a lumber yard and build a grain elevator.

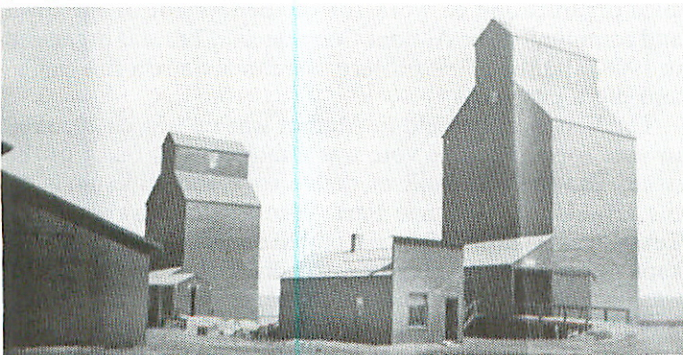
Mr. and Mrs. Hyde and their two children, Thelma and Wallace, arrived in Sims the later part of May 1906 from Rauville, S.D. and at the same time, eight carloads of lumber came to Sims for the C.H. Chase Co. Hyde tried to buy lots in Sims to locate the new business, but C.L. Timmerman, lumber dealer in Sims, owned most of the available lots and did not want any competition. Hyde unloaded the lumber on the railroad right-of-way at Sims because the railroad charged a demurrage fee if the cars were not unloaded within a certain number of days.



Mr. E.W. Hyde
Founder of Almont

This dilemma and disappointment caused Hyde to look for another location to start his business venture; he found it on a siding just four miles south of Sims. The Northern Pacific Railroad had installed the side track in 1883 and called it Almont. There already was a telephone in a booth at the siding; the telephone line continued south to the Heart River Hotel, located on the Heart River. Homestead seekers came to the hotel to stay while prospecting for free land and land agents were also headquartered at the hotel to show them the available land.

We're not sure where the name Almont came from, but hearsay has it that someone on the construction crew or follow-up inspection party, had a French background and used French words to describe the area — Alta (high) mont (hill) became ALMONT.



Almont - 2 elevators shortly after being built - 1906.

On July 4, 1906, nine blocks for the future city of Almont were laid out by Morton County surveyor, H.H. Harmon and E.W. Hyde. Hyde's partner, J.W. Burt, E.E. Templeton, J.W. Hurley and O.A. Young helped with the survey. (The chain used to survey the town is in the Almont Museum.) Hyde is acclaimed as the founder of Almont.



Amanda Nelson at the door of Almont's first bank.

The lumber which had been unloaded at Sims, was moved to Almont and within 10 days from the date of survey, a 40,000 bushel elevator was under construction. By the end of three weeks, the Sherwood Restaurant was open for business and a building for a general store was started. The Hyde family lived in Sims until their new home in Almont was completed and ready for occupancy. The Hyde home was the first house built in Almont.

On August 12, only 39 days after the survey, about 300 people gathered for Almont's first celebration. There was a non-denominational church service that morning in the new lumber shed, to start the day's activities. The 24-piece Bohemian Band from 12 miles east of Almont, provided entertainment during the day. Highlight of the celebration was a baseball game between Almont and Sims. After a 2 to 2 tie, Almont won the game in the 10th inning. The winning team was of a last minute pick-up team of young farmers and townspeople, who played the game in overalls.

At the time of this first celebration, five businesses were already in operation: Sherwood Restaurant, Chalmers Hotel,

DeVaul Store, Chase Lumber and Elevator. By the end of August the Casserly Hardware Store was under construction.

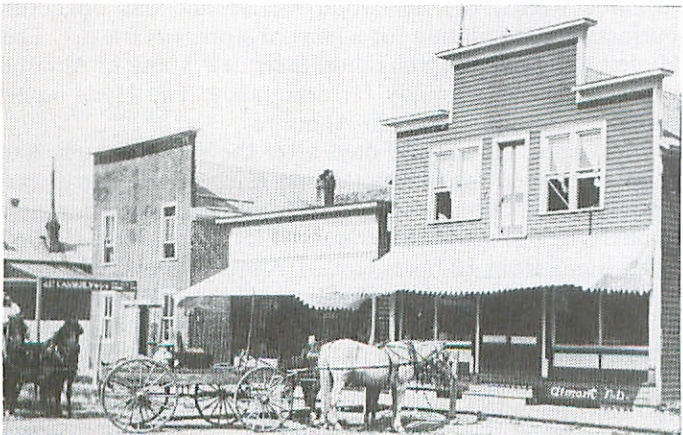
The new elevator was ready to receive grain that fall, but farmers bringing heavy loads of grain to town were faced with a problem — there were creeks to cross and no bridges. Temporary crossings were made of bridge planks which served the purpose until bridges were constructed. Grain was shipped out of Almont in immigrant railroad cars that had come in loaded with machinery, livestock and furniture. As soon as the cars were unloaded, they were filled with grain and shipped east.

It was amazing how rapidly the town of Sims grew in the early 1880's — but Almont boomed even faster. It was unbelievable.

One year and six months after the July 4th survey, 25 businesses had started: two banks — First State and Farmers State; two elevators — Chase Co. and Lyons Co.; three general merchandise stores — Fred Holritz, C.A. Knutson and John Frey; one hardware store — J.P. Casserly; two hotels — Almont Hotel and Tischler Hotel; one implement store — Jens Nelson and Sons; three lumber yards — Heart River Co., Mandan Mercantile and Chase Lumber Co.; one restaurant — Red Star; two meat markets — Pellet and Larson; one confectionery — Dave Pederson; one drug store — Davenport Drug; barber — Frank X Todt; Lawyer Hiram Goff; a weekly newspaper — *The Advertiser*; Postmaster E.E. Templeton who was also a representative for Lutheran Colonization Co.; livery barn and feed store operated by Ben Bird; blacksmith — J.R. Thompson; and Doctor Barton. There was also a two-story NPRR depot and City Hall. By this time all lots from the original nine-block survey had been sold.



Almont — Main Street looking north.



Almont West Main Street — 1910. (L. to R.): Corner of Bateman Cafe, Casserly Hardware, Davenport Drug, Timmerman Store.

On August 12th and 13th, 1907, Almont's first anniversary was celebrated. The following committees were selected to be in charge of the celebration: program — E.W. Hyde, Fred Holritz and John Frey; entertainment — Fred Holritz, Ray Davenport and P.R. Peterson; races — Ben Bird and Ed Holritz; finance — Jens Nelson and Roy Davenport; dance and music — John Davenport, C.A. Knutson and Clarence Bergland; baseball game — Joe Casserly and Andrew Holritz; advertising — G.H. Anderson and E.E. Templeton. On Monday the 12th, the Valley Forge Band entertained and a ball game between Carson and Almont was played — Almont won. Horse races, foot races and a dance concluded the first day's events. Tuesday's program included several addresses and a baseball game between Sims and Almont. This time Sims was the victor.

Almont continued to grow — adding more business to Main Street which included a third hotel. Almont really boomed during the summer of 1909 when the NPRR built the south branch. Stores, hotels and boarding houses did a big business with the influx of more laborers working on the railroad. Several businesses from Sims moved to Almont, as that town was now on the decline.

Because of the rapid growth of the town, more land was acquired; the Filkens Addition was the first to be added, followed by the Atkinson Addition. There must have been many carpenters employed in Almont at that time, as houses and businesses seemed to spring up over night. Among the many buildings erected that year were a community hall, 2-room school and a 2-story depot, said to be the finest between Mandan and Dickinson.

The Almont Creamery began operation in the spring of 1908 with Louis Larson of Winthrop, MN as buttermaker. Farmers had organized to make the new business venture possible. Hogan Anderson was president of the organization; B. Schmitz, vice president; E.M. Willman, secretary and N.E. Becklund, treasurer. Directors were Jacob Held, Rickart Olson and Christ Kaelberer. The creamery was located one mile south of Almont, on the corner where one road leads south and the other to the west. For many years, after the creamery was gone, that corner was always referred to as the "creamery corner." An ice house was a necessity before the creamery could operate; 40 tons of ice were put up that winter to be used for cooling the cream and butter.

Almont's first newspaper, *The Advertiser*, was replaced by the *Almont Arena*. The first edition came off the press on December 2, 1910. The subscription rate was \$1.50 a year. The last issue was June 19, 1914. Since then the *Almont News* has been in the *New Salem Journal*.

Almont businessmen realized the need for some kind of civic organization to work for the betterment of the town and community; the Almont Commercial Club was organized in 1908, and their first projects were to acquire a fire engine and dig a city well.

The first election held in Almont was on March 20, 1908 to vote for a jail. The vote was unanimous in favor of the issue. The jail was built of native rock and still stands on the grounds of Heritage Park. Ben Bird, a cowboy from Texas, was Almont's first appointed deputy sheriff, and was kept rather busy keeping law and order in town; in fact, it was becoming too much for him alone, so a town marshal was appointed to assist him for a monthly salary of \$65. Bird also had a livery stable and stage line between Almont and Carson, and served as a veterinarian. In later years when



Ben Olson in his shoe repair shop about 1923.

Almont no longer had a medical doctor, he was called on to treat minor cuts and bruises on the natives. Marge remembers the "horse doctor" treating a bad gash on her forehead when she was about 3 years old. She carried the scar for many years.

One of the novelty shops in Almont was a millinery store, opened in 1910 by Mrs. Nellie Lauzon of Webster, SD. There was a great demand for fancy hats in those days!

Almont's first doctor was G.G. St. Clair, physician and surgeon, who stayed about a year and then was replaced by Dr. W.T. Cain in 1911. Dr. Cain had practiced in Underwood for two years before coming to Almont; he also purchased the Almont Pharmacy. Dr. Keats, a lady doctor, practiced in Almont in 1916 and also was a pharmacist.

Automobiles made their appearance on the streets of Almont in 1909 or 1910. Attorney Hiram Goff had the first car and J.W. Hurley was the owner of the second car in Almont. By 1916, cars were outnumbering horse-drawn vehicles. At Almont's 10th anniversary celebration, 125 automobiles crowded the streets.

A cigar factory began operation in 1916, owned and operated by James Graham. It was located on the site of the present Almont City Park. The factory manufactured more cigars than any other in North Dakota. It was moved to Almont from the Heart River. Miko cigars were very much in demand and orders for them were running 300,000 behind schedule.

Another boost to Almont was in 1916, when the NPRR put up a stockyard which could accommodate many carloads of livestock.

All east and west traffic, from the Pacific to the Atlantic coasts, went through Sims and Almont on a "highway" called the Red Trail. The road followed the railway, making a loop down to Almont from New Salem to Glen Ullin. The Red Trail was state owned and marked with signs. Tourists from all parts of the country came through Sims and Almont and a camp site was set up for overnight travelers.

As more automobiles came into the area, there was a need for gas stations. The first gas pump I remember seeing in Almont was in front of Nelson-Templeton Implement Co. Later the Standard Oil Co. and Banner Oil Co. had pumps

and also bulk storage tanks. Gas was delivered with horse-drawn tanks on wagon wheels to the farms who had tractors. The tanks held 200 gallons or less; some were divided, with gas in one part and kerosene in the other. Another service to the community was the dray; it operated mostly between the depot and downtown businesses. We think the first dray line was owned and operated by Myles Purfeerst. The horse-drawn dray wagon hauled all the freight, mail, cream cans and other commodities to and from the depot. It was also used for other things that had to be hauled — no one owned pickups or trucks to take care of their needs in those early days. I remember that the dray man was very busy on Monday mornings hauling hot water from the school to private homes for washing clothes. School water was much clearer and softer than that in private wells. In 1924 Punch and Leo Timpe bought the dray business from Myles Purfeerst and they also had bulk gas delivery. By this time a small truck was used instead of horses.

An accommodation for Almont residents was Sunday mail service. The "fast train" No. 1, which didn't stop in Almont, threw off a bag of first class mail from the east. It also picked up mail from a contrivance which held the sack of mail — and when the train sped by, a metal "arm" from the mail car would grab the sack and pull it into the train. It was an interesting transaction to watch. The mail sack that was thrown off was taken to the post office where the mail was sorted into the boxes. The mail usually arrived shortly after noon so was a great place for Almont residents to gather and discuss the weather and home town news.

Almont has always enjoyed celebrations. In 1926 pioneers from Morton, Oliver, and Grant counties held an Old Settlers Picnic in Almont. John Olin of Sims and the Almont Commercial Club organized the day and events, which attracted 1500 people.

Electric power, the "highline," reached Almont in 1930. Several businesses and homes were using Delco plants to provide (dim) lighting — but most homes used kerosene or gas lamps. They welcomed the power line, even if the cost was more.

Almont was incorporated June 16, 1936 with E.W. Hyde as the first Mayor. Until then it was governed by Sims Township Board of Supervisors.



Almont Main Street east side about 1940.

In 1946 the 40th anniversary of the town was observed with a 2-day celebration held on August 2-3. Activities included a parade, ball game with Judson (Almont won), airplane rides, free movie and dance. A rodeo and horse show was held the second day. Almont's founder, E.W. Hyde ad-

dressed the crowd at the rodeo and urged everyone to “hang together and keep Almont alive,” in spite of a shaky future. (The railroad was re-routed the following year.)

It is with a note of sadness that we write this closing paragraph on Almont. When we reflect on all the businesses and services that were once Almont, we get a depressed feeling. Losing Highway 10 in 1927 was the first jolt, but the big loss was in 1947 when the Northern Pacific Railroad pulled her tracks. Everyone predicted then that Almont was doomed to die — but it didn’t — we’re still hanging in there. Our 75th anniversary slogan in 1981 was “75 and Still Alive.”

What will our slogan be in 2006? How about “Cheers for 100 Years — We’re Still Here!”

Mayor Claude Ritz and I had the honor of sealing and placing a Time Capsule in the new bank in 1976 — the year of the Bicentennial. It will be opened during the 100th anniversary of Almont — and I hope to be there to help do the honors!

More about Almont during the early years, is included in the other chapters of this book — and also in Almont’s 75th Anniversary History book.



Threshing on Labor Day. Ben Ramsland on separator.



Almont flood — 1950.



1963 Labor Day Parade.



Almont flood of 1967.

The 1885 Morton County census shows the following head of livestock: 914 horses; 110 mules; 1901 cattle; 392 sheep and 410 swine. The valuation of all property at Sims in 1886 was listed at \$37,500.