

Home Delivery—the Drayman

Today, freight deliveries to businesses are made by trucks, usually coming directly from warehouses, while home deliveries depend upon services such as Purolator and Canada Post.

In the days when rail was king, a local merchant would have to pick up freight at the station, or he could hire or contract a draying service.

The drayman would meet the train and do the door-to-door deliveries. This was by horse and wagon of course, until it became more efficient to buy a truck.

Boissevain's W. R. "Bob" Barefoot remembers helping out with Art Hammond's Draying service....

"All freight was brought in by the railroad, both Great Northern and CPR. The Great North-

ern, the wholesale houses being in Brandon, would bring back a lot of groceries in the morning when that train came down from Brandon. Art had two teams of horses, with men driving them, besides this one-ton truck he had. It would take them all morning to deliver to the stores. He would of course deliver, if a box came down for, say, Mrs. Smith that lived over on Aiken Street, he would take it around to her. He delivered everything right to their door."

In addition to doing the daily deliveries from the station, the draymen did deliveries from merchants to customers. In the days before everyone had a car, many businesses would deliver. Local bakeries were regular customers.

Another specialty was the ice wagon.

"Mel's ice wagon, as he delivered ice to the housewives for their iceboxes was the delight of us youngsters who loved to

suck on a cool chip of his ice on a hot summer day."

And of course they delivered lumber to construction sites and helped people when they moved.

Over time, the draying business evolved into the small town transfer business. Most people had cars and trucks, and only needed help with large loads, such as shipping livestock to market – jobs that were so much more efficient with a larger truck.

As roads improved, we used the railways less. In response, the railways cut service, and we used the roads even more. Soon businesses had no other option but to use trucks and the rail lines closed for good except when it was absolutely needed for grain delivery.

Looking back, the railway and the drayman made a pretty good team.

Sources:

Boissevain History Book Committee. *Beckoning Hills Revisited. "Ours is a Goodly Heritage"* Morton – Boissevain 1881 – 1981. Altona. Friesen Printing, 1981.

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Boissevain's Drayman

By 1892 Holms, McIntosh and Co. had formed the Boissevain Cartage Company. L. Underwood was a drayman two years later, and James Burns in 1901.

1907 saw Harris and Tuck, the Boissevain Draymen, E. J. (Evan) Phillips, and George Scott all vying for business. They were joined in 1908 by J. Loosemore.

In 1909 Bob Woods, the barber, came to town and drove a dray for one of the draymen for a couple of years.

Mel Taylor was a drayman about this time, too. John Licherman was in business in 1922. Art Hammond, and brother Mel, started their long-lived business in 1927. He had a Model T truck and one horse on the dray and he'd bought his father-in-law, Mr. Wood's dray business out.

Russell Empey operated a dray service for a few years in the late 1960's.

▼ Two teams stand ready to deliver items from the train at Boissevain's CPR Station.

