

Among those meeting there were Palmer Stadum, Gaylord Landis, Harold Blegen, William Sosalla, and Lloyd Stadig, all interested in mechanics and electronics. It was in this workshop the idea of making an electrically controlled car was conceived and accomplished. Palmer Stadum made the electronic brain while Lloyd Stadig was largely responsible for the body and mechanical parts. It was made from a child's wagon. It was exhibited at Baker Day.

Another of their exhibitions for Baker Day was Leapin' Lena, a novelty car. It was hinged in the middle so whenever the driver stepped on the gas the front reared up in the air.

Palmer's favorite topic for discussion was how to bring electricity to the people of the area. Many ideas were discussed. When the Rural Electrification Act was passed it opened the way for this dream to become a reality. The group organized into the Baker Technical Club and largely due to the efforts of Palmer Stadum were successful in organizing and building the Baker Electric Cooperative, the first rural electric Cooperative in North Dakota.

In 1913 Baker began the celebration of Baker Day on July 11. It was an annual event until the 1920's. In the early 1930's the tradition was revived. At that time some of the events of Baker Day were a parade, a barbecue, or bean hole beans at noon, a carnival, races, baseball game, speaker with a pageant, home talent play or talent show and a dance. Hundreds of people came from near and far for the celebration. The last one was in 1942.

But alas for by-gone days. The glory of Baker has departed. From a population of about 150 in its boom days it has now dwindled to a mere 20 and the chances are even that will decline.

The Soo Line Comes!!

By Mrs. Lloyd Stadig

Along with settlement by the homesteaders, came the railroads! Early North Dakotans who had to drive their horses or oxen many miles to market, were pleased to learn of the coming of a nearer railroad. Our state, because of its level land, made railroad construction easy compared to that of the more eastern and western states.

Early rivalry between the major railways regarding entrance into many of the fertile areas developed. The Soo Line and Jim Hill were in contests throughout much of the state. Railway construction lasted until World War I; little has been done since that time.

One of the last lines to be built by the Soo was the Drake-Fordville branch. This gave the Soo a route from its main line at Drake to its main Winnipeg

line at Thief River Falls, via Fordville. It thus gave it a more direct route to Duluth, where so very much of its grain was shipped.

Construction of this railroad began about 1911. Much of the equipment to build the line was shipped into Esmond by our N.P., then transported overland to the points of construction; some 12 to 15 miles to the north.

We recall when much of the equipment came to Esmond. Many dump carts, a steam shovel or two, several 'dinky' engines. These engines were transported from Esmond to near Fillmore by rail--the rails laid ahead of the engines a short distance; the engines then navigated the laid rails; these were then dismantled, then laid ahead of the caravan again. This continued until the construction area was reached.

We recall the names of Peter Nelson, and Jamieson, contractors, and Mr. Wharton, the foreman, and his two daughters, Joyous and Gladness!

The headquarters for much of the construction, during the two years of its peak, was in Esmond. This was quite a boom town during that period.

Then, there was the rush, by some of the citizens, to purchase lots in the new towns to be. Newspaper ads in the nearby papers gave glowing accounts of the business opportunities to be had in these towns. The fertility of the lands adjacent to them was lauded. The towns close to Esmond were: Harlow, Baker, Fillmore, Silva, Egan and Orrin. When it was discovered that an Egan existed in South Dakota, the name of this town on the Soo was later changed to Balta, and has remained so to this day. It was feared that the name Egan in each of the Dakotas might cause confusion in the postal department, hence the change.

All of the new Soo Line towns showed early, and in some cases, remarkable growth. Grain elevators sprang up, also grocery stores, hardware stores, meat markets, banks, implement dealers, some newspapers, and just about everything that a small town would need. Baker especially made a rapid growth. It was the second town in the country to boast of electric lights; Leeds was first. A more complete history of these Soo Line villages is to be found elsewhere in this publication.

After completion, this Drake-Fordville line of the Soo began to prove its value to the railway. During the time of its existence it has contributed greatly as a passenger route, a carrier of grain, of coal and all farm commodities. Like other branch lines of the nation, it no longer has its passenger trains, but continues to be a heavy hauler of carloads of the farmers products.