

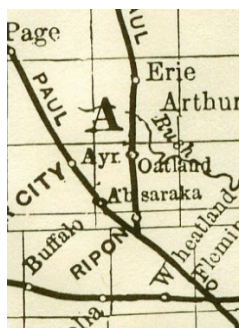
Erie, North Dakota: From Railroad Platform to Thriving Village to Decline

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Antecedents

Dakota was a barren, almost treeless landscape in the early 1870s, when the railroads first arrived. The Northern Pacific's main line entered Fargo in June of 1872 and continued pushing westward toward Bismarck, the Rockies, and then on to the Pacific Coast. Its twin ribbons of iron functioned as an artery, providing easy access to settlers and a means to ship out what would become the region's wealth—the wheat and other grain that could be produced once the plow had turned the prairie sod. Soon the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba Railroad (it would be renamed the Great Northern in 1890) would cross the Red River and arrive in Fargo. It pushed northwestward, diverging from the Northern Pacific and cutting a diagonal to what would become the city of Minot.

There were no efficient alternatives to the Iron Horse in the 19th century American west. Steamboats did ply the Red and Missouri rivers, but they served limited areas, had little capacity to move goods, and usually could not ply the water in the winter. In the early years after the arrival of the railroad, teams of horses or oxen were used to haul grain to the railhead, but this was dangerous and backbreaking work. The landscape was punctuated by creeks and coulees, and there were no convenient overnight stopping places. If Dakota was to flourish, the railroads would need to construct branch lines to open up additional areas far from the main transportation corridors. And so as the main tracks were extended on to Bismarck and Minot, branch lines veered off to the right and left at regular intervals. Each allowed homesteaders to move in, and in short order, grain was being collected and shipped to the main line and then off to millers in the East.



One of the first branch lines west of Fargo originated at a town site called Ripon, which had been platted out in 1876. It never amounted to anything, but the Great Northern constructed a station there in 1881, and that same year, workers laid track northward for 40 miles. As was the custom in those days, the railroad decided where towns were to be built and even named them. One such settlement, intended to be on the south side of a coulee flanking a branch of the Rush River (visible on the map to the left), was to be named after the river. A section house was constructed there, and tickets were printed. Rush River seemed to be a foregone conclusion, but the railroad panjandrums had not reckoned with George Churchill and Frank Williams, two Pennsylvanians who owned farm land just to the north and wanted the town to be nearer to their property.

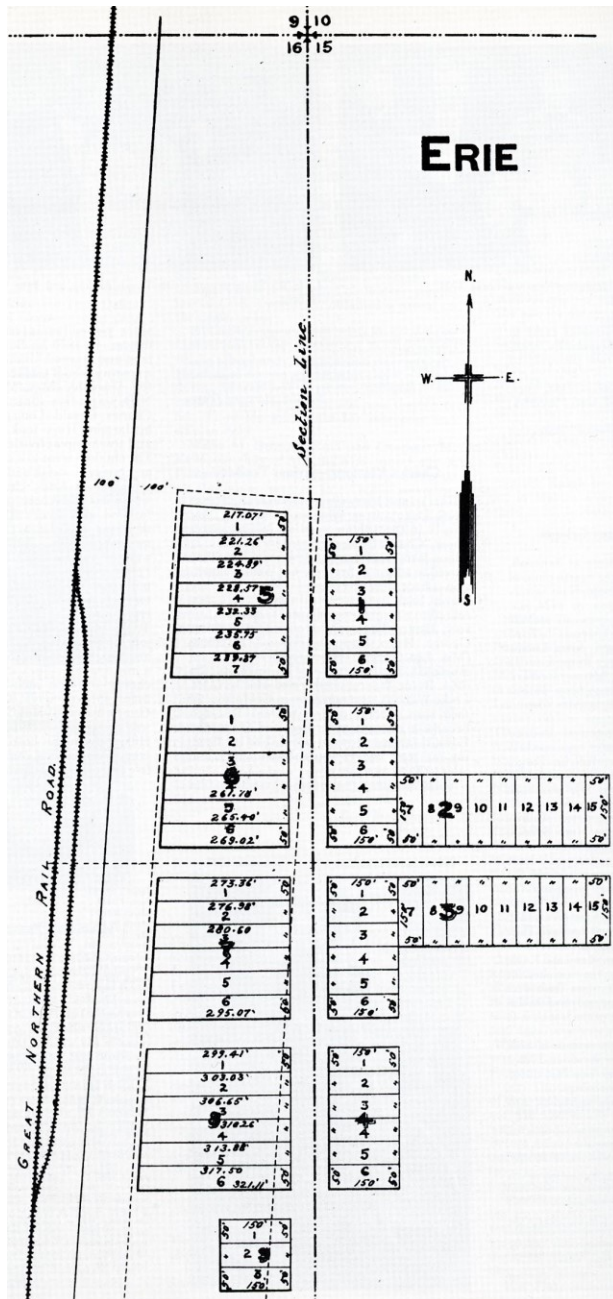


Churchill and Williams built a 6 X 6 foot platform along the tracks about 2 miles north of the Rush River section house and arranged for a shipment of freight to be delivered prepaid to a then non-existent village named for their home town in Pennsylvania: Erie. Their scheme was successful, and Erie came into existence when the town site was officially approved by the Great Northern in 1882. The platform was removed and replaced by a siding and soon a station house. Trains like that shown to the left (in a photo taken at the turn of century, about 20 miles north of Erie) soon were running along the track.

A post office opened that same year, and the surrounding 36 square mile township also took the name Erie when it was organized two years later. Erie was platted in 1904 by one T. R. Atkinson but never incorporated, and although it once had several hundred residents and a thriving business district, it is much smaller today. There are no businesses along its ghost-like main street now, and many houses have decayed and been ripped down. It is well, though, that we remember what once was.

The following narrative features members of a number of prominent Erie families, many intermarried, as well as individuals who were in Erie for just a short time. Some of these family relationships are explained, but they are complex and confusing. I have made no attempt to document and interrelate all who once lived in Erie and contributed to its early development, but hopefully there are clues here that will help others interested in following up on individual families.





The 1904 plat map of Erie. The village was divided into nine blocks of lots, four of which are to the right of Main Street and five to the left. Main Street runs along the line between Section 16 on its west side and Section 15 on its east side. The blocks are:

- Block 1: 6 50 X 150 foot lots
- Block 2: 15 50 X 150 foot lots
- Block 3: 15 50 X 150 foot lots
- Block 4: 6 50 X 150 foot lots
- Block 5: 7 50 X 200+ foot lots
- Block 6: 6 50 X 200+ foot lots
- Block 7: 6 50 X 200+ foot lots
- Block 8: 6 50 X 200+ foot lots
- Block 9: 3 50 X 150 foot lots

The total number of lots was 70. Almost all of the deeper lots on the west side of Main Street were reserved for businesses, at least in the early years. The smaller lots bordering the east side of Main Street were a mixture of houses and businesses, while those extending along the east to west-oriented side street were all residential. In about 1906, a second east-west side street was addedⁱ. It ran south of Blocks 3 and 7 and north of Blocks 4 and 8, looping around to the north to connect with the east-west side street shown in the 1904 plat. Residential lots were eventually platted on both sides of this street.

In the Beginning

In the summer of 1897 or 1898, an enterprising photographer set up his wide angle camera northwest of Erie and took a panoramic photo of the town. We know the approximate year, because the Big Store (constructed in 1897) is visible, but the Methodist Church (constructed in 1899) is not. There must have been excitement, because a boy has ridden out on his bicycle and stands beside it in the mid foreground. A horse and buggy approach the photographer from the distance. The town is surprisingly empty and bleak. No trees are visible, but we do see two

grain elevators and a station house along the east side of the railroad tracks, as well as the Big Store, a building known as the Incubator, two other businesses, and just a half dozen houses, some obscured by other structures.

Another photographer climbed to the top of one of the elevators a dozen or so years later and took a second panoramic photo. We cannot pinpoint the exact year, but the school and bank—both constructed in 1907—are visible, as are a few small trees. The town is still quite empty, so the date must have been about 1910. The aerial vantage point allows for a fairly accurate assessment of structures in the town. If we ignore what appear to be outbuildings (and outhouses, some clearly visible), there are a dozen residences and 17 businesses, not counting the elevators and station house, which were to the side and rear of the photographer and not visible in the panorama.

With just a few exceptions, and thanks to the research of those with long memories who have put their recollections on paperⁱⁱ, we know much about the nature of these businesses and the names of the proprietors. We also know who lived in some of the houses and who settled much of the surrounding farmland in Erie Township. Integration of this information with new statistics and online genealogical information allows for a reasonably accurate picture of the early development of the town, including details of some of the pioneer families whose descendants remain in the area, as well as families that stayed a few short years and then departed. Errors have undoubtedly crept into the following narrative, but I have endeavored to be as accurate and organized as possible in painting a picture of early Erie.

Organization is nevertheless a challenge, because the families intermarried, cannot be neatly separated from one another, and had differing roles in the development of the village over the generations. Some individuals worked for different businesses at different times. This makes it difficult to integrate families and businesses with historical timelines in any simple way. As a compromise, I focus first on Erie's founding and the early businesses. Some family information is included here, but most stories of early families will have to be collected separately.

Several recurring themes emerge. One is the importance of migrants from Pennsylvania in the initial founding of the village. Another is the large number of families that came to Erie from Kincardine, Lucknow, and surrounding villages in Bruce County, Ontario, Canada. And another, which will be striking to anyone familiar with Erie today, is the vibrancy of the village in its early years—signs of life that have ebbed away and been extinguished over the decades and that are not likely to return. But let us begin with those gentlemen from Pennsylvania.

The Pennsylvanians

The history of Erie on the prairie is intertwined with the activities of five Erie, PA, families: Churchill, Williams, Delamater, Noble, and Reed. Each invested in land and other property during the very early days. The Delamaters, Nobles, and Reeds were related to one another by marriage, but only one branch—the Delamaters—actually came to live on the prairie and stayed for any length of time. We will start with Erie's two founders: George Churchill and Frank Williams.

George Silas Churchill was born in 1862, and so he was barely out of his teens when, as we have learned, he tricked the railroad into building a section house at the future town site and earned the right to name it after what most people think was his home town of Erie, PA. In reality George was a native of Troy Center, PA, and so Erie might as well have been Troy Center, ND. But he was fond of his adopted home, and so the new village became Erie.

Mr. George Churchill son of G. T. Churchill, who lives in Cass county, N. D., has added another half section to his farm, which is now half a mile wide and two miles in length. When Mr. Churchill went to Dakota he and Frank Williams had a section between them—or rather it belonged to Churchill & Williams, the parent firm, and the latter concluded to divide it and give it to the boys. Mr. George Churchill was married recently, and his wife is one of the accomplished teachers of the Dakota schools. The railroad station stands at the dividing line between the two farms.

--Erie, PA, Times-News, March 17, 1890

Described as a staunch and politically inclined Republican, George homesteaded land in what became Erie Township and purchased additional acreage. By 1893, he owned the south half of Section 14, the south half of Section 15 (including land that became part of the village), two quarters in Section 10 and one in Section 23. This was a substantial holding of prime farmland. Most of it was still in his name as of 1906, but the south half of Section 15 had been sold to August Bolmeier (1857-1921)ⁱⁱⁱ, and George now had the southeast quarter of Section 16. In effect, he had disposed of one part of the town site and acquired another.

George had met a young school teacher soon after Erie was founded, and he married Lulu Knapp (1866-1945) soon thereafter, in 1884. George was Erie Township Treasurer and also Justice of the Peace, but the family moved to Casselton in 1899, where he had a machinery store and was involved in real estate—some of which undoubtedly concerned his farmland near Erie. George spent most of the rest of his life living in North Dakota, but his body gave out while he was back in Erie, PA. The Churchills had one son, also named George, who became a manager for the Caterpillar Company. He lived in the Chicago area and on East 35th Street in Manhattan. George Jr. did marry, but there were no children and thus the founder of Erie's family line has been extinguished^{iv}.

George Churchill's partner in seducing the railroad to build in Erie was Frank L. Williams, certainly one of the more interesting characters associated with the founding of the town, with a colorful and equally mysterious family. Williams was born about 1855 in Erie, PA, the son of Amos Williams, a local grain buyer. So far as we know, Amos never visited Dakota, but he managed to file a homestead in Section 10. This land soon passed to his young son Frank, who had also purchased the north half of Section 15. Both of these properties were adjacent to George Churchill's land.

Frank Williams married a Chicagoan and accomplished singer, Emma Hovey, in 1882, and their son Lynford Sterling Williams was born three years later in Erie—PA, not ND. We have no evidence that either mother or son ever set foot in Dakota. She was residing in Minneapolis as early as 1891, singing in the Unitarian Church. Her husband Frank lived for a time at Erie but was in Minneapolis, too, as of 1908. His former wife and her son were long gone by then (we

have no details of the divorce). They had moved to Port Huron, MI, where she advanced her vocal career and in 1896 married Major Benjamin Van Tuyl, a merchant and war veteran who had a few oil wells on the Ontario side of the river. She was widowed in 1900 and soon struggling with the major's former wife and children over his estate. Emma moved to Detroit in 1902 and was living there in 1910. Lynford (1885-1941), who resided with his mother, was then working as an actor in a traveling company. He married and then divorced and moved around the country, jobbing in Bakersfield, New York City, Corpus Christi, and then Cincinnati. Lynford died in 1941.

The very Rev. Harry Vere, dean of Gethsemane Episcopal Cathedral, Fargo, will preside at funeral rites in West chapel Saturday at 2:00 p.m. for the late George Silas Churchill, 96, pioneer granger of Erie and former Casselton businessman.

Burial will be made in the family plot in Casselton cemetery. Honorary bearers will be Clayton Dalrymple, L. E. Correll, E. T. Carley and Roy Johnson and W. E. Strehlow, Casselton, and Murray Baldwin and Dr. E. H. Lier of Fargo, former Casseltonians.

Active bearers will be Ralph D. Johnson, E. L. Holt, H. H. Hawley, R. T. Carley, Carl A. Taubert of Casselton and Dr. Tyler Lier of Fargo.

Mr. Churchill died Monday in Snyder Thrasher hospital in Erie, Pa., where he had been confined several years.

Mr. Churchill was born the second year of the Civil War, April 23, 1863 at Troy Center, Erie County (sic), Pa., the son of George T. and Sarah Lawrence Churchill, natives of Weatherford, Conn. When a young man he came west, locating on a farm at Erie (named for Erie, Pa.), in 1883. Dec. 18, 1884 he married Lulu Knapp of Fargo who was a teacher in a rural school near Erie at the time.

Leaving the farm in 1899 the Churchills moved to Casselton to make their home. Mr. Churchill entered the implement business in 1907 with the late W. J. Bell under the name of Churchill and Bell. Mr. Churchill died in 1930.

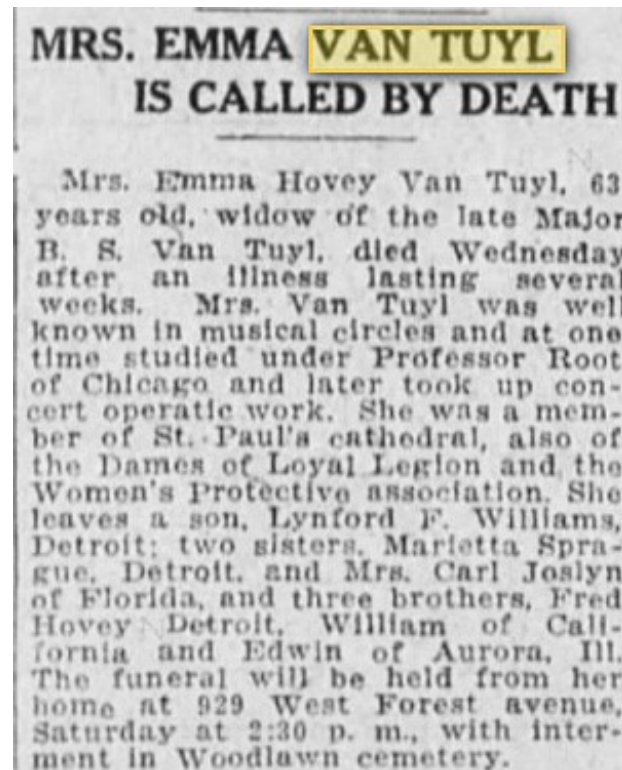
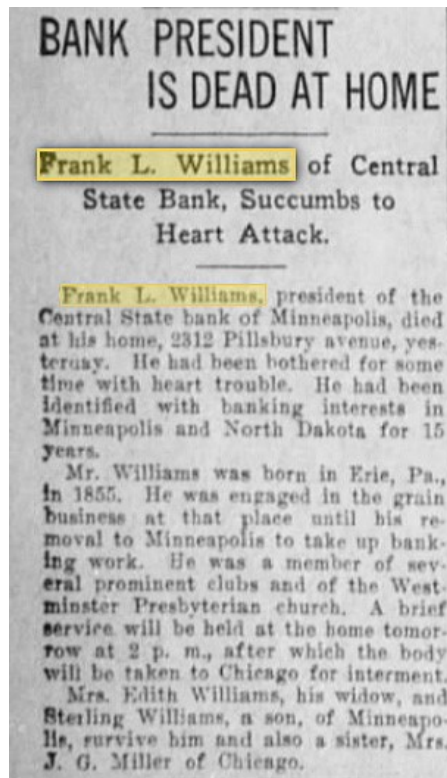
Mr. Churchill served as a member of the North Dakota lower house in 1893 and was chairman of the insurance, and the ways and means committees. In Casselton he served on the park board for a number of years. He was a life member of the Masonic Lodge, the Knights of Pythia and was Grand Master of Exchequer for 1941-42.

He was a member of St. Stephen's Episcopal church and had served as a member of the bishop's committee. He was a member of the Sons of the Revolution.

Mr. Churchill is survived by a niece Miss Lucille Churchill, Erie, Pa., with whom Mr. Churchill made his home before becoming hospitalized, and a nephew H. E. Churchill of San Francisco. Neither will be able to come on for the rites due to illness.

Preceding Mr. Churchill in death was Mrs. Churchill who died Sept. 9, 1945, eight months after son Everett "Pike" died, whose work in heavy machinery had taken him on travels over half the globe. Another son died in infancy while the Churchills were on the Erie farm.

And what of Frank? The newspaper article below on the left from July 9, 1916 tells the story. Emma's obituary is to the right of it.



Benjamin's Grandsons

Now let us turn our attention to Benjamin Delamater. An Easterner who apparently never ventured onto the prairie, he sent five of his grandsons to Erie, and each made his mark there. The first grandson was Leonard Delamater (1836-1922), who came to Erie from Randolph in Crawford County, PA, in the spring of 1884, one of a group of investors who had gone west searching for land. He purchased property and constructed buildings that summer, returning to Pennsylvania in the fall. He returned the next year as overseer of one of the farms that had been purchased earlier and remained for the rest of his life, living on Section 23. Leonard had married Mary Smith (1856-1917) in 1855 and fathered seven children, all born in Pennsylvania. Four of the children would make their way to Erie: Homer, who married Tena Schroeder; Amelia who married Harvey Sloan and moved to Erie after his death; Sadie, who married Louis Schroeder and then, after she was widowed, Rev. R. L. Colvin; and Franklin, who married Mathilda Hetrick and in later life moved to Pillager, MN.

The second grandson, George B. Delamater (1821-1907) was Leonard's cousin, and among the group of investors from Crawford County. He (or more precisely stated, his wife, Susan Cowle Delamater) owned the west half of Section 22, just south of Erie, but the family did not live there. A banker, oilman, and college trustee, he had business interests in Meadville and Erie, PA, and was in no apparent need to secure farm income. George and Susan Delamater's daughter Susan married Col. Louis Walker, who was instrumental in the development of the zipper. This led to the oft stated story that the zipper was invented at Erie, but in fact, it was not^v.

The remaining three grandsons were Horace Noble and the Reed brothers—Henry and Abram. They were also among the group of investors. The linkages between the Delamater, Noble, and Reed families are intertwined with two coexistent land companies that purchased large acreages in Erie Township, most or all of them so-called railroad lands that had been awarded to the Great Northern when it built its branch line northward. These lands, which are listed in the table below, were not available to homesteaders but were sold by the railroad to finance its operations. We are not sure of the formal names of the land companies, but one shared the Noble and Delamater names and the other the Reed and Delamater names. It is possible that land titles passed between the two companies and to individuals associated with one or the other, further complicating our ability to interpret the situation.

To our knowledge, no members of the Noble family ever moved to Erie, yet by virtue of their large land holdings, the Nobles were important for the early development of the township. Horace Noble (1826-1910) was a man of means whose mother was a Delamater and whose aunt was a Reed. He moved his family from Crawford County to Erie, PA, sometime in the 1860s, where he was employed as a coal dealer and came into close contact with the Reed family and, we surmise, George Churchill and Frank Williams. Horace eventually purchased four sections in Erie Township from the railroad for \$2.00 an acre. He is remembered as a frugal man who did not want to waste a kernel of grain during the harvest. Horace sold his land interests to Leonard and Franklin Delamater in 1898.

Land Description	1885 Real Estate Taxpayer	1893 Plat Ownership	1906 Plat Ownership
Section 1, all	Brown	Est. of C. M. Reed	Kernahan Dickson and Eliza Francis
Section 11, all	Delamater & Noble	L. Delamater & Co.	Louise Schroeder and Sadie Schroeder
Section 13, all	Reed L. & Co.	Emma Thompson	D. H. Burke
Section 14, N½	Delamater & Noble	L. Delamater & Co.	Dell Farm Co.
Section 22, W½	Delamater, G. B.	Mrs. S. C. Delamater	Mrs. S. C. Delamater
Section 25, all	Reed L. & Co.	C. M. Reed Est.	Nellie Dunleva, Clara Dunleva, Fred Linderman, R. H. Morrow

Henry and Abram Reed were hardware merchants in Erie, PA, as late as 1880, but as of 1885, they were among a larger group of Reeds living in Erie^{vi}. With them was their father, Rev. Leonard Reed—almost certainly the L. Reed of the L. Reed and Company mentioned above. Leonard died in 1889, and by 1900, both of his sons had fled to near San Diego, where they farmed^{vii}. So far as we know, none of their descendants remained in Dakota, but in departing, they left us with a mystery: Who was the C. M. Reed, whose estate owned land at Erie as of 1893?

There was a Charles Manning Reed (1803-1871), who was among the most prominent and wealthy individuals in Erie, PA. He owned multiple businesses, including steamships, and he served as a U. S. Congressman. His estate was estimated at \$10-\$15 million, an incredible sum

for the time. Could he be the Reed of the “C. M. Reed Est?” This possibility tempts us and makes a good story, but C. M. Reed had died long before Erie Township was settled. His will has been published, and none of his estate went to any of the Reeds associated with Erie, ND. There is also no known close family connection between C. M. Reed and Leonard, although we note that they are buried in the same cemetery in Erie, PA. The mystery will likely remain a mystery unless something can be found in dusty old land ownership records.

At any rate, by 1906, all of the Reed and Noble land was owned by others, as the table above confirms. Today few in Erie today know of the role played by Benjamin Delamater’s grandsons in establishing the community.

The Great Northern Depot and Erie's Station Agents

It is the railway that got Erie its start, and so it is fitting that we begin our story with the Great Northern depot, which was constructed in 1882, soon after Erie's founding. We know of seven station agents, six of whom led apparently peaceful lives and one of whom did not. There may have been others, but they have eluded us.

Allen Ankrum (1861-1922), an Illinois native, was appointed first station agent in 1885 and served until sometime after 1900, when he and his wife Birdie moved to Seattle, where he was employed as a railroad telegrapher. Birdie was the daughter of Wilbur and Josephine Hill, who came to Mapleton, ND, from Erie, PA—yes, that Erie, but we know of no connections to our Erie's founders or to the Hill families in Erie. We are unsure why Ankrum came to Erie as a young man or how he became acquainted with Birdie prior to their marriage in 1889.

The second known station agent was Proctor W. Rice (1881-1940), a Kentuckian who came to Erie about 1907 or 1908. While there, he married Hulda Schroeder (1880-1929), daughter of Erie pioneer Henry Schroeder (1852-1936), about whom we will learn more. Rice became station agent in Amenia shortly after the marriage and moved on to Mountrail County just a few years later. They eventually settled in Washington State, where like his predecessor Allen Ankrum, Rice worked as a telegraph operator.

The next known station agent was W. R. Gill, who was in Erie for just a short time prior to 1910. Gill made news when in April of 1909, his wife asked the Cass County Insanity Commission (yes, there was once such a body) to declare him insane. She then withdrew her complaint before they could render a judgment but soon reinstituted it, forcing the members of the commission to examine the hapless husband. This was duly accomplished, and he was declared fit and then released to what must have been an unhappy wife^{viii}. He soon left town for whereabouts unknown, we trust traveling by himself.

The fourth known station agent was George Nasse (1887-1949), who arrived in 1909 and moved on to a similar position in Ayr for a short time before returning to Erie as an early merchant, as described below. Nasse remained in Erie until sometime before 1930, when he moved to Leonard and operated a store. Nasse and his wife eventually moved to Fargo, where he worked in West Fargo's Armour Meat Packing Plant.

The next known station agent was a Mr. Sager, who was in Erie as of 1915 and perhaps for a few years thereafter. We suspect that he was Alvin Sager (1881-1962), an Indiana native who, like Ankrum and Rice did earlier, left Erie for railroad employment in Washington State. Unlike them, he returned to Fargo, where he worked for the Northern Pacific.

Sager was succeeded by Bert Lindquist (1893-1960), who was born in Minnesota and working as a drug store clerk in Fargo as of 1917. He assumed his duties in Erie before 1920 and appears to have stayed on until after 1935, when he and his family moved to Nelson, MN, where he was also station agent. The Lindquists lived in Erie for roughly 15 years but appear to have maintained no lasting ties to the community.

Erie's seventh and likely final station agent was Oscar Paulson (1897-1978), who came in the late 1930s with his wife Carrie Ammerman (1907-1976) from their home in Nelson County. The depot remained open until sometime in the late 1950s, when Paulson closed it down after more than sixty years of existence. Oscar and Carrie will both be remembered by old timers in Erie. They had no children and are both buried in Erie Cemetery.



known as the “Surrey Line^{ix}.”

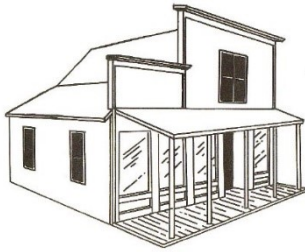
The depot, which was adjacent to the tracks and north of elevator row, is long gone, as are the trains that carried freight and passengers to and from Erie in the early days. Prior to construction of the Surrey Cutoff in 1911-1912, trains traveled south from Erie via Ripon to Casselton, where passengers transferred to the Northern Pacific for the last few miles to Fargo. The cutoff, which was built by the Great Northern, allowed Erie passengers to skip Casselton and arrive in Fargo on what became

The village appears to have been served by one daily train in each direction as early as 1905, and amazingly, a single set of train numbers seems to have survived for many decades. In 1913, GN 341, a mixed passenger and freight run, left Fargo at 8:00 a.m. and arrived at Erie two and one half hours later, at 10:30 a.m. The train went on the Portland Junction in Traill County, returning to Erie as GN 342 at 3:25 p.m. and arriving back in Fargo at 6:34 p.m. The run of GN 341 and

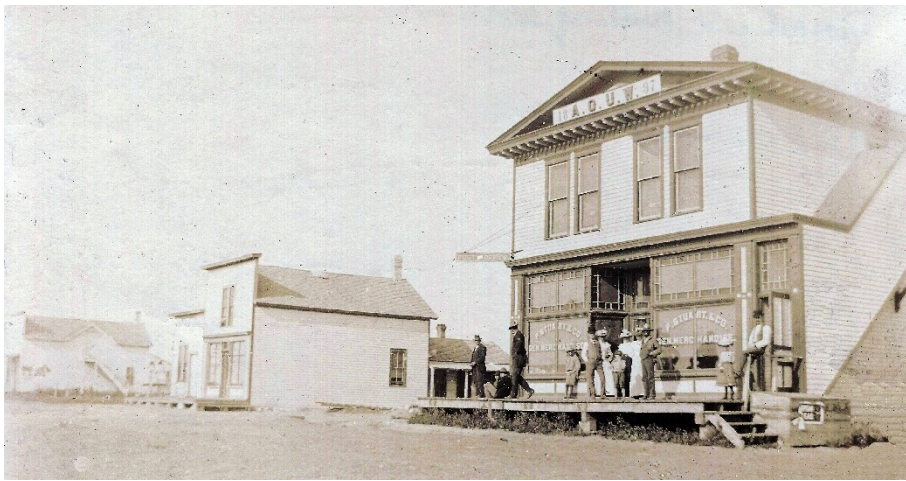
FARGO AND PORTLAND JUNCTION			
343			344
Mixed			Mixed
Mon.,			Mon.,
Wed.,			Wed.,
Thurs.,			Thurs.,
Sat.,			Sat.,
	Miles		
4 45	0	Le Fargo 1, 2, 4, 12 35	
5 30	23	" Vance 12 35	
7 15	32	" Erie Jct. 11 45	
7 25	34	" Erie 11 25	
7 55	44	" Chelburg 11 30	
8 15	50	" Clifford 10 45	
8 35	56	" Roseville 9 59	
9 01	60	" Portland 9 45	
9 15	65	Le Portland Jct. 9 25	

342 was virtually identical in 1937, but timetables of that era indicated that service was irregular, an early sign that passenger service would eventually end, victim of the automobile. Although the date of the last passenger service to Erie is uncertain, the village retained four times a week passenger train service as late as 1958. Inexplicably, the railroad had ever so slightly changed the train numbers by this time: GN 341 was now GN 343 and GN 342 was now GN 344. We wonder why they went to the trouble.

Erie's First General Store



Erie was founded in 1882, and its first store was built by Jack McKee, who had homesteaded on Section 14 of Erie Township, at about the same time. He was induced to sell his claim by the same Pennsylvanians who had plotted to move the town site from Rush River to Erie. They gave him a lot (Block 2, Lot 6) on which to erect the building shown to the left that served as Erie's first store, the family's living quarters, and beginning in October of 1882, the new village's post office^x. It was a small, two story structure with a slanted roof that was low and probably prevented taller adults from standing erect. We can imagine the barrels of pickles, crackers, and molasses on the main floor and the crowded living quarters for the family up above. A one story addition, which is shown in the drawing above and attached to the middle structure in the photo below, was added to the north side of the building some years later.



Jack immigrated to the US from Dufferin County, Ontario. His given name was John, and in 1884 he married Janet Cameron (1865-1934), a native of Bruce County, Ontario, and member of a well-known Erie family that we shall encounter later. Jack and Janet remained in Erie for only a few

years. About 1890, they moved to Dwight in Richland County, where he had a machinery shop. The family remained in North Dakota, where Janet had family and where both Jack (1862-1935) and Janet (1865-1934) passed away. This was long after they had left Erie, but both are buried in Erie Cemetery.

Used Machinery

We have on hand a line of used machinery such as:

Corn Binders.



Potato Diggers, Plows, tractor and horse drawn.



**FARM-ALL
TRACTORS
10-20 and 15-30**

If interested see
R. A. Bolmeier
Erie, N. Dak.

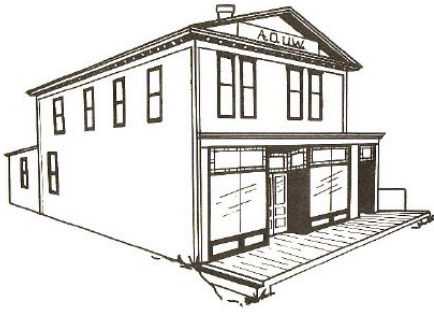
Next came Edward Stowers (1862-1946), who married Hattie Mosher (1860-1953) in Minnesota about 1882 and then came to Erie to operate the store and serve as Erie's postmaster from 1891-1895. Like Janet Cameron McKee, Hattie Mosher Stowers was a member of a well-known Erie family that we will meet later. And like the McKees, Ed and Hattie Stowers were short timers in Erie, departing for St. Paul in 1898 or 1899. We are quite certain that the store passed next to long time Erie merchant Harry Nutting (1864-1956), who was married to Hattie Stowers' sister Luella (1866-1954). Harry is known to have operated Nutting and Mosher's store in Erie beginning in May of 1899—Mosher

being Hattie and Luella's brother Art Mosher (1872-1961), who lived with the Nutting family at the time. We will encounter him later.

The timing becomes murky at this point, but it appears that the Nutting and Mosher Store operated until sometime after 1910, when it passed all or in part to a man named E. P. Jones. In 1915, Jones sold part of his interest in what was called "the small store" to Reuben Bolmeier (1890-1961), who became the proprietor. Then, on April 1, 1916, Bolmeier and his partner George Nasse, who we have already met, started a business known as Erie Mercantile Company^{xi}.

Reuben Bolmeier (1890-1961) was a member of a family that is long gone but remembered by all Erie old timers. His father August Bolmeier (1857-1921) had come with his wife Caroline Albert (more about her family later) from Wisconsin to homestead near Hunter in 1879. The family later purchased the south half of Section 15 from George Churchill and moved to Erie Township about 1900. August was a cattle buyer while at Erie and often shipped carloads of animals out of town on the Great Northern. Reuben, the fourth of their ten children, married Fern Hill (1892-1987) in 1922. He was Erie postmaster from 1925 to 1935 and operated the store until the early 1930s, when he converted it to an International Harvester farm implement business. Reuben sold out in 1944 and moved his wife and three children to Absorakee, MT, where he ranched until his retirement in 1957. We wish we knew who purchased the store from Bolmeier and when it closed, but we do not.

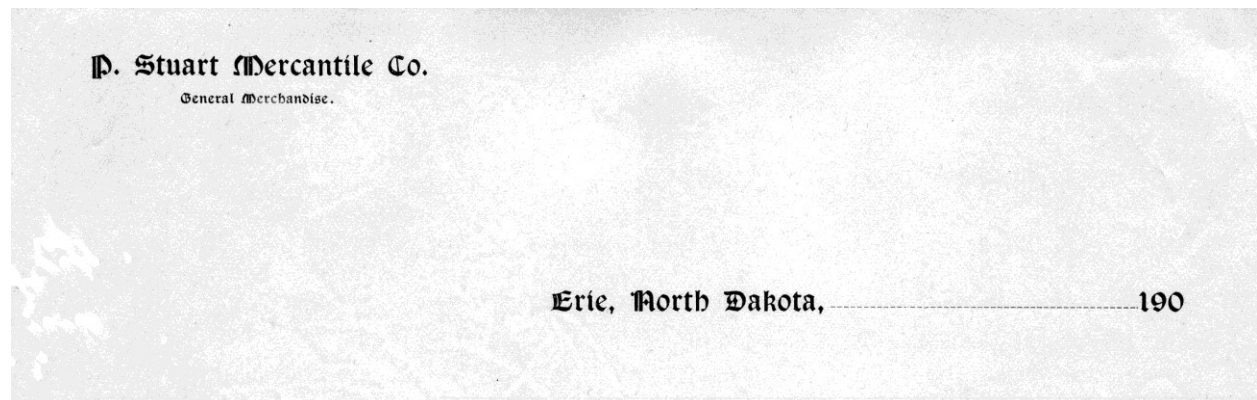
The Big Store



Everyone called it the Big Store, and by Erie's standards, it was a large structure. Constructed in 1897 by Peter Stuart, it was across the street and straight south of Jack McKee's store on Block 3, Lot 1 of the town site. It faced Main Street and was a full two stories high with a single story extension on the back. The second floor was intended to serve as the town hall and hosted dances as well as plays and meetings of the lodges that were popular in the day: the A. O. U. W., Odd Fellows, Modern Woodmen, Royal

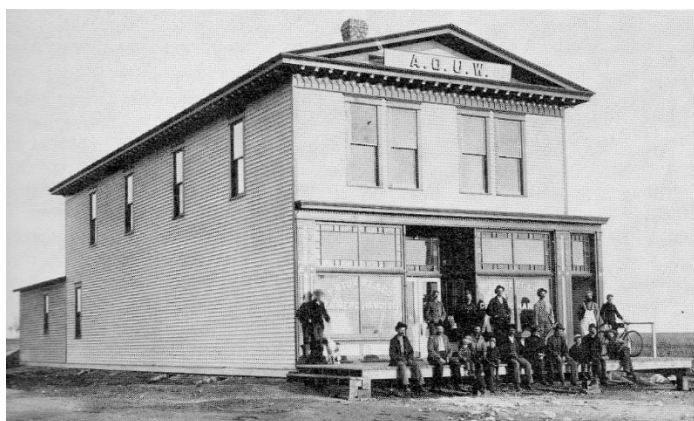
Neighbors, Masons, and the Order of the Eastern Star. Local schoolboys played basketball there, too.

An early photo shows two aisles running the length of the building with goods piled high between them and counters to the left and right. It must have been something in comparison to Jack McKee's first little store across the street to the north. Large containers are stacked in the back, and stools to the right suggest that there might even have been a lunch counter. Glass-walled containers to the left held candy as late as the 1950s, when a small child could get a piece if he had a penny or could convince Mr. Olson to extend credit on the family's account. The store's account books from the turn of the century still exist as proof that the early settlers could buy more than coffee, tea, chocolate, and vinegar locally. Purchases included fly paper, a whip, cinnamon soap, kerosene, rope, nails, shoes, and even colic cure and something called the Golden Medical Discovery.



Peter Stuart was born in 1862 and in a twist of fate married Grace Cameron, sister of Janet Cameron McKee. Two of Erie's early storekeepers thus were brothers-in-law. The Stuarts operated the store for just a few years and then returned to Weyburn, Saskatchewan (where his wife's family lived) with their children Flora and Cameron^{xii}. He served as sheriff there for a time, but we have lost track of them in later years. Harrison Hill (1853-1914), member of a well-known Erie family that we will encounter later, was next to run the store, and we have a reasonably good idea of those who operated the Big Store following his death. First came Julius

Theodor Meeg (1879-1966), a Norwegian who immigrated to this country in 1899 and settled in Fargo, where he was employed as a grocery clerk as of 1900. Julius married and moved to Warwick, ND, where he was operating a store in 1910, and then in 1914, he came to Erie, where he operated the Big Store until 1925 (John Bissett worked in the store about this time^{xiii}). His World War I draft registration document places him in Erie as of 1918 and informs us that he worked as a merchant for Lande Brothers^{xiv}. The Meegs returned to Fargo, where Julius worked as a salesman, after having spent a little more than a decade in Erie. The Meeg's son Alfred Meeg (1902-1992)^{xv} married Jean Morrow (1901-1980), but they moved away, living in Wisconsin and Illinois.



Next after Julius Meeg came August Bolmeier's sons Haven (1899-1981) and Wesley (1902-1974), who operated the store until 1946, when they pulled up stakes and moved west^{xvi}. The Big Store was then operated for a short time by Gordon Cox (1897-1987), who had come to Erie from Steele, ND, and farmed for a while before becoming a merchant. Jack Bergman (1897-1997) also operated the store, which was

branded as Bergman's Friendly Fairway Store^{xvii}. Mildred Pendleton worked there for a time. The McCann brothers were also associated with the store, but we do not know when and in what capacity.

**We Have
IT
You Need It.**
**Lumber
Building Material
and Fuel.**
FEED GRINDING
BOLMEIER BROS.
ERIE, North Dakota



Mervin Olson (1898-1996) purchased the Big Store in 1950 and with his wife Laura (1905-2006) operated it until 1966. The store was known as Olson Mercantile during this time, and it retained affiliation with Fairway Foods. The Olsons retired when they sold the store and traveled, eventually moving to western North

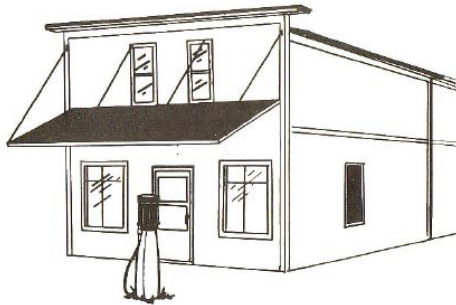
Dakota. They are both buried at Galesburg, home to Laura's Hochgraber family. The last proprietor of the Big Store was Martin Thorstad (1899-1986), who operated the business from 1966 until it closed a few years later. The building was used for storage until it deteriorated to the extent that it had to be razed in 2009.



The Blacksmith Shop

Erie's first blacksmith shop was constructed by Wes Haight (1844-1930) in about 1883 with Jack Stuart (1860-1952) as manager. Jack was the younger brother of Peter Stuart, who ran the Big Store, and he was married to Annie Cameron (1869-1950), who was the sister of Peter's wife Grace. Jack and Alex, yet another Cameron sibling, had a short-lived implement store on the west side of Main Street prior to 1900^{xviii}. Alex stuck around, but like Peter and Grace Stuart, Jack and Annie Stuart moved to Weyburn, Saskatchewan, in the early 1900s.

Wesley Clyde Haight was born near Rochester, NY, and went west to Michigan as a young man. He married there and brought his wife and three young children to Wheatland, where he was working as a blacksmith in 1880. They came to Erie soon thereafter—likely on the newly constructed railroad branch line—farming at first and then opening his shop. It was located in along Main Street toward the far south of Block 3. The drawing here shows the shop, which may or may not have been the original building, as it appeared in the 1950's.



Haight and his family hightailed it for Oregon sometime after 1885 and eventually settled in California, where he died. The new owner was a man named Batley, likely Robert Batley (1824-1897), who was farming northeast of Erie in Hunter Township. Other early blacksmiths were R. H. Morrow and Franklin Delamater, both of whom figure in Erie's past. Morrow ran the shop for just a few years shortly after 1900 and then sold it to Delamater.

In 1904 Delamater hired Frank Ries (1880-1964) to work in the shop. Ries had been born in Luxembourg and settled in Chaffee soon after coming to Dakota. Hearing of opportunity at the Erie shop, he walked 25 miles and settled into the job. He purchased the business in 1907 and spent the rest of his working life there. The Ries family included six children, all born in Erie. Several of the sons worked with their father in the blacksmith shop or in the hardware store that he operated for a time. Frank Ries was among the first in Erie to have a telephone, undoubtedly for business purposes. There were only 22 numbers in 1944 directory, among them his: 15-J.

A number of Erie residents worked in the blacksmith shop, among them Bob Delamater and his second cousin, Marshall Sloan (1883-1968). Sloan was school janitor in the early 1920s. In later years, he sold Rawleigh products and lived directly south of the school with his wife Emma Mathew Sloan (1877-1975), daughter of John Matthews who farmed east of Erie. "Watch out Emma" was a favorite slogan of 1960s era Erie School students when they were at bat and intent on slugging the baseball across the street.

**No Other Washer
Has All These Features.**

In the SPEED QUEEN are:

"Arc-cuts" Drive Transmission	Bowl-shaped tub--
High-vane Tangle-proof agitator	Double walls--

New SPEED QUEEN Safety-Roll Wringer.

Let us give you a demonstration.

Frank C. Ries
Hardware and Blacksmithing.

Erie's First Hardware Store

Nelson Bingham (1867-1924) was a native of Dent County in south central Missouri. He came with his family (originally from Ontario) to the southern part of Dakota Territory prior to 1885. After his father's death in 1892, his mother moved with her nine children to Tower City, where Nels, by now a grain buyer, met and married Celia Frederick (1884-1974), a young woman

The Erie Hardware and Implement Co. have just completed the excavation for their basement under the store.

Blackbirds and sparrows have left this country, because the Erie Hardware and Implement Co. are selling the farmers' Monitor Drills, and they leave no seed uncovered.

Hunter Herald, March 14, 1907

originally from Chaffee.

The wedding took place in the summer of 1903, but the family did not remain in Tower City. The year 1904 found Nels and his brother Alexander at work building a

house in Erie. Nels and his wife moved in during December of 1905 and opened a hardware store along Main Street in the bustling village. Alexander and another brother, Malcolm, stayed for a while, evidently as partners in the store (Bingham Brothers sold a "fine new carriage" to one Elmer Ferguson as reported in a 1908 news item). The company was known for a time as Nels Bingham, Implements, but then Nels and his the brother drifted off to South Dakota and to Ambrose in Divide County, where other Bingham families were settling.



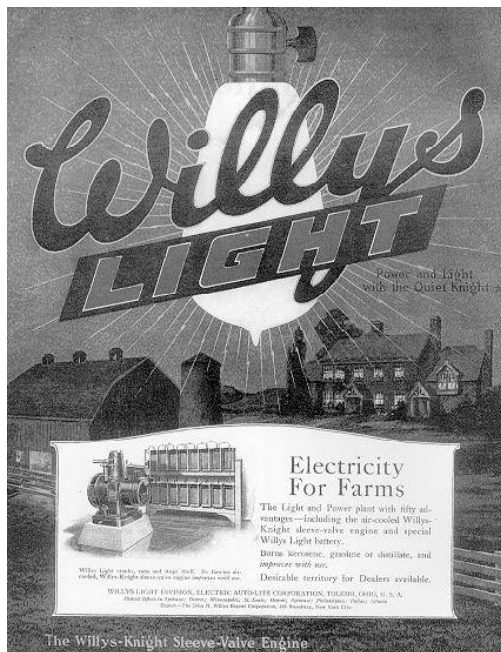
The business was also known as the Hibbard & Bingham Hardware Store. It was housed in a narrow clapboard building with a stepped front facing the street. Window panes reached to the ceiling along the first floor and there were rooms above. The store was fronted by a plank walkway upon which items for sale were displayed—a washing machine, a children's wagon, and various tools and implements. Hibbard was another Tower City resident, Fred J. Hibbard (1869-1944), who also built a house when he came to Erie. A Presbyterian pastor, he retired from the ministry because of poor health, evidently believing that running a hardware store would be less strenuous—and it must have been, because Hibbard stayed for just a few years and then moved on to serve churches in North Dakota and Minnesota.

But back to the Bingham family. Celia's younger brother, Benjamin Joseph Frederick, who was single, was boarding with the Bingham family in 1910 and working in his brother-in-law's hardware store. Ben Frederick took over the store in 1916, when Nels was still a young man. B. J. Frederick & Co. advertised hardware, furniture, harnesses, Overland automobiles, auto repairing and accessories, plumbing, steam fitting, and repairing. He was proud of the store, to the extent that he used extra space and capital letters to fill out his World War I draft registration document, enthusiastically announcing his occupation as "Hardware, Harvest & Furniture merchant." "Run my own business" he wrote that summer day in 1917. Contemporary newspaper stories recount the home furnaces that he installed and his affiliation of with the Willys Company, which sold farm light and power plants.

Nels was still in Erie as of 1920, selling Willys light plants, but the Bingham family pulled up stakes and moved to California in the early 1920s. Nels died in San Luis Obispo County when he was just 57 years old. Celia Bingham married James Stephens in 1927 and with him ran a photography shop in the San Luis Obispo County town of Morro. Her three children with Nels—Everett (1906-1979), Meredith (1911-1982), and Ruth Bingham Regan (1919-2012), were all born in Erie.

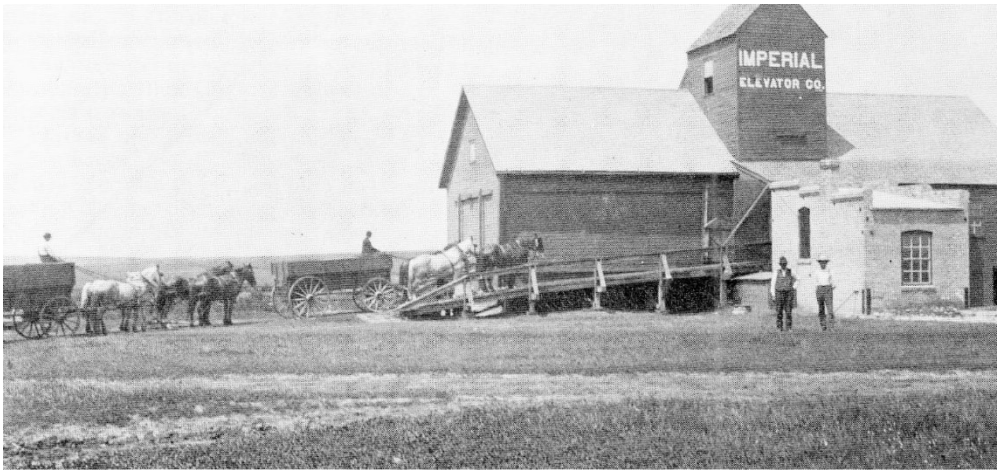


Ben Frederick met Ethel Mae Hill (1888-1983) soon after his arrival in Erie, and they were married there in 1912. Ethel was the daughter of James Hill (1854-1915) and his wife Elizabeth (1854-1930), a well-known Rich Township couple, and sister of the aforementioned Henry Hill. Ben never made it to sunny California. He operated the hardware store until 1920, when he died at just 31 years of age, leaving his wife and an infant daughter. The store passed to Jake Lehman (1874-1966), who had been working for Ethel's parents in Rich Township before moving to Erie in 1916. A native of Germany, he was running the village's first electrical plant as of 1920 and we assume took over the hardware store after Ben Frederick's death^{xix}. We are not sure how long Lehman operated the store or indeed, how long it remained in business.



Ethel Frederick never remarried. She remained in Erie while her daughter Betty was still in school but moved to Casselton in the mid-1930s and ultimately to Detroit Lakes, MN. She died there in 1983, six decades after her husband's death and a few days after her 95th birthday. Jake Lehman remained in Erie for many years, where for a time he was school janitor. He married Eunice Kelly Cameron (1878-1949) in 1911 and had four children, among them son Conrad (1916-1973), who was well known in Erie. Jake Lehman, who is later life was school janitor, died in California, but he, his wife, and Conrad are all buried in Erie Cemetery.

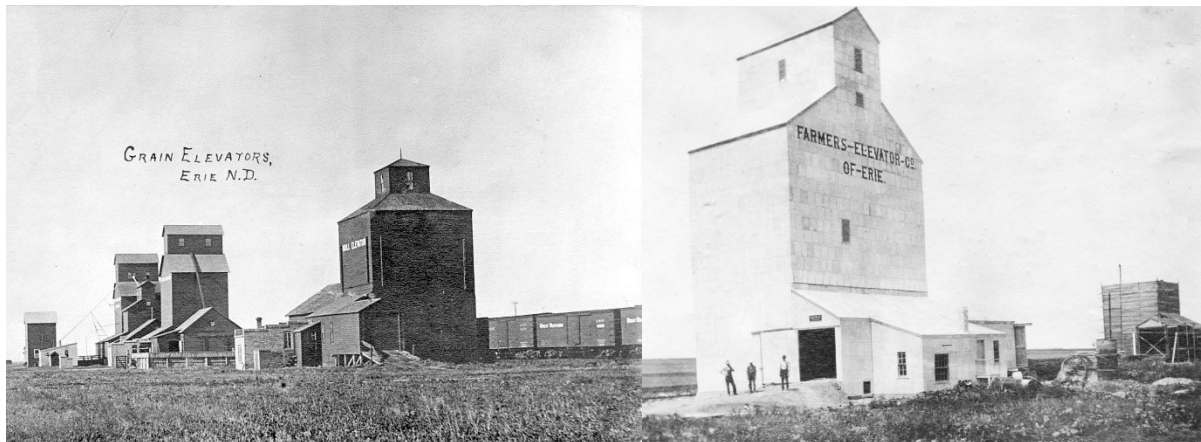
The Grain Elevators and Lumberyard



Above: a very early view of the Imperial Elevator, which later became the Farmers Elevator.



Both of the above early photos from the southeast show, from left to right, the St. Anthony and Dakota, Farmers, and Cargill elevators. The left photo was probably taken from the second floor of the 1907 Erie School.



Left: The St. Anthony and Dakota, Farmers, and Cargill elevators from the northeast. Right: the Farmers elevator that was rebuilt after the 1912 fire.

Homesteaders were attracted to Erie for one reason, and that was to extract wealth from the earth. It is no surprise, then, that grain elevators soon were constructed to receive the harvest. Their job was to store the grain and then when prices were high, to arrange its transportation over the 228 rail miles that connect Erie to millers in the Twin Cities. The first of Erie's grain storage facilities was constructed in 1883 by Cargill. The St. Anthony and Dakota was built two years later, and the Imperial Elevator came along between 1895 and 1898. Then in 1905 the Erie Farmers Elevator Company was established with three Erie area farmers—J. W. Rutherford, R. H. Morrow, and C. B. Warner, as principals.

There was a small fire in the Farmers Elevator in 1908, so we know that Erie's fourth elevator was constructed within a few years of formation of the firm. Thanks to the business regulators in Bismarck, we also know that by 1892, 60,000 bushels of grain could be stored in Erie: 25,000 at the St. Anthony and Dakota and 35,000 at Cargill. The combined capacity of all three elevators was 70,000 bushels as of 1898, when a 63 X 4 foot loading platform was in use, facilitating grain transfer to waiting trains.

The five photos on the preceding page show the elevators at various undetermined time periods during Erie's early years. The top, and we believe oldest photo, shows the Imperial Elevator. The second row of photos (taken toward the northwest) and the left photo in the third row (taken toward the southwest) show the same three clusters of buildings at different times. We know that the southernmost structure is the St. Anthony and Dakota and that the blocky, northernmost building is Cargill. The Cargill elevator burned in November of 1915, and based on the below article from the February 27, 1912, issue of the *Bismarck Tribune*, both the Imperial and Farmers elevators had gone up in flames three years before the Cargill elevator caught fire.

BAD FIRE AT ERIE.
Two Grain Elevators Destroyed, Causing \$40,000 Loss.
ERIE, N. D., Feb. 27.—Both the Imperial and the Farmers' elevators here were burned. Each structure was filled with grain. The loss is placed at about \$40,000.
Both buildings and contents were insured. The lumber yard of the St. Anthony & Dakota Elevator company also caught fire, but the damage was not heavy.

So just where were the Imperial and Farmers elevators located on Erie's row of skyscrapers? We are not sure, but the stepped roof and chimney of the brick weighing house attached to the very old photo of the Imperial Elevator—the one with the horses—is also visible in the photo lettered "Grain Elevators, Erie, N. D.," where the chimney is directly below the "D." We can only conclude that the elevators were quite close to one another. This seems odd, but we have no better explanation for the configuration of the structures.

Cargill never rebuilt after the 1915 fire and decommissioned its Erie operation in 1918, but both the Imperial and the Farmers emerged from the ashes. The shiny new, metal-clad Erie Farmers Elevator rose up near the hulk of the abandoned Cargill structure as shown above. The Imperial must have been somewhere nearby.

The elevators provided employment for a number of Erie residents over the years. Some were

Erie, N. D.—The Cargill Elvtr. Co. has retired from business at this station. Wm. Bolmire is agt. for the Imperial Elvtr. Co., and I have succeeded C. W. Clark as mgr. for the Erie Farmers Elvtr. Co.—W. R. Seth.

Grain Dealers Journal 41, 739 (1918)

short timers: a man named Panebaker, Ole Gremsgard (who moved on to Northwood), C. Wilber Clark, Leonard Ellis, and Walter R. Sethy (not Seth, as has sometimes been recorded), who was in Erie in 1920 and went on to manage an elevator in Egeland, Towner County. George L. Davies deserves special

mention. He was viewed as an exemplary manager when he departed in October of 1909, but then \$450 was discovered missing. Davies was apprehended in St. Louis and returned to Fargo, where he pled guilty to theft of the money and was remanded to the state penitentiary in Bismarck, where he spent two years at hard labor.

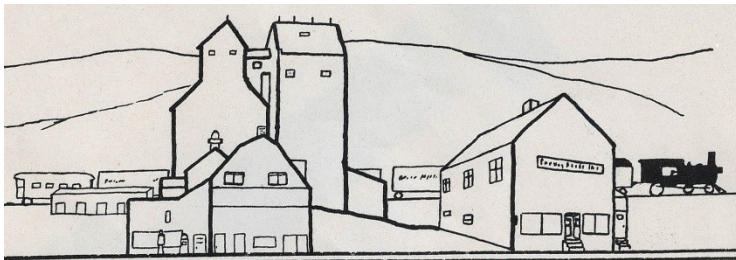
Several other elevator workers were members of well-known Erie families that were involved in multiple Erie businesses, and so we will provide details here:

- James Beith (1876-1952) was the son of Anna Cameron (1847-1907), who had married Andrew Beith in Huron Township near Kincardine, Ontario. Anna's parents were John (1820-1886) and Annie (1829-about 1909) Cameron, Scottish immigrants who settled at Kinloss, near Kincardine. The family immigrated in 1882 and took up a claim in Section 26 of Erie Township. The Beiths lived on a farm at Wheatland, where he died in 1886 at age 43 after he fell from a horse during a buffalo hunt. A young man when his father died, James Beith worked at the Imperial Elevator Co. (from about 1900 until sometime after 1916), ran the lumberyard, and also farmed. He married Lena Maud Goodall (1885-1956), who had been brought to Erie by Mr. and Mrs. Harrison Hill following the death of her mother in Canada. Maud was a clerk in the Big Store, which was operated by Mr. Hill after the departure of Peter Stuart. James and Maud's daughter Margaret Beith married Arnold Rostad, who worked for her father when a young man. He farmed and operated a county snowplow, and she taught school in Erie for many years—5th and 6th grades during the early 1960s. They lived in the James Beith house (Block 3, Lot 7) just east of the Big Store.
- Herbert Guest (1867-1920), who married James Beith's sister, Agnes. A Canadian who owned farmland northeast of Erie in Section 2, Guest purchased a lot in Erie in 1896 and presumably built a house on it. He was a grain buyer for the St. Anthony and Dakota Elevator and worked in the lumberyard in Erie. The Guests and their three children moved to Roseburg, OR, in 1907.
- Herman Schroeder (1870-1951), who replaced Herbert Guest at the elevator and who with his wife Minnie Hill Schroeder (1868-1958) came to Erie via Wisconsin and South Dakota about 1905. Schroeder resigned from the elevator in 1909 and moved to a claim in Montana



but returned to Erie. Two of Herman's siblings had been in the area for a decade or more before his arrival. Louis (1859-1937) and Tena (1865-1937) Schroeder married siblings Sadie and Homer Delamater. Louis had come to Dakota about 1889. He and Sadie (1874-1962) purchased land in Section 11 from his brother-in-law Homer Delamater, and the family farmed there, eventually selling the land in 1920 to their son Willis (1896-1989), whose wife was Charlotte Kelly (1898-1980). Another son, Phillip (1894-1976), married Ina Needham (1894-1958) and lived on Section 2. Herman Schroeder was a farmer on Section 28 and also a banker in Erie. The family raised five children, two of whom in turn were well known farmers in mid-20th century Erie: Lyle (1897-1961), who married Viola Viestenz, and Wallace (1907-1977), who never married. Wallace's friends called him "Little Joe."

- Hans Robertson was a Dane who came to Erie from Pelican Lake, MN, sometime prior to 1925. He had been an elevator manager in Minnesota, and during the years 1925-1930 he was working at an elevator in Erie^{xx}. Hans (1879-1949) and his wife Ella (1880-1954) returned to Minnesota sometime after World War II and are buried in Hill City, MN.
- Lawrence Burgess (1902-1976) was born in Erie, the son of A. W. Burgess (1867-1956) and his wife Charlotte Maggie Morrow (1880-1959). The elder Burgess was a Canadian who came to Erie to farm and later worked in the village as a liveryman, in the hotel and drug store, and as a lumber salesman^{xxi}. He and Maggie moved to Fargo in 1930. The younger Burgess married Lillian Pautz (1902-2000) in the 1920s, and was employed in an elevator in Erie as of 1930. The family was in Fargo as of 1936 and eventually moved to the Minneapolis area.
- Bill Bolmeier (1888-1977) eventually purchased the St. Anthony and Dakota, which was rechristened the Bolmeier Elevator^{xxii}. His brother Melvin (1908-1991) was a grain buyer in Erie, and another brother, Fred (1886-1967) made a career of painting elevators all across the upper Midwest. The Bolmeier Elevator evidently survived until at least 1944, when Bill and ultimately the rest of his brothers left the area for the west.



The final survivor of all of the majestic structures shown in the photos above was the Erie Farmers Elevator. The business eventually became known as the Erie Grain Company and was managed by Wilbur Gates (1902-1985), who had

purchased the elevator and was active until about 1973. Bob Moore and Jesse Pautz^{xxiii} worked there, too. Jesse was Lawrence Burgess' brother-in-law, and Gates was an Ohioan who had moved to North Dakota as a young man and lived in Ransom County before coming to Erie. Portions of Erie's final elevator (sketched out above in a school yearbook advertisement from the late 1940s) still exist in derelict condition, as shown by the color photo below, which was taken in 2008. It appears to be the metal-clad building that was built after the fire and shown in one of the photos above.



The Lumberyard

The lumberyard was owned by the St. Anthony and Dakota Elevator and has been described as a rather large structure. The early panorama photo below confirms this statement. From shortly after the turn of the century, the photo reveals a long wooden building running parallel to the railroad tracks with extensive stacks of lumber nearby—signs of the Erie’s rapid growth in those early days. V. G. Miller was an early “lumber agent” until his resignation in 1909 and departure for the west. Ray Delamater and James Beith were managers at one time or another. A. W. Burgess was working there as of 1910, but then as noted in the *Bismarck Tribune* article above, it was slightly damaged by fire in 1912. Ray Delamater (1888-1954), son of Homer Delamater and Tena Schroeder Delamater, was manager in 1915, and H. L. Schroeder took over when Delamater moved on to Nebraska. Harry Sloan (brother of Marshall the blacksmith and Amelia the postmistress) is known to have worked there as of 1920. We do not know when the lumberyard closed, but all traces of it are now gone.



The Governor and the Bank



The bank building was constructed for, as the stone above its front window indicates, the State Bank of Erie. It is a substantial structure, one of two brick buildings that rose in Erie in 1907 (the other was the school). It stood until November 26, 2019, when it was destroyed so that a nearby lot could be sold. The building was on Block 6, Lot 6, diagonally across the street from the site of the Big Store and directly across from the site of McKee's old store. The building housed Paul Mitchell's real estate and insurance business for many years during the past century but was unoccupied at the time of its destruction in 2019.



Oil Gushers

Occur Frequently

Unexpected fortunes seldom materialize overnight. But acquiring a larger sum than you expect is easy, once you let the interest on a savings account start to earn for you. We'll be glad to explain how a few dollars will start you toward your goal.

ERIE STATE BANK

Erie, N. Dak.

L. B. Hanna was the State Bank of Erie's first president with W. J. Moorish as vice-president. Louis B. Hanna (1861-1948) was a Pennsylvanian with no known connections to Churchill and Williams. He came to Hope in 1881 but soon found himself in Page, where he was in the lumber business and also appointed postmaster. He opened a bank in Page in 1886 and soon was involved with financial institutions in Cooperstown, Fargo, and of course Erie. Hanna did well in life. He served in the North Dakota legislature, was elected to Congress in Washington (1909-1913) and was elected North Dakota governor, serving from 1912-1917. Hanna spent his later years in Fargo and is buried there in Riverside Cemetery. A Canadian by birth, Wesley Morrish (1878-1935) was Hanna's associate in the banking business. They worked together at the First National Bank in Fargo, where Wesley spent his later years. Like Hanna, his partner in putting Erie in the banking business, Wesley Morrish rests in Fargo's Riverside Cemetery.

We know of three cashiers at the Erie State Bank. Elmer Nelson was cashier as of the 1910 census, and Jay D. Barr (1883-1961) was cashier from 1910 until sometime after 1916, when he took his family to St. Paul and then on to San Diego. Nelson families were well represented around town, but Elmer, who was born in Minnesota about 1868, seems to have been unrelated to them. He apparently stayed a short time and then, like Barr, departed. The third cashier, the aforementioned Arthur Mosher, served for 20 years. John Bissett also worked in the bank for a while. Some more familiar names were also associated with the banking business in Erie as of 1917. Herman L. Schroeder was president, with James Jenkins (1888-1968) as vice-president and Henry Hill (1882-1953)—who would later become the bank's president—as cashier.

Bank Burglary fails at Erie

Old fashioned Alarm averts looting in Erie

An old fashioned burglar alarm, powered by dry cell batteries, saved the Erie State Bank from being burglarized early Wednesday.

Burglars had punched the lock out of the front door to gain entrance, had gone down the basement, presumably to look over possibilities of getting into the vault through the floor.

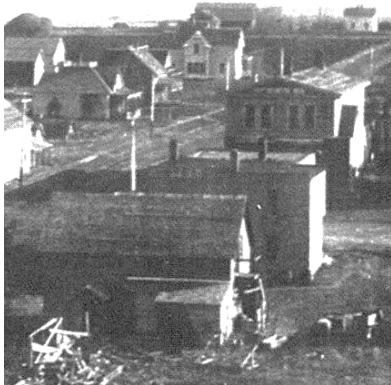
When the combination on the vault door was moved, the burglar alarm, a siren, was touched off. Citizens sleeping nearby were awakened and called H. L. Hill, cashier, who called the Cass County sheriff's department at 2:55 a.m.

No one was seen leaving the bank and nothing was disturbed within the building.

--Hunter, ND, Herald, May 13, 1937

No. 584	
Report of the condition of	
THE STATE BANK OF ERIE	
at Erie, in the State of North Dakota, at the close of business, Nov. 10, 1915.	
RESOURCES	
Loans and discounts	\$ 88,532 26
Overdrafts, secured and unsecured	1,333 75
Banking house	5,000 00
Due from other banks	\$14,905 94
Checks and other cash items	975 82
Cash	3,874 00
	19,755 26
Total	\$114,621 27
LIABILITIES	
Capital stock paid in	\$ 10,000 00
Surplus fund	2,500 00
Undivided profits, less expenses and taxes paid	3,092 90
Individual deposits subject to check	\$75,480 93
Time certificates of deposit	21,174 68
Cashier's checks outstanding	2,372 71
	99,028 37
Total	\$114,621 27
State of North Dakota, County of Cass, ss.	
I, J. D. BARR, Cashier of the above named bank, do solemnly swear that the above statement is true, to the best of my knowledge and belief.	
J. D. BARR, Cashier.	
Subscribed and sworn to before me this 17th day of Nov., 1915.	
AGNES CUTHBERTSON,	
Notary Public	
[SEAL] My commission expires Jan. 7, 1921	
Correct. Attest:	
L. B. HANNA,	
W. J. MORRISH, Directors	

Erie Hotel, Meat Market, Barbershops, and Pool Room



The Erie hotel was built in 1884 on Lot 3 of Block 7—directly across Main Street to the west from the Big Store and just north of the livery barn. As the three illustrations show (one a drawing from the front, one a photo from the back, and the third a photo from the northeast), it was a flat-roofed two story structure facing the street with a one story porch and entrance to the northeast.

We are not sure of the earliest proprietors or exactly how it was configured, but Carl Nelson (1865-1922), who arrived in Erie in 1894, had the meat market as of that year. He took over the hotel and barber shop in 1895 and as we shall see, also ran the pool hall and livery barn. In 1904, Nelson sold out, and the market passed to William and Elizabeth Grant, with for a time at least, their son Bob (1881-1947) and his wife Rose (1889-1970) serving as managers. Meat was packed on ice and delivered to farm homes during those early years. Beginning in 1911, Grant attempted to sell the business, but he did not find a buyer until 1916, when Erie farmer David Goodall (1862-1933) purchased the operation and installed Wayne and Susie Kyser as managers of the hotel^{xxiv}. Walter Jorgenson took over the hotel in 1925, and Bruce and Sarah Brewer, likely the last proprietors, were in charge from before 1930 until sometime after 1940. The building served as a private residence for a few years, but it then was torn down and eventually replaced by what became the Farmers Union.

For a time, Erie was actually a two meat market town. We know this, because of an old newspaper article stating that William Scott, formerly of Ayr, built a new meat market in 1911. We are not sure how long this meat market remained in operation, but in 1912, William Rieke (1876-

1964) purchased “the meat market building” and moved it to a spot near the creamery, where he converted it into a residence. This is likely Scott’s failed operation, but it may have been part of the hotel’s meat market. Walter Jorgensen was listed as a butcher in Erie as of 1930, so a meat market must have survived until this date.

There is also uncertainty about the tenure of barbers in Erie, but one Edwin Paschke resigned as barber in 1914 after struggling unsuccessfully with the bottle^{xxv}. Charles Brown was barbering in 1920, and then from the late 1920s until the 1940s, Henry Yagen (1889-1943) was Erie’s tonsorial artist. A Wisconsin native who barbered in Minnesota prior to his service in World

War I, Yagen married Iva Goodall (1895-1977), daughter of David Goodall, in 1919, and this brought him to Erie. The Yagens lived in Oregon after their departure from Erie.

Details of the Erie pool hall or halls are sketchy. We know that the village had one such establishment prior to 1897, when Carl Nelson purchased the business. Nelson operated it until at least 1907, and as of 1920, William Rieke was running a pool hall. It apparently was in operation for many years after 1920, but unfortunately, we cannot fill in the blanks—either in timing, location of the establishments, or proprietors.

Here are some details about the principal families associated with the hotel and meat market:

- Carl Nelson (1865-1922) was a Swedish immigrant who came to the US in 1883 and married his wife Elvera in Minneapolis. He had extensive business interests in Erie and has the distinction of being the first person in North Dakota to purchase “school land,” which was usually all of Section 16 in each township (rather than being open to direct transfer to homesteaders, school lands were sold, with the profits reserved to support local schools). After his time in business in Erie, Nelson sold insurance (1910) and was Vice-President of the bank in Ayr (1920). There were two sons in the family: Miles (1900-1973) and Morris (1915-2001). Nelson is buried in Erie Cemetery.
- William Grant (1860-1930) was a Canadian who farmed at Erie before he went into the hotel and meat market business. He also operated the nearby livery stable. William and his wife Elizabeth (1860-1929) had three children in addition to Robert (1884-1947). Their son George (1880-1936) married Fanny Cameron (1881-1967) and farmed near Erie. Their daughter Kathryn married Jesse Pautz, who we have already met.
- David Goodall (1862-1933) was a native of Ontario and related to the Beith and Hill families of Erie. He was living in Fargo at the time of his death.
- Wayne Kyser (1881-1968) was a native of Hagerstown, MD, who came to Erie when he married Susie Morrow (1885-1976) in 1916. The Kysers lived in the hotel until 1925, when they moved to a farm. Their sons Wayne (1921-2014) and Lynn (1926-1992) farmed at Erie.
- Walter Jorgensen (1878-1954) was a Page farmer and Denmark native who came to Erie for a short time as a butcher. He returned to Page and is buried there.
- Bruce Brewer (1882-1967) was one year younger than Wayne Kyser and like him, from Hagerstown, MD. They almost certainly knew each other in childhood. In 1915 Bruce married Sarah Morrow (1885-1980), Susie’s twin sister, in the process becoming Wayne Kyser’s brother-in-law. The Brewers farmed before they took over the hotel and returned to farming later. In old age, they lived in Erie, where the school children remembered him as a careful if somewhat absent minded driver as he slowly piloted his car about town. The Brewers had no children and are both buried in Erie Cemetery.
- William Rieke was best known as a rural mail carrier in Erie—as were his son and his grandson. He was related to the Albert, Pautz, Bolmeier, and Mechtel families through his wife (see Endnote iii).

Creamery



The Erie Creamery Company was organized in 1905 and opened in the spring of 1906 in the building shown above, which was located north of McKee's store on the east side of Main Street. Herman Schroeder, who we have already met, and Hans C. Jensen, both from South Dakota, were the lead organizers. The creamery was apparently never very successful, and so by 1912, the directors were already considering closing the operation. The decision was made in 1916, when the building and its contents were put up to auction. We are not sure about the machinery, but Charlie Meyer (1860-1931), an Erie farmer, purchased the structure and the land upon which it stood. The structure was split in half, with one portion going to a Meyer farm in Dows Township. The remainder was moved to the center of town, where it housed a pool hall and barber shop in conjunction with the Erie Hotel.

Herman Schroeder was a farmer and remained in Erie after the closing of the creamery. Jensen, on the other hand, evidently moved on, but we have little information about him. Charlie Meyer (1860-1931) had come to Dakota in 1880 and was one of earliest settlers of Dows Township, although he also farmed at Erie. He owned three sections of land at the time of his death.

**PUBLIC
Auction**

—AT—

**Erie Creamery Company,
Erie, N. D., Feb. 15, 1916,
2 P. M.**

Creamery Building, Ice House, Refrigerator, Large De Laval Cream Separator, Four Vats, One Butter Churn and Worker, One Pair Scales, Boiler, Engine and Pumps. All other articles contained in the Erie Creamery Building.

Bankable Paper will be taken due October 1, 1916, drawing 8% interest.

By order of Board of Directors of
Erie Creamery Company, Erie, N. Dak.

Livery Barn, Its Successors and Kate's Dress Shop



In 1896, Erie businessman Carl Nelson constructed the livery barn, shown here during an early 20th century celebration. William Grant owned the structure in 1906, when he put on an addition to the west side. James Jenkins (1888-1968) and Christy Beacom (1882-1912) were running the operation as of 1907. Beacom sold his share to Jenkins in 1911, one year before his untimely death in an automobile accident. Jenkins, who was also Vice-

President of the Erie State Bank, owned and operated the livery barn for a number of years. Ralph Cameron rented it in 1917-1918, and a man named James Bush had it as of 1920.

Hans Robertson, who we met above, also owned the facility. Livery barns not being in demand during the automobile age, Robertson remodeled the structure into a café and game room on the south and a garage on the north. He rented the “Robertson Garage” out in 1937 to Hans Anderson, a farmer from Gardner who moved to Erie to run the business, but some point, the garage burned and evidently was never rebuilt. We do not know when the café and game room closed.

Almost every small town in mid-20th century North Dakota had a Farmers Union Oil Company, and Erie was no exception. The business was, so far as we can tell, originally housed in a clapboard building on Lot 1 of Block 8—on the corner directly north of the school. This structure had a very different early life, when it housed a dress shop operated by Kate Cameron (1864-1915). Never married, she was the eighth of John and Annie Cameron's eleven children—sister of Alex Cameron, Mrs. McKee, Mrs. John Stuart, Mrs. James Beith, Mrs. Henry Hill, and several others. Kate was a well-known, well liked, and community-minded resident of Erie.

But let's get back to the Farmers Union, which appears to have been organized in the early 1940s. About 175 patrons, an unbelievable number by today's standards, attended one meeting in 1945.

SPRING
MILLINERY
OPENING

My Spring Millinery opening
will be held at

ERIE

--ON--

APRIL, 3 AND 4.

Having personally inspected the
stock of the wholesale houses and
made purchases therefrom, I can
assure the ladies of Erie and vicinity
that my display is replete with

THE NEWEST CREATIONS

the market affords. Your inspection
invited.

Miss K. Cameron

ERIE, N. D.

ERIE MERCHANT ANSWERS CALL

**PROMINENT MILLINER OF ERIE
DIED AT THE HOME OF HER
SISTER IN THIS CITY SATUR-
DAY EVENING—HAD BEEN ERIE
RESIDENT SINCE 1882.**

Miss Kate Cameron, aged 53 years, died at the home of her sister, Mrs. James McKee of 918 Twelfth avenue north, Saturday evening at 7 o'clock following an illness of less than a week. Death was indirectly due to an operation which she underwent some time ago for complications.

Miss Cameron was born in the province of Ontario, Canada, and came to North Dakota in 1882 and settled near Erie. She engaged in the millinery business at that point, which business she had worked up to a most successful stage previous to her death. She was particularly prominent in lodge circles, being one of the state officials of the Degree of Honor and one of the Past Matrons of the local lodge of that order. She was well and favorably known in this city and leaves a host of friends to mourn her death. She is survived by four sisters and three brothers besides numerous other relatives.

The remains were shipped to Erie this morning and the funeral was held from the Presbyterian church of that city at 2:30 o'clock this afternoon. The services were in charge of Rev. E. C. Ford of this city and interment was made in the Erie cemetery.

The body was prepared for burial by Undertaker E. F. Wasem.

A number of individuals, some well-known and others obscure, worked in Erie's early oil and gas businesses. In most cases we cannot link names to businesses, but here for the record are the people:

John. P. Nelson (1863-1951)—another one of the Nelsons who once inhabited Erie—was a Swede who farmed in Empire Township before becoming a gas station manager in Erie as of 1920. He is buried in Erie.

Clarence Brown (1894-1968) worked for Standard Oil when it was in Erie. Son-in-law of Sam Mechtel, who we will have more to say about, Clarence and his family moved to Casselton between 1930 and 1935.

Melvin E. Ottis (1899-1973) came to Erie from Kindred and ran what for a time was known as Ottis Oil Sales. He was there from before 1920 until after 1940 and then moved on to Oregon, where he died.

Albert Schrock (1899-1976) was brought from Iowa to Towner County, ND, when an infant. He came to Erie after 1935 and worked for the Farmers Union (his coworker was a man named Frank McDermott). By 1942 he was back in Iowa, where he died.

We have already encountered Jack Bergman (1897-1997), who came to Erie from Sargent County between 1930 and 1935. He worked for a time in oil and gas sales and is buried in Fergus Falls, MN.

Roy Allen (1896-1969), son of William and Sarah Allen, was an early mechanic in Erie. He held this position as of 1920 but was painting in Los Angeles 10 years later. Another mechanic was Mac Hyen (1899-1988), a Dane and the son-in-law of Hans Robertson. He was employed in Erie as of 1940 but soon moved to the Minneapolis area and died in Arizona. A man named Charles Doyle also worked as an electrician in an Erie garage around 1930.

Ed Norling (1888-1945) didn't sell gas and oil, but he did transport materials around the area as a self-described drayman. Norling, who was born in Wisconsin, came to Erie before 1930 and worked until near the time of his early death. He married Elizabeth "Lizzie" Cameron (1883-1972) in 1930. She outlived him by two decades and was a "widow lady" in Erie during the 1950s and 1960s. Both are buried in Erie Cemetery.



Drug Store and Erie's Physicians—and our Veterinarian (Yes, There was One)

It is hard to believe but true: Erie once had physicians in residence. The first was Adolphus Guest (1869-1956), who was born near London, Ontario, and came to Erie before 1900. So far as we can determine, he was unrelated to Herbert Guest, who also lived in Erie as his contemporary. Dr. Guest stayed for only a few years before relocating to Jamestown, where he opened a practice in 1903. By 1930, he was in Athens, OH. He eventually made his way to San Diego and died there.

Erie's second physician, a Dr. Schutt, succeeded Adolphus Guest in 1903 and stayed for only two years. He was replaced in 1905 by Dr. Samuel D. Coffin (1878-1952), a Minnesotan. Coffin built a house on the south side of the village in 1908-1909, but by 1910 he was in Seattle, where he practiced for the rest of his life. We know of only one more Erie physician, a Dr. Soper, who was in the village as of 1916. We are unsure of his arrival date, but he apparently departed some time prior to 1920.

Medical patients often have needs for drugs and other medicines, and they were available in early Erie. The village's first drug store was founded prior to 1903 and as of that date was operated by William S. Whitman (1867-1933), a colorful character who like our little village's founders, came to us from Erie, PA. Whitman, who was born Wittmann and for some reason changed his last name (his brother did not), almost certainly came to Dakota under the influence of Churchill and Williams. Known locally as Billy, he married Lizzie Beith (1872-1893, a school teacher and sister of James Beith, who we have already met. She soon died in childbirth, leaving Whitman with a baby daughter. His second wife, whose first name we do not know, was a member of Erie's Dows family.

Whitman farmed near Erie until his short-lived entry into pharmacy. By 1904, he was in Grand Forks, where he had an interest in the Grand Forks Bottling Works. Seemingly accident prone, he broke his arm while cranking his car and was severely injured in a train accident, but he went on to serve on the city council and become a state senator—all the while maintaining his contacts to Erie.

Banker L. B. Hanna stepped in upon Whitman's departure, investing in the store, which was renamed the Erie Drug Company. Put in charge was a Mr. Willison, who we cannot trace. Dr. Coffin also held an interest in the drugstore at about this time, but he was bought out by Arthur C. Nelson (1888-1949) in 1912^{xxvi}. Nelson was the son of gas station manager John P. Nelson and also Whitman's brother-in-law through his wife, Mae Dows Nelson (1886-1970). He ran the drug store for a while but then moved to Grand Forks, where he and his wife remained. The drug store appears to have closed some time prior to 1920.

And then there was George H. Smith, who was listed in a 1908 newspaper article as Erie's veterinarian. We have not been able to trace him or discover how long he ministered to Erie's livestock, but it is nonetheless fascinating that such a person once worked in the little village.

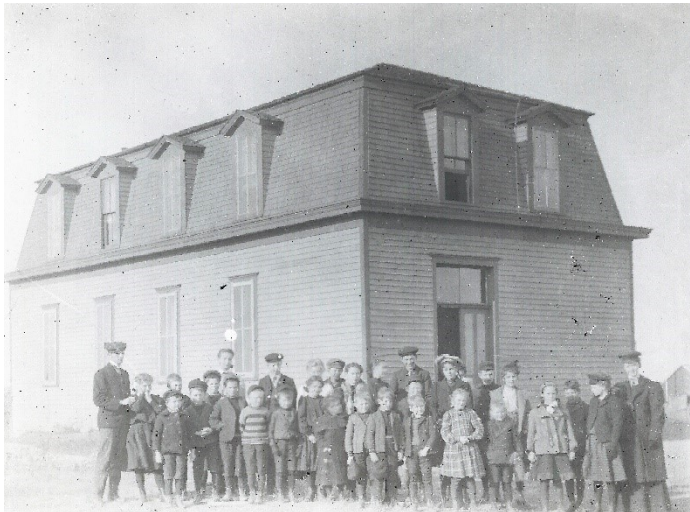
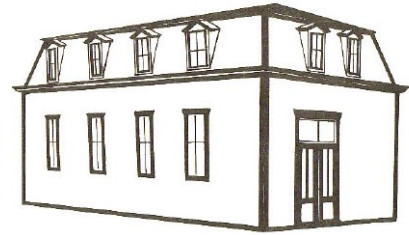
The Incubator and 1907 School

According to a 1978 history of Erie Public School District No. 52, the district was organized in 1891 and encompassed all of Erie Township, which of course included the growing village.

There were three country schools, each named for a family.

The Delamater School was near the village in Section 16, the Warner School was southeast of the village in Section 26, and the Hill School was in Section 29. The structure that served

as Erie's first town school had been constructed earlier—in 1881—by Alfred Mosher. An imposing building for such a small village, it featured a mansard roof and dormer windows on the second floor. We are not certain if it was intended to be built as a school, but it advanced the education of Erie's children for several years, as shown in the 1905 photo below. After the brick school was constructed in 1907, the building became known as the Incubator, a name of uncertain origin that may have referred to the fact that many families lived there over the years.



Alfred Mosher and his family were prominent in early Erie, and so before we return to the school, we devote a few paragraphs to Alfred and his family. Alfred (1834-1920) and Persis (1835-1902) Mosher were New Englanders who, like so many other Erie settlers, came first to Wheatland. The family homesteaded on Section 18 in 1880, spending the early winters in Wheatland but eventually settling permanently in Erie. The Moshers had 11 children, at least six of whom accompanied them to

Erie and figure in Erie's story. The eldest daughter, Hattie Mosher (1860-1953) had married Edward Stowers (1862-1946) in Minnesota before her arrival in Dakota. We have already learned that Ed operated a store in Erie and served as postmaster from 1891-1895.

Hattie's younger brother Warren (1862-1909) also married in Minnesota. Like his father, he homesteaded in Section 18, but he soon passed this land on to his parents and by 1900 was a businessman in Page. Warren was only 37 years old when he died. Jennie Mosher (1866-1954) married William Hudson (1851-1919), a widower from Gardner. After his death, she married Harry Nutting, an Erie farmer and longtime businessman in the village.

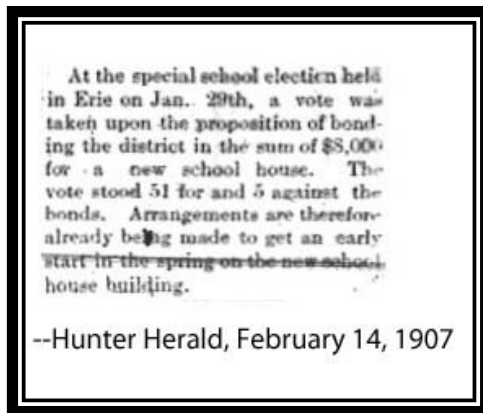
Three of the younger Mosher brothers also lived in Erie. Ted (1874-1920) was a farmer and carpenter in Erie who died relatively young. His younger brother, Harry (1876-1950) also lived in Erie for a short time before moving to Fargo^{xxvii}. Of all the Mosher children, it was Arthur (1872-1961) who had the longest association with Erie. He married Bertha Johnson (1886-1980) in 1912 and moved to San Diego but was persuaded by his father to return just two years later to

help run the store. Art Mosher was appointed Erie postmaster in 1899 and served for more than 10 years. Art was also bank cashier and a businessman.



A number of Alfred and Persis' grandchildren were born in Erie and spent there earlier years there, but most do not figure in town's history. The exceptions include Warren's daughter Phyllis (1903-1981), who married Erie farmer Floyd Thompson (1903-1987); Art's daughter Arberta, who married Erie farmer Robert Grieger; and Art's daughter Ruth, who married Kenneth Marshall, an Empire Township farmer. Another of Art's daughters, Virginia Mosher Homan, did not remain for long in Erie, but she did

preserve a collection of old photographs of the village, including one of the Art Mosher residence (left), which was constructed a short distance east of the Ries house and blacksmith shop.



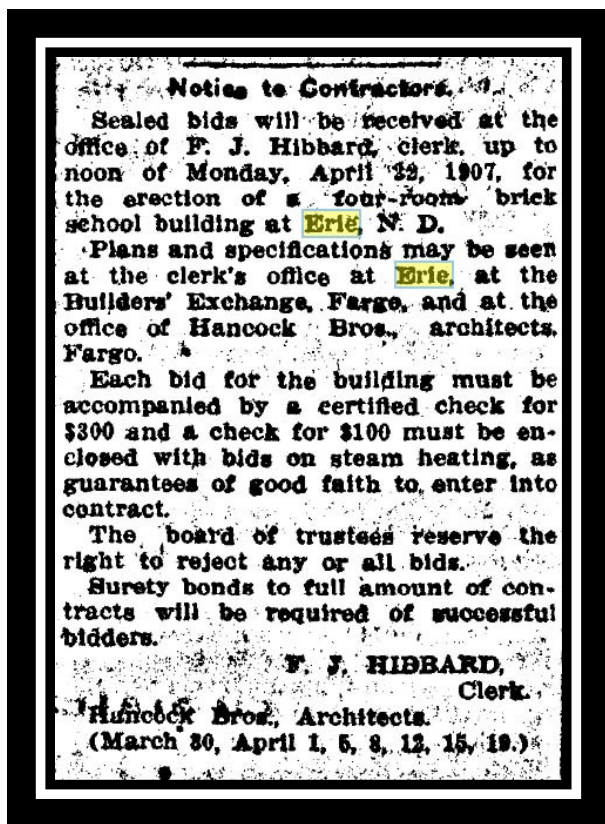
Now back to the school. As 1907 neared, Erie residents recognized the need for a school that would be more substantial than the Incubator. A petition was circulated, and as shown by the newspaper notice to the left, a special election was held on January 29th. The yeas outweighed the nays 51-5, and so architects were contacted and the new structure to cost \$8,000 designed. As indicated by the published request for bids below, which appeared in the *Fargo Forum and Daily Republican* in April of 1907, it was to have steam heating and be clad with brick. C. H. Johnson of Fargo,

won the construction bid. This firm had several commissions that year, including one for "the erection of the state institute for the feeble minded in Grafton."



The school was duly constructed, and as is clear from the early photograph below, it was a substantial, no nonsense structure. There were four classrooms, two on each floor, with a full basement. Each classroom was bright and airy with what were told was a "cloakroom" along one wall. Parents in Erie not being accustomed to dressing their children in "cloaks," we young students hung our coats there.

Only grades 1-9 were taught that first year, and there was only one male student in the 9th grade, and he only lasted for 30 days. Enrollment was



27 in 1917, when two years of high school were offered. At some later point, the last two years of high school were included. Enrollment figures over the decades are scant. There were 14 high school students in 1924 and 27 in 1935 & 36. Seven graduated from Erie High School in 1935, but there were only 3 seniors in 1938. Erie High School claimed 17 students as of 1947—5 freshmen, 2 sophomores, 6 juniors, and 6 seniors (for the record, the seniors were Lorraine Albert, Wayne Berndt, Bruce Johnson, Jacqueline Kramer, Robert Morrow, and William Pendleton). It was at about this time that the town fathers began considering the construction of a gymnasium as a way to secure the school into what was becoming an uncertain future. The gymnasium was constructed in 1950 and dedicated that summer in the presence of 500 people, including Governor Brunsdale. An impressive building for such a small town, it included a 50 X 78 foot basketball court, a 16 X

84 foot stage, locker rooms, a full kitchen, and several other rooms that were used for classes.

The 1947 enrollment numbers were about the same in 1959, when there were 4 freshmen, 5 sophomores, 6 juniors, and 5 seniors attending Erie High School (for the record, the seniors were Allan Berndt, Billy Gates, Teddy McGovern, Terry Meyers, and Tony Zahn). But declining population and greater mobility ultimately sealed the fate of Erie School District No. 52. There was just one graduate in 1966—Jerry McPherson, and so it is no surprise that talks about consolidation heated up during the winter of 1966-1967, when about 65 students remained in all twelve grades. A trial merger with Arthur and Hunter was, after a contentious series of meetings, approved. Dakota High School (then located in Arthur) graduated its first class of 32 students in 1968. Among them was the writer, and just two other former Erie students—Donna Havelange, and Marlene Grieger (other former Erie students opted to transfer to Page).

Erie school never reopened. The district was dissolved and partitioned between the Dakota and Page districts. The old 1907 brick building was torn down a few years later and the gymnasium that made the community so proud in 1950 sold for use as a storage facility. It still stands (the photo on the next page shows that the upper stage curtains were still in place as of 2018).

A large number of individuals taught in Erie over the years. Here is a partial list, which includes many names that will be familiar to those who remember Erie—and other names that have been forgotten: Gertrude Stowers, Mabel Thayer, Hulda Schroeder, Irene Wallace, Minnie Nelson, Bella Morrow, Vina Cuthbertson, Emma Schroeder, Roy Potter, Sarah Jenkins, Emma Bolmeier, Edythe Sloan, Ferne Hill, Nancy Furrer, Jean Morrow, Lucille Colvin, Lester Fugers, H. L.

French, C. S. Nuchette, Jessie Hockridge, Bess and Maude McKee, Lennie Higbee, A. Flint, Alice Campbell, Geraldine Helland, Ellen Lura, May Lane, Augusta Sommerfeldt, Lena Melke, Goldie Munch, William Titus, Ruth Gardner, Margaret McGrath, Laura Lee, Martha Dittmer,



Theresa Horkan, George Melby, Della Wilken, Iva Tyson, G. B. McMillan, J. E. Hutchinson, C. A. Shimmer, Ruth Johnson, Mildred Beith, Ruth Strom, Harold Sewerdsen, Ora Hammerud, K. W. Hammer, James McPherson, Mary Huey, Marion Stock, Doran Davison, Dorothy Caldwell, Alma Ries, Earl Shearer, Alta Wilcox, Gertrude Bressin, Margaret Rostad, Georgena Matthey, Doris Henrichs, Louis Davis, Jack Morrison, Marjorie Hill, Lyle Willert, Earl York, Keith Wick, Marjorie Anderson, Anna Lee, Arla Kay and Alberta

Ann Unruh.

Other Erie Businesses

It is not my intent to attempt to catalogue every business that ever appeared in Erie over the years, but there are several additional businesses warranting attention:

Bars and restaurants. Food and alcohol were undoubtedly available at a number of early Erie establishments, including the hotel, pool room, confectionary, and soda fountains at the stores. The village also supported several establishments dedicated to eating and drinking. One very early bar operated from a small structure to the east of the Big Store. A Mr. Johnson (with a name like that, we will never be able to find him!) was proprietor. Much later—between 1951 and 1962, Lawrence Moss (1919-1995) operated a restaurant, bar, and soda fountain from a building that stood just south of the Big Store. The Moss family was from Minnesota and eventually returned there. Bob Delamater operated Bob's Bar and Grill for a few years thereafter, but eventually the businesses folded.

Confectionary. Harry Nutting, who we have already encountered, ran a confectionary store for a number of years in Erie. The location was south of the Big Store, across the street from the old livery barn. There are also indications that it stood across Main Street. Abram Burgess and a man named Shelstad managed the confectionary store.

Machinery dealership and bulk station. In the mid-1920s, Melvin Ottis (who also operated a Standard Oil bulk station), Sam Graff (1895-1984), and Lennie Johnson operated a machinery dealership in Erie. Sam Mechtel's son George Mitchell (1900-1972) was associated with this business in the late 1920s and also operated a livery service. The photo below, taken about 1930 from the center of Erie's Main Street, faces south and shows the machinery business directly to the right of the cars. The Incubator and the Erie School are partially visible behind it.

GEO. W. MITCHELL		No. 541
GARAGE AND LIVERY		
ERIE, N. DAK.		19
PAY TO THE ORDER OF		\$
		DOLLARS
TO FARMERS STATE BANK OF ERIE,		
77-877 ERIE, NORTH DAKOTA		



Sam Graff, who arrived in 1929, constructed a building to house a grocery store and locker plant that was opened in 1939. His wife Clara (1898-1986) was postmistress in Erie for 31 years. Wayne (1918-1978) and Marjorie Hill (1919-2016) operated the grocery and locker plant in this building in the late 1940s and early 1950s (the advertisement below is from a 1951 booklet published by the Erie Presbyterian Church). We are not certain if the post office and all of these successive businesses were in the same structure, but the author can confirm that the 1960s era post office was in a building that resembles that shown in the photo to the left, which is from about 1930.

Stockyards. For many years, a stockyards existed west of the school in Erie. We are not sure of the exact business model, but August Bolmeier was an early buyer. As of 1930 there were two livestock buyers in the village who must have traded through the stockyards. The first was Adolph Carl (1876-1956), a German who came with his family before 1920 and left after 1940 for Los Angeles. Garfield Harrington (1881-1968) had deeper roots in Erie. A native of Woodstock, Ontario, he was a brother of Mary Harrington (1874-1940), who married Willis Hill (1874-1922) and Luella Harrington (1868-1914), who married Willis' brother Wallace Hill (1865-1912). Both were prominent early families in Erie. Garfield was also a brother-in-law of two Hills who we have already met: Harrison, who ran the Big Store for a time, and James, who farmed in Rich Township. Garfield Hill eventually moved from Erie to Mayville, where he continued his livestock business. He and his wife Edna (1885-1947) are buried there.

Shoe shop. For many years, Herman Witt operated a shoemaking and repair shop in Erie. Born in 1877, he was the son of Fred Witt (1835-1911) and his wife Julia (1836-1924), who farmed in Dows Township. Herman never married and evidently left Erie in the 1940s for destination unknown. Two of his siblings have Erie connections. Fred Witt (1866-1937) married Minnie Albert (1872-1938) in Erie and farmed for several years before departing for Glyndon, MN. More tragic is the story of his sister Bertha, who had the misfortune to marry Charles McPeck, who murdered her in 1914.

Potato warehouse. Dows and Erie township farmer Charles Meyers (1861-1931) had a potato warehouse in Erie. We do not know its location, but Jesse Pautz, who we met earlier, worked there at one time.

The mysterious gift shop.
In about 1960, the Cass County fathers decided to pave Erie's Main Street. The photo to the right shows one of the workmen standing by his pickup truck on the street, which is already under construction. He is facing southwest, toward the bank building. The commercial building behind him is derelict, but the sign above the door



clearly identifies it as a Gift Shop. We wonder who would have thought that such a shop would be successful in mid-20th century Erie, but do not know. The building is in fact visible in old

photos of the village—to the right in the photo below with the old creamery/pool hall building to the left. Its origin and uses through the years remains a mystery.



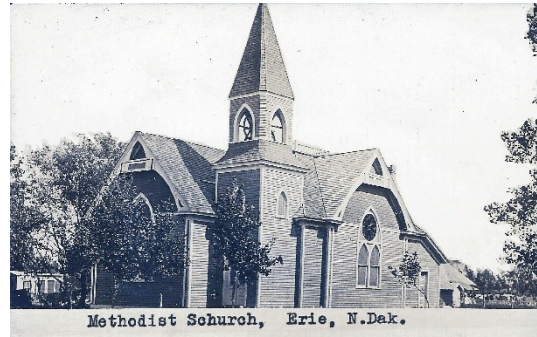
Churches

The Methodists

Although there are no longer any churches in Erie, at one time the community supported three thriving congregations. Small groups undoubtedly held informal worship services from Erie's beginning,

The new M. E. church at Erie is completed, and will be dedicated by Bishop Isaac W. Joyce, Monday, January second at 11 o'clock a.m. After the sermon and dedication, the audience will be invited to repair to the Workman Hall for an hour or two of sociability and a free lunch served by the ladies of the church. This is a rare opportunity for the people of the country to come together for a day of intellectual, spiritual and social enjoyment. You cannot afford to miss this opportunity of listening to a great man. All of the people of Mayville and vicinity are most cordially invited to be present. Stable room will be provided for teams from a distance.

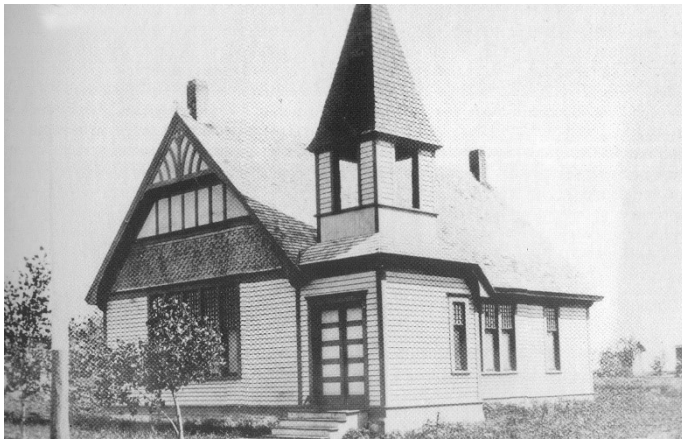
but the first completed structure belonged to the



Methodist Episcopal or ME Church—the Methodists in today's vocabulary. As the article to the left from the January 5, 1899, issue of the *Mayville Tribune* indicates, their building, in Block 4, was constructed in 1898 and dedicated the next January. It was across the street from what would soon become the school grounds. A \$150 bell was added in 1908, and then in 1916 the parsonage was constructed a little to the south of the church (and a basement was dug out). Rev. A. Edwards, who arrived in 1915, was the first to occupy the parsonage. We know of a Rev. Hart, who arrived in 1905, but otherwise little is known of the Methodist pastors who served the

congregation. Most of the pastors were short-timers and remained in Erie for just a few years. Membership dwindled in the second half of the 20th century, and the congregation was disbanded about 2000. The building no longer exists.

The Presbyterians



The Presbyterian Church was organized in 1889 by Rev. F. M. Wood and Rev. B. W. Coe, and then following loss of important records, reorganized three years later. Rev. Featherstone was the first pastor, and there were 14 charter members—among them the first Elders: Joel Franklin, Leonard Delamater, and James Rutherford. The building was constructed in 1902 on a lot toward the middle of Block 2. The nearby parsonage was built two years later. Like the

Methodists, the Presbyterians were in a burrowing mood in 1916, when they, too, excavated a church basement.

A Rev. Holzinger was serving the congregation in 1905, but as with the Methodists, most former pastors have been forgotten. There are, however, two exceptions. The first is Rev. Gus Book (1865-1951), who was born in Sweden and came to Erie about the time of World War I and remained until just 1919, when he moved to Tower City. He is remembered less than two of his children: daughter Stella Book (1895-1956), who married Erie farmer John Cuthbertson (1898-1940) in 1924, and son Roy Book (1897-1967), a carpenter who lived in Erie and the surrounding area.

Rev. Robert L. Colvin (1870-1951) was an Illinois native who taught in several North Dakota schools and was pastor to churches in Hope, Colgate, and Erie, among others. He came to Erie in 1915 and although it appears that he moved away several times, he has Presbyterian pastor in Erie in 1920 and in 1930. He had several children, including Foster (1906-1987), who was disabled and remained in the Erie area, and Christine (1903-1969), who taught in the Erie school.

Church of God



The Erie Church of God was founded in 1898 by a pair of itinerant evangelists who literally walked into town one day from the nearby town of Arthur. The history of the church is closely tied to Sam Mechtel (1859-1938), who was anything but churched in his younger days, and who was converted by the evangelists. He and his wife Frederieke Albert (1867-1937), member of a family that we have already encountered, had a large number of children, and with several other families, they formed the nucleus of the church. The congregation met in the Mechtel home and the Erie school—and later in the country Hill school, which was purchased after its closure and moved into town. In 1954 the congregation purchased the building of the Arthur Methodist Church (shown left) and after having excised the steeple, transported it into Erie, where it stood on the west side of Main Street on the far northern side of town.

Benjamin J. Franklin (1880-1966) was an early minister who was in Erie as of 1915 but then moved on to start other churches in the west. Both A. W. Burgess (1867-1956), who held a number of positions in town and was pastor as of 1920, and Bertha Gaulke (1873-1951), whose family lived in Grand Forks, were pastors who later served the congregation. Cecil Evans and Milbert Ortman (1917-2005) were mid-century pastors. Like the other churches in town, the Church of God slowly dwindled away in the 1960s and 1970s. The building lasted longer than those of the Presbyterians and Methodists, but it met a more ignoble end when it was turned into an automotive repair shop. The structure was torn down about 2010.



A Personal Epilogue

In less than a century, Erie went from a dream cooked up by a couple of daring Pennsylvanians to a thriving community to just another small town in terminal decline. It didn't take long for the first, late 19th century homes on the windswept prairie to be surrounded by trees and hedges. Then came the businesses—stores, a bank, eating (and drinking) places, a hotel, and of course the requisite row of elevators that sustained the community's agricultural base. You or your horses could be doctored in Erie. You could hop on a passenger train to Fargo, confident that your children were in school and maybe even learning something. And you could have a beer and skunk your neighbor at a game of pool or win a few hands of pinochle on Saturday night, and then do Sunday penance in any one of three different houses of worship, all without leaving the small village.

By the time my parents deposited me as one of seven first graders at Erie Public School in 1956, most of Erie's virtues and vices alike had evaporated. The Big Store, one remaining elevator, the Farmers Union, blacksmith shop, and a café remained, but most of the structures labeled on the map on the next page were long gone. As I progressed through the grades, advancing however tentatively in wisdom and knowledge, the slow drip-drip of decline began to accelerate. The school district called it quits after my junior year in high school, and I was bussed eight miles east to Arthur, where I graduated in the first class at Dakota High School and then hightailed it out of state, never to return as a permanent resident. But I visited regularly.

Each home stay over the past half century included a drive into town and an update on Erie's signs of decline. Some of it was physical—here and there a house no longer standing, the schoolhouse and playground razed, all three church buildings bulldozed, the Farmers Union boarded up, the elevator a creaking hulk, the Big Store leveled to a patch of grass, and then in 2019 the final indignity: the bank building, which had stood watch over its corner for 112 years, fell victim to real estate regulations that viewed it as a danger to passersby.

There is also a human dimension to the decline. As chronicled in the preceding pages, some families sampled Erie and soon decided to move on, but many put down lasting roots and remained. Farming had always been a labor-intensive occupation, and so in addition to his children, every farmer employed hired men for assistance—especially at harvest time. Farms were small, farmsteads were relatively close together, and there were few business options available other than local merchants. Not all of the children and grandchildren of the early settlers remained, but a healthy percentage of these generations could find employment in the village or the farms that surrounded it. This changed with the advent of the automobile and the introduction of tractor power and large machinery. Fewer people—a lot fewer people—were needed to sow, cultivate, and harvest crops, and they could easily escape to larger towns for shopping and entertainment.

Over time, “technological progress” caused the near collapse of Erie's employment base and the disappearance of opportunities for the descendants of the early settlers. Grandpa and Grandma may rest in the cemetery on the hill, but their descendants became scattered, some

totally unaware of what went on in the little village on the prairie. My own homesteader great grandfather Samuel Mechtel, had 11 children, all born at Erie, and 32 grandchildren, most born at or near Erie. There are dozens and dozens of great grandchildren, but only four of them have families near Erie and only one has an Erie address. I, too, am one of the of Erie diaspora—just old enough to sense the vapors of Erie as it was and just curious enough to want to commit the story to paper. I hope that you will enjoy these lines and forgive me for any errors and oversights.

--Steve Pueppke, Okemos, Michigan, April 12, 2020



Google Image of Erie in 2019

Location	Structure
A	Church of God
B	Erie Bank
C	McKee/Bolmeier store
D	Erie Hotel/Farmers Union
E	Big Store
F	Presbyterian Church
G	Elevator
H	Livery Barn
I	Moss Cafe
J	Graff Grocery/Locker
K	Blacksmith Shop
L	The Incubator
M	Erie School
N	Methodist Church

Erie Business People, 1900

Name	Occupation	Name	Occupation
Stewart, John	Blacksmith	Whitman, William	Salesman
Schroeder, Emma	Teacher	Guest, Herbert	Grain buyer
Schroeder, Hulda	Teacher	Guest, Adolphus	Physician
Ankrum, Allen	Railroad agent	Nelson, Carl	Hotel keeper
Larson, Paul	Butcher	Nelson, Lewis	Painter
Delamater, Leonard	Farm machinery	Nutting, Harry	Merchant
Mosher, Arthur	Merchant	Goodrich, Charles	Teacher
Hill, Harrington	Merchant	Cameron, Thomas	Grocery sales
Carrol, William	Blacksmith	Stuart, Peter	Merchant
Lindstrom, Charles	Miller	Nelson, William	Painter
Gromsgard, Ole	Grain buyer		

Erie Business People, 1910

Name	Occupation	Name	Occupation
Naase, George	Railroad agent	Pautz, August	Grain elevator
Burgess, A. W.	Lumber salesman	Bingham, Nels	Store merchant
Coffin, S. D.	Physician	Frederick, Ben	Store salesman
Hill, George	Merchant	Rieke, William	House painter
Ries, Frank	Blacksmith	Grant, William	Boarding house
Delamater, Frank	Carpenter	Grant, Robert	House painter
Bolmeier, Emma	Teacher	Goodwin, Henry	Store bookkeeper
Franch, Harry	Teacher	Hill, Henry	Store salesman
Morrow, Susie	Teacher	Nelson, Elmer	Bank cashier
Jenkins, Sarah	Teacher	Nutting, Harry	General store sales
Jenkins, James	Livery business	Mosher, Arthur	Postmaster
Cameron, Kate	Millinery store	Mosher, Ed	House painter
Powers, Frank	Stone mason	Nelson, Carl	Insurance

Erie Business People, 1920

Name	Occupation	Name	Occupation
Bolmeier, Fred	Elevator painter	Dokken, Ole	Railroad foreman
Bolmeier, Reuben	Grocery store prop.	Dokken, Andrew	Railroad section man
Bolmeier, Roy	Hardware sales	Bush, James	Livery stable
Book, Stella	Sales lady	Lee, Laura	High school teacher
McGrath, Margaret	Grade sch. Teacher	Colvin, R. L.	Presbyterian pastor
Delamater, Frank	Contractor	Bingham, Nels	Light plant salesman
Nasse, George	Retail store prop.	Kyser, W. R.	Hotel propreitor
Titus, William	High school principal	Book, Robert	Hardware sales
Frederick, B. J.	Hardware store prop.	Meeg, Julius	Grocery store proprietor
Nelson, C. M.	Bank vice president	Meeg, Alfred	Grocery sales
Ries, Frank	Blacksmith	Sethy, W. R.	Elevator manager
Allan, Roy	Mechanic	Brown, Charles	Barber
Arvidson, Herman	Carpenter	Mosher, E. L.	Carpenter
Powers, Frank	Mason	Conrad, John	Real estate
Lehman, Jacob	Electrical plant manager	Lindquist, B.	Railroad station agent
Hill, H. L.	Bank cashier	Mosher, A. A.	Bank clerk
Nelson, J. P.	Gas station manager	Rieke, William	Pool room manager
Bolmeier, William	Elevator proprietor	Sloan, Amelia	Telephone operator
Sloan, Harry	Lumber yard manager	Sloan, Esther	Postmistress
Hill, Ferne	High school teacher		

Erie Business People, 1930

Name	Occupation	Name	Occupation
Witt, Herman	Shoemaker	Brewer, B. S.	Hotel landlord
Book, Leroy	Carpenter	Yagen, Henry	Barber
Hill, Mrs. Henry	Rooming house proprietor	Lindquist, Bert	GN station agent
Harrington, Garfield	Livestock buyer	McLeod, Kate	Nurse
Ries, Frank	Blacksmith	Ries, Lawrence	Hardware sales
Ries, Leo	Blacksmith laborer	Ries, Albert	Hardware sales
Nelson, Miles	House decorator	Mosher, Arthur	Bank cashier
Robberstad, Anna	General store sales	Bolmeier, William	Elevator manager
Morrow, Robert	Road grader	Brown, Clarence	Standard Oil sales
Graff, Sam	Hardware merchant	Grant, Robert	General store sales
Norling, Edward	Drayman	Sloan, Henry	Lumber sales
Burgess, Lawrence	Elevator laborer	Bolmeier, Reuben	General store proprietor
Jorgensen, Walter	Butcher	Bolmeier, Wesley	General store sales
Larson, Leonard	Garage laborer	Doyle, Charles	Garage electrician
Carl, Adolph	Livestock buyer	Ottis, Melvin	Oil salesman
Allen, John	Elevator laborer	Nutting, Harry	Grocery store proprietor
Ottis, Alice	Teacher	Day, Berlin	School principal
Bolmeier, Emma	Teacher	Grant, Rose	Telephone operator
McLeod, Anna	Nurse	Hanson, Cora	Teacher
McLeod, Maggie	Nurse	Sorenson, Myrtle	Teacher
Robertson, Hans	Farmers Elevator agent	Sloan, Marshall	School janitor

Erie Business People, 1940

Name	Occupation	Name	Occupation
Paulson, Oscar	Railroad station agent	Bolmeier, William	Elevator grain dealer
Bokken, Andrew	Railroad laborer	Bergman, John	Oil and gas sales
Lehman, Jacob	School janitor	Kramer, John	Highline electrician
Schrock, Albert	Oil and gas sales	Samuelson, Harold	Teacher
Yagen, Henry	Barber	Samuelson, Margaret	Teacher
Sloan, Marshall	Rawleigh products salesman	Robertson, Hans	Service station sales
Hyen, Mack	Mechanic	Brewer, Sarah	Hotel operator
Evanson, Joseph	Bulk oil sales	Power, Theodore	Railroad laborer
McLeod, Annie	Nurse	Johnson, Doubal	Show horses
Larson, Leonard	Mechanic	Bolmeier, Wesley	General store merchant
Bolmeier, Haven	General store merchant	Bolmeier, Emma	Teacher
Bolmeier, Melvin	Elevator grain dealer	McLeod, Clinton	Trucker
Palmer, Grace	Store clerk	McLeod, Jack	Trucker
Norling, Edward	Drayman	Pautz, August	Janitor in potato house
Bolmeier, Reuben	Farm equipment merchant	Hill, Henry	Insurance sales
Colvin, Robert	Minister	Colvin, Christine	Teacher
Graff, Sam	Merchant	Graff, Clara	Merchant
Grant, Francis	Telephone operator	Grant, Kenneth	Farm machine operator
Davidson, Doran	Teacher	Nutting, Harry	Grocery store merchant

Erie Business People, 1940 (continued)

Name	Occupation	Name	Occupation
Dorrance, William	Tonic medicine sales	Nelson, Miles	Painter
Ottis, Melvin	Bulk oil sales	Nelson, Maurice	Grocery clerk
Mosher, Arthur	Bank cashier	Mosher, Ruth	Grocery clerk
Book, Roy	Carpenter	Herman, Robert	Teacher
Viestenz, Lydia	Wholesale hardw. Bookkeeper	Palmer, Devaro	Road grading/mechanic
Ries, Frank	Blacksmith	Ries, Albert	Blacksmith
Ries, Arthur	Blacksmith	Ries, Lawrence	Road grader

Endnotes

ⁱ The *Hunter Herald* issue of October 12, 1905 reports that “August Bolmeier has just sold a tract of nine lots to some local parties and there will, in the near future be three or four new residences erected there and a new street laid out.”

ⁱⁱ “Erie, the Early Years,” a booklet prepared for the village’s centennial in 1982, is especially valuable as a historical resource.

ⁱⁱⁱ August Bolmeier was one of three sons-in-law of William Albert, a Wisconsin farmer who accompanied his daughters to the Erie area in the 1880s. Each of these families participated in the early development of Erie. The eldest daughter, Caroline (1862-1930), married August in Wisconsin and had sons who operated businesses in Erie. Her sister Theresa (1873-1940) married August Pautz, whose descendants worked in Erie businesses, their sister Emma (1876-1956) married Bill Rieke, (1876-1964) who operated a pool hall in Erie for a number of years, and their sister Frederieke (1867-1937) married Sam Mechtel/Mitchell (1859-1938), who had business interests in Erie. Another sister, Minnie (1872-1938) married Fred Witt (1866-1937). They farmed for a few years and moved to Glyndon, MN, in 1919. We will meet representatives of each family in this history.

^{iv} Early Erie was also the home of Charles Churchill, whose land eventually was acquired by George. Charles was George’s uncle. He came to Erie with his family from Morrison, IL, some time after 1880 and returned to Illinois before 1900.

^v Old timers often told the story of Erie’s involvement in invention of the zipper. In reality, the connection was very minor. Those interested in this story should see Robert Friedel’s 1994 book, *The Zipper: An Experiment in Novelty*.

^{vi} The 1885 Cass County, Dakota Territory Census, lists Leonard Reed with his sons H. M. and A. L. and daughter Isaa, along with a woman identified as another daughter (she was likely a daughter-in-law) plus two grandsons. Abram evidently came first, because he is the only one listed in the 1880 US Census of Erie Township.

^{vii} Abram Reed (1845-1923) left the farm in older age and worked as a school janitor. His brother Henry, who was two years older, was still living on the farm near San Diego as of 1920.

^{viii} “Gill Held to be Sane,” article in the *Fargo Forum and Daily Republican* of April 29, 1909.

^{ix} The May 25, 1913 issue of the *Fargo Forum and Daily Republican* describes the new service and states that people living near the line “are rejoicing” at the improved service.

^x Names and appointment dates of early Erie postmasters/postmistresses were: Jack McKee (1882), Edward Stowers (1891), Peter Stuart (1895), Arthur Mosher (1899), Esther Sloan (1915), Reuben Bolmeier (1926), Clara Graff (1935), Irie Kuball (1965), and Elayne Enger (1966).

^{xi} From the May 6, 1916 issue of the *Fargo Forum* under the heading Erie Mercantile Co.: “R. A. Bolmeier and George Masse are the proprietors of this popular store. They just started in business here April 1, 1916, and are both young men of enterprise and industry. They have a fine general store here, and, besides general merchandise, handle drugs, and have a nice soda fountain.”

^{xii} A notice of dissolution of Peter Stuart’s corporation appeared in March of 1915 in the Pembina Pioneer Express newspaper.

^{xiii} See the Duncan Bissett – Catherine Cuthbertson story in *Rural Cass County*, pages 288-289.

^{xiv} The owners of the Big Store during Julius Meeg’s time in Erie were three brothers from Galesburg: Lars (1861-1937), Ole (1864-1949), and Tore Lande. According to the Galesburg local history book, it was Ole who “started

another store at Erie with the partnership of Mr. Megg (sic).” Although the Erie branch store did not last long, Ole Lande operated his store in Galesburg until his death in 1949 at age 85.

^{xv} According to the *Bismarck Tribune* issue of July 29, 1923, Alfred Meeg of Erie was one of two North Dakotans who qualified for the R.O.T.C. shooting competition that year in Camp Perry, OH.

^{xvi} From the *Hunter Herald*, January 27, 1938: Messrs. Haven and Wesley Bolmeier and Erle Hill left Sunday for Minneapolis. They went to attend the annual Fairway grocymen’s convention.

^{xvii} The 1945-46 issue of Erie High School’s yearbook contains the following ad: “For highest quality and lowest everyday prices shop at Bergman’s your friendly Fairway store, phone 14-J, Erie, N. Dak.

^{xviii} A June 6, 1904 article in the *Fargo Forum and Daily Republican* states that A. D. Cameron and W. S. Whitman have dissolved the Erie Implement Company. We suspect that this is Cameron and Stewart’s old firm. Whitman soon left Erie for Grand Forks, where he was elected to city government and the North Dakota legislature.

^{xix} A 1921 newspaper article states that Roy Allen (1896-1969) was moving into town to live upstairs from what was still called the B. J. Frederick Hardware Store. A mechanic as of 1920, Roy was the son of Erie farmer William and Allen, who had emigrated from Ontario and married Sarah Morrow. Roy married Ivy Moug from Ayr and moved to the Los Angeles area before 1930.

^{xx} From the *Hunter Herald Newspaper*, February 26, 1925: Hans Robertson and daughter Mrs. Hoff returned from Minneapolis Monday where Mr. Robertson had been attending a grain dealers convention.

^{xxi} A. W. Burgess became a minister of the Church of God. We are not sure that he ever pastored a church, but he was deeply religious and practiced divine healing during his years in Fargo.

^{xxii} *Hunter Herald Newspaper*, December 19, 1935: Bolmeier Brothers elevator was burglarized on Monday night. The thieves opened the safe and taking the money, they also took two guns and some cartridges.

^{xxiii} During his later years, Jesse Pautz (1904-1982) was a school bus driver and janitor at the Erie School. He kept score during basketball games in the gymnasium and swept the floor at half-time. His son Marvin was a truck driver and also drove the Erie school bus. A skilled driver, he could parallel park on snow by sliding the car into the space sideways.

^{xxiv} From the *Fargo Forum and Republican* issue of March 10, 1916: “There was a large attendance at the Goodall’s sale last Saturday, and it was a great success. Mr. Goodall has purchased the Erie hotel from Mr. Grant, and with his family, has taken possession of same.”

^{xxv} The *Fargo Forum and Republican* put it this way: “Edwin Paschke, our congenial barber, has resigned after nearly a year’s work here on account of the ‘happy water’ being passed around too freely in that pool joint.”

^{xxvi} According to the May 1913 volume of *Northwestern Druggist*, “A new drug store is to be installed in the town of Ayr, N. D. Arthur Nelson, now of Erie, N. D., was formerly going to move his stock to Ayr but decided differently and the plans stated here were adopted instead.”

^{xxvii} Ted and Harry both married into the Hudson family: Ted’s wife was Mary and Harry’s was Blanche Hudson.