

Floating Stone Lake Flour Mill

by Stan Desmond

John Burgess constructed a flour mill on the south shore of Floating Stone Lake, S.W. 29-60-11-4. The steam engine to power the mill, which was brought in from the south country by Mr. Dunbar along with a mighty twelve-bottom plow, apparently crushed many culverts along the way.

This mill began gristing in 1918 and was in production for only one year or so. The miller was Mr. Dabels.



Old Flour Mill on shore of Floating Stone Lake.

Upon closing, the Old Mill (as it was known), gradually disappeared. The house that had been moved to the millsite was moved four miles to the John T. Burgess homestead, S.W. 35-60-11-4. This house still had another move to make to the Desmond's, on the S.W. 23-60-12-4, in 1933, where it still stands today, in 1983. The steam engine was taken for cast by a nearby foundry years later, and the rest of the mill just slowly disappeared with time.

There were many picnics at the Old Mill. The shelter it provided was greatly appreciated in July, 1928, when one of the worst hailstorms to hit this area struck. There were at least three floors in this building, and water leaked down from one floor to another. By the late thirties, the building had disappeared.

The local people continued using this site for picnics, and on a Sunday, you could just drive to the Old Mill and there you would see some, if not most, of your neighbours.



The Old Mill at Floating Stone, Ethel Graham and Vicky Poirier.

This property was later reserved by a local municipal council for a recreation area to serve the community, otherwise, the property would have

been sold. Had this happened, it would not be the public resort area it is today. However, in the 1980's you will not find nearly the number of neighbours on a Sunday at the Old Mill. More local families go there on the week-day evenings since the weekends are very crowded with people from the city, who are camping for the weekend.

In July, 1983, a reporter for the Historical Society interviewed Mr. Walter Dabels, son of Paul Dabels and obtained the following information.

Paul Dabels was born in Hamburg, Germany, in 1877. He was a miller by trade. He emigrated to Nebraska and married Emma Schmidt (whose brothers Otto and Albert resided in the Ashmont area for many years) in Phillip, South Dakota. In about 1909 Paul homesteaded at Hopkins Crossing near Elk Point. He operated a flour mill in St. Paul for a time. Then he built a flour mill at Boyne Lake and operated it from about 1916 to 1919. Mr. Dunbar was the engineer and Mr. Dabels the miller. Crops were not good for a few years and business did not do too well. When the Dabels family left, the mill was taken over by Mr. Burgess, Billy Burgess' father.

Walter remembers coming to Boyne Lake as a small boy. He rode with his mother and two older brothers in a democrat, following the huge steam engine which travelled under its own power. It seemed so far! He also remembers the giant plow which was brought in along with the steamer.

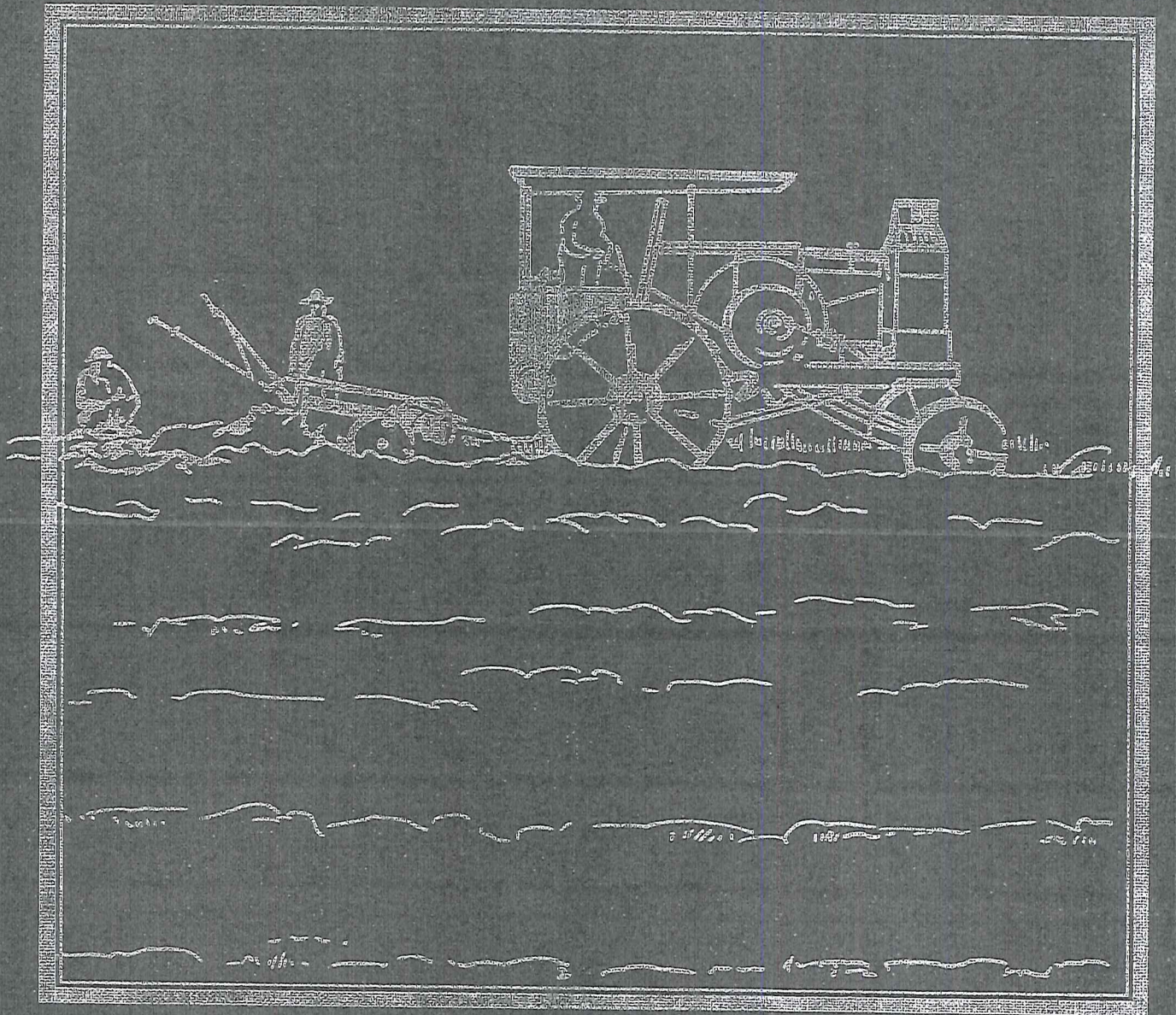
The family's buildings were just west of the hill. Walter started school while they lived there. The Banta family lived farther west along the lake. Don Banta was a school-mate. An interesting sidelight: Walter Dabels' wife is Orpha (Ford) a niece of Mrs. Walter Elliott.

The Dabels family, which grew to number seven children, moved to Chauvin, Alberta, where Paul operated a flour mill. Later, in the thirties, they ran a saw-mill near Fort Assiniboine.



Jack Owen, Bill Proctor, McKim Ross at Floating Stone Lake, 1951.

AN ERA IN REVIEW



A History of
Owlseye - Ashmont
Abilene, Boscombe, Cork,
Boyne Lake, Anning
and Area

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