

Westman Oral History Collection

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Narrator (Interviewee): Laurie East
Interviewer: Mrs. Mae Johnson
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[00:37]

Mae Johnson: [breathes in] Today is December fourth, 1981. The following is a interview with Laurie, East. [breathes in] Laurie was born in the municipality of Odanah on the west half of 291318. [breathes in] He was educated at the Treemain and Roseneath schools. [breathes in] Laurie worked with his father on the family farm until his father's death, he then took over the farm operation. [breathes in] Laurie, uh, farmed the home farm until 1963 and he then built a home on part of north-west 191318 [breathes in] where he and his wife Bernice still reside. [breathes in] Laurie became a member of the Odanah council, January the first, 1970. He was appointed to the library board as the representative member from the

council and he still represents the council on that board to the present date.

[breaths in] Laurie has kindly consented to share with us a resume of the history of the Minnedosa Regional Library. [breathes in] This interview is for the Westman Oral History Association Project, Voices of Yester Year.

[01:38]

Question: Uh, Laurie, Umm, how is Thee, uh, Minnedosa Library sponsored?

[01:45]

Answer: The library is sponsored by the councils Minnedosa, Minto and Odanah. [Breaths in] And because of joint sponsorship it is not practical to separate Odanah's involvement from the other two councils.

[01:56]

Q: Well how, uh, is it financed?

[01:58]

A: [Breaths in] All three at present contribute to the financial support of the library on a per capita basis.

[02:05]

Q: uh, Where there, umm, uh, ever previous attempts to organize a library?

[02:12]

A: Yes, apparently there was several attempts made to organize and establish a public library in Minnedosa prior to the establishment of the present library in 1976.

[02:22]

Q: Could you tell us about the organization of the present ,uh, library, Laurie?

[02:28]

A: In the early summer of 1975 a few interested persons met in the Minnedosa Collegiate office to reconsider the possibility of establishing a library in this area. [Breathes in] Because several previous attempts to establish a library had not met with success. [Breathes in] Two persons influential in getting this meeting underway where Marie McDonald and Bill Hancock. [Breathes in] Resulting from the efforts of this small group a petition was again circulated in the town of Minnedosa and the two rural municipalities of Minto and Odanah. [Breathes in] Then with sufficient signatures the petition was presented to the three councils for their approval. All three councils approved the petition for a library.

[03:15]

Q: Uh, who was appointed to the first board?

[03:16]

A: uh, This time in 1978 the first library board was appointed to do the necessary organizational work. Board members were appointed on the basis of one member from each council, plus two rate players at large.[Breathes in] Mrs. Agnus Grant was the first chairperson of this board. Other members of the, uh, of this board were as follows: Minto council: Hubert Bode... Mode, Rater payers: Verna Avril and Audrey Blease, Minnedosa: Bill Hancock, Phyllis Graham and Agnus Grant, Odanah Council: Laurie East, Rate payers: Jean Louis and Leonora Cameron.

[03:55]

Q: uh, Where, uh, was thee, uh, first location of thee newly, uh, created library?

[04:00]

A: The first location was in the old post-office annex, which the town owned. It was renovated by the town and rented to the library board on a monthly basis. although the board knew it was smaller than the space required, we were grateful to the town for the accommodation.

[04:17]

Q: And, uh, who was your first librarian?

[04:21]

A: At this time the present librarian Shirley Metcalfe was hired and her volunteer assistant was Teddy Harrison.

[04:29]

Q: uh, Was, umm, there an official opening for the library?

[04:34]

A: Shirley began organizing the library, July the first in preparation for its being open to the public as soon as possible and the official opening was held in October of that year. W.O Mitchell, guest speaker, spoke to a large crowd in the legion hall.

[04:51]

Q: did, umm, did you find that the library was used as much as you had hoped for?

[04:57]

A: Yes, in less than two years the ever increasing use of the library forced the board to look for larger premises. A few building were considered, even a request was made to the town council to extend the annex. [Breathes in] once none of these possibilities were acceptable, the board decided the only solution was to... was a new building, built to meet the needs of a growing library. The town offered the corner lot known as the straw property and at a joint meeting at the three councils they agreed, with some reluctance to a

new library being built on the straw property. The old house to be demolished. After much inquiry and investigation by the library board into buildings and building materials both board and councils favored a steel building of at least 2,500 square feet of floor space. [Breathes in] During...

[05:51]

Q: Uh, who, umm, who was in charge of the building construction?

[05:56]

A: During this period L. East as chairperson and Bud Amy chairperson of the building committee were kept extremely busy negotiating and making all arrangements necessary to get the building under construction.

[06:08]

Q: And, uh, to whom was the contract given?

[06:11]

A: B&B steel.. steel builders of Brandon were given the contract for the entire building, ready to occupy for 95,000 dollars. building to be ready for occupancy by the fall of 1979

[06:24]

Q: Now how where funds raised for the new building, Laurie?

[06:28]

A: The board endeavored to raise as much of the cost as possible to ease the financial burden on the taxpayer, also the three councils contributed as

much as they felt, uh, able toward the building. [breathes in] much credit is due the board members for the large portion of the 95,000 dollars they raised. This included a very successful amateur concert, broadcast through the Dauphin radio, CKDM. [breathes in] Much credit is due Audrey Brease and her committee for the success of the broadcast evening and the financial results. [Breathes in] [Paige flips] The new building was ready the first week in June, 1979, and by mid June it was in operation.

[07:13]

Q: That must have been a very proud moment for all of the board members and, uh, I...I know you, Laurie, were one who was instrumental in a... in a great deal of, umm, volunteer work. You very modestly forget to mention that. umm, And, but these, umm, all of the board members gave so many hours of their time voluntary to this project and, uh, a nu... I know that a number of, umm, of those citizens still remain on thee, uh, board. Showing an act of interest in the continuing work of the library.

[07:50]

A: Yes it was extremely gratifying to see the new and completed building. [breathes in] The official opening of the new library building was held in the library on November the 17th, 1979. [Breathes in] The honorable Norma Price was guest speaker and cut the ribbon, held by Reeve Colvisar of Minto and Reeve Anderson of Odanah. [Breathes in] Others called onto speak

where Dave Blake M.L.A ,uh, Mayor Jim Burgess and, uh, and MP Charlie Mayor, to mention a few. Recognition was given to those instrumental in gathering an interested group together to discuss the formation of a library. [Breathes in] Also those who gave of their time on the first board. [breathes in] the board chairperson at this time, Laurie East, was master of ceremonies.

[08:38]

Q: have you, umm, are you happy, uh, Laurie, with thee, uh, way the library has grown?

[08:46]

A: yes, very much so, the new library continues to grow in use and is quite successful, due largely to the efforts of the librarian, Shirley Metcalfe and her staff. [breathes in] We hope the library in our midst is now a permanent facility

[09:03]

Closing: well thank you very much, uh, Laurie, for most interesting and informative, uh, interview and your interviewer has been Mae Johnson.

End of interview