



BROOKS

FIRE DESTROYS BUSINESS BUILDINGS AT BROOKS

Fire starting in a vacant building at Brooks about midnight Thursday evening, burned eight buildings to the ground and caused a loss of about \$26,000 besides wiping out over half of the business section of the village of Brooks. Only one building was left standing in the entire block — the hotel. The Kienast garage in the next block was untouched and was the only other business building standing on the westside of Main Street.

The Brooks band had played a concert on the street earlier in the evening and it is presumed that someone threw a cigarette in cigar stub through a broken window in the vacant building which was owned by the Merchants State Bank of Red Lake Falls and the stub ignited some refuse and started the fire.

So rapidly did the flames spread that it was next to impossible to save any stock of furniture and several people barely escaped in their night clothes. The school teachers, Misses Blanche Berthiaume, Olive Maas and Alma Guillemette, lost everything in the flames but the clothes they were wearing.

Deymonaz Bros. lost their entire stock valued at \$11,000 and on which there was but \$3,000 insurance. Their building was owned by W. O. S. Pennington of Glenwood, pioneer merchant of Brooks and son of President Edmund S. Pennington of the Soo Railway. The amount of insurance on the building was not known but the structure was valued at \$5,000. H. E. Lantz lost several hundred dollars worth of furniture in the residence apartments over the Deymonaz store.

F. A. Honwaldt lost his restaurant building, equipment and household furniture. His loss was about \$2,500 with insurance of \$1,400. A pool hall and barber shop owned by Nick Pfeffer, then in the army, and leased by Arthur Lambert, burned. The loss was about \$2,000 with insurance of

\$600. The post office, drug store and residence rooms of A. Laniel, postmaster, made a loss of \$2,000 with no insurance. Edwin Jacobson, suffered a loss of \$800 when his harness shop burned but he had \$600 insurance. The building was owned by Frank Deymonaz and valued at \$1,000. It was insured. Some household furniture valued at \$500 and belonging to Albert Moreau of Empress, Alberta, was stored in this building and was not insured. Mr. Moreau had just written Mr. Deymonaz to ship the goods but no way-freight was due until Saturday.

Paul Leroux who ran a general store suffered a loss of \$4,000 on the stock with but \$700 insurance. His building was worth about \$1,500.

The vacant building owned by the Merchants State Bank was uninsured.

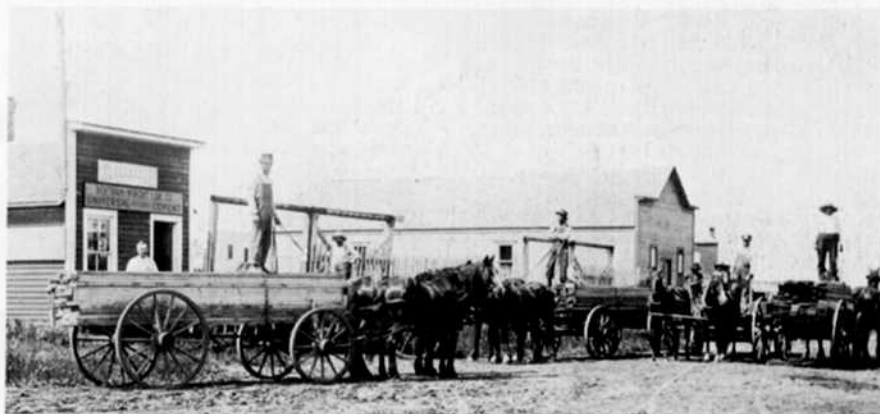
Ed. Rasmussen who lived above the Deymonaz building was able to save some furniture; Edwin Jacobson saved some harness stock, and Arthur Lambert and family a few clothes but this was all that was saved in the entire block.

The village of Brooks, being unincorporated,

had no fire department and there was nothing to do but try to keep the flames from the buildings across the street. As it was, every pane of glass in the Perras hardware store and the First State Bank across the street, was broken by the intense heat. The Bertram-Wright Lumber Yard caught on fire from the sparks but prompt work saved this property.

The insurance rate was \$5.35 per \$100 for all the buildings that burned, and this high rate was the reason why more insurance was not carried. Many of the losers felt that they could not afford to carry more insurance but as one loser said, their losses have convinced them that they couldn't afford not to. A subscription list for the benefit of the sufferers was circulated in Red Lake Falls and other villages of the county and the business and professional men and farmers contributed liberally to the relief of the needy.

Brooks was left without a store of any sort and there was no place to purchase a single article of food or clothing. Deymonaz Bros. announced their intention of starting up in business again and until their new building was ready they located in the Brooks hall. The post office was removed temporarily to the First State Bank. Gazette May 23, 1918.



Brooks Lumber Yard, J. E. Buskirk behind wagon 1916

ST. JOSEPH'S CATHOLIC CHURCH

In the early years of the twentieth century, groups of parishioners from St. Francis Xavier Church in Lambert and St. Anthony's Church in Terrebonne merged to form the parish of St. Joseph's in Brooks, the first mass was said on December 31, 1916 by Father Beaulieu of Lambert. The parishioners in the Brooks community were mainly French Canadians who came from Quebec via Crookston. The Germans and Irish emigrated from southern Minnesota in about 1915.

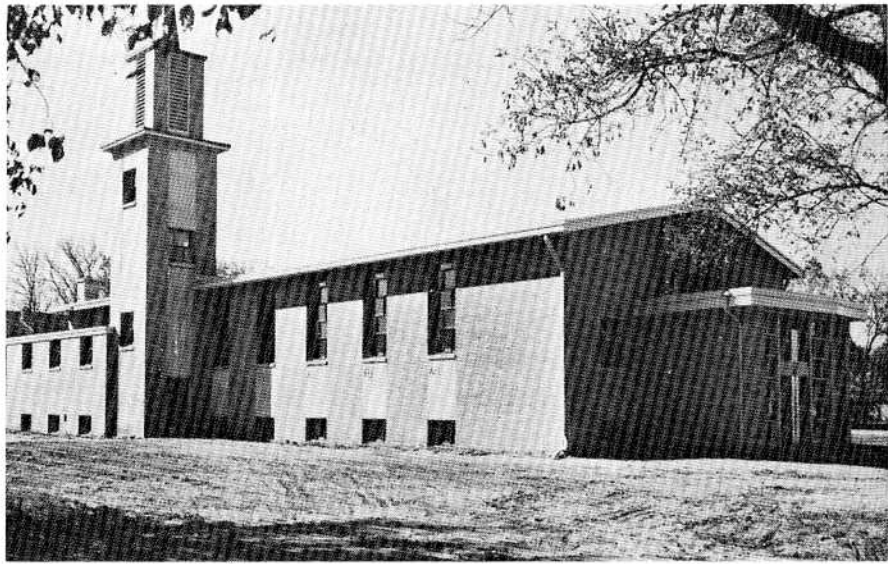
Father Arthur Beaulieu of Lambert was appointed to oversee the formation and organization of the parish and he also was to aid in building a church. He served as priest and administrator for several years and he performed the first baptism on February 20, 1916. He was finally made resident pastor on March 4, 1919.

On August 20, 1916 the parish officers held a meeting in Pfeffer's barber shop to set the wheels in motion for the construction of the church. The chairman of the congregation was Frank Oban with F. J. Deymonaz serving as treasurer, and Max Perras, secretary. It was decided to build the new church on land that had been originally deeded to Louis Derosier by the United States government in 1882. The church dimensions were to be six feet wider than the Terrebonne church and sixty feet long, which was the length of the Terrebonne church. Peter Champagne, Narcisse Robidoux, and Fred Berberick were appointed to a committee whose task it would be to formulate building plans and also to determine the timber costs for the structure. Louis Berry donated \$25 for the gravel to be used for the foundation. Other funds were obtained from assessments, bank loans, and loans from the Diocese in Crookston.

The St. Joseph's Cemetery was established in August 1918, and the main part of the building was completed in 1919. At this time they turned their attention to the construction of a sanctuary and a sacristy. The parish was assessed for this addition and later in 1920 a house to house collection was conducted to obtain money for the purchase of a bell, which weighed nine hundred pounds and cost a dollar per pound. It sang out in the tone "la" of the musical scale and was the finishing touch for the church which had been built out of the people's devotion and sacrifice.

In the fall of 1920, it was decided to continue their expansion to include a parish house on the corner of the lot. Early in the spring, a loan was taken out for the house to be built at a cost of \$4,700.00 by A. Morin and Fred Miller on lots fourteen and fifteen of block eight in Brooks. In 1924 it was decided that the parishioners provide logs for a parish hall. However, these plans changed to a basement for the church when the foundation proved to be faulty. Work on the basement was done by volunteers in the congregation.

Late in May, 1929, Reverend Beaulieu died and was buried in Crookston, and in July, Reverend Victor Cardin was appointed pastor to serve until December, when Father C. J. Deshaies filled in for one month. In January Reverend Victor Cardin was appointed and served for two years. On January 12, 1931, Reverend Henry Rousseau, the assistant from the Red Lake Falls parish, was appointed resident pastor. Then on July 2, 1933, a great lively time began for Brooks with the arrival of Reverend Louis E. Proulx, just ordained



from St. John's Seminary. There was to follow twenty-two years of colorful history, frequently with Father Proulx in the middle, or as some might say, "at the bottom of it all."

In 1955, Father Proulx left the parish to accept another appointment and he was replaced by Father Henry Carriere. At this time a new church was planned to replace the old one which needed extensive repair. After the removal of the old church, construction began in July 1956. The church was dedicated on April 11, 1957.

In January of 1972 Father Larry Wieseler came to Brooks and still is serving as Pastor of the St. Joseph's Parish.

Throughout this tenure as Postmaster, Mr. Laniel served a total of more than 45 years, being succeeded by his son Ralph in September of 1949. Ralph Laniel served as Postmaster for just over 15 years until his death due to ill health in November of 1964. The office was run by the Clerk-in-Charge, Pearl A. Laniel for 6 months until Clarence R. Gagner was appointed Postmaster on June 19, 1965, who has since served the office.

A. E. Sorenson served as the rural carrier from 1904 until about 1911 when Alf Berry became the carrier. Mr. Berry served as rural carrier for 37 years retiring in 1948. Emmitt Morinville served as a temporary carrier between 1948 and 1950 until Lloyd Mercil was appointed rural carrier in April of 1950. He has since served in that capacity having totaled 26 years of service.

History records that Arthur Laniel purchased the first property sold in the Village of Brooks on which to build his post office. Some years later the post office occupied a portion of the grocery store which Mr. Laniel also owned. The post office business was run concurrently with the store until 1958 when Ralph Laniel sold the grocery store to Ronald Paradis. Mr. Laniel then constructed the present post office building on its present site where it has since supplied the postal service needs for the people of the Brooks community.



Brooks Presbyterian Church

HISTORY OF BROOKS POST OFFICE

Now standing on the corner of Main Street and Minnesota Ave. the present building which houses the Brooks Post Office occupies the same lot that once held the large general merchandise store owned by a Mr. Pellington prior to the 1918 fire.

The origin of its history dates back to the commencement of the Village of Brooks in 1904 when Arthur Laniel was commissioned Postmaster on June 24th of that year. Prior to that time area residents were served from the farmstead of Cyrille Lusier. He attended to the surrounding community residents postal needs as Postmaster for more than 20 years.

BROOKS SCHOOLS

The three-room school building serving District No. 126 in Brooks was erected in the early 1900's and was the only three-room county school in Red Lake County. Catherine Berthiaume taught the lower grades in the 1920's and 1930's and held the record for longevity.

This school served the district until 1941 when a two-story frame structure was completed under a WPA grant. The new school had four class rooms, auditorium, stage, library, hot lunch room, and, one of the most important features, indoor plumbing. The school was also used for all community functions.

Teachers at the time of transition from the old school building to the new one in 1941-1942 school year were Elmer Dorn, Bernice Herold (Larson), and Mary Ford (Bonnett). Ruth Falardeau (Lindquist) was added to the staff the same year.

Members of the school board at this time were Floyd Dalton, A. J. Parenteau and

BROOKS STATE BANK

George Robert Bourdon managed the Brooks State Bank, owned by his father, from 1920 to 1933. George had his bachelor's pad above the bank where he lived with his big dog who enjoyed bringing home bits of clothing off the women's wash lines. He just about broke George.

George had the first radio in Brooks and invited the teachers from Sarah Morin's Hotel to listen to the programs during business times. Reception was poor or non-existent and they began to doubt his integrity. On one occasion he found a nest of mice under the wooden sidewalk and motioned to the faintest of them to come over. When he acted as if he had just regurgitated them in his hand, she promptly threw-up all over the sidewalk.

George drove a stripped Buick with fancy side curtains. He took it to the Buick garage in Red Lake Falls to have it fixed and met their secretary-bookkeeper, Janet M. Zaiser. They eloped soon afterwards.



Brooks State Bank, George Bourdon, cashier

BROOKS CHEESE FACTORY

Formula: One capable, ambitious Frenchman plus one industrious, hardworking Frenchwoman equals one small town business success: The Brooks Cheese Factory.

Aurelius Parenteau, born at Drummondville, Quebec, Canada, was raised in a family with more than one hundred years of experience in cheesemaking. His grandfather, first of the family to leave France had been a cheesemaker for many years and his father owned his own factory in Drummondville. In 1920, Aurelius rented a cheese factory in Drummondville and operated it for three years. He then got the travel bug, and headed out to see the country. After his return to Quebec, he was studying a map and noting Red Lake Falls, remembered that he had relatives there and decided to make a visit. In the fall of 1923 he decided to make this area his permanent home and purchased his first cheese factory near Terrebonne.

In 1924, Aurelius met Della Perusse and they were married in 1926. It was about this time that he sold his Terrebonne business and moved to Brooks where he had purchased and old creamery to be used as a cheese factory.

On the first day of business the factory bought and processed exactly three hundred and twenty-three pounds of milk and this made thirty-two point three pounds of cheese. This is a very small amount compared to the average of one hundred thousand pounds of milk and ten thousand pounds of cheese being produced per day at this time.

In the early days, all of the milk that was used was brought to the factory in milk cans by the farmers themselves with horse and wagon. About 1935, the first milk truck was purchased and used to collect the cans of milk from the farmers in the surrounding area.

Through the years the business continued to expand and more employees were hired to meet the needs of the increased production. In 1948 Aurel Parenteau joined his father in the business, serving as manager.

The fame of Brooks Cheese has spread beyond the surrounding area. The product has been shipped to all parts of the United States with a large percentage being purchased by the Kraft Cheese Co. which has plants in California and Idaho. One of the highlights of the Brooks Cheese Factory



Cheesemaker Aurel Parenteau at work in the Brooks Cheese Factory.



Brooks School Dist. 126 built about 1918.

Medore Mercil. The hot lunch program that got started in the old school in 1940-1941 with Mr. Lilly Desautel (Bourgeois) as its first cook, continued to be a great success and was the first program of its kind provided in Red Lake County.

On October 31, 1967 (Halloween), fire destroyed the two-story elementary school which housed grades one through eight. Teachers at the time were Val Gagnon (Strnad), George Derosier, Mrs. Dorothy Picard, and Mrs. Mae Wichterman. Spring kindergarten classes were offered the last few years prior to the fire under the supervision of Mrs. Rebecca Gagner. School board members at this time were Arthur Hagge, Anthony Schiefert, Arthur Hamrum, John Reinbold, Lloyd Mercil and Frederic Berberich.

After the 1967 fire, classes were held in the basement of St. Joseph's Church and ended with the school year 1969-1970.



Brooks school, built in 1940, burned on October 31, 1967.



occurred in 1953 when Representative Harold C. Hagen of Congress presented some Brooks Cheese to President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The President was photographed accepting the gift and this photo along with a thank-you letter from him appeared in the local papers.

In 1952 a whey drier was installed to make a by-product of one of the wastes of the cheese process. This dried whey is used as feed for calves, pigs and poultry. As the business grew it became necessary to enlarge and remodel the old creamery, so, in 1954 a new brick building was erected. The new forty by fifty foot structure was used to house the complete cheese manufacturing equipment, along with office space, part of which is used as a retail store. The next major change occurred in 1961 when the factory switched to complete bulk milk handling.

In 1961 a record breaking 2,470,716 pounds of cheese was manufactured by the plant from a total of 26,389,286 pounds of milk and 906,863 pounds of butterfat for which producers were paid \$805,515.73. Wages paid to employees of the firm for that year totaled \$103,145.61; 160,000 gallons of fuel oil were used; \$15,481.00 was paid out in freight and \$6,008.45 in electricity, contributing substantially to the economy of Red Lake County and the surrounding area.

Marc Parenteau joined his brother Aurel in the family business following their father's death from cancer in May of 1961 and the brothers continued in the fine business traditions established by their father.

The business continued to prosper and in 1964 it was again necessary to remodel and enlarge the factory to almost double its size. That year the factory was awarded a plaque by the Kraft Foods Co. for maintaining the highest possible quality in cheese-making.

1967 brought a temporary setback to the business when the National Farm Organization initiated a milk holding action which resulted in a shortage of available milk purchaseable for cheese-making. That same year the cheese prices became so low that even though milk was available it was hauled to Pelican Rapids for making butter and the Brooks Cheese Factory halted their production.

The factory resumed production in March of 1969 and although this was a shorter working year the total product output surpassed the record year of 1961.

The production average of the factory has averaged 100,000 pounds of milk or 10,000 pounds of cheese a day over the last five years.

On February 2, 1970 the factory made twelve vats of cheese in one continuous operation, the largest amount ever manufactured at one time in the history of the factory. The 225,000 pounds of milk required made over eleven tons of cheese (or 25,000 pounds). Cheesemakers, Aurel and Marc, worked in shifts starting at midnight and worked for twenty-four hours.

Another record was set on June 19, 1974, when 30,000 pounds of cheese was produced from 322,000 pounds of milk (161,000 quarts) in one day!

The factory has employed as many as twenty people including truckers, office workers and plant men during the peak season which is March through June since the early 1970s.

A third generation of the A. J. Parenteau family has also participated in the cheese-making as part time employees. Aurel's four sons and two of Marc's sons have

worked at the factory during their high school years and in the summertime.

In the last half of 1975, circumstances prevented the factory from paying the prices necessary to retain its normal milk

volume. Difficulty in reaching an agreement with NFO resulted in a marked decrease in volume.

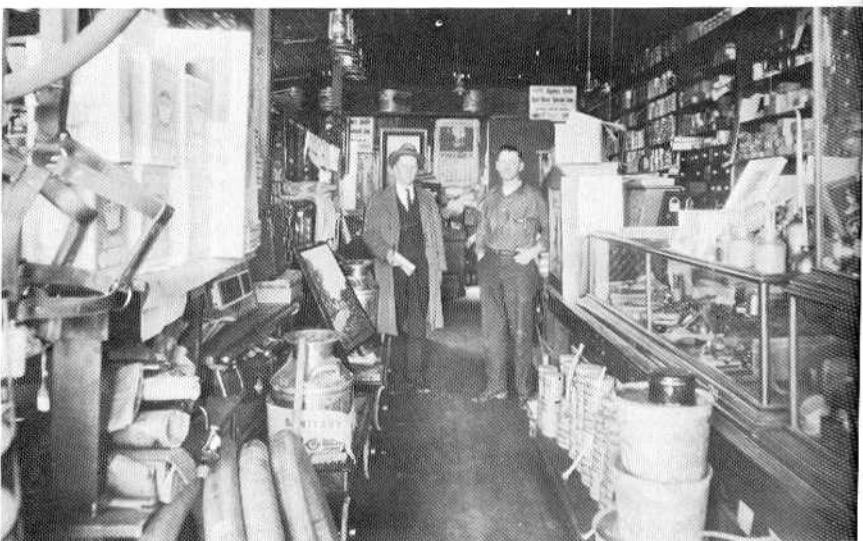
Brooks Cheese Factory marked its fiftieth year in business in March of 1976.



Albert Moreau store 1914. Mrs. Peter Champagne and Mrs. Louis Perreault.



Adelore Paquin livery barn



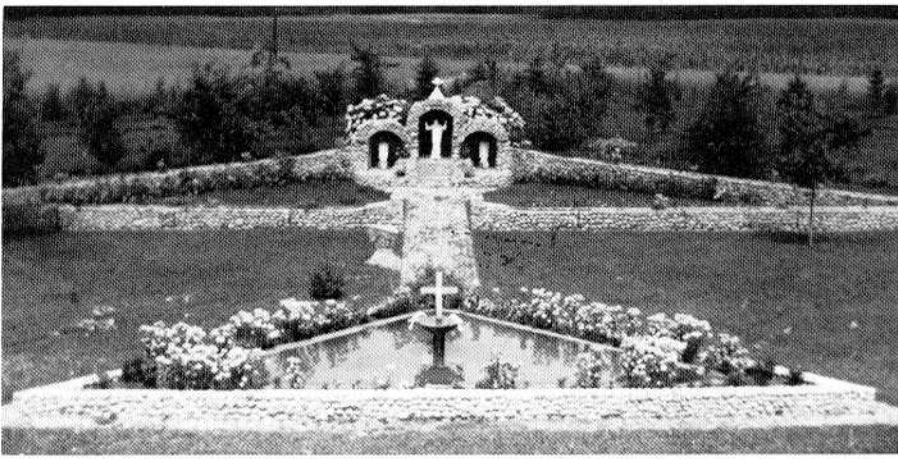
Max Perras in his store, Brooks Hardware 1925

THE BROOKS SHRINE

The idea of building a shrine is not extraordinary. Human beings have always thought it right to honor God in such an external manner. It did take courage to construct a spiritual monument which could be seen by people of various beliefs and appreciated by them.

Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Thibert lived on the northeast corner of Highways 92 and 59, and it was her devotion to the Sacred Heart that prompted Mrs. Thibert in 1950 to erect a small shrine on the corner with a little landscaping. However, the successful growth of shrubs and trees brought about the idea of a more attractive statue and the erection of a larger monument, the shrine we see today at the junction of the highways.

The Thiberts soon realized they had undertaken a very difficult task. The walls of the main enclosure extend a full 120 feet. The fountain is surrounded with a sixty-foot wall. With 50 yards of gravel, 60 yards of stones, and 20,000 pounds of cement, one can guess the amount of work done here. All of it was constructed by Joseph Thibert with occasional assistance from his



wife and young son, Parnell. It is not astonishing then to learn that the work took about three years. The modeling and molding is the work of Mrs. Thibert.

Soon realizing that plaster statues would not stand up under the rigor of our northern climate, they ordered marble statues from Cararra, Italy, through the Little Falls Granite Co., Little Falls. The previous year this company had donated the granite plaque inserted in the north wall near the main structure. The doves of porcelain were made by Mrs. Jeanne LaGrave, a French artist of this area.

Hundreds of tourists have visited the Brooks Shrine over a period of years, and will continue to do so.



Mayors, past and present, Aurel Parenteau and Ron Paradis.



Brooks Restaurant built by Wilbrod and Mary Boucher and Leah Noyes about 1905.

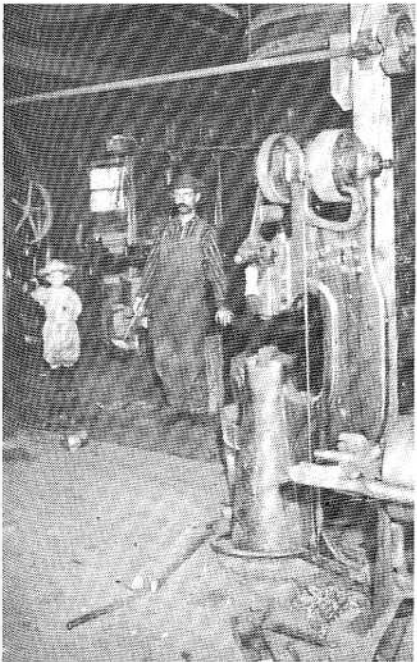
SENIOR CITIZENS HOMES IN BROOKS

The organization of the Senior Citizens Housing Corporation of Brooks met a grave need existing in the community. Plans and specifications were drawn up by Father Henry Carriere to be submitted to the Farmers Home Administration for approval and loans for the project were obtained the first part of 1967.

The first three double units were erected in 1968, the second three units in 1970, and a single unit complex built in 1972 to total seven duplexes or fourteen apartments for the retired elderly at a modest rental. The homes are built in a horseshoe shaped area east of the existing business district, and in the same location as the former First State Bank, hardware store and a garage.



Blast to Brooks annual celebration.



Clodemers and Leonel Gauthier, Brooks Blacksmith Shop 1907

