



### Embroidery ice carnival

Mar 13 1984

Photo by Thelma Hiuser

and the world in 80 minutes" was the theme for the Figure Skating Club carnival held Saturday at the community centre. The Sunday afternoon performance was cancelled due to the snowstorm and has been rescheduled for Mar. 18 at 2 p.m. During the carnival, a Miss Universe pageant was held, with front row from left, Carolyn Harris, of Embro, as Miss Scotland, Sherri

Whittaker, of RR 3 Embro, as Miss Canada and Heather Schurman, of RR 4 Embro, as Miss Tahiti. In the back row, from left are Gayle Milne, of RR 2 Embro, as Miss Ireland, Marci Walters, of RR 3 Embro, as Miss Spain, Julie Slegers, of RR 2 Embro, as Miss Holland, Julie Harris, of Embro, as Miss U.S.A. and Sherry Garner, of RR 3 Embro, as Miss Japan.

## HAMLET HISTORIES

# Brooksdale faded but survived



THIS LAND surrounding St. Andrew's United Church, to the right, in Brooksdale, is part of 200 acres of Clergy Reserve Farm, which was deeded to the church in 1839.

S. R. 1984

(Staff photo by Margaret Boyd)

By MARGARET BOYD  
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The tiny hamlet of Brooksdale, north of Embro, is nothing more than a few homes, a garage and a church - the kind of place one would joke "blink and you miss it" about.

Surrounded by Huckleberry swamp to the south and farmland on every other side, Brooksdale is located in a small valley in West Zorra Township.

Unlike other nearby hamlets in the township, such as Youngsville and Bennington, Brooksdale remains a united community, with about 30 residents. The Women's Institute is still active and descendants of the first settler are still living in the hamlet.

Israel Reed was the first settler in Brooksdale. He traded 200 acres in the St. Thomas area for 1,000 acres in Brooksdale in 1812 or thereabouts. At the time the nearest neighbor was two miles away.

By 1890 an attractive village had sprung up on the land, near a brook of clear, spring water. The name, Brooksdale, was chosen by Dr. Hugh McLeod, a local doctor and schoolteacher.

There is some discrepancy as to when the village was christened Brooksdale. One history reports the arrival of the post office and subsequent village naming in 1859, another lists 1875 as the year. The post office closed

in 1914.

At the turn of the century Brooksdale had a shoemaker, blacksmith, two general stores, Methodist (built in 1870) and Presbyterian (built in 1883) churches, a cider mill by the creek and a wagon and implement repair shop.

One of the stores became Bailey's Hall, a popular dance hall for a number of years. Brooksdale also had a local orchestra.

The Brooksdale Cheese and Butter Company, started as a farmer's co-operative, was a successful business from 1883-1920. Farmers would haul their milk in 30-gallon cans by horse and wagon from the farm to the factory. When a receiving factory was built at Embro, the Brooksdale factory became used as a loading dock.

A log school predated either church in Brooksdale; for some years it was used as a church meeting place.

Two hundred acres of land surrounding St. Andrew's United Church, (the former Presbyterian church) remain a Clergy Reserve Farm, one of a few such farms in the county. The land was granted in 1839 and is held in trust. Rented out to farmers, all proceeds from the land go to charities.

With the advent of the automobile, small hamlets such as Brooksdale lost their self-sufficiency. Now just an intersection on the busy Embro Road, Brooksdale is smaller and quieter than it once was, but still alive and kicking.