

CASTOR COMMENT



Fall Castor by Mary Rowsell

Correspondence

Editor, Castor Review:

Welcome to the new Castor Review. I wish it every success.

However, in your Sidewalk Talk you gave a list of Russell business establishments during the depression. I glanced down it expectantly to see my husband's name, but it wasn't there.

J. Lloyd Steele, pharmacist, bought the Bigelow drug store in 1926 and was in business continually until 1950 when Warwick Legge purchased it.

One day, during the Depression Mr. Stewart, the banker took occasion to compliment us as the only business in Russell which had not come to him for a loan. He knew we were suffering from unpaid accounts the same as everyone else but we always managed to pay our bills without borrowing. Naturally we were very proud of Mr. Stewart's statement.

Why were we ignored as if we weren't in business at all.

Yours truly,
(Mrs. J. L.) Isabel Steele
Russell

Editor's Note

According to the Mercantile Agency Reference Book of 1930, upon which last issue's Sidewalk Talk was based, J. Lloyd Steele indeed ran a drug store in Russell during the depression. As implied, his credit rating was second to none among the business community. Because of space limitations, Sidewalk Talk listed every second merchant who appeared in the book under Russell. Unfortunately, Mr. Steele was one of the odd men out.

Editor, Castor Review:

Your initial issue of Castor Review arrived today for which I wish to thank you. Congratulations on the fine content and

excellent format. May I wish you continued success in your work.

You seem to be interested in local history. I might mention that the house in which Mrs. Richard Morrow (nee Helen Stevenson) lives will be 100 years old in 1978 and on that lawn is a Duchess apple tree over 100 years old to the best of my knowledge.

Mrs. Morrow is third generation on the farm although it is jointly owned. It is a double brick house of Georgian architecture, I believe. I was raised in that house, attended public school in North Russell, high school in Russell Continuation School, took a B.A. at Queen's and returned for five years as principal of the now demolished continuation school.

Incidentally, I was in Russell for the Grade 8 graduation ceremonies and was delighted to see that a North Russell pupil had won the Stevenson Memorial Scholarship which I present yearly. I would like to see a school column in your paper to promote interest in the youngsters in both school and community activities.

Yours truly,
Mrs. Esther (Stevenson) Takalo,
Thunder Bay

Editor, Castor Review:

I returned to Russell a year ago for a visit, the first in 27 years. I found many changes but I have also changed. I lived almost half of my life in the Russell district.

If it is quits raining for a while in sunny Alberta so that I can get my crop harvested, I would like to visit again in Russell this fall. I will drop in at your Russell office on my next trip if you have one by then.

Yours truly,
Gordon R. Morrow
Botha, Alberta

Editor, Castor Review:

Good luck to you with the Castor Review. We do enjoy it. How about more personal news, also death notices and birth notices.

Yours truly,
Dorothy Marquette,
Russell

To Our Readers

The Castor Review's subscription campaign continues. To date, about 100 readers have paid \$3 each for 12 issues, effective beginning with January's edition.

We urge those who want to receive the paper to fill in the subscription form located inside this issue and mail along with \$3 as soon as possible.

While \$3 isn't a huge amount to most people, the money will go a long way towards making the Castor Review financially feasible and help insure its continued existence.

If we can't bring in enough funds to pay expenses, we won't be able to survive for very long.

CASTOR REVIEW

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Sidewalk Talk

By Mark Van Dusen

"Wood-Boiled Spaghetti, mighty fine"

Several months ago I heralded the resurgence of wood stoves. I have since had cause to wonder at the prophet in me.

When I last doted on the subject, I compared the reliability of early cast-iron cookers to today's cranky electric primadonas.

Well, my feelings for the black belchers have proven all too true in both painful and rewarding fashion.

My wife Joan, who approaches any stove with a certain amount of temerity, recently jabbed a pushbutton on our modern model and, poof, a lick of flame shot out and almost fried her delicate pinky.

Delicate surgery on the guts of the appliance under the glare of a sealed-beam flashlight - I've always fancied myself as a Kildare or a Casey - finally freed the subversive switch.

Now, only to buy a replacement and slap'er in good as new. No such luck.

Replacing the failed part was to become no less complicated than transplanting a heart. A search high and low for a similar switch produced the same responses from the experts:

"Haven't seen a switch like that in a dog's age. Last time I did, it cost thirty bucks."

"They don't make them stoves no more, sonny. Have to buy a new one."

Spend hundreds of dollars for a new stove because of a crummy little switch? No way, I told myself, I'll fight to the end to avoid the planned obsolescence trap (what did it matter if the stove was 15 years old and made by a company now big in pipelines).

Just when all seemed lost, a ray of hope glimmered. A man of enterprise and initiative surfaced to vow he could rebuild the control panel and resurrect the stove.

"Cost ya fifty bucks," said this budding Barnard of baking bugaboo. Done, I replied.

There was one last hurdle, of course. The patient had to be trucked to the scene of the operation and back. What the heck, it's working again.

But the upshot of the story is yet to come.

When the electrical elephant apparently went belly up, I had been in the process of hooking up an ancient Findlay wood-burner which I had dexterously pried from my elder brother at a surprisingly bargain price.

With the fuse-blowing baster on the blink, I hastened to finish the job. Pipes, Jig-saw, metal flashing, asbestos, stove black, elbow grease and . . . work like a charm.

Crackling merrily, the ornate Oval brings water to a boil swiftly and fills the room with a penetrating warmth and sweet aroma.

Why, my wife whipped up a spaghetti dinner on the shimmering armor plating (real pioneer stock, that girl).

Makes you wonder if things were really that rough way back when.

Quebec: The Silent Watch

Theodore Roosevelt once referred to "the supine and lethargic majority which failed to have enough energy to take charge of their own affairs", a description peculiarly applicable to the situation in Canada today, as our country stumbles and slithers from one insoluble problem to another.

Who are the "supine and lethargic majority"? Those who don't want to see Canada divided but would rather not be bothered to do anything to avert the calamity.

Those in every province and region who know in their hearts that a nation or society cannot be erected on a principle of language alone with refuse to stand up and be counted.

Those who are not prepared to tolerate the consequences of a separate and independent state thrust like a dagger in the heart of Canada; but are unwilling to do anything to remove or alleviate the grievances leading to such a catastrophe.

Those unwilling to contemplate the train of disaffection and disorder which would inevitably arise out of the pretensions of such a separate nation and its claims on the French-language populations of other provinces, such as New Brunswick and Ontario. (After all, a nation which supinely and lethargically gives up a major province like Quebec, can hardly be counted on to protect a smaller province like New Brunswick).

Those who know that if Quebec separates, the first action of Mr. Levesque and his captives will be to secure an agreement with Ontario in order that that province may support and subsidize the new nation's independence; they also know that, in the atmosphere prevailing in the event of the separation there would be as much chance of such an agreement as of Mr. Levesque flying to the moon. And yet they do not speak.

Those who are aware that the spectacle of a nation in the one hundredth year of its existence calmly contemplating a referendum of the question of whether or not our nation should continue in existence has compounded Canada's image as the clown among nations and yet continue to hold their peace.

These represent the "supine and lethargic majority" described by Theodore Roosevelt; a majority among which all of us in this dark hour of our history are included.