

Pavučina Corner – By Tony Kadlec

SILVER LAKE: 1933 TIME PASSAGES: PART 2 OF 4

I am pleased to present a series of articles contributed by Ron Pulkrabek written from the perspective of a visitor to the village of Silver Lake at the end of the year 1933.



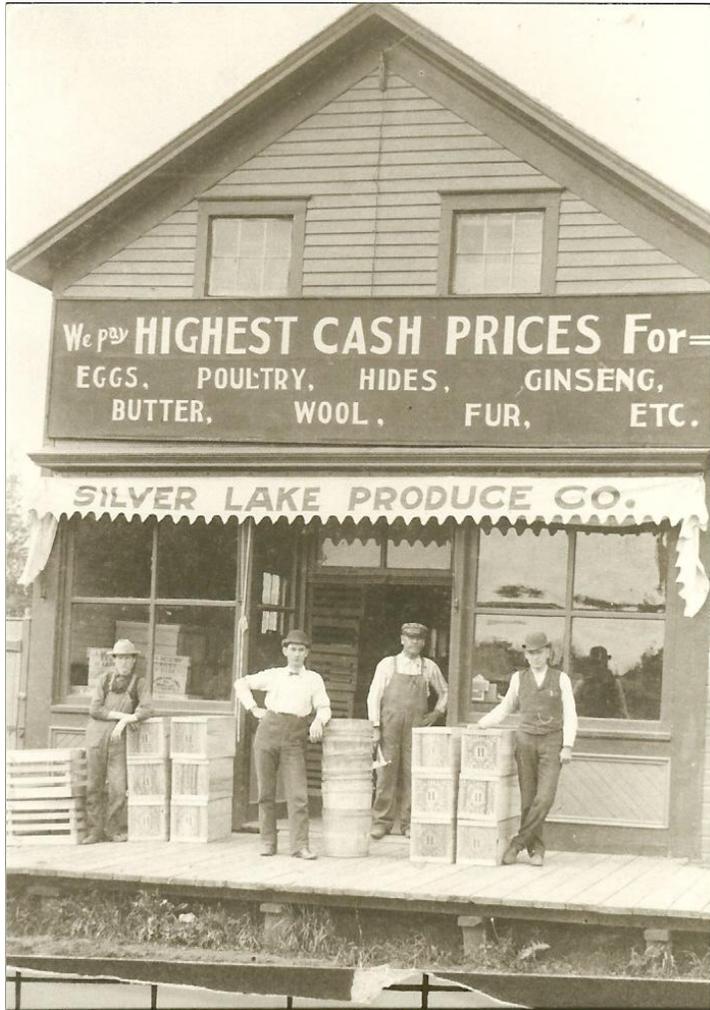
Hardware Store Scene, Silver Lake, McLeod County, Minnesota

“...Just to the East is the Czech Presbyterian Church. This group of Bohemians and Moravians have ties to the “Brethren” inspired by John Hus who was burned at the stake in 1415. Just recently the whole congregation had a group picture taken. Over 250 men, women, and children dressed up in their finest suits, dresses and hats filling the whole east side of the Church right up to the street. The 8 inch by 32 inch photo is absolutely stunning and will be admired for years to come. Reverend Dr. Krenek was present for the Church’s 50th anniversary but has recently been recalled to a parish in Prague, Czechoslovakia. The Presbyterian Church has been busy this past year with several ice cream socials and food sales, 22 young people were confirmed, and the Christian Endeavor Society presented a 3 act play titled “An old Fashioned Mother”, admission being 25 cents.

Just across the street to the east is St. Adalbert’s Polish Catholic Church. It is a stately Church built in 1889 with venerated cream colored brick. A rectory and a 3 story school were added soon after. The 6 nuns have prepared the 122 children for their Christmas program and most people will attend the midnight mass on Christmas Eve, listening and singing famous Polish Christmas hymns. Better get there at 11:15 PM to get a seat. St. Adalbert’s Church Bazaar was held this fall with 35 cent meals served from 11:30 AM until 6:30 PM. The Stibal Orchestra supplied the music. The St. Adalbert’s Choir sponsored a card and Bunco party last week. In both Catholic churches, the announcement that someone has died is made by tolling of the bells. One peal per year. It is up to you to count and speculate who died, which usually doesn’t take long.

Across the street is Chalupsky's gas station with the grease pit outside. A block to the east is Faloran's Gas station which has been recently sold to John Pokornowski. It is the last place to buy gas before hitting the double "S" curves leaving town. Oil is on sale for 35 cents a gallon.

Across the street from the St. Adalberts School is an auto repair shop. No one there the day I visited. Then is Domaglaski's Dry Goods and Grocery store. This big store has everything from soup to nuts including women's shoes for 25 cents and dresses for 75 cents.



Tucked back off the street is Ed Rivers Feed Mill. Farmers pull 2-wheeled trailers of corn and oats behind their car to be ground for various animal feeds, sometimes 2 or 3 times a week.

They let their cars sit in line while they saunter up town to their favorite tavern to have a few glasses of suds and catch up on the latest gossip. Time passes away so quickly that often the wife and the kids have the chores and even the milking done by the time the husband gets home.

Just to the south of the feed mill is Streachek's harness shop. Soaking a whole harness is quiet a process. Bill's business has slowed down slightly since tractors are taking over.

Up on the corner across the street from St. Adalberts Church is Slanga's hardware. It is a big solid building originally built by Hynek Totushek. On sale at Slanga's are 5 foot tall straw brooms for 19 cents, hack saw blades are 6 for 10 cents and an early paint sale on red barn paint at 98 cents a gallon.

Silver Lake Produce Co., Silver Lake, McLeod County, Minnesota

Just to the south is the Farmers Produce. Farmers slide their 15 and 30 dozen egg cases into a little door onto a roller track. Even on a Saturday night women unpack and inspect each egg behind a darkened curtain with a bright light. They classify them as old, fertile, cracked, too small, too big, dirty, etc., so that the farmer's wife will only get about 50% number 1's. The egg money is HER money to buy the children clothes, Christmas presents, a few groceries, and other household necessities.

Right next to it is Picha's Log Cabin Bar with the rustic log front. Just inside is a glass counter with candy bars, etc. Then the main bar starts with the spittoons and the little railing on the floor holding small green granules to soak up any spit that had missed the spittoon. It looks nice when it is raked clean. Just beyond the bar is the eating area with high-backed swivel chairs and a fake shingled roof above. A bowl

of turtle soup or hamburgers will set you back 5 cents. Many framed pictures of local hunters with game and fish adorn the south wall.

Almost attached to The Log Cabin is Joe Hakel's garage. It is fairly dark in here. The large roll-up door is propped up with an 8 foot 2 X 4 as the springs broke a few years ago. In the front of the garage I could hear a lawn mower or motor running wide open. The whole shop was a cloud of blue smoke. Through it all I made out the image of Joe who was trying to adjust the carburetor on the motor. A forty watt bulb burned above his cluttered work bench onto parts which haven't moved for years. A small 1 foot by 2 foot area is left to work on. As I walked in, four old men came out coughing and choking. They usually meet here once a day, sit around the stove and discuss the world's affairs. Guess they can't take the smoke like Joe.

Next door is Vlcek's Blacksmith shop which is fairly neat, compared to some which only have little paths of broken springs, coulters, plow shares, metal chairs, and other items that have laid there for years. Frank is pretty efficient compared to some blacksmiths who after your second trip will quickly start fixing your part when he sees you coming down the street. Most simple repairs cost 10 cents. Way down the street is Frank Zrust's lumberyard. They will even make fine kitchen cabinets upon request.

Across the street is the fine, solid, brick Elementary and High School built in 1922 for \$40,000 after the wooden one burned down. School hours are 9 AM to noon and 1 until 4 PM. The first meeting of the Silver Lake Parent Teachers Association was held a few months ago. They kicked off the event by featuring the Lyman Cooley Travel Talk Show accompanied by motion pictures. Admission was 15 cents. The High School gymnasium was filled to capacity when the Junior Class play featured "Poor Father". Last week the Silver Lake Schools received a letter from the State School Inspector after his visit, stating that all conditions were satisfactory.

I see eight ladies skating on the lake, dressed in long dresses and coats and fancy hats. Maybe they are some of the group from the branch of the Silver Lake Red Cross Ladies. They do a lot of volunteer work and look very impressive when they march in parades, all dressed in long, gleaming white, flowing dresses. Or was it the ladies that appeared on a program for the Glencoe Women's Club, dressed in ethnic Czech costumes singing and dancing for the enjoyment of the Glencoe ladies? Just a few years ago the lake was completely dry. People had gardens on the edges. Happy Bill Makovsky's hay mower broke down in the middle of the lake. Before he could get it fixed it started raining. Some people say it is still remains under the water.

Up the street to the north is Johnny Cermak's Garage. This was his father's former feed mill after he was injured at the mill and died. Johnny is a laid back type of mechanic, never in a hurry but gets things done and does good work. In his smiley face he most always smokes or chews a two inch long cigar. Being a bachelor he lives above the shop in some sort of low-roofed room. He just over hauled a Model "A" and must have gotten the bearings a little too tight. The motor had difficulty turning over. By pushing it outside and pointing it downhill towards the lake, three guys shove it at a fast clip. The driver pops the clutch; the motor starts amid a cloud of smoke which very shortly clears up and begins to purr like a kitten. One old guy said in the hot summer the boys will chip in 10 cents each for one of them to take a 2 quart fruit jar across the street to the Log Cabin to be filled. They pass it around until they cool off."

NEXT WEEK: Paying a visit to the shops of mid-town Silver Lake

If you have any contributions or suggestions for topics for future columns, please contact me by email: tkadlec@gmail.com or call me: (651) 271-0422 or send your letters to my attention: 1408 Fairmount Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55105. See this article online at: www.kadlecovi.com Děkuji! Tony Kadlec
