

Stockholm's demise



Stockholm in 1920. The railway had already announced it was bypassing the town. It was the beginning of the end for the community.

Photo courtesy of the Red Deer & District Archives.

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Express/Adviser

The ghosts were restless in Stockholm this month. The Swedish Baptist Church, originally built in 1904, was rolled out of town.

The July 10th move was another nail in the coffin for the forgotten Central Alberta community, located along Hwy. 596 eight kilometres west of Red Deer.

The townsite of Stockholm was first surveyed 100 years ago, but has endured a slow decline for the past eight decades.

It is now a ghost town, but a few diehard residents remain, more than happy to enjoy the tranquil rural lifestyle.

"It's nice and quiet out here. We were raised in the country and enjoy it," said Lise Doupe, who with her husband Wes, used the old church as a garage before it was moved.

Once renowned for their cheese factory, Stockholm's pioneers threw in the towel for the town's future when officials with the Alberta Central Railway bypassed the community in 1912 to build a rail line north through Sylvan Lake on its way to Rocky Mountain House.

Stockholm's demise was a familiar end for many Central Alberta pioneer communities that depended on the railroad for its long-term survival.

"Railroads both created new communities - like Blackfalds, Penhold, and to some extent Red Deer," said Michael Dawe, city archivist for the Red Deer & District Archives. "It was also the death of some communities, like Content and Everts which were bypassed and died."

But the few folks still living in and around Stockholm still care about the town's history, and retain a strong sense

of community. The old school at the townsite, originally built in 1934, is now the Burnt Lake community hall.

The old church may have been rolled out of town but its destination was only a few hundred metres away across Hwy. 596 to the farm of Lorie and Melvin Johanson.

"If it could be saved, it was nice to be able to do so," said Melvin. "It's still in really good shape. It's a nice building to have around."

The Doupes, who wanted to build a larger garage on the site of the former Baptist church, will not be left without a holy pioneer shrine. Their house is the townsite's old Seventh Day Adventist Church.

"It doesn't even look like a church now at all," said Lise, noting at one time the immediate area around Stockholm had seven churches.

To move the Baptist church from the Doupes' property to his farm, which is the former site of the pioneer cheese factory, a friend of Melvin's rolled the structure - propped up on logs - with a large tractor. He also had to get the rural electric company to lift up the power lines to accommodate the move.

"We got looking at it and it looked movable," said Melvin, whose two young sons, Trevor and Jason, have converted the church into a min-indoor floor hockey rink.

"They are not going to like it if I put too much stuff in there because they like playing in it," said Melvin. "It's amazing how great the shape that building is in."

Whatever its current use, the old church is saved, and the ghosts of Stockholm have staved off total oblivion.

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ALMOST LOST

An old water pump is nearly lost in the tall grass that now grows in front of Stockholm's former general store and post office.

Scott Van Seggelen/staff photo



NEW HOME FOR CHURCH

Despite being one year away from being 100-years-old, the old Swedish Baptist Church from the former town of Stockholm has found a home at the Johanson farm directly across the road from the old site.

Scott Van Seggelen/staff photo