

THE BOOM

The boom was going within the year. Oil companies rushed in to purchase tracts of land and workers flocked into the area. The town grew from approximately 75 people in 1953 to 2,000 within a year of the discovery. People lived wherever they could— from trailer parks to the famous Drayton Valley skidshacks, which sprang up everywhere.



Along with the oil, inevitably came civilization. The infamous Wildcat Café opened, staffed by “ladies of the evening.” Two businessmen moved in and opened a 24-hour drinking establishment. Small town Alberta had become a boomtown almost overnight. Though the original residents in the area had mixed feelings about this transition, most thought it was a beneficial change. The oil provided jobs, money and services. The rural community was missed by some, but on the whole, the boom was greeted with approval.

With the rapidly increasing activity, the Alberta government created the Drayton Valley Townsite Act, setting out the conditions for subdivision. The act was passed retroactive to March 1st, 1954, and thus began the planning of Drayton Valley.

By May, 1954, \$500,000 worth of building permits had been issued, including a \$250,000 hotel. By the summer, work had begun on water and sewer lines after the development of two reservoirs—a 200,000 gallon underground unit and a 40,000 gallon elevated unit. The latter had to be expanded to 200,000 gallon capacity due to further growth.

Drayton Valley held the first elections of the town council on March 4th, 1957. The elected mayor was Robert Clarkson and the councilors were H. Pickup, H. Knight, D. Chow, D. Mackenzie, O. Williamson and J. Getzinger.

Over the years, construction has continued with the erection of a bridge over the North Saskatchewan River and a hospital. Schools, parks, motels, hotels, shopping facilities and many other projects soon followed.

The future of Drayton Valley is promising, with a steady population increase. The population was at 6,000 by the turn of the 21st century and it's still rising.

“Drayton Valley is an unusual town in many respects. The spirit of the community is exceptionally high, the participation in the affairs of the community on the part of citizens, as well as clubs and other organized groups, is equal to, if not higher than in other older centres. By which formula the town achieved this maturity in such a short space of time is difficult to say, however, it can be safely assumed that there must have been some outstanding citizens,

both inside and outside the administration who provided the community with good leadership.”

That statement was taken from the town’s general plan for 1967 and planning certainly has led to the success of Drayton Valley as a cultural, social and business entity. Drayton Valley is truly a model town in every sense of the word.