

THE SETTLERS

The land remained unbroken until 1907, when the lumber industry moved in. Trees were cut and sent down the North Saskatchewan River to Edmonton for processing.

The first homesteaders were William and Dora Drake and their six-year-old daughter, Dolly. They selected a quarter-section of land within a stone's throw of what is now the Town of Drayton Valley.

The original town site was situated one and a half miles down in the valley. The town's name has also changed from its original name, "Powerhouse." It was called this because an English syndicate had plans to build a dam six miles south of Drayton Valley in 1911. Due to the outbreak of World War I, they were forced to abandon the project.

Dora and William Drake ran the first post office in Powerhouse. Because there was another centre called "Powerhouse," the postal inspector suggested that the name be changed. Dora and William decided on Drayton Valley because "the first part of the name (Dray) was near to that of [their] own, and the latter part (ton) similar to [their] own home town." And so it became "Drayton Valley" and has remained ever since.

Throughout the 1920s, the main industry was lumber. By 1930, there were thirty lumber camps, employing between three and four hundred men.

Drayton Valley was largely unaffected by the Great Depression of the 1930s due to its relative isolation. Because of their tremendous community spirit, the less fortunate community members were taken care of. As a rural community, its chief entertainments consisted of card parties, school dances, box socials and turning over outhouses. From every description, it was a peaceful placid town nestled away from the world.

By 1945, the forests had been harvested and the lumber mills began to shut down. Farming became the main industry in the area. It was a small town of approximately fifty residents with little history and what looked like even less future.

