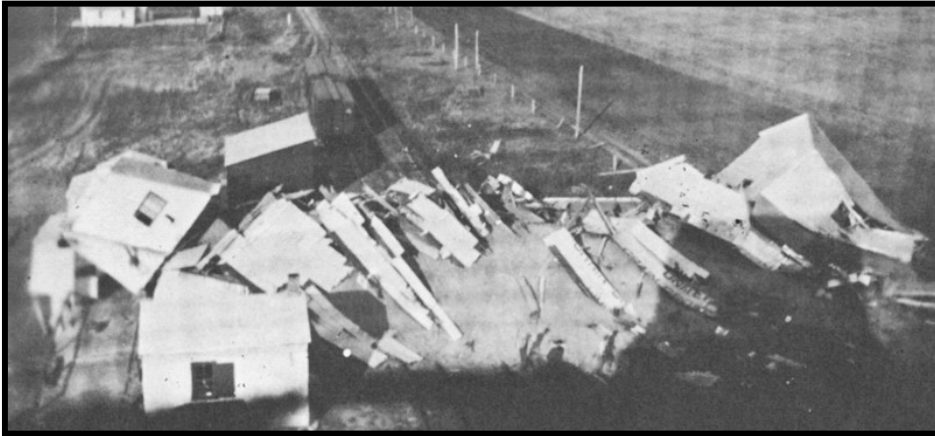


# What the Rats of Cranmer Knew



▲ *The wreckage of the Cranmer U.G.G. Elevator.*

signs of incoming water.

In the case of the grain elevator we have to note that those working in the elevator that day had heard a persistent creaking and groaning from deep within the building as early as 6:00 pm that day. The rats in fact took several hours to grow uncomfortable and orchestrate an escape. The humans who worked on the site could only respond by filling the only two rail cars available, which they did before leaving the building at about 11 pm.

The collapsed U.G.G. elevator was rebuilt in 1929 and continued to serve the grain trade as well as operating as a depot for the sale of coal. The loading platform was also used for other shipping needs, notably the shipping of cream to creameries.

The U.G.G. elevator at Cranmer closed in 1975, and like so many other sidings, whistle stops and hamlets, it disappeared from the maps.

Sources:

Brenda History Committee. *Bridging Brenda Vol. 1.* Altona. Friesen Printers, 1990  
 Seff, Phil and Nancy Seff. "When Rats Leave a Sinking Ship." Fascinating Learning Factory. <<http://www.fascinatingearth.com/node/189>>  
Map: Turtle Mtn. Sectional Map. Office of the Surveyor General. Ottawa, 1922  
Photo: Brenda History Committee. pp 137.

During the first century A.D. Pliny the Elder wrote in his "Natural History," that "when a building is about to fall down, all the rats desert it." A more modern proverb suggests that rats always leave a sinking ship.

Is it really true? Do rats have some sort of sixth sense that warns them of imminent disaster?

Consider this local example.

At about 9 pm on a late September evening in 1928 the rats that had been living comfortably in the United Grain Growers Elevator at Cranmer began an evacuation of the premises. Later, at about 12:30 am the elevator

collapsed with a crash heard several kilometres away. The foundations of the fifteen-year old structure gave way and gravity was unforgiving. As it

## Do rats have some sort of sixth sense?

crashed to the ground, the top was thrown 70 meters across the CPR tracks crushing telephone and telegraph lines. Grain, from the 30,000 bushels the elevator was storing, was mixed with debris and piled twelve feet high along those tracks.

Before we give too much credit to the rats we should understand that, in the case of ships, rats tended to live in the lower reaches of the cargo hold and would see the first

## Where is Cranmer?

When a new rail line was built into a region the plan was to have a town about every fourteen kilometres. This was considered a reasonable level of service in that the majority of farmers were now within twelve kilometres of an elevator. This was a big improvement over the previously non-

existent service and everyone was pretty happy.

But as years went by those farmers who still had some distance to haul their grain started wondering if perhaps service couldn't be better. At the same time, by the early 1900's there was enough rail line competition to give the grain companies an

incentive to be more accommodating.

The villages of Goodlands and Waskada were created when the CPR line was built in 1899-1900. In 1906 an extra stop, called a siding, was built at about the midway point and in 1913 the first of two elevators was open for business.

► *Farmers to the north and south of the new Cranmer siding appreciated the shorter trips to deliver grain*

