

# Naming Medora

The story of each small town has both typical and unique elements



▲ Medora – buildings came first... trees a bit later.

Robert and Medora Campbell had been living in the Minto area for nearly a decade when a CPR survey party boarded at their home for a time. The hospitality must have impressed these men (or maybe it was Medora herself that impressed them?) and they later honoured her by naming a town after her.

Postal records, however, show a Post Office named Medora, operated by William Cosgrove, and located in that neighbourhood in 1887, several years before the survey that established the town.

Is this an example of memory playing tricks? Or was the timing wrong and the surveyors in question involved in a different task? It doesn't matter, it is a nice explanation

for the name, and conflicting details aside, likely true in essence.

Medora was one of those many towns that grew quickly, served its purpose, then evolved from a busy rural service centre to a quiet collection of homes adjacent to the highway.

The first train made its way westward from Deloraine in July 1892. Surveyors had selected a spot for a station about midway between Deloraine and Napinka and an empty stretch of prairie farmland was transformed.

Empty is perhaps not the right word. As elsewhere in the pre-railroad days, communities existed before the towns sprang up.

About a mile from the corner of Road 452 and Road 15N a seemingly abandoned cemetery bears the sign "Brenda Memorial Garden." Locals know it as the "Old Me-



◀ The Brenda Memorial Garden, also known as the "Old Medora Cemetery."

dora Cemetery." It is close to where the first Medora Post Office was located. The first recorded burial was in 1886.

The post offices, like schools, were here before the railway and before the towns. They were in farm homes and locations changed as postmasters resigned or moved on.

In fact three post offices, with five different names served the Medora region in the early days. This first one was opened in 1887. To avoid confusion it was re-named Menota when the "town" of Medora was created. The second post office, called Emerald Hill, was located south of the town in 1890. It was later moved in to the new village and re-named Medora Station and then Medora.

Other than a bit of confusion about names, the Medora story follows an established pattern. The first elevator was in operation by 1895, followed by three more within ten years. Baptist and Methodist churches were built in 1903 and a cemetery established soon after. A rural school called Burns a few kilometres outside of town was moved into town and renamed Medora.

Growth continued. The telephone service came to Medora in about 1905. Sports and cultural activities thrived. The Medora football team was started in 1904 and continued until 1908. The team won five trophies, the trophy being a silver cup.

Today, we can look back from a distance and see that the time from 1890 – 1930 as the era of the small town as a commercial centre. We needed them, then we didn't.

#### Sources:

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