



## **Rothsay Farmers Co-op – Rothsay, MN (1905 – 2009)**

The first annual meeting of the Wilkin County Farmers Cooperative Mercantile Company was held on June 10, 1905 in Rothsay, MN where the Articles of Incorporation & By-laws were adopted. On land acquired from the Duluth Elevator Company, the actual elevator itself was built in 1906 with a 50,000 bushel capacity. The business underwent its first name change that year as well. It was shortened somewhat to the Wilkin County Farmers Grain & Mercantile Co.

The Lawndale elevator joined with Rothsay in 1908, & in 1909, it was decided to sell salt at Lawndale. That same year, coal sheds were built in Lawndale & Rothsay as well.

In 1910, the business went through another name change. It was shortened again to the Farmers Grain & Mercantile Company, a name it kept for the next 77 years.

A dark spot in the elevator's history occurred when the manager between 1917-1920 was found to have been involved "in some very unethical & fraudulent activities." Although records do not indicate exactly what he had done or the outcome of the court proceedings, it is clear from the company's history that bad checks were written & needed to be covered. The Board of Directors split up the area & solicited funds from shareholders in order to keep the company afloat.

The elevator got into the oil business in 1935 by purchasing an oil station from Haga Brothers, which was rebuilt in 1942. According to records, one of the worst tragedies to befall the company occurred in 1951. While the manager was doing service work, a fire broke-out at the oil station. The manager was severely burned & died from his injuries.

In 1976 the elevator entered the anhydrous ammonia business with the installation of a bulk tank & 12 nurse tanks.

In 1985, the elevator became an independent company by ending a 19 year relationship with the Atwood-Larson Company. In 1987, with a change to the Articles of Incorporation & By-Laws, another name change occurred. The business is now simply known as Rothsay Farmers Co-op.

Over the years, the elevator acquired several locations. In 1930, the National Elevator in Rothsay & the Monarch Elevator in Lawndale were purchased. In December 1971, stockholders approved a merger between the C. & O. Carlisle Elevator and Rothsay. Their first general manager was Carl "Jack" Mattson (who is also a former board member & past officer of the MGFA). A new main elevator was built in Rothsay in 1974. In January 1992, the Peavy Elevator in Barnesville was purchased. In the 1980's, both the Lawndale & Carlisle locations were closed but continue to be used for storage today. At Barnesville there is a substantial seed, fertilizer & agronomy department. Rothsay Farmers Co-op is also a 25% owner of Agassiz Valley Grain, LLC shuttle loading facility in Barnesville.

One other note, Lyle Hovland, who served Rothsay Farmers Co-op as President for 6 years in the 1980's, is also a current officer (Secretary) & Board member of the Minnesota Grain &



Feed Association. He was also the MGFA's President from 1999-2004.

Today, Rothsay Farmers Co-op focuses their business on grain, agronomy, tire sales & service.

Paul Jorgenson has been the manager of Rothsay Farmers Co-op since 1995.