

## Farmers Cooperative Elevator – Bellingham, MN (1898 – 2009)

The earliest attempt to form a farmers' elevator in Bellingham dates back to May 1889 when a correspondent for the local Bellingham newspaper inquired, "What has become of the farmers' warehouse which was to be built at this place?" A June 18, 1889 meeting was particularly memorable mainly for the failure to organize to purchase the Appleton Mill Company's elevator, which was up for sale.

The first farmers' elevator in Bellingham was the Bellingham Farmers' Mercantile & Elevator Company, which was incorporated on July 16, 1898. The business was incorporated not only for the purpose of handling grain but also for "farm products of every description." The elevator was completed & opened for business on August 22, 1898. The first annual meeting was held the following July & the local newspaper noted that the elevator had some issues, including some accounting discrepancies as well as an error during construction that made use of the weighing out scales impossible at the time. The scale problem was eventually corrected, and improvements were made in many areas, but not in the foundation. A new engine house & office were added in August 1907.

On March 16, 1909, the name was changed to the Farmers' Elevator Company of Bellingham.

In 1918, the elevator building which stood easternmost in the line, was overloaded on one side with wheat & fell over. Another elevator was purchased from the Rudning Grain Company to take its place.



CIRCA 1923



According to history, the elevator temporarily shut down in the Fall of 1937, but was re-opened on January 11, 1938 as the Farmers Cooperative Elevator Company of Bellingham. The new entity assumed all titles & interest to all of the property of the earlier business (Farmers' Elevator Company of Bellingham).

In 1954, FCE purchased the Peavey elevator & in 1959 a fire burned it down.

In 1959, an 80,000 bushel

annex was added.

A feed mill was added in 1962.

In 1964 a house was built for the manager.

In 1973, the elevator bought the government bin site which added 150,000 bushel capacity.

A large corn dryer was added in 1978.

By 1986, the elevator had a 600,000 bushel capacity.

In 1978, the elevator bought a fertilizer blending plant from Land O' Lakes for \$200,000. Curt Pederson was the manager back then of the agronomy business.

Today, Curt Pederson is the General Manager of the Farmers Cooperative Elevator Company of Bellingham.

