

## Glacial Plains Cooperative

Glacial Plains Cooperative, established in 2001, is itself a fairly young entity when compared to the elevators that comprise this cooperative. When we go back their beginnings, though, they are as old as this association, the Minnesota Grain and Feed Association, at 106 years old.

The Kerkhoven Farmers Elevator Company (estab. 1907), Murdock Farmers Elevator Company (estab. 1909) and Farmers Union Cooperative of Benson (estab. 1945) are the foundation of Glacial Plains Cooperative. These three elevators in their early days were all

heavily involved in buying & selling grain, seed, flour milling, grinding & mixing feed, and coal.



As is common in business, there were high points, like expansion, new construction and new equipment purchases & installations...and low points, like fires, explosions and burglary. Based on the history reviewed, the Kerkhoven location had some tough times. The elevator was damaged twice by fire in the 1940's. The worse fire of the 2 was in June 1942, when the old elevator, the corn crib, the corn sheller room, part of the new modern feed mill and 21,000 bushels of grain were destroyed. Luckily the main elevator suffered no damage. In June 1964, they suffered an explosion that caused about \$175,000 worth of damage. They lost a corn sheller, a flax cleaner, 21 tons of bulk feed, 40,000 bushels of cash corn, and 7,500 bushels of oats. The mill building also suffered some damage but most of it was to a mill motor.



A Burlington Northern boxcar derailed and plowed into the east building of the Kerkhoven elevator on a Monday morning in March of 1972. That accident was blamed on thick ice and snow on a railroad siding. The damage was so significant, the building had to be torn down and rebuilt.

The Murdock Farmers Elevator, according to history, was burglarized twice. The first time, in 1938, the thief made off with some useless paperwork, but 10 years later in 1948, the burglars got away with several hundred dollars from the safe.

In the early 1980's the concept of unit train elevators in Minnesota was beginning to take off. The Benson, Murdock and Kerkhoven elevators performed feasibility studies on building a unit train elevator, most likely in Murdock. On April 1, 1982, with a vote of 839 to 126, the three companies voted to merge their operations and become the United Farmers Elevator. They also voted to build a new \$1.5MM elevator in Murdock capable of handling unit train loading. Their first car of 54 grain cars in the first unit-train was loaded at Murdock in December 1982. That initial unit-train loaded was bound for the West Coast with 189,000 bushels of corn.



In August of 1996, construction began on a new grain-loading facility alongside United Farmers Elevator's

present unit train elevator. The new facility was big enough to load another unit train at the same time as the original structure, making it possible to load both corn and beans without emptying out first. An additional dump pit was also added.

In May of 1999, United Farmers Elevator acquired the Milan Farmers Elevator.

In April 2001, the United Farmers Elevator and Swift Co-op Oil (Cenex) voted in favor of merging their business to form Glacial Plains Cooperative. In 2005, Glacial Plains Cooperative entered into a lease agreement with the owners of a grain handling facility in Sunberg.

Today, Glacial Plains Cooperative handles grain, grain drying, feed, fuel, ag chemicals, fertilizer & seed. They have 5 locations in Benson, Degraff, Kerkhoven, Milan & Sunberg. They have approximately 8.4MM bushels of grain storage. Glacial Plains Cooperative is managed by Tom Traen.