

### John F. Loewen — Constable

Mr. John F. Loewen served as constable for the village of Winkler in 1923. He was the son of Mr. Frank Loewen who farmed in the Glencross district. In 1902 Mr. John F. Loewen was married to Miss Aganetha Peters who was born June 7, 1884, in the village of Schanzenfeld. Today, at the age of 86 years she resides alone in a small house at the south-west corner of Second Street and Mountain Avenue. A short visit to her home reveals to anyone why the Bible admonishes the members of the church not to neglect the widows.

At the time when Mr. Loewen was the constable in town, the family lived on Fourth Street in a small house that they rented from Mr. William Neufeld and that stood approximately on the site where the Hometown Service Garage is now located. On October 16, 1923, Mr. Loewen got up at seven o'clock and quietly hurried into the summer kitchen to light a fire in order to prepare a light breakfast before leaving with friends on a short trip to hunt Prairie Chickens. In his hurry, he mistook a can of gasoline for kerosene and when he poured the contents of the can onto the burning embers the resulting explosion spattered gasoline on his clothing which burst into flames. In order to extinguish the flames, Mr. Loewen dashed out of the kitchen and rolled around on the street. However, this had little effect and therefore he ran down the street to ring the town bell and thus summon the volunteer fire brigade to extinguish the flames which he evidently assumed were destroying the summer kitchen. Fortunately, the only damage to the kitchen was that the inside walls were covered with smoke and soot, but in running about a block to the belfry tower, all the clothing except for the shoes on his feet, were burned off Mr. Loewen's body. After pulling the rope and ringing the fire alarm, Mr. Loewen in great agony fled across Mountain Avenue to the residence of Dr. G. F. Weatherhead. When the doctor's wife opened the door she was so frightened that later she too became ill because of the shock. As there was no hospital in Winkler, Mr. J. A. Kroeker provided the transportation and his brother Mr. A. A. Kroeker gave physical and spiritual comfort to Mr. Loewen in the back seat of the car on the way to the Morden Hospital.

Mrs. Loewen awoke a little later because there was a noisy disturbance in their front yard. On inquiry, she was informed that her husband had just been taken to the hospital at Morden. That evening Mrs. Loewen and her two-year old son Johnny were taken to the bedside of her husband. Because of the swelling, Mr. Loewen asked his wife to open his eyes so that he could see his infant son.

At seven A.M. the next morning Mr. Loewen died and Mrs. Loewen and her family planned to hold the funeral service in the Winkler Mennonite Brethren Church. However, since Mr. Loewen had served as a policeman there was considerable objection and discussion by the Church membership as to the propriety of permitting the family to conduct the funeral service in the M.B. Church. Fortunately, good will prevailed and the doors of the Church were opened for a fellow-citizen who in life had performed his duties of protecting not only the church membership but also their building.

After the funeral, the Winkler Village Council suggested to Mrs. Loewen that if she and her fourteen-year-old son Abe would continue the duties of her deceased husband and ring the town bell regularly in the morning, at noon, and in the evening until the end of the month, the Council would pay her the \$25.00 salary that was due her departed loved one. As her young son did not have the courage to ring the bell because the rope in the belfry was still covered with blood and skin from the hands of his father, Mrs. Loewen rang the town bell herself.

### Mr. Jack Felde — Constable

A local citizen who has seen much of the seamy side of life in Winkler is Mr. Jack Felde who was born December 3, 1894, at the mouth of the Volga River on the Caspian Sea in Astrakhan, Russia, where he and his father were employed by his uncle in a large brick factory. Mr. Felde's father was the pilot of a ship that delivered bricks from the factory in Astrakhan to the coastal cities on the Caspian Sea.

Because Mr. Felde was of an age that he could be called up for military training, and since he had a brother in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who paid the fare, he immigrated to Canada and arrived in Winnipeg in May, 1913. He found employment at the St. Charles Hotel, but as he was not yet a Canadian citizen he felt the war fever directed against him as a German enemy alien. His friend, Mr. Henry Thiessen, suggested that they accompany Rev. William Bestvater on his trip by C.P.R. to Winkler. Rev. Bestvater was to conduct a series of services at the Winkler M.B. Church. It was in July, 1914, that they arrived in Winkler on the morning train, and Felde and Thiessen looked for someone to take them across the International Border to the United States. Their purpose for coming to Winkler had been to slip across the boundary and to join Mr. Felde's brother in Milwaukee. They hired Mr. Isaac Giesbrecht, who operated a livery barn on the west side of Main Street, to take them by car to Walhalla. Mr. Giesbrecht owned two cars which he used in summer; in winter, of course, he hitched his horses to the sleigh to convey his passengers to near-by towns.

When they arrived in Walhalla, North Dakota, without having reported at the immigration office, Mr. Giesbrecht straightway dropped his two fares and returned home. However, it did not take the American patrol very long to catch up with the two adventurers. The police told them that he would take them back to the International Border but that Felde and Thiessen were not to come back if they wanted to stay out of jail. Fortunately, the motorcycle used by the patrol had a side car and the two renegades climbed in for a fast ride to the border where they were deposited and asked not to return. They were actually happy to be back on Canadian soil but now the trek back to Winkler had lost all glamour. As they crossed a farmer's field, the owner asked them in Low German where they were going. When they revealed to him that their destination was Winkler, he agreed to take them there for the price of \$7.00. The two young men were glad to close the deal, and were ready to go to bed when they arrived at the