

While nurse Bingham was battling an unco-operative Atlantic, Minnedosa was busily erecting its first hospital. Built with assistance from a Lady Minto grant the VON 11-bed hospital served this district for 40 years, then as nursing home for another 20, now as Drysdale Apartments. In 1909 nurse and the yet-unfinished Lady Minto Hospital met and Miss Bingham spent happy years nursing here rising quickly to matron. Her starting monthly salary was \$35.

Mabel remembers vividly two popular well-known colleagues, Drs. W.J. Roche and J.N. Andrew. The former, MP for this riding for 20 years with many as minister of mines and natural resources; the latter (whose parents homesteaded near Neepawa in 1878) became the proverbial "legend in his own time" through almost 60 years of dedicated medical service here. She also remembers well the hospital's custodian Harry Harmer as "a very nice man and most dependable person." Harmer, many boy scouts will know, served as batman to their founder Lord Baden-Powell during the Boer War when that general successfully defended Mafeking with 800 men against some 10,000.

In 1912 love came to our adventuresome nurse and she married Fred Cowan. Fred was a son of R.A. Cowan, one of this district's earliest pioneers who served on Minnedosa's founding council of 1883. The Cowan farm was located $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles west of town on the south valley rim. An attractive painting by W.A. Burgess (artist-farmer who lived here briefly) in about 1890 is all that remains of that homestead. In fact, hundreds of cars daily roar through what was once the farmyard.

Here the former urbanite nurse helped her husband grow grain and vegetables, raise pigs, cows, chickens, turkeys. "The valley," recalls Mrs. Cowan wistfully, "was unbelievably beautiful then; wild and unspoiled." For a year the Cowans lived in B.C., but the call of their beloved valley drew them back and they settled in it less than two miles west of their first home. Here in a new house Mabel--now in her 90th year--still lives peacefully, with her youngest son Peter and 18-year-old grandson Mark. These two men operate a successful son-father farm in the finest Cowan tradition finding time to collect, repair and operate steam-engines as a hobby. Three other children were born to the Fred Cowans; Freda who lives in Quebec, Robert, and a baby girl who died in infancy.

The grief of losing her son in the last war becomes painfully evident in Mabel's gentle face when she talks of him. Flt. Sgt. Robert John Alexander Cowan fought the Nazis in that most dangerous capacity, bomber gunner. A holder of four medals he was killed Jan. 9, 1943, and awarded the RCAF's operational wings "posthumously in recognition of gallant service in action against the enemy" by Air Marshall Robert Lecki, and the Silver Cross; both deeply cherished by his mother. Equally meaningful is a letter from A.J. Bell, Minnedosa's elementary school principal from 1909-35, part of which reads: "I am proud of my Minnedosa boys and girls and particularly of Bobby. He was a fine, straightforward, manly boy when he was my pupil and I watched him grow to manhood with the same sterling qualities."

In 1964 Mabel's husband died. Besides Mark she has another grandchild, Linda--a 21-year-old pharmacist in Quebec. Failing eyesight interferes greatly with her favorite pastime of reading and recently she's often been bedridden. A cheerful, pleasant woman Mabel Bingham Cowan did find some brighter days in Canada, and created many herself in this community she loves dearly. The lines she wrote long ago as young woman are equally timely today. So also is the rest of her little poem:

So only a word of kindness Lightens our heaviest load And a gentle smile of gladness
Brightens our weary road, Forming the truest friendship Filling our
hearts with love Guiding our weary footsteps To a brighter world above.

32. SCIENCE FAIRS

VALLEY VISTAS column, Brandon Sun, Feb. 11, 1972

Although several developments in Manitoba's educational system during the past decade are hardly commendable the science club and fair movement's a notable exception. In early 1960 C.A.E. Hensley (co-author of the Science Indoors and Out series which grades 7, 8, 9 used as texts for a quarter century), who did much to kick off the movement in this province, wrote: "As an extension of their regular teaching many science teachers now are helping their science-prone students to develop problem solving habits and skills by sponsoring science clubs and science fairs. This movement is widespread in Europe and south of our border, but is very new in Canada. Some 40 schools in the province, half in the Winnipeg area and half outside it, now have active science clubs." He wrote this shortly after the first provincial science fair had been held. Mr. Hensley, it may be recalled, left Manitoba the following year to help Jamaica revitalize her science curriculum. Three other Manitoba educators pioneering in this movement were N.W. Wilde, L.L. Kolt, V. Peters, while the service club supporting it most strongly then was the Rotary Club.