

DID YOU KNOW.....

A look back at early area history as found in the archives of the Enderlin Historical Society and Museum by Susan Schlecht

The following information is taken from the *1891 - 1941 Official Souvenir Program* for the 50th anniversary of Enderlin.

Enderlin also had its share of interesting and innovative settlers in the early days.

The Harpers, of Irish birth, moved to Enderlin in 1897 from Minneapolis where Mr. J.C. Harper was a business owner. In Enderlin, along with his oldest sons, he established the Harper Dry Goods Co. During the years the store was in operation, son Alfred had charge of the men's wear department and son James was in charge of the shoe department until he joined the Eaton Shoe Co., of Boston, Massachusetts. The store was later enlarged to include a grocery department. As stated in the history, "*Mr. Harper was the father of the Ship-By-Rail club, its local president and honorary president of the state association.*"

Mr. J.C. Harper was evidently an athlete of some reputation. Early information indicates that "*Mr. Harper was (at the time he lived in Minneapolis) Minnesota's champion athlete.*" Further information is shed on that issue, when we find that "*It was on a country road on the outskirts of the city (Enderlin) that he made the world's record for men over 50 years of age, at the age of 66, running 100 yards in 12-4/5 seconds. He also left affidavits of 100 other records.*" There are two pictures of Mr. James Christopher Harper at the museum. One picture is after winning the hurdle race at the Caledonian Games on July 29, 1885 and the other is after breaking the 100 yard world record at age 66 on September 23, 1922 at Enderlin. Mr. Harper died in 1935.

One of the Harper's younger sons, Arthur, graduated from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and was a lieutenant colonel in command of the 60th Field Artillery at Fort Bragg, NC. A daughter Nola was in Washington, DC in 1941 as an active member of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding Great Britain. Arthur was a 1912 graduate of Enderlin and Nola, who was born in Enderlin, was a 1918 graduate.

Sue's comments: It is interesting to note that Harper Dry Goods Co. was an actual "department" store right here in Enderlin! Does anyone have any further information on Mr. Harper's athletic accomplishments? Also, what was the "Ship by Rail" club? As noted, the son Arthur Harper was a graduate of West Point, probably in about 1916. Does anyone have further information to indicate if there were earlier graduates of the Academy from Enderlin or was he the first of many?

Watch for more history next week!