



RM OF EAST ST. PAUL

## East St. Paul life in the early 1940's; oh how getting milk has changed!

*Sophie Huebert is a lifelong East St. Paul resident who grew up on Mowat Road with her parents, Irene and Luke Stelmach, and older sister Anne. She has lived on the same property almost all her life, and raised her family there with her husband Ed, who passed away in 2011. Sophie's is the first residents' personal history story to be published in the Neighbours of ESP magazine, and on the RM's website under the Spotlight on History tab. We hope you enjoy Sophie's recollections of life in the RM some 70-plus years ago.*



### By Sophie Huebert

When Mayor Shelley Hart asked me to write something about my life in the early 40's here in East St. Paul, I really had difficulty choosing just one topic as things are so different today! One idea came to mind as I walked by the milk cooler at Sobeys and picked up a carton of milk.

When I was 9 or 10 years old my parents usually kept one or two milking cows. During summer holidays it was my job to walk the cows across Hoddinott Road to a large grassy area where Applecross and Omenik Drive are today. In 1942 – 1943, there were probably only a dozen cars driving down Hoddinott Road all day!

Each cow had a long rope attached to its collar and I carried two long steel pins that I had to push into the ground to tether them so they wouldn't wander too far. There they would be content to spend the day grazing on the lush green grass. Later in the day I would bring them home to be milked before suppertime.

Another task dad assigned to me was to make sure the cows' big water trough in our yard was full of fresh water, and I was supposed to do this before I brought the cows home because if the water was just pumped from the well, it would be ice-cold and would hurt their teeth and they refused to drink it. Often I'd forget until the last minute and of course I'd be reprimanded.

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My mom always did the milking herself. Whenever my father tried to help he would somehow manage to squeeze one squirt in the pail and one in his shoe! Luckily that wasn't one of my chores.

After milking was done mom would put the milk through a separator – an apparatus that divided the milk from the cream. The cleansing of the separator parts had to be done very carefully and I hated when I had to do this by myself. When enough cream was saved the very tedious job of making butter would begin.

We had a large crock called a milk churn with a long wooden paddle and it would take quite a while using an up and down movement before butter would form. The butter would then be scooped into a bowl and the rest would be buttermilk for us to drink.

During the war years when rationing food stamps were issued, friends from the city would drive out to our home and give us their sugar coupon rations in exchange for butter or meat rations stamps. We had plenty of butter as well as meat as we also kept chickens and a few pigs. My parents would usually send our visitors home with fresh eggs and vegetables.

In the winter months the cows would be fed and kept in the barn. I was happy about that, as I didn't have to take them back and forth to pasture. Unfortunately one part of keeping the



*Sophie, in photo above left at home today, and above, second from left, with her parents, Irene and Luke Stelmach, and older sister Anne. Below, the family at their home on Mowat Road, which was located beside Sophie's present home.*



cows indoors in winter would occasionally result in tragedy. Our barn cats would like to snuggle up to the cows for warmth during the cold months and one morning my dad came into the barn to discover one of the cats had been completely flattened by a cow during the night, prob-

ably when the cow turned over during the night.

Milking cows by hand is now obsolete with modern technology. I still enjoy buttermilk, but at 85 years old I'm glad I can simply pick it up at the store compared to what I had to do for it when I was a kid!