

## Early Industry: Farming and Market Gardening

*Stories from the “East St. Paul Centennial 1916-2016” book  
Submitted by Mayor Shelley Hart*

During my mayoral campaign in 2014, resident Deb Schwartz asked me what I thought of establishing a Farmers Market in our community. I loved the idea and brought it forward to Council when we were looking for ideas to celebrate our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2016. A Farmers Market seemed like a natural fit for our community, it was only surprising that it hadn't happened years earlier.

East St. Paul began as a farming community when settlers arrived and bought up long narrow plots of land extending two miles east from the Red River. Land was cleared by horse and plough, and homesteads were established by such families as the Irvin's, the Mowat's, the Pritchard's, the Bird's, the Isbister's and the McBeth's, to name just a few. There are reports of a feed mill being located near Hoddinott and Birds Hill Roads in 1883, to which grain was brought by farmers to be ground into flour or feed. Sugar beets were one of the early crops, grown by the Waugh family as far back as 1912.

The book *Heritage II: A History of East St. Paul*, identifies James Reid as the first market gardener in the area. Reid arrived with his wife in 1912 to live on Rebeck Road. He was one of many market gardeners who sold produce at vegetable stands on Henderson Highway and at farmers markets in Winnipeg for generations. While these stands can still be found during the harvest months, there are fewer of them as farmland is subdivided and grocery stores become omnipresent and convenient.

One of the few and the largest market garden in the municipality still in business on a full time basis is Hnatiuk Market Gardens. It is owned by Martin and Raymond Hnatiuk, members of a third generation family of market gardeners. Located on Mowat Road, the Hnatiuk's grow about 40 varieties of vegetables including corn, cucumbers, garlic, cabbage, peas and beans.

By his count, Stan Buksak was a market gardener for nearly seven decades. His parents ensured he got started early – just a few years after his birth in 1936 – and he quickly learned the tricks of the trade. He recalled years of picking, bunching and packing vegetables alongside his brothers and sister. Their parents used a team of horses to ferry the produce down the mud and gravel roads to the market at Stella Avenue and Main Street in Winnipeg. In 1965, Stan married Marianne and they made their home in the north end of East St. Paul where they farmed 60 acres. Pumpkins were their main crop, and when they hosted field trips of schoolchildren from Winnipeg each year, they sent each child home with a pumpkin of their own. Stan retired from full-time market gardening in 1996, but he and Marianne kept a garden for their own use and to give away produce to family and friends. Sadly, Stan passed away on May 1, 2017.

