



# Spotlight on History

RM OF EAST ST. PAUL

## Laying good eggs - Fahr's ESP egg farm attracted customers from near and far for more than 40 years

*William Fahr has lived in East St. Paul since he was 4 years old and Patricia since 1978 when she married William. Together, they raised two sons while farming the land first settled by William's parents in the early 1950s. Today, their land on the north side of Hoddinott Road east of Mowat is an active grain farm.*

**As told by East St. Paul resident authors - William & Patricia Fahr**



There was a time when the Fahr egg farm on Hoddinott Road was a gathering spot, not just to get your eggs, but to catch up with neighbours and collect the latest East St. Paul news and gossip.

Julius and Gerda Fahr moved to East St. Paul in the early 1950s and settled on an acreage on the north side of Hoddinott, east of Mowat Road. Julius was a seed salesman for Brett Young Seeds and he and Gerda began raising hens – in 1958 they raised 3,000 birds.

Son William Fahr, who moved to East St. Paul with his family when he was four years old, helped on the family farm and later, with his wife Patricia, ran it.

William says in the early 1970s his father had inked a deal to supply eggs to Canada Safeway under the store's Lucerne brand. The hen operation by then had two barns, 200-feet in length and 20,000 laying hens.

It was a lot of work, and the Fahr family literally had their hands full of eggs on a daily basis.

"Chickens lay one egg per day on average so the work was constant," William said.

"You could never take a week-end off!"

The hens not only kept the Fahr family busy, it provided employment to local kids, aged 12 – 15, who worked gathering and sorting eggs. Their job included removing eggs with double yolks or cracked shells, and they were paid by the number of flats they could fill, so speed and efficiency were crucial to their bottom line.

The Fahr Farm also sold eggs to the public out of a small building on the farm that became known as 'The Egg House'. In the 1970s it was open every Saturday from 8am to 4pm, but the workload was heavy and in the 1980s the hours were shortened and The Egg House would close at noon.

And while The Egg House was where locals came for their eggs and neighbourhood news, the quality product had folks travelling from all over to get their fill of Fahr's fine eggs.

"People came from St. Vital, Charleswood, North Kildonan and even from some northern communities," Patricia said, noting the ladies from the northern communities gifted her with handmade footwear for her sons, Johnathan and James.



**Clockwise from top left: Willy and Pat Fahr; 10-year-old Johnathan with the hens; Julius and Willy; and an undated aerial shot of the Fahr farm.**

The farm fresh eggs were a favourite in the Ukrainian community as their shells held colours better than store bought eggs, so they were perfect for the intricate details that are the hallmark of Ukrainian eggs.

"As you can imagine, Easter was an especially busy time with all the egg decorating," Patricia said.

Like any successful farming operation, there were challenging times. The Fahr's lost about 12,000 hens one year when a poacher – in the form of a mink – got into their barn and went on a killing spree. It took a week before the mink was eventually

caught.

The Fahr's had an opportunity to sell their operation to a larger egg farm south of Winnipeg and in 2000 that's what they did. Their barns were getting old and the community of East St. Paul was growing all around them.

The two large barns were demolished, marking the end of an era for the Fahr family and for East St. Paul.

"We still hear from past customers, friends, and family how they miss those fresh eggs," Patricia said.

"The taste of store bought eggs never seem to match – and we have to agree."

