

"History of Medicine Valley Estonian Settlement"

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(translated by Tõnu Onu)

Foreword

The collection and preservation of the data relating to the early (1900-1920) history of the Medicine Valley Estonian settlement has been a project of this writer for some time. The creation of the Estonian Historical Commission in 1965 provided the final stimulus to implement the project. The assignment became my responsibility and was completed in the 1970s.

Unfortunately the completion of the work has dragged on for too long, due largely to lack of experience in finding historical sources as well as in managing and organizing the material gathered. However, the collection of material could not be delayed any longer. The ranks of those who were part of establishing the Medicine Valley settlement in the early years are diminishing rapidly. Furthermore, few of them have preserved historically valuable material from that period.

The Medicine Valley Estonian Society (MVES) beginning in 1910 was really the central organization for the whole Estonian settlement. The minutes of the MVES activities from 1910-1917 and from 1932 to the present (1965) have been preserved as well as the accounts from 1934 and most of the library and list of books. Significant personal diaries and financial records of only one of the first settlers in Medicine Valley have been preserved, those of August Posti. Fortunately the material has been well kept in the hands of his children, despite being in scattered places. Frits Kinna's financial records from 1910 (exemplary) and from 1913-1915 have also been preserved. Unfortunately the personal documents of Henri Kingsep and most probably the record of MVES minutes starting in 1919 were destroyed in a fire. That record must have still existed in 1932 when a new record was started since the first minutes state that: "The minutes of the previous meeting were adopted." Brothers Sam and Hendrik Kinna apparently had kept an accurate diary and farm accounts but before his death in 1948, Hendrik is believed to have burned all those documents and a large part of his extensive personal library. In March of 1968 Mrs. Hilja Kalev (Hendrik and Sam Kinna were her uncles) revealed that the diary in question was in her possession and had not been burned. However, she is not willing to show it to anyone since it contains much personal information as well as being critical of some individuals (Frits Kinna). My repeated efforts to convince Mrs. Hilja Kalev of the importance of the said diary with respect to the general history of Estonians were in vain.

I was unsuccessful in finding any information in the Lacombe County archives about the early history of the Estonian School.

My main objective has been to gather and preserve as much available information as possible about the Estonian settlement, especially its early years (1900-1920). That information can be found in the appendices. My summary in no way claims to be

“historical” in the academic sense of the word. However, I hope that the information gathered contains elements that will be useful to someone preparing a historical overview.

Historical Background

The trio¹ who at the turn of the century were the founders establishing the Sylvan Lake and Medicine Valley (Alberta) Estonian settlement came from South Estonia. August Posti came from the Tani farm in the parish of Rõngu, in the township of Hellenurme, in the province of Tartu. He attended confirmation classes in Rõngu in 1888 and was married there in 1897. (Appendix 3, note #12) Brothers, Hendrik (also Henri) (younger) and Kristjan (also Christian) (older) Kårsna came from the large and wealthy farm of Horma in the township of Liinamäe in the province of Võru.² They received what at the time was considered a good education. Hendrik Kingsep’s childhood friend, most likely a classmate and later of like-mind, was Hendrik Kinna (1864). The father of the two brothers, “Horma Ott”, wanted his son Hendrik to become a church minister and Kristjan a doctor. (explanation from Lembit Kingsep) However, during the last decade of the 19th century the young educated class in Russia, especially in border areas including Estonia were bitten by liberal-radical views in opposition to the chauvinism of the Russian Czar’s authority. Consequently Hendrik (Kårsna) became a school teacher in Nuustaku, Ottepää. This profession also protected him from being conscripted into the Russian army. Kristjan became a sailor and world traveller. Hendrik Kinna, after having served in the Russian military as a sergeant-major, worked at the turn of the century as a cashier and accountant in a large wine firm.

Sylvan (Snake) Lake Estonian Settlement

Around 1898 Kristjan Kingsep ended his sea travels and came ashore in New York where a great number of other Estonian sailors and port workers had arrived before him. At the time there were huge waves of emigration from Europe, especially to the USA with the Alaska gold rush of 1880 and the Klondike gold rush of 1896-1899. The Canadian government also did its part by supporting the Canadian Pacific Railway’s efforts to settle the prairies in the Canadian West, first and foremost with people who would till the soil. Homesteads of 160 acres were given for free from Crown lands with only \$10 being charged for registration. When this information reached Hendrik from his brother Kristjan, he set out to cross the ocean with his whole family (wife Emilie, daughters three year old Linda and year old Salme). At the beginning of 1899 they joined Kristjan in New York and continued their journey to the promised-land – western Canada. The rode as far to the wild-west as the railway went at the time – Calgary. From

¹ Brothers Hendrik(Henri, b 1871) and Kristjan (Christian) Kingsep (also known as Kårsna and Kängsep) and August Posti (b. 1871). The latter was a relative of Hendrik Kingsep’s wife (a cousin). Hendrik Kingsep married the local shoemaker’s daughter, Emilie Saar, when he was a school teacher in Nuustaku.

² The wealth of the farm was indicated by the fact that in September of 1902, the father sent his sons money in the amount of \$227.11 to Christian and \$252.83 to Hendrik as revenue for the co-operative, likely for operating capital.

there they took the Calgary-Edmonton line north to Red Deer. All homesteads ten miles west from Red Deer had already been given out. At that time the land west of Red Deer was covered mainly by aspen and lower areas by willows since forest fires had swept through the areas several times over the years. There were rich grasslands and a few clearings which were suitable for cultivating gardens. This is where on May 9, 1899 Kristjan and Hendrik Kingsep decided to take homesteads about 10 miles west of Red Deer near Snake (later Sylvan) Lake. The available land in the area was covered by rich grass and water for herds. The hope was that it would take a few years before obtrusive neighbours would arrive. They began to raise cattle.

When Horma Ott heard that his son Kristjan had put down roots in Canada's western wilderness and with his brother taken a homestead, in 1899 he put Kristjan's family (wife Tiina and five children) on a train and sent them on their way to his son. Tiina made the long and difficult journey with her small children on her own. (Appendix #4) Word went back from Hendrik to his relative August Posti in the homeland who until then was without land and working on his father's farm, raising cattle to feed his family. In February of 1902 August Posti sold off his belongings and farm animals in Estonia. This gave him 151 roubles and 60 kopecks. To this he added his bank savings (316 roubles 40 kopecks) and sums received from other individuals as well as paid up loans (146 roubles) which gave him 613 roubles. From this amount he paid 363 roubles 40 kopecks for his trip to America (two adults and two children aged four and two) of which 316 roubles was for tickets and 47 roubles for other expenses. (Reference # 16) By March 17th he was on the shores of Sylvan Lake (Appendix # 5) and had joined the collective farm on March 31st.

This agricultural co-operative (Appendix #6) which lasted a mere eight months and had only three (originally four) Estonian families of settlers,³ was undoubtedly the first attempt to set up in practice the idea of a collective farm or kolkhoz not based on religious beliefs. However, the participants were of like political mind and related. (August Posti and Hendrik Kingsep)

When the collective farm was disbanded on October 26, 1902, Hendrik Kingsep and August Posti with their families settled 24 miles to the west in Medicine Valley. Kristjan Kingsep's family stayed put since Kristjan himself left the family in December of the same year. In the meantime, however, Peeter Herman's family who were friends of Kristjan from New York, their relatives the Walls and many other Estonians had settled by Sylvan Lake. (See Appendix #4 and map)

On September 6, 1902 Hendrik Kinna, Hendrik Kingsep's class mate, also arrived in Sylvan Lake. He did not take land there but with the families of H. Kingsep and A. Posti settled in Medicine Valley on October 26, 1902. (Appendix #5 and Appendix #6)

³ During the period of the "collective farm" the others at Sylvan Lake were Juhan Kask who took a homestead on April 2, 1900 beside Henri and Kristjan, as well as Peter Walter (formerly Vassili), who took a homestead on July 30, 1900. They did not, however, join the "collective farm". For a short time Juhan Neithal also joined the "collective farm" at the beginning but dropped out. Juhan Neithal came from the "Nurmekunde" settlement in the province of Tver in Russia.

Many Estonians from Russia also settled by Sylvan Lake during the 1901-1904 period. Some of them took homesteads (south of the Sylvan Lake – Red Deer road), many, however, stopped only to look around to find suitable land. After lengthy travels they found suitable land in Stettler and Big Valley (Alberta). Estonians from Russia settled there throughout 1904. (Appendix 4 - ½).

Medicine Valley Estonian Settlement

Early period (1902 -1920): Growth in numbers

The first to settle in Medicine Valley from the Sylvan Lake in October 1902 were the Hendrik Kingsep and August Posti families and Hendrik Kinna. (Appendix 4) The first two and Kristjan Kingsep's family had already been to Medicine Valley in the summer of that year to stack hay and put up buildings in preparation for resettlement in the fall. Medicine Valley did not yet have a single settler and all of the land was still available. August Posti registered a homestead in his name on February 10, 1903. (Reference #14) Hendrik Kinna took a homestead on April 24, 1903. Hendrik Kingsep did not obtain a homestead but settled on Canadian Pacific Railway land. Five years later (March 20 1908) A. Posti became the actual owner of the land. (Reference #15)⁴

Since the land as well as the natural surroundings in Medicine Valley seemed like the promised-land to the new settlers (Appendix #37). August Posti sent word back to his home in the province of Tartu (Appendix #17) and Hendrik Kinna to his relatives in the province of Võru. Already in the following spring (1903) large groups of new settlers started arriving (Appendix #8) from the Hellenurme area, from the City of Tartu, from Kärgula in 1903 and Sõmerpalu in 1903 and 1904 (in the province of Võru). The Sestrap group came separately from Tallinn in 1905. The last to arrive was a larger group led by Juhan Moro (Muru) in 1905. (Appendix #8-3) With the end of the Russian-Japanese War (started January 28, 1904) and the 1905 Russian Revolution (October 1905) events and sentiments calmed down in the Estonian homeland. Consequently, the urge to settle in Canada also receded. During the 1905-1910 period only a few people came to Medicine Valley (Appendix #26) since the reason for young men reaching conscription age (21) to settle elsewhere was primarily to avoid service in the Russian military. Older people left to settle elsewhere in order to obtain their own land.

From 1910 to 1916 there was a wave of young settlers (Appendix #8) since there was fear that Russia would enter the Balkan War and the tension preceding First World War was starting to build. During the years from 1916 to 1923 there were no new Estonian arrivals in Medicine Valley. However, two families (a total of ten members) and five single individuals left to resettle elsewhere and 11 people passed away. (Appendices #11 and 12)

⁴ For details on the regulations on land regarding the Prairies and homesteads see Appendices #36 and #27.

By the end of this early period the Medicine Valley Estonian settlement had grown to approximately 160 members with 45 households consisting of 30 families and about 15 single individuals. (Appendix #10) This number does not include the third generation born here of whom there were only a few. At the end of this period all of the families and most of the single individuals had started farming. In addition to farming, some did own small enterprises such as watermills. Some of the single young men went out to do seasonal work in mines and forests.

At the end of this period the 33 Estonian households in Medicine Valley owned 57 quarters of land for an average of 1.7 quarters or 272 acres per owner. (Appendix #40 – map #39)

Politics

The early period

As Hendrik Kinna justifiably claims (Appendix #37) the majority of the first settlers had a radical outlook on life. Among them were educated and spirited individuals who were good social organizers. Understandably a close intellectual relationship developed with the “Uus Ilm” (“New World” newspaper which began publication in 1909) group in New York and they came to share the latter’s step-by-step change of view from socialism to Communism.

At the MVES meetings and lectures (Feb. 5, 1911, July 9, 1911 and 1912) socialism and aggressive politics soon became the main topics of discussion. For example, during a period of six months at the end of meetings Hendrik Kingsep read all of Karl Marx’ *Capitalism*. The politically more conservative members such as Karl and Paul Langer, Paul Koot, August Pihuoja, Juhan Kinna, Juhan Moro, Mart Sestrap and others (see the membership list of 1914 – Appendix #30) withdrew to some extent from the activities of the Society. Neutral members Frits Kinna, August Posti, J. Mäesep and others still did try to maintain the activities of the Society. They attempted to carry out the cultural objectives established when the Society was founded, foremost of which was to build their own hall. The list of activities in the Society’s 1914 annual report (presented at the annual meeting on January 11, 1915) included Frits Kinna’s presentation (March 8, 1914) “Ideas and Rules of the Society”. However, in the minutes of the March 8, 1914 meeting which had ten points, there is no mention of F. Kinna’s presentation. An addition has been made later at the end of the minutes “Note that the title of the President’s speech has been omitted”. The recording secretary was H. Kingsep and he devoted nine pages of the minutes to his own speech. There was an attempt to limit political propaganda by permitting Hendrik Kingsep to talk about socialism for only half an hour at each meeting (March 10, 1912). August Posti in his diary on April 16, 1912 wrote: “In the evening we attended a socialist meeting”. It is not mentioned where the meeting took place. There is no evidence as to whether the Medicine Valley Estonian political leaders were also caught up in the network of paid Moscow agents working in Western Canada at the time (C. W. Harvison “The Spies in Our Midst” Weekend Magazine of January 21, 1967 – Appendix #46). A police search

did take place here and Hendrik Kinna was unluckier than the others and was fined \$200 for possessing banned publications. (Appendix #37)

The growing lack of mutual confidence and disintegration based on political motivations was most evident for many years with respect to building a hall for the society. A complete split occurred in 1918 when the Society's Estonian Hall was built and the question was not only the location of the building. At that time, a group led by Hendrik Kingsep and joined by J. Vares, Mart Sestrap and the Mõttus family from west of Gilby separated from the others. This group later (1921), with Hendrik Kingsep, being one of the organizers, participated with others in building a hall in Gilby.

After the Estonian-Russian Peace treaty was signed, large numbers of Estonians opted to return to their homeland (1921-23). In the West there was an underground (especially in Germany, Albrecht: "Das verratene Sotsialismus" 1941?) as well as public propaganda in the USA encouraging settlement in Russia to build socialism. (Edward Õun, *Perhaps the next night*", Sweden 1956 pp. 10-14) The newspaper "Uus Ilm" (New World) in New York was the organizer for Estonians resettling.

Among the Medicine Valley Estonians, New York's confidence was placed in Hendrik Kingsep. At the beginning of March 1923 a group of Estonians left Medicine Valley to build Russia. (Appendix # 32) Although this was a significant loss for the small Estonian community, it did have a sobering effect in its own way. This was especially true when within a year or two, three of the resettlers returned from Russia.

From the minutes of the MVES (1913-15) and August Posti's diary, it can be seen that Estonian farmers regularly participated in the meetings of the regional local of the United Farmers of Alberta and were the founders of UFA's Gilby local. The UFA's endeavours beginning in 1911 and at the end of the First World War and later (1921) also were of a social-political nature. (Grant MacEwan, "Poking into Politics" Edmonton 1966 pp. 111-12 and Appendix #31-c)

A more definite change in direction of the Society's leadership occurred at the annual meeting of January 1913 when an executive committee was elected instead of an executive. (Appendix #30) It appears, however, that the majority of members were indifferent to socialism despite the best efforts of the leader. Why else would the secretary of the Society at three consecutive meetings, February 9, March 9 and April 13, 1913 have urged the members to take part in the founding meeting of the socialist society in Gilby which had been repeatedly cancelled due to lack of participants? The fourth attempt to establish the society took place in Hendrik Kinna's home on April 20, 1913 when only three people attended. Consequently, the socialist society was not established.

The atmosphere at the meetings of the MVES as early as the beginning of 1913 can be ascertained by the minutes of April 13, 1913 written by Hendrik Kingsep himself. ...*"When the Society decided a year and a half ago that I would speak about socialism for half an hour at every meeting, it became necessary for me to start studying socialism to reach solid truth from notions without which there cannot be any results. During this*

time I have read about 15 books and three socialist newspapers, one regularly and excerpts from two. Each one of the writers, many of them world famous, explains capitalism and its activities very well in his own way. But nothing gave my spirit the same satisfaction as the flashbacks to the goblin stories I had heard as a child...

Capitalism is a goblin – capitalistic government – goblin government –socialism – destroys the goblin and breaks its neck - ...There was also a discussion of the folly of capitalism and since there is no socialist candidate in Lacombe it was decided not to go and vote.”

In those minutes alone there are nine long pages of similar text. The purpose of such minutes is shown by the calculation on the last page:

Points 9 and 10 – 9 pages with 33 lines =297 lines x 7 words per line = 2079 words.

A column in “Uus Ilm” has 107 lines with 6 words per line = 642 words. $2079 \div 642 = 3$ columns.

During 1914 and 1915, socialism was the most frequent topic of discussion at meetings. The executive made particular attempts to assist the “Uus Ilm” newspaper, either by the purchase of shares (May 10, 1914, April 11, 1915), organization of subscriptions to the newspaper (May 1, 1914 and December 1915), contributions to the newspaper (April 13, 1913) and its calendar (July 10, 1915), fund raising (May 10, 1915) and support for the purchase of a new typewriter (March 16, 1916 etc.

In 1916 there was a complete change in the political endeavours of the Society’s executive. Hendrik Kingsep, although still Vice-President, did not take an active role in running the Society or the meetings. During the whole year he took part in only one of nine meetings (March 16) where there was a discussion of an issue with political undertones – support of the newspaper “Uus Ilm”.

In the six meetings held in 1917 not a single issue of a political nature was raised. Hendrik Kingsep was not elected to the executive since at the time of the annual general meeting in January he was travelling in California. His only recorded participation in 1917 was on February 11th where he gave a long and practical description of his trip to Victoria and California to explore the possibilities for new settlements.

The written history of the MVES stopped with the minutes of November 11, 1917 and did not resume until 1932. Thus, there is no possibility of taking a closer look at the political campaign that influenced part of the Medicine Valley Estonians in 1923 to emigrate to Russia to build up socialism. (See Appendix #32)

Appendix #2: Chronology of Settlement

1898 Kristjan Kingsep arrives in New York from South America

- 1899** Hendrik Kingsep arrives in New York from Estonia with his family and joins his brother Kristjan. They set out for the Canadian West and reached Sylvan (Snake) Lake near Red Deer. (Appendix #4) On May 9th both obtain homesteads there.
- 1900** Kristjan Kingsep's wife, Tiina, arrives with her children in Sylvan Lake.
- 1901** On March 9th the first Estonian collective farm "Õhisus" is established near Sylvan Lake. (Appendix # 6)
- On March 18th August Posti arrives with his family in Sylvan Lake to find in addition to Hendrik and Kristjan Kingsep, the Kask, Neithal and Wassily Piht families.
 - On March 20th Minister Sillak came to Sylvan Lake.
 - On March 31st August Posti is accepted as a member of "Õhisus"
 - On September 6th Hendrik Kinna arrives in Sylvan Lake.
 - On October 26 "Õhisus" puts and end to its activities. Its members Hendrik Kingsep and August Posti with their families settle in Medicine Valley. Hendrik Kinna joins them. (Appendix #6)
 - During the year several Estonian families arrive in Sylvan Lake from Russia including Magnus Tipman and others. (Appendix #4)
- 1902** The following groups arrive in Medicine Valley from Estonia:
- Peeter Perler's group from the area around Tartu (Appendix #8)
 - Juhan Kinna's group (in April) from Kõrgula in the province of Võru. (Appendix #8)
 - Karl Moro's family from Sõmerpalu in the province of Võru. (Appendix #8-2)
 - In the spring brothers Karl and Juhan Rääbis arrive from the province of Võru. (Appendix #8)
- 1904** The majority of Estonians who had settled in Sylvan Lake from Russia leave to settle in Stettler and Big Valley. (Appendix #40)
- 1905** In the spring Juhan Muru's (Moro) group arrives in Medicine Valley from the province of Võru. (Appendix #8)
- In February the Sestrap family arrives from the Tallinn area.
 In the spring Hendrik Kingsep's father "Horma Ott Känksep" arrives
 The first deaths occur in Medicine Valley Estonian families. A graveyard is established on the property of K. Rääbis (Appendix #11)
- 1906-09** A few families arrive in Medicine Valley from Estonia (Appendix #26)
- 1909** Building of the Estonian School in Medicine Valley (Appendix #44)
 The CPR starts selling land it owns.
- 1910** In April the Medicine Valley Estonian Society (MVES) is founded (Appendix #30)
 In the same year new settlers start arriving from Estonia (Appendix #8)
 Juhan Mäesep's water mill starts up in May
- 1911** Frits Kinna's water mill starts up in November
- 1912** In January, brothers Juhan and Karl Pihuoja (Pihooja) arrive from the province of Võru.
 A train station is opened in Eckville; a small village and commercial centre develops there.

On June 12 the Eckville Co-op is established (Appendix #38)

- 1914** Arrival of brothers Mõttus and Huul (Appendix #3)
On June 13 the “Kalmu Cemetery Company” is established in Medicine Valley (Appendix #12)
- 1916** In the spring, the last of the settlers from the early period arrive from Estonia, travelling through Siberia, over Japan to Vancouver:
a. the family of Juhan Mõttus, his wife and three sons (Appendix #8 and #21)
b. Juhan Wernik settles in Okanagan, B.C. from Medicine Valley
- 1917** Telephones are installed on the farms in Medicine Valley
- 1918** The first Estonians from Medicine Valley depart for Estonia, Karl and Juhan Pihuoja and K. Osol;
Juhan Mäesep – unknown (via Japan)
In April and May the Estonian Hall was built in Medicine Valley. (Medicine Valley Estonian Society) (Appendix #29)
- 1921** A community hall was built in Gilby, Medicine Valley
- 1923** In January the first settlers after the First World War arrive from Estonia. Juhan Pihuoja returns with his wife.
On March 1st a group of Estonians from Eckville set out to join other Estonians in New York.
The “Koidu Collective Farm” is established in Russia.
At the end of October Henri Kinna and August Posti arrive at the collective farm. (Appendix #32)
- 1924** In September August Posti is the first to return from the “Koidu Collective Farm” in Russia.

Appendix #9

List of Estonian Farmers in Medicine Valley in 1913

The list is an extract from the minutes of the meeting of the Medicine Valley Estonian Society on August 10, 1913 containing the names of the Estonian settlers from Medicine Valley (38) and the four from Sylvan Lake who were likely to participate in building the Society’s Estonian Hall.

- | | |
|--|------------------------------|
| <u>1) Kingsep Henri</u> | <u>20) Mõttus Hugo</u> |
| 2) Kinna Juhan | 21) Mõttus Jakob |
| <u>3) Kinna Henri</u> | 22) Mõttus Kusta |
| <u>4) Kinna Samm</u> (Sam) | <u>23) Mäesep J.</u> |
| <u>5) Kinna Frits</u> | 24) Ossul Oskar |
| 6) Kinna Art | 25) Perler Peter |
| 7) Koot (Koots) Paul | 26) Pihuoja (Pihooja) Juhan |
| 8) Koot (Koots) Peter | 27) Pihuoja (Pihooja) August |
| 9) Koot (Koots) Ferdinand (Paul’s son) | 28) Pihuoja (Pihooja) Karl |
| 10) Huul Karl | <u>29) Posti August</u> |
| 11) Langer Karl | 30) Rääbis Charlie |

- 12) Langer Paul
- 13) Matteus (Matthews) Adam
- 14) Moro Hendrik
- 15) Moro Jaan
- 16) Moro Juhan
- 17) Moro Karl
- 18) Moro Peeter (Juhan's son)
- 19) Mõttus Aleksander

- 31) Rääbis Jaan
- 32) Sestrap Mart
- 33) Sestrap Mihkel
- 34) Sestrap Gustav
- 35) Teener Jaan
- 36) Toomingas Jaan
- 37) Vares J.
- 38) Wernick J.

From Sylvan Lake:

- 1) Herman P.
- 2) Wall Gustav
- 3) Wall Madis
- 4) Piht Wassili (new name Walters Peeter)

Note: August Posti proposed the building of the Hall; the list of names was most likely drawn up by August Posti. It is not the list of members of the Society. According to the minutes nine members (and ? Kinna) and several outsiders participated in the meeting. The names of participants in the meeting are underlined.

V.M.

Appendix #11

Cemetery

The first cemetery for Estonians in Medicine Valley was on a sandy hill north of the farmyard on the property of Charlie Rääbis. (See map #4) According to Olga Rääbis and Kinna the following people are buried there:

1. Ott Kingsep (also Kärnsna or Känksep) 1905
2. Endel Rääbis, son of Charley and Leena, as an infant
3. Leena Rääbis, Charlie' wife, killed when struck by lightning
4. Helen Rääbis, daughter of Charlie and Leena
5. Frits Moro, son of Juhan and Anna
6. The son of August and Miili Posti, stillborn 1909
7. Harri Rääbis, son of Jaan and Rosalie, born 1900, died 1921.
8. Gustav Uudeküll, lived near Sylvan Lake, worked in mining, lived here before the arrival of the Kinnas.

Note: Ott Kingsep's grave is the only one with a more permanent headstone, a massive poured concrete structure measuring 4 x 2 ½ feet. This memorial appears to have been erected in 1923. Three dates are engraved on the square base, 1809, 1818 and 1917. Their significance is unknown.

The other graves are unknown. Only the remains of a fence can be seen under a new aspen forest which is now used as pasture. The land at present belongs to Waldo Rääbis, Charley's son.

V. Matiisen, summer 1965

Extract from the record of minutes of the Medicine Valley Estonian Society

April 9, 1911

Meeting at S. Kinna's residence

Most members present.

Main points for discussion on the agenda: 1) Establishing a collective farm
2) Organization of a graveyard

A discussion followed on the issue of the cemetery. H. Kingsep proposed that whether or not the question **is** raised, **it** should be decided by a vote.

The vote showed twelve members in favour and five against. J. Wernick proposed a motion asking if people were in favour of maintaining the site of the old cemetery or choosing a new one. Opinion was in favour of the old site as long as conditions for purchase of the land were satisfactory. C. Rääbis promised to provide two acres of dry land for \$10 an acre. Paul Langer thought that since all Estonians were not present who would gladly participate and help defray costs, it would be preferable to send out a letter and hold a vote to see who supports the project.

That motion was accepted and it was decided that the secretary give the letter to M. Sestrap in Gilby to have people there sign it.

Meeting chaired by the President, J. Wernick

Minutes drafted by the Secretary, F. Kinna

August 13 at S. Kinna's residence

“There was a discussion about the cemetery: Johann Kinna proposed that a new site be chosen which would be more suitable for the purpose. Jaak Kinna promised **d** to provide free land for it.

The majority support the proposal. The Society elected a committee to organize the project and choose the property: H. Kinna, F. Kinna, K. Anton, P.Langer, J. Wernick. (See Appendix #12)

V. Matiisen

Appendix # 12

The Gilby Cemetery

Meeting respecting graveyard in Gilby June 1914

(Copy of minutes: V. Matiisen)

The meeting was called to establish a Cemetery Company. The Secretary read the financial statement which indicated that \$40 had already been contributed by members. Of this amount \$28.15 had been paid for expenses leaving \$11.85 in the account.

This was followed by a presentation of the requirements set out in government regulations for the establishment of a cemetery company.

It was decided to establish the Company and name it the "Kalmu Cemetery Company". K. Langer proposed, seconded by H. Kinna that capital to establish the Company should be \$480 divided into 60 shares of \$8 each.

A board of directors was elected with J. Teener as President, proposed by K. Langer and seconded by P. Perler; F. Kinna as Secretary, proposed by Matteus and seconded by K. Langer; Mike Sestrap as Treasurer, proposed by Pihuoja and seconded by P. Langer.

The size of the grave sites was set at: a single grave 10 x 5 feet at \$5; plots 10 x10 feet at \$10, 10 x15 feet at \$12, 10 x 20 feet at \$16.

The graves were to be seven feet deep.

With that the meeting came to an end.

A note had been added in pencil later stating: *It was decided to change the size of the plots and the price of individual graves as stated in the next minutes.*

Signature (John Teener)

Note: Gilby is located in Medicine Valley, seven miles north and one and a half miles west of Eckville. There is a bridge over the Medicine River from long ago. On the east shore of the River, Mihkel (Mike) Sestrap opened a farm store, probably around 1906-07. In fact, the meeting was held in his store. Jaak Kinna donated land for the cemetery from his homestead.

In 1921 the Gilby Hall was built near the bridge on a lot beside the store. Mike Sestrap's store, as well as the Gilby Hall, was on J. Teener's homestead. He sold the homestead to an Englishman in 1919.

Jaak Kinna gave the land for the cemetery for free from his homestead. He was also one of the first to be buried in the new cemetery on March 20, 1917. The cemetery is located a half mile west of Gilby. (See map Appendix #12)

V. Matiisen

Meeting at Residence of J. Teener June 7, 1915

(Copy of minutes: V. Matiisen)

J. Teener was appointed to chair the meeting. The members present were: J. Teener, Mart Sestrap, H. Mõttus, Oskar Mõttus, H. Kinna, Jaak Kinna, P. Langer, K. Langer, Mike Sestrap, P. Perler, A. Pihuoja and F. Kinna.

The minutes of the previous meeting were read but not approved since it was decided to change the size of the plots. K. Langer proposed that the previous plot of 10 x 10 feet be changed to 10 x 20 feet for the same amount of \$10 with a plot being 20 feet measured from south to north and 10 feet measured from west to east. H. Kinna seconded the motion and it was approved by a majority.

Jaak Kinna proposed that everyone carrying out a burial be responsible for preparing their own grave and marking it either with a stone or cross and that the grave be seven feet deep.

The proposal was supported unanimously.

The price was to remain at \$8 for plots measuring 10 x 20 feet which was to be the basic size. The plots on the east side measuring 11 x 11 feet cost \$5.

If someone wishes to buy two plots of 10 x 20 side by side or if they already have one plot and wish to buy another one next to it, the cost would be \$14 for the 20 x 20 feet plot. The rate for an individual grave was set at \$3. The regulation was adopted unanimously.

Mike Sestrap read the following financial statement:

Revenues	\$25.85
Expenses	\$14.55
Balance	\$11.30

With respect to Wall's father, it was considered to not be a matter for the Company. It was decided not to demand a deposit to bury the dead in order to give people a chance to bury their deceased even if they do not have the money at the time. They would be allowed to pay when they have the money. It was decided to place a notice at the gates of the Cemetery that burial without permission is prohibited:

permission must be obtained from the executive of the Cemetery who would indicate where a burial can take place. The following were elected to the executive unanimously: President, J. Teener, nominated by H. Kinna and seconded by K. Langer; Treasurer, Mike Sestrap, nominated by Pihuoja and seconded by Perler; Secretary F. Kinna, nominated by K. Langer and seconded by H. Kinna .

It was decided to purchase two shovels with a short handle and one with a long handle. It was decided to put up a ten foot high wooden cross at the cemetery. Oskar Mõttus accepted the task of making the cross measuring 10 feet high and 6 x 6 inches square, painting it black and installing it for \$3.50. Mart Sestrap took it upon himself to make a tool box measuring 6 x 3 x 3 feet with a lock and hinges, paint and place it at the Cemetery for \$2.

This was followed by a selection of gravesites and the meeting was then adjourned.

Signature (John Teener)

Meeting of June 12, 1916
(Copy of minutes)

Members present: J. Teener, H. Kinna, Paul Koot, Jaak Kinna, P. Perler, Mart Sestrap and F. Kinna.

J. Teener was elected to chair the meeting. The minutes of the previous meeting were read and adopted.

According to the Treasurer's report there was \$6.35 in the cash box. Mihkel (Mike) Sestrap resigned as Treasurer. Paul Koot proposed that 50 cents be paid each time to whoever shows gravesites to people. H. Kinna seconded the motion and it was adopted unanimously.

It was decided to rearrange the plots in accordance with the new regulation. It is considered essential to put up a notice, initially on paper, at the cemetery of the regulations required by the Company.

J. Teener was elected President unanimously; H. Kinna as Treasurer, nominated by Perler and seconded by Teener; F. Kinna as Secretary, nominated by H. Kinna and seconded by Perler.

The responsibility of showing gravesites was assigned to J. Teener, for which he would be paid 50 cents each time.

The meeting was then adjourned.

Signature (John Teener)

On June 18, 1917 a meeting was held in the home of J. Teener. Five members were present, all of them Estonian. In addition, Mr. Dan Clausen was present and was elected Secretary-Treasurer (Nominated by H. Kinna). From that meeting on, English became the language of proceedings.

December 27, 1918 meeting in the Gilby store. Nine members were present, all Estonians and the Secretary-Treasurer (English). Estonians remained as the only active members (of the Society) and constituted the executive. Beginning in June of 1930 members from other ethnic groups also participated in the meetings at the Gilby Hall. Up to the present, 21 Estonians and 24 people of other ethnic groups have been buried in the cemetery.

V.M.

Appendix #12

Stories from the Pioneer Period in Medicine Valley

Frits Kinna's story

The store, the post office and the county office were in Red Deer. The first to maintain contact was Hendrik Kingsep. He made one trip which took three days each month to bring the mail and goods from stores. He made the trip with a wagon he had built; the wheels were made of boards but had neither spokes nor iron rims. The wagon was pulled by a horse and ox. A few years later (around 1905-06) someone by the name of Killick built a house in Eckford (this is where the name Eckville comes from) on land near the bridge on the Medicine River a mile north of the present town and now (1965) owned by Onifryzen. Killick had a store and post office in the house and Snell had a hotel at the same place. Later a school was built west of the bridge on land now owned by Lembit Kingsep. In 1912 when the CNR reached Eckville, establishments were moved there i.e. the present town site. When the post office was in Killick's house we all took turns at the beginning to bring the mail from Red Deer. From 1908 to 1912 I brought the mail and goods from stores three times a week. The trip took two days and I was paid \$5. I used two horses. The cost of a horse and also of a mule was \$100 to \$150.

The first threshing machine was owned by Hendrik Kingsep. The machine, which was in common use in Estonia, was powered by horses. When Kingsep stopped delivering mail (1908) he acquired a gasoline motor and later a threshing machine powered by a steam engine. I was the "engineer".

Back in Estonia, in Sõmerpalu and elsewhere in the province of Võru, it was difficult to get water for people and herds, and the soil was poor. For the settlers from Võru, this made the Medicine River Valley very appealing with its deep black soil, rich grasslands, plentiful water and high shore line which facilitated damming water to build water mills.

My father, Juhan, was a tenant on a manor dairy farm, in Kärğula. This, however, meant moving a lot. My grandfather, Jaak, was also a tenant on a manor dairy farm. My father had saved enough money after moving expenses to buy a cow. We got flour, salt, sugar and fat from Red Deer and meat and fish we got from nature. My father stayed at home and I went out to work on a CPR bridge building gang. From my first pay I bought a rifle to go hunting. We went home only during the holidays. We came back from Red Deer by foot (40 miles). We were paid \$2 a day from which meal money was deducted. There were many Estonians with me. I remember some: August Posti, Karl Rääbis, Sam Kinna. Sam Kinna's leg was badly hurt in an accident and he suffered to the end of his life from the injury. The money to buy farm equipment and an ox came from my wages. My sisters also went out to work in Red Deer as domestic help.

From the experience I gained from bridge building (cement work), I was able to start building a dam for a mill with the help of Karl Rääbis. We began the work in 1911 when I stopped delivering the mail. I built the turbine myself and ordered the mill stones from the USA. The mill started operating in November 1911 (Appendix #41).

When we obtained land, there were two log huts with mud roofs on my homestead used by a rancher named Armstrong. Along with cattle he raised horses on open land. We kept the huts and lived in them until we built our own houses. When we arrived from Estonia we spent our first year with my uncle Hendrik Kinna.

The size of a homestead was 160 acres (1/4 section). The government gave out the homesteads for free from its stock of land to all applicants (men or single women, 21 years of age or older).* The only fee was \$10 for registration. The homestead was certified in the name of the individual if he lived there and cultivated 15 acres of land in the first year. (Appendix #36) Boundary lines had been made which were visible and at the corner of each section and 1/4 section there were numbered steel stakes in the ground. This allowed everyone to find his homestead on his own.

During the first decade (until 1912) when I delivered the mail, the road used between Medicine Valley and Sylvan Lake was an old Indian trail which on higher ground went through Evert. Between Sylvan Lake and Red Deer there already was a road in the same direction as the present Highway 11. (This is not completely accurate V/M.)

The first businesses to be established in the new Eckville when the railway arrived around 1912 were the general store (owned by Forhan and Clausen), a post office, a garage (Isaacson), a hotel (owned by Lumbek) and a co-op store. The school house by the river was also moved there. Around 1915 (?) there was major fire which destroyed all buildings on the east side of the main street.

* For the purpose of settling Canada's three western provinces, a regulation was made for the division of land suitable for agriculture during the second half of the 19th century. At that time the land was divided into six mile strips from north to south. The strips were called ranges and between each meridian in southern Alberta there are 30 ranges and in central Alberta, 28 ranges. Each range in turn was divided into

6 x 6 = 36 square mile townships which are numbered from 1 to 112 from the south at the USA border northward. The townships were divided by boundaries of 1 x 1 = one square mile parts called sections (640 acres) and these in turn were divided into quarters of 160 acres or 16 legal subdivisions (see map and Appendix #36).

The even numbered sections in each township belonged to the government's stock of land to be given to applicants for homesteads. From its land, the government gave one section for a school house and one for the Hudson Bay Company. All odd numbered sections belonged to the CPR as compensation for building the railway and settling the Canadian West.

The CPR began selling land in 1909. Pieces of land up to 640 acres were sold to farmers but also to speculators. In 1910 some land near the Edmonton-Calgary line was being sold for prices of \$22.00-\$30.00 an acre. The conditions for giving land to the CPR were specified on October 21, 1881 in the Syndicate Contract. According to the Contract, each odd numbered section within 24 miles on both sides of the railroad between the 49th and 57th parallel belonged to the CPR. (See reference #20) V. Matiisen

When our family settled in Medicine Valley in the spring of 1903, there were no settlers other than a few Estonian families (Hendrik Kingsep, August Posti) and my uncle Hendrik Kinna. The same or the following year the first to come were the Swedes, Gilbertson (taking homestead NW to SW 22-41-3 and NW -15-14-3, V.M.). The area around Sylvan Lake and westward to Benalto was settled by Finns. Huge numbers of them had resettled from the United States. During the following few years, I don't know exactly when since I was away from home on a CPR construction crew, the Eckville area was also settled by Finns.

The high price of horses led to enterprising initiatives.* In southern Alberta near Calgary while working on the railroad, Frits Kinna and August Posti discovered that ranchers were selling horses for \$50.00. The horses had not been broken in and were of a lighter breed, in other words, riding horses. At the end of June in 1904 (Reference #10) when they left railroad construction, they went looking for horses and from June 1 – 4 “bought horses.” F. Kinna recalls that they both bought four horses. They loaded the horses onto a train wagon and set out for Red Deer where the train ride ended. Frits Kinna no longer remembers how they got the untamed horses to Medicine Valley. At home they started “training” the horses. In addition to the time and effort that took, F. Kinna's right thumb was also sacrificed in the process. This required a separate trip to a doctor in Red Deer. He still managed to get himself two teams with which he delivered mail during four years between Red Deer and Eckville, making three trips a week.

August Posti's diary, however, contains an entry for July 5-25: “Training the horses” and on August 23; “Skinned a horse”.

Mules were not used in Medicine Valley although Kristjan Kingsep had a mule at the Sylvan Lake settlement.

*Usually \$150.00. On March 15, 1914, August Posti paid A. Pihuoja \$250.00 for a horse and on March 11, 1913 \$300 to P. Perler. A pound of butter at the time cost 20 cents.

From August Posti's diary on November 14, 1914: "There is a sparrow in the family already." Unfortunately, there is no information on magpies as to whether they were here earlier or came later. There are black crows here as a nuisance to farmers. There are no grey crows.

If the first Estonian settlers on the banks of the Medicine River were: "all extremely enthusiastic about their valley," it was undoubtedly due to the fertile soil and geography which felt familiar to those coming from southern Estonia. There were springs when sowing began at the end of March (March 30, 1905) or at the beginning of April (1906). Spring, especially April, was often very cold and there was seldom a spring that did not have snow and several days of cold weather during the first half of May. There was often late frost at the beginning of June and early frost at the end of July which often ruined or spoiled the potato and wheat field crops in the second half of August. There was often snow in September during the middle of wheat threshing; however, the so-called Indian summer in late autumn nearly every year saved the situation. By November one had to deal with real winter weather just about every year. Serious financial losses were mentioned only once by A. Posti in his diary on September 11, 1916.

It seems that the winter and spring of 1920 were catastrophic. In A. Posti's diary we find:

"A strange winter. It started snowing on October 22nd and the snow stayed. It was very cold before Christmas with temperatures dropping to 40 degrees below zero. From what I can recall, it was not as cold after Christmas but there was deep snow on the ground. In March there was widespread influenza. A lot of snow fell in the first half of April. On April 14th there was a seven inch snow fall and two feet of snow on the ground with no melting.

April 25 – Clear and a lot of thaw and water rising on the river

April 29 – there was five feet of water on the ice

April 30 – It was cloudy and snowy all week. No one has any feed left for their herds and the animals are being fed flour. Many of the animals have died. There is still a lot of snow although some hill sides are bare. Spring birds are all out but no sign of spring.

May

1 – It snowed and cleared up in the evening

2 – It snowed all day... Went to the mill and brought back 2 beavers and a muskrat. (The reference is probably to Mäesep's former mill belonging to Posti)

3 – The ice is going in the river, the water is high, still lots of snow.

5 – Very stifling 12 degrees, a lot melted

6- A lot of melting, the river is very high and carried the bridge away at night."

Early on the Estonians proved to be quite inventive in automating farm work. Hendrik Kingsep was the first to acquire a threshing machine. It was driven by horses (or oxen). This power implement was built by Hendrik Kingsep himself. A similar type of power source was also in widespread use in Estonia. H. Kingsep used this source of power to make roof shingles, saw boards and mill flour on stones. A few years later H. Kingsep acquired a steam powered threshing machine. The wagon with which H.K. in the early years carried mail and goods from Red Deer for the whole Estonian community was home built. The wheels were made of boards cut into a round shape. (Information from Hendrik Kingsep's daughter Emma Lapp)

Mart Sestrap built a small windmill (wooden) on the roof of his blacksmith's shop. He was a good blacksmith and did work for others also. With the windmill he milled flour. (on stones) A few years later the windmill was demolished by a storm. Mart Sestrap did not build a new one since in 1910 J. Mäesep's more modern turbine driven water mill came into operation on the Medicine River. (Told by Mart Sestrap's daughter, Alma Liivam, as related by her mother)

Industries

The first turbine driven water mill in Medicine Valley was built by Juhan Mäesep. (See map in Appendix #40). He had worked as a miller in Estonia. A canal of about 400 feet long for the mill was built by the Estonians through volunteer labour using shovels drawn by horses. The cost of building the canal was \$500. Mäesep had borrowed the money from August Posti. The canal (still in existence) shortened a long curve on the river and gave a drop of six feet without any need to dam the water in the river. J. Mäesep designed the turbine himself and it was built by J. Vares. The stones for the mill were brought from the USA. The mill started operating in May of 1910. (Reference #11) It was used for coarse milling to make flour for bread, meal for animals and barley. J. Mäesep also used the same power source to saw boards and make shingles. The mill users came from a large area. It came to be used less when Frits Kinna's mill in 1911 and Karl Moro's mill in 1914 came into operation in Eckville. (See map in Appendix #40) The mill and homestead belonged to J. Mäesep until September 28, 1918 when they were auctioned off to pay for a mortgage. They then became the property of August Posti. The mill remained in operation for a few years under the new ownership. J. Mäesep was a giant, 6 foot 4 and a great speaker. He did not farm. He returned to Estonia after the First World War where he continued to build mills according to Karl Posti. K. Pihuoja now farms the quarter that once belonged to J. Mäesep.

The same sort of steam power used for threshing machines was also used for milling. This was the method used by Paul Langer already in 1911 to mill for himself and neighbours. Juhan Kinna also had a stationary steam boiler (upright) as of 1910 which was used for threshing as well as milling. He also did work for others. In this

connection Frits Kinna took a course and exams to become a steam boiler operator (engineer) (Explanation by Frits Kinna)

J. Mäesep set up saw mill business and also made roof shingles at his water mill in 1910. (August Posti's diary) During this period Karl Anton also owned a saw mill (chain saw) and made shingles. He stopped operating in 1912 since he left for New Zealand with his whole family. Around 1920 Alek and Oskar Mõttus also owned a saw mill mainly for their own use. This is now owned by Richard Mõttus and still working. (V.M.)

August Moro's story

Since there were rich grasslands and a lot of free land, people kept cattle. Milk, cream or eggs and also meat were sold or exchanged for other goods in farm stores in Gilby and Eckville. Later from 1910 onward when there was no longer a herd, livestock was also sold. Gilby was one of the nearest places where livestock was bought. From there the animals were herded by land to the railway station in Lacombe. (26 miles) In old Eckville around 1910 there was a cheese factory where you could sell milk. When the railway reached Eckville (1914)* we started sending cream to Calgary. Game (rabbits and some goats) and birds (partridge, duck and grouse) as well as large fish stocks in the river and the nearby Wood Lake provided a huge supplement to meat. There were great amounts of wild berries (blueberries, bilberries and wild strawberries) and mushrooms. Bread at that time was baked from barley flour.

*Information differs regarding the arrival of the railway. The railway station masters were not able to provide answer for me either. This might be explained by the fact that there were two railways (CPR and Canadian National Railways) (CNR) in Eckville only one mile apart. August Posti wrote in his diary on January 13, 1913 that "Men marking out the direction of the railway went by here" and "Horses were at work on the railway". According to Frits Kinna this occurred in 1912.

Frits Kinna's story

In the Medicine Valley settlement we didn't give specific names to the farms. We used the owner's name and in official correspondence the number of the section and quarter. We did christen our farm as "the Valley Farm" (Oru Talu), but used the name only amongst ourselves.

Frits Kinna was one of the original owners of a water mill with industrial capacity. It was located on his homestead on the Medicine River. (See map in Appendix #40) F.K. put in an application to Ottawa in 1909 to dam water for the mill. The plans for the dam and mill were registered in Ottawa in 1914. F. K. acquired some of the parts for the mill – shaft, bearings, gearwheel etc. (total \$130) already on May 9, 1910. The mill started operating in November 1911. (See details in Appendix #41, 41A and 41B)

“From the “Mill Accounts” (Reference #8) it appears that the mill produced: “rye, wheat flour, grouts for porridge, coarse barley, flour (barley flour was made for Finns) coarse oatmeal, and sour oatmeal. Wheat was also cleaned before being milled.

The stones for the mill and silk sieve for flour were brought from the USA. At times in the winter there wasn't enough water. From the names in the “Mill Accounts” most of the mill users were Finns.

Karl Moro's flour mill (Information from August Moro)

The flour mill set up by Karl Moro at the edge of Eckville went through many stages over the years. In 1914 Karl Moro, along with his sons George and August, bought two acres of land from Kasper on the banks of the Medicine River at the edge of town. The mill was turbine driven and stones were used for the milling. At the beginning the mill produced barley and meal for animals and later sifted flour. The permit for a dam came from Ottawa and an engineer came out to see it. In 1923 a steam driven flour mill was built on the same property by the side of the road. (See two photos) In 1926 Oskar joined the business while George left it. In 1932 the machine was refurbished and the buildings completely renovated. (See photo) In the meantime Karl Moro had moved to Peace River. From that time on the mill belonged to his sons, August and George Moro.

In 1937 and 1938 the Moro's flour mill furnished the town of Eckville with electricity. The equipment for the power station and the electric cables for the whole town were all installed by Frits Kinna. (See Appendix #16) In 1938 the Calgary Power bought the rights from the Moros to furnish Eckville with power. In 1947 the flour mill was sold to the Eckville Co-op. By that time August Moro was the sole owner since Oskar had also moved to Peace River.

Appendix #29

Construction of the Estonian Hall

The Medicine Valley Estonian Hall (See Appendix #40) was built in May and June of 1918. In the record of minutes of the Medicine Valley Estonian Society (1910-18) there is a copy of the fire insurance policy NA 16904 in effect for six months from April 15 to October 15, 1918. The policy insured 18,000 board feet of material which was intended for construction of the hall. The site was first shown to be on the property of J. Vares. As of June 14, 1918 it is on Paul Koot's property where the hall still stands.

In August Posti's diary (Reference #11) there is an entry: “The Society's Estonian Hall built on 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, 29, 31, 1, 2, 3, 4, 21 = 14 days.” Subsequently two additions were made to the Hall. In 1931 a stage was built in its present form with a ceiling and walls of panel board. In the same year an addition was put on the east end of the building, a two storey balcony with a hall underneath, stairs to the balcony and storage space. (Herman Lapp's information) In 1944 the whole south side of the

building was widened with the addition of a kitchen, banquet hall and two cloak rooms. Another significant expenditure occurred in 1958 when a new aluminium roof was put on the south side of the building and the inside of the banquet hall insulated.

This gives the technical history of the building of the Estonian Hall. Unfortunately the part of the Society's minutes containing how construction actually took place is missing. The first mention of the Society acquiring its "own home" is found in the minutes of July 3, 1910. The first to raise the idea of building a hall was J. Toomingas on January 8, 1911 at a meeting of the Society. The question was left undecided since it was considered premature.

In 1910 the Finns already had two buildings: the "Elsbeth" Hall (also known as the Socialist Society Hall) between Eckville and Sylvan Lake and the "Hyväse" Hall (also known as the Young People's Hall) three miles south-east of Eckville. The Estonian School in old Eckville was also used for parties and dances. (Reference #9)

The question of building a hall for the Society was raised again by August Posti on August 10, 1913 at the annual general meeting. The question appears also to have been discussed outside the Society. This time the question is discussed very thoroughly at the meeting. One of the methods of financing discussed is the possibility of a \$10 donation from each Estonian farmer. Their names are listed in Appendix #9, with a total of 42, four of whom are from Sylvan Lake. At the same meeting both Adam Matteus and Paul Koot promised to provide land for free, leaving it up to the majority to decide.

The people attending the meeting, many of whom were not members of the Society, were apparently unanimous in their opinion on the need for a hall and its construction within financial means.

Hendrik Kingsep, who was also the recording secretary at the meeting, then raised the legal question of who would own of the hall, the MVES or also the other existing associations of which he, H. Kingsep, was a member. Furthermore, would those associations be able to hold their meetings in the hall without any obstacles? In the next part of the minutes it becomes evident there was a political reason for this serious discord which already at that time had divided the small Estonian community and sown distrust and animosity. People left the meeting shouting in anger.

This deep split appears even more clearly at the next meeting on September 14, 1913 where the question of building a hall is again raised. A proposal is presented from a committee constituted of members from outside the Society (F. Kinna, Sam Kinna, A. Posti, C. Rääbis and Karl Langer). Non-members (guests) leave this meeting also making angry comments.

At a meeting on January 11, 1914, under item 10, the question of building a hall is again discussed. At this meeting it was decided to undertake construction of the hall. It was also made known at this time that a meeting had been held outside the framework of

the Society. (August Posti's diary: January 4, 1914 "At Langer's on the subject of building a hall for the Society")

Excerpt from the minutes: "... The matter was discussed at length ...The enthusiasm to acquire a hall was clearly so great that even those who until the present had doubted our capacity to build a hall were now in favour. Despite the late hour (it was after five o'clock), the meeting decided to undertake construction of the hall. Two donation sheets were given out, one to J. Wernik and the other to G. Wall with the following introductory explanation:

"The Medicine Valley Estonian Society decided at its meeting of January 11th to undertake construction of a building for the Society. The building will be located on the property of either J. Teener or A. Matteus depending on the possibilities. We the undersigned shall participate in the undertaking for the amount specified below:"

Signatories: 1) Peeter Herman, 2) Jaan Moro, 3) J. Wernik. 4) H. Kinna, 5) Sam Kinna, 6) H. Kingsep, 7) J. Toomingas – in the amount of \$10.00. Signed (J. Toomingas)

Annual general meeting of February 8, 1914 with 16 members and a few non-members: "The matter of building a hall was the next item, which whipped up waves once again on a stormy sea. In the tumult of virulent back and forth waves of arguments S. Kinna's proposal was accepted: that the Society would contribute half the expenses of building the hall and individuals who are not members, the other half, and that the hall then be built which would be governed by an executive composed by an equal number of individuals from the Society and from outside the Society." The proposal was adopted with eight votes in favour and seven against.

March 8, 1914 "The list of participants for the building is also signed by Huul, A. Posti and K. Moro bringing the amount promised up to \$150.00, plus \$40 conditionally committed. The total, therefore, is \$190.00 promised by 19 individuals. The question of when to ask for the money is left open.

May 10, 1914 item 11 "The subject of the hall is discussed again, specifically the possibility of purchasing the Eckville store for that purpose. No decision was reached."

June 14, 1914 item 6 "Purchase of the Eckville store is considered impossible."

(The minutes of 1913 and 1914 were drafted by Hendrik Kingsep)

January 11, 1915 item 11 "Construction of the hall is discussed."

February 14, 1915 (The minutes are drafted by Emma Kingsep) item 5 J. Mäesep proposes that construction of the hall begin and states he will provide logs for free.

Posti puts forth a motion that: every member of the Society should donate \$1.00 for the construction of the hall.

F. Kinna considers Litt's proposal for shares.

S. Kinna states that thoughts of festivities and building a hall should be set aside for a while. At the present sad time of war, our thoughts should be with the poor countrymen back in Estonia and that they should be mourned.

Mäesepp: "We don't want the hall only for festivities but more for gathering knowledge."

July 11, 1915 item 4 (also August 8, 1915 item 5) "J. Mäesepp proposes that a dance be organized in August to raise funds for the Society's hall. No one is opposed to the proposal."

November 1915 – A party took place at Mart Sestrap's grain house. The weather was very cold. There were only a few party goers. Profit \$9.00

In the second half of 1916 three parties and two family evenings were organized which were successful activities financially and for the number of participants. According to the January 1, 1917 MVES report there was \$121 in the bank account. Furthermore, in the meantime during the year (1916-17) political arguments had receded and there appeared to be a renewed desire on the part of everyone to build a hall for the Society. Many former members rejoined the Society and new members also joined. At the meeting of September 9, 1917 there is a decision that the size of the Society's hall should be 26 feet wide, 50 feet long and 12 feet high with an arched ceiling. There is a request for a budget to see if the Society has the means to build such a hall. Frits Kinna takes the task upon himself. On October 14th both he and August Posti present draft budgets in which the cost of lumber comes to approximately \$500. In Hendrik Kinna's opinion, since the Society has \$175 in its account which with some effort could be increased to \$200, but still leaves it \$300 short, the project is beyond the means of the Society's members alone. A long and fierce discussion follows with mistrust again rising up between permanent Society members and "outsiders". The latter group includes some who would support the construction of the hall but do not wish to join the Society. A solution is reached (7 votes in favour, 2 against and 3 abstentions) by deciding to establish a joint stock company for building a hall and constituting a committee to draft a constitution for the company. (Paul Langer, Frits Kinna, Hugo Mõttus, Karl Rääbis and Sam Kinna were elected to the committee.)

The committee held a meeting on November 4, 1917 and on November 11 the joint stock company's draft constitution was presented at a Society meeting. The arguments over the draft became fierce. The meeting changed paragraph 4. During the arguments, Karl Rääbis, who was a member of the committee, spoke several times to oppose the joint stock company. When the final version of the company's constitution was read and a vote was held to see who were ready to participate in construction of the hall in this way, only eight were in favour and they were all members of the Society. This ended the idea of a joint stock company. K. Rääbis was blamed for scaring people away with his interventions. "... The meeting came to a noisy end with people in

an agitated state as was always the case when construction of the hall was discussed.” The Society’s record of minutes comes to an end here on November 11, 1917. The following 14 pages have been ripped out.

However, a fire insurance policy in the name of the MVES dated April 15, 1918 for six months for 18,000 board feet of lumber, has been preserved. The site was initially on the property of Jaan Vares and later on that of Paul Koot. Construction took place from May 17th to June 4th 1918. (August Posti’s diary) The plans for the hall were drawn up by Frits Kinna and Karl Langer. The latter was often very active in construction activities (Frits Kinna’s expression).

Hendrik Kingsep apparently withdrew from MVES activities in 1916 and 1917. His name does not appear in the minutes of meetings in matters relating to the building of the hall. It appears that he was in serious disagreement with respect to the site of the hall. This resulted in Hendrik Kingsep, along with a small group of Estonians (Jaan Vares, Mart Sestrap, Hugo and Alek Mõttus and others) from west of Gilby, not participating in the construction of the MVES hall. The building material, which had been transported by everyone in turn during the winter and spring of 1918 from the sawmill in Leedale to the property of Jaan Vares* at the north end of the settlement, in the spring was taken two miles south-east to a new site on the property of Paul Koot** which was closer to the centre of the settlement. As mentioned earlier, construction of the hall took place in May and June of 1918.

Hendrik Kingsep with Mart Sestrap and Englishmen, Andrew and Thuborn started organizing construction of another community hall in Gilby. It was built in 1921.

*According to Ludwig and Jaan Koot there was a disagreement over the right of ownership of the hall.

**Two acres of land were subdivided from the property of Paul Koot for the hall for a price of \$50.00.

Period II. As mentioned above, a large addition was made to the hall in 1931. This proved to be necessary and possible since the activities of the MVES were given new energy and a boost in 1930-32 when a great number of young new arrivals joined the Society.

In July and August of 1936, Frits Kinna installed electric wiring in the hall for a payment of \$8.55. When necessary for parties, a portable gasoline engine electric generator would be brought to the hall. (Borrowed from Frits Kinna)

Appendix #30 **Medicine Valley Estonian Society (MVES)**

Early Period

The book containing MVES minutes of 1910-18 has been preserved, although in fact the last minutes are from November 11, 1917. The last 14 pages (181-194) have been torn of the book. A separate financial statement was not kept and the annual report is in the Minutes. The organization meeting of the Society was held on April 21, 1910 in the Estonian School. There was no list of participants in the Minutes. The following names do appear in the Minutes: 1) Frits Kinna, 2) Hendrik Kinna, 3) Juhan Kinna, 4) Peeter Koot, 5) Karl Langer, 6) Karl Moro, 7) August Posti, 8) Jaan Teener, 9) Jaan Wernik. From the minutes of the May meeting it appears that among the founding members, the following were also present: 10) Paul Langer, 11) Artur Kinna, 12) Peeter Perler, 13) Sestrap, Mihkel (Mike) and 14) Jaan Tomingas.

Hendrik Kingsep was elected to chair the meeting, Frits Kinna as secretary and Peeter Koot as “cash master”. The objectives of the new society are defined by the first sentence in the minutes: The first question of discussion on the agenda was: “What kind of association do we need, a social or business one? The conclusion, after lengthy discussions, was that both were necessary but there was not a sufficient financial base for a business association. Therefore, a social association should be established to which could be added a mutual fire insurance company.

The meeting organizers had a provisional constitution for the society. It was discussed and adopted with some minor modifications. A committee was elected to finalize the constitution – J.Wernik, J. Kinna, and Frits Kinna. The meeting set the entrance fee at \$1.00 and membership fee at 50 cents a year.

At the meeting of May 9, 1910 in Gilby (chaired by H. Kingsep), a draft constitution was discussed and adopted with minor changes. Unfortunately, the text of the constitution is missing. From the minutes that followed there is no indication that the constitution or the Society was registered with the provincial government. (The present MVES constitution and by-laws were registered with the provincial government only on June 26 1933, when they received a Certificate of Incorporation.) The first executive was elected at this meeting and new members were accepted, 15) Kinna Henri, 16) Kinna Sam, 17) Moro Jaan, 18) Moro Juhan, 19) Mäesep Jaan, 20) Anton Karl, 21) Rääbis Jaan, 22) Kingsep Emilie, 23) Kinna Marie (24) Posti Miili, 25) Wall Gustav (from Sylvan Lake), 26) Herman Peeter (from Sylvan Lake March 12, 1911). It was decided to hold meetings on the first Sunday of each month.

Family evenings were organized once a month and social evenings with a program (choir, play, literature readings, later movies, folk dancing) and dances at least 3-4 times a year (Easter, John’s Day (Jaanipäev) and Christmas). Before the Society’s own hall was built in 1918, it used Mike Sestrap’s rooms in Gilby and the Estonian School at first and later mainly the homes of Sam and Henri Kinna and also of August Posti.

Educational and cultural activities were taken quite seriously right from the beginning. In order to keep better track of events and academic achievements and to

present the information to others at the Society's meetings, the following division of assignments was made: (November 6, 1910): H. Kingsep – a farmers' collective, H. Kinna – Alberta politics, Peeter Koot- "Socialist matters", A. Posti – Estonian literature, Sam Kinna – the Duma and activities of associations, K. Anton – inventions. At the next meeting (December 4) S. Kinna took on the task of keeping a "diary" which he did meticulously until his retirement. His conscientious and accurate work made the diary a source of much valuable information. Unfortunately, his brother Henri destroyed (burned) the diary before his death. (Appendix #16) In it he had noted all weather related information as well as other significant events. He also made a presentation on a summary of weather observations at the annual general meeting. On October 2, 1910 H. Kingsep spoke about "How much we pay in taxes without knowing it".

There was a unanimous decision to hold lecture evenings at the meeting of December 4, 1910. Already at the same meeting there were speakers and presentations: a) Inventions – an airship capable of flying over the ocean (K. Anton); b) the Russian Duma – demands for the mother tongue as language of instruction (S. Kinna); c) Farmers' unions – demands for abolition of tariffs ((H. Kingsep). The first lecture evening in Gilby was held on December 17th which turned out to be very long (it ended at 3 in the morning) with five individuals making presentations, mainly readings. The lectures are listed in the minutes: K. Kinna made a short presentation on the life of Count Leo Tolstoy. Henri Kingsep also spoke on the same subject but veered off from Tolstoy's world views to our Christian church, religion and religion based on God. A. Kinna read an article from "Majapidaja" (The Housekeeper) about a Japanese nature based philosophy regarding the life and development of humans. A. Posti read an article from the "Virulane" about meteorites and the cooling of the earth.* After discussion it was decided that there should be an announcement of the subject of presentations before the meetings and the presentations should not simply be readings from books. H. Kingsep said he would speak at the next lecture evening about criminals and robberies. It was decided to hold the next meeting on January 21, 1911 but there are no minutes for that meeting.

There were presentations and speeches at every meeting after the official part. During the early years (1910-13) there was particular emphasis on issues of an economic nature and many events were organized of which several attracted the whole community. (Appendix #31)

The first two years of activity of the MVES were encouraging. There was a harmony of views and there were proposals and people to carry them out. However, there soon developed a strong tendency toward narrow-minded political party activity on the part of the more active members who were also more experienced and educated. (Appendix #37) There was an increasing amount of socialist propaganda (see Politics) at the Society's meetings. Unfortunately the minutes of 1912 are very cursory and deficient but it is clear that during 1912 there were differences in political opinions in the Society.

* Seem to be two Estonian newspapers or journals (translator's note)

Already in 1913 it appears that people with different political views as well as young people had withdrawn from the activities of the Society. This is shown by Hendrik Kingsep's remark at the annual general meeting in January that: "...the Society should acknowledge its responsibilities and positions clearly and not be dejected or discouraged by the fact that more people do not become members or, more specifically, that all Estonians in the settlement do not become members..."

In 1910 the Society had 26 members with 5-6 members added in the following years. In 1913 there were usually 10 -14 participants. At the family evenings, however, there was enthusiastic participation, even amongst those who had withdrawn from the Society.

The existence of the problems mentioned above could also be seen from the meeting of July 13, 1913 on the basis of J. Wernik's complimentary summary of the achievements of the Estonians in Stettler (J. Wernik was the representative of Medicine Valley at the meeting). After a long discussion, he made the following observation with regard to the planned summer social gathering being: "...that our Society's social aspect is weak since first, there are few of us and second, the organization of the Society's activities have fallen primarily on the older generation, since the younger generation seems less willing to do so."

J. Wernik also thought it relevant to state (at the meeting of August 11, 1912) that "... in our community people live for one association ...and don't wish to join many associations..." There is no explanation of "the many associations".

The activities of the Society in 1913, 1914 and 1915 are characterized by constant aggressive propaganda. The number of active members declined. Only the subject of building a community hall attracted members and outsiders to meetings.

In 1916 there is a complete change in the political aims of the executive (See Politics). Hendrik Kingsep, despite being Vice-President, no longer took an active part in leading the Society and the meetings. In 1917 he was not even part of the executive since during the elections in January he was on a trip to California.

The activities in 1916 for the MVES were in some sense like a rest or transition period. During the nine meetings held in the year, the main topic was the organization of social or family evenings or the analysis of their success. In a period of six months, three social and two family evenings were organized to raise funds for the construction of the community hall. All of them were a success thanks to the energetic organization of J. Mäesep and Sam Kinna's imaginative programs as well as everyone's contribution to the work. J. Mäesep was typical of the Society's "neutrals" since he never took part in the debates involving political themes. From the beginning of the Society he was a loyal participant at meetings and an active member. He was a lifelong director of the social committee as he worked tirelessly and energetically to organize fund raising social evenings for the construction of the community hall and promised to saw all lumber, without pay for the construction of the hall. Unfortunately his "career of service" came

to an end due to a seemingly insignificant misunderstanding regarding the calculation of a social evening's expenses. He angrily left the Society at the very meeting (November 11, 1917) where the discussions on his wish for the construction of the community hall were coming to a conclusion.

Already at the beginning of 1917 there appeared to be signs of renewed faith in working together within the families of Estonian settlers. Participation in meetings increased, members who had left the Society joined again and new members also joined. At the annual general meeting of January 14, 1917, 15 people were in attendance. Former members, Paul Langer, Jaan Vares, Liidia Langer, Marie Moro and Lilli Moos, joined again. On February 11th Hugo Posti, August Matteus and Amanda Moro joined as new members.

Six meetings were held during the year (until November 11) and the last three were devoted almost exclusively to the construction of the community hall. (Appendix #29) Exchanges again became very fierce with mutual mistrust being evident. A decision was made to create a joint stock company for the construction of the community hall. However, when it came time for most decisive step – donation of money – it became clear that many people's true "spirit of sacrifice" had faded.

The written history of the MVES breaks off with the minutes of November 11, 1917. This blank period lasted until 1932.

The only time in this period that the full membership list is shown is in the minutes of the annual general meeting of January 11, 1915.

Members who have paid their membership fees in full:

- | | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| 1) Hendrik Kingsep | 8) Marie Koot | 15) Adam Matteus |
| 2) Emma Kingsep | 9) Jaan Moro | 16) August Posti |
| 3) Frits Kinna | 10) Karl Moro | 17) Miili Posti |
| 4) Hendrik Kinna | 11) Peter Moro | 18) Jaan Rääbis |
| 5) Juhan Kinna | 12) Gustav Mõttus | 19) Jaan Tomingas |
| 6) Sam Kinna | 13) Alex Mõttus | 20) Emma Tomingas |
| 7) Peter Koot | 14) Juhan Mäesep | 21) Gustav Wall |

Fees not paid in 1914: 22) Peeter Herman, 23) Marie Herman, 24) Jaan Wernik,

25) Hugo Mõttus (for two years)

One of the most important tasks of the Society was to establish a mother-tongue library. In the early years hardly a meeting went by where this was not discussed. The librarian and his assistant, brothers Sam and Henri Kinna were elected to the first executive. They remained in their positions continuously for two decades. Both brothers had received, what was considered, a good education at the time in Estonia and spoke Russian and German fluently. Sam also spoke Finnish. They were the right men at the

right place with respect to the Society's library. They also possessed their own well-stocked multilingual library. (Appendix 16)

A. Posti as early as the third meeting the Society (June 6, 1910) raises the idea of creating a library and wished to subscribe the magazines "Põllutööleht" (Agricultural Journal) and "Näitelava" (Theatre Stage). Henri Kinna thinks: "...at first books with scientific and educational content should be ordered and books of fiction should be emphasized less". H. Kingsep suggests first collecting books from people which they are willing to let the Society use and find out what books other Estonian societies possess so they could be exchanged. He also suggested seeking advice from librarians in Estonia. However, the idea to exchange books with other Estonian societies was dropped since the mailing charges proved to be high. (July 3, 1910) At the first general meeting (January 8, 1911) the librarian's report revealed that the Society had 73 purchased and 9 donated books for a total of 82. At the same meeting it was decided to organize a group book binding session at S. Kinna's home on January 12th. There was also discussion of rules for lending books. On Frits Kinna's proposal (8 for, 5 against) it was agreed to lend books to outsiders for a deposit of ten percent of a book's price. (H. Kingsep's proposal)

The list of books of the MVES library has been preserved. (Appendix #4) Unfortunately the list does not indicate when the books were acquired or the number of books at the beginning of a given year. According to the inventory contained in the 1914 report (meeting of January 11, 1915) the library expenditures had been:

1910	\$18.10
1912	\$23.16
1914	\$18.10

Total \$59.36

Librarian's report: 244 bound volumes.

At the meeting of October 27, 1963 a committee was elected for the complete organization of the library. This gave the following results:

Books in the 1963 list	454
Lost books	191
Books in the library but not on the list	56
Various journals	13

A new list was drawn up and a copy sent for the information of the Estonian Central Archives in Toronto.

The Society had its own stamp. J. Wernik had come up with the idea (November 6, 1910). He and S. Kinna were elected to work out a design for the stamp which was made by G. Wall for a fee of \$1.00. (March 12, 1910) The stamp was donated to the Red Deer District Museum in Red Deer in 1994.

MVES Relations with other Estonian Organizations in Alberta

The first contacts were established with the Estonians in Stettler from the beginning of the Sylvan Lake settlement. This contact was maintained and developed later with visits between the two settlements and guest performances at summer socials. The MVES and the "Linda" Society also exchanged books and written plays. Later on many of the young people exchanged marriage vows.

Medicine Valley	Stettler
Hugo Mottus	Liisa Tipman
Oskar Moro	Tipman
Anna Posti	Johannes Tipman

During the same period school teachers from Stettler taught at the Estonian School (Ed Tipman) and in Eckville (Ado Tipman).

The more active Estonians from Sylvan Lake were members of the MVES. G. Wall made the Society's stamp. Many of them are buried in the Gilby Cemetery.

On trips to Red Deer, which by horse and wagon took two days, the Medicine Valley Estonians stopped for the night at the homes of friends and relatives in Sylvan Lake where Tiina Kingsep's home was particularly appreciated. Tiina and Kristjan's son, Lembit Kingsep, settled to farm in Medicine Valley in the 1920s. He left in the spring of 1966 as a pensioner.

In the early period there did not seem to be much direct contact with southern Alberta i.e. the Estonians in Lethbridge and Barons. The distance was too great and travel too slow. The only exceptions to this were the workers on the railway. This is how Frits Kinna went looking for a bride in Lethbridge. In the minutes there are entries that invitations to socials have been sent to Lethbridge. In the later period, the personal contacts became quite close. During that time there were many young men from Estonia moving around Alberta looking for work. Many of the young men who had worked on the Estonian prairie farms in Barons later became independent farmers in the Medicine Valley Estonian settlement. (Appendix #33)

Choir and music ensemble

Early period

Even several years before the establishment of the MVES (1910), there was an active choir and music ensemble in the Estonian settlement, although they were not formal organizations. They joined the MVES and handed over \$14.00 which had been collected for the purchase of a cello. The MVES decided to contribute an additional \$10.00 for the purpose (June 5, 1910).

The Estonian settlement never set itself off as a separate entity from the surrounding multi-ethnic community. The Estonians were more likely leaders and initiators of community events. They organized their own choir and music ensemble early on (1906-08) and performed often, primarily at the region's Finnish social gatherings. The Estonian dance band, made up of the younger members of the music ensemble, was well known and popular in the community.

The soul and tireless leader of the choir for many years was Hendrik Kingsep. (See Appendix #30) He always had his violin with him and never missed an opportunity for a sing-song or a choir practice. The latter were organized, if possible, every two weeks. (See Appendix #27) The long time leader of the music ensemble was Artur Kinna. The group was initially composed of: Artur Kinna (violin), Hendrik Kingsep (violin), Frits Kinna (piano, cello) and J. Wernik (flute). The musicians all also belonged to the choir. H. Kingsep did not join the group when it played at dances. In 1910, for example, the group played in Bentley, Eckville, Evart and Hyväse halls, the school house and socialist hall. The development of song and music was greatly facilitated by the fact that many of the families in the settlement were very musical and they had transmitted the talent to their children. The Kinna family was an example of this where the head of the family, Juhan, had been a clarinet player in an orchestra in Estonia. He did not play here since he did not have a clarinet. Frits played the piano and later learned the cello which he played even better. (See Appendix #45)

The choir, music ensemble and theatre group travelled to Stettler to put on guest performances in the Linda Hall. The Linda Society in turn paid visits to Medicine Valley. (See photos from 1921) In 1915 and 1916 when Hendrik Kingsep was involved in political campaigning, Artur Kinna became leader of the choir and music ensemble. (Minutes of December 12, 1915)

The accounts contained in the 1914 report of the Society (meeting of January 11, 1915) showed

"Expenditures on music"		"Income from performances"	
1910 - Cello	\$25.00	1910	\$6
notes	\$6.00	<u>1911</u>	<u>\$3</u>
		Total	\$9
1911 – musical instruments	\$10.55		
notes	\$4.00		
<u>cello bag</u>	<u>\$1.80</u>		
Total	\$ 47.35		

Enterprises

Despite the fact that according to the Society's constitution its main objectives were recreational and cultural, as the only organization in the Estonian settlement, economic problems were regularly on the agenda of meetings.

The idea of a mutual fire insurance association was raised already at the founding meeting of the MVES on January 24, 1910. At the same meeting a committee was

elected to draft a constitution: Jaan Teener, H. Kingsep, Karl Moro and A. Posti. The committee presented a draft constitution at the next meeting of the Society (May 9), where it was discussed but no definite decision taken. According to the minutes, the following principles were under debate:

Should payment be made through work or cash? It was decided that that insurance should be paid in cash.

To obtain the money each insured party must present the bill of exchange for the amount which represents his part of the deposit. The bill will be held in the accounts or the bank until it is needed, i.e. when an accident occurs.

Should the association accumulate capital, for example through annual fees?

The claim for insurance should be in line with the value and contents.

The insurance agreement is for a period of three years.

The value of the insurance should be for one-half the total value.

Insurance against prairie fires may also be covered but the applicant for insurance must use means of fire protection determined by the commission.

The constitution was adopted on July 3, 1910 in the form presented by H. Kingsep. Anyone outside the MVES would not be accepted as a member and operating expenses were to be covered by a standard annual fee. Unfortunately, there is no trace of the text of the constitution.

Joint sale of animals (Cooperatives). As early as at a meeting of June 5, 1910 H. Kingsep suggests the joint sale of animals (oxen) to increase income. At a meeting of September 4th, it is reported that the seven members of the Society together would have ten oxen, two heifers and five cows for sale. It was decided to ask the Red Deer farmers union the price of animals and about the conditions for the joint sale of animals. The response was read on May 11, 1912. A joint sale of oxen took place in the spring of 1912 with five men having 19 oxen weighing a total of 25,035 pounds for a value of \$1,661.05. Another joint sale was organized in March 1916 by Frits Kinna.

On March 16, 1916 Mr. Logan made a guest presentation at the Society's meeting on fattening baby beef.

Acquisition of a purebred bull. At the meeting of May 9, 1915 Adam Matteus raises the question of acquiring a purebred bull with the support or through the government. The Finns had been successful in doing so. It was left to Frits Kinna to get more information. At the meeting of November 12th of the same year, F. Kinna presents the detailed guidelines of the Dominion Government. The establishment of a formal association is required with at least ten members. The bull is provided free of charge. The care of the

bull becomes the responsibility of the executive and there is a membership fee of \$1.00 a year for treatment of the bull etc. A discussion followed about the breed of bull. Since few members were present it was decided to call a meeting outside the Society to determine how much interest there was in the wider community.

Butter factory. The first time the possibility of producing butter in common was raised by H. Kingsep at a meeting on June 5, 1910. At the next meeting on July 3rd a decision is made to examine in detail the question of building a creamery and Sam Kinna was to prepare an estimate of costs for the next meeting. Subsequently there were lengthy arguments at the meeting of August 7, 1910. H. Kinna was of the opinion that there is less work with beef cattle and there is not much difference in revenue. There were others in favour of a creamery. The cost of setting one up was calculated to be \$600. Discussions continued on September 4th when H. Kingsep presented statistics from the government on the average revenue from a dairy cow. A. Posti provided data on his sale of butter from nine cows. Surprisingly, the average amount of revenue from each dairy cow per year is exactly the same, \$30. H. Kingsep also presented information on his dairy herd for 1906, 1907 and 1908 and put particular emphasis on the expenses paid to the dairy (a total of \$111.85 over three years). The meeting was unable to come to decision on whether "... to set up a butter factory as a business or at home first." At the meeting of October 2, 1910 Sam Kinna also provided data on the amount of revenue from his dairy herd for a period of four years (1906-09) during which he received a yearly average of \$27.71 per cow. The meeting found that establishment of a creamery ("butter factory") was too costly (on the basis of data received from the government) and decided to drop the question from the agenda "for the time being".

Grain cleaning machine. On December 4, 1910 August Posti raised the idea of buying a grain cleaning machine jointly and a group of participants was formed at the same meeting: Peeter Koot, Karl Moro, Karl Anton, H. Kingsep, J. Kinna, A. Posti, H. Kinna, and J. Wernik. K. Anton and G. Wall were given the responsibility of looking into the price and choice of a machine.

Threshing machine co-operative. The founding meeting was held at the home of H. Kinna on September 24, 1911, a decision to buy a machine (with a gasoline motor) was made on October 1st and by October 7th the machine was already in operation. The cost of the machine was \$1,985 and of the separator \$1,040. On December 10, 1911 there was already a discussion of a report on the fall threshing. The 1912 fall meeting took place at the home of Mart Sestrap (information from the diary of August Posti).

The idea of establishing a **loan and savings co-operative** was raised by Sam Kinna on May 14, 1911 when he asked about making loans and the expediency of doing so. He thought it desirable if the Society could be similar to an intermediary to assist loan applicants. At the same meeting the participants from Oja gave a lengthy explanation of the activities and utility of loan and savings co-operatives in Estonia. At the next meeting (July 9, 1911) Sam Kinna gave a more complete presentation on loan and savings co-operatives and he was assigned the task of drawing up a draft constitution. On August 13th it appears that S. Kinna presented a constitution for a loan and savings

co-operative. Three individuals agreed to act as shareholders and to put up their property as guarantee: H. Kingsep, S. Kinna and (?). On March 10, 1912, a new committee was elected to set up the loan and savings co-operative – J. Wernik (drafted the final constitution), P. Koot and H. Kingsep.

On August 11, 1912 (item 8) H. Kinna presents the report of the Loan and Savings Co-operative and states that funds are available but no one has applied for a loan. At the meeting of November 11, 1912 there is a question as to whether the Co-operative is alive or dead. The business director, H. Kinna, certifies the Co-operative to be capable of carrying on activities. Since the by-laws of the Co-operative prohibit the discussion of its internal matters at a public meeting (February 8, 1914) there is no overview of its actual activities.

From the above it may be concluded that the Co-operative was intended only for the members of the MVES.

The creation of an **economic co-operative** was raised by H. Kingsep at the Society's meeting of April 9, 1911. The Co-op was then established in 1912 in Eckville with Frits Kinna elected as Chairman of the Board. The Society placed the little funds it had (\$49) in the Co-op. There are frequent discussions of the latter's activities at the Society's meetings. (April 10, 1913, March 1914, July 11, 1915, February 13, 1916) (Appendix #31)

The idea of ordering binder twine jointly was raised on August 1, 1912 and Hendrik Kingsep took it upon himself to get the necessary information.

Establishment of a Farmers Association (UFA or United Farmers of Alberta).

At the meeting of September 4, 1910, the idea was raised to create a Gilby branch of the Farmers Co-operative (association V.M.) and write to Mr. Carswell about the idea. At the meeting of October 2, 1910 the majority was in favour of the idea of establishing Gilby's own farmers' association. On November 6 the secretary was given the task of publicizing the place and setting the time of the meeting to establish the association and to invite a member of from the "Eckville Society" (= co-operative). It was agreed to spend up to \$1.00 for "postal expenses".

The Gilby UFA Local was established in 1911 and it held several meetings in connection with the forthcoming Alberta provincial elections (August Posti's diary and Grant MacEwan "Poking into Politics" Edmonton, 1966, pages 111-12). There are also repeated reminders to members at the Society's meetings about the need to attend UFA meetings (September 2, 1911, February 3, May 4, December 21, 1912).

Hendrik Kingsep played an active leadership role in the UFA Gilby Local. For purposes of comparison it is of interest to see the following recorded in the minutes of the MVES (March 8, 1914): "From the newspaper, *The Guide*, the attention of the Society is directed to: 2) Information that the Linda branch of the UFA(i.e. Stettler Estonian Society, V.M.) posses 400 books and a building."

Installation of telephones. A telephone network was installed in the village of Eckville in 1913. This was a local initiative and the required association was created, the Eckville Mutual Telephone Association. The Eckville central station was connected through the Red Deer central station to the provincial government telephone system. At the MVES meeting of April 13, 1913 (item 7 in the minutes) Henri Kinna explained the “installation contract” to the participants and found it to be unfair.

However, in the next two or three years, the conditions in the “contract” must have become more favourable or the need for telephones greater since at the MVES meeting of June 11, 1916 Frits Kinna states that a meeting has been held which supported the installation of telephones on farms. A committee, of which he was a member, was formed to explore the possibilities in greater detail. He encouraged people to participate actively in the undertaking.

In 1917 the first rural line was built northward through the Estonian settlement up to the property of Hugo Mõttus. Frits Kinna, Karl Langer, Paul Langer, Henri Kingsep, Juhon Moro, Henri and Sam Kinna, Adam Matteus, Jaan Teener, Mart Sestrap and Hugo Mõttus were connected to the line. The only non-Estonian member was C. Kasper.

Since the line had to be built and subsequently completely maintained through resources and expenditures provide by individuals themselves (an average of one mile per farm), a board was set up with Frits Kinna as chairman and Paul Langer and C. Kasper as members. The membership fee was \$10. (Information in part from Frits Kinna)

Note: While the number of rural lines has grown probably to ten (1965), the system is still built and maintained on the same basis as in 1917.

Beginning on March 1, 1967 the provincial government of Alberta will takeover the whole network and replace all lines with underground cables. V. Matiisen.

Appendix #32

Departures from Medicine Valley to Russia in 1923

List of Estonians

A – Individuals Returning to Eckville in 1-3 years

- | | | |
|-----------------|---------------------|--|
| 1) August Posti | left alone | Older son Hugo stayed to replace his father i.e. as head of the household. Father returned at the end of September 1924. |
| 2) Paul Mõttus | left alone bachelor | now lives on the edge of Medicine Valley with his sister |

3) Henri Kinna bachelor brother Sam sent him a return ticket

B- Individuals who left and stayed

4) Jaan Moro left alone, leaving wife, Katti, in Eckville Katti later lived with her brother Paul Mõttus

5) Henri Moro left with his family, wife Anna, 3 sons and 2 daughters

6) Peeter Koot left with his family, wife Marie and 3 daughters

From Sylvan Lake

7) Peeter Herman – settled in Medicine Valley after returning

8) Jaan Smith (Smitt) – left from southern Alberta for Russia, returned in 1927 and started farming in Medicine Valley. He bought two quarters, R-3, Tw 40. Sc 6, SW and SW. He sold his land after World War II and now lives in Calgary.

The settlers who left departed from Eckville on the CPR on March 1, 1923 were Paul Mõttus, Jaan and Henri Moro, and Peeter Koot; they were joined by Peeter Herman from Sylvan Lake. Later in October, August Posti and Hendrik Kinna also left. (Reference 21 and 11, Appendix #37)

Frits Kinna’s story: In Medicine Valley the idea to resettle in Russia was started by Hendrik Kingsep who was energetic in promoting the project. Resettlement took place at one’s own expense and huge sums of money were taken along. Everyone left together from the Eckville CPR station. In New York they joined the American Estonians leaving to resettle. They also bought machinery and tractors in New York to take along. The name of the commune was “Koit” (Dawn) which was later changed to “Krasnaja Zarjaa”. People stayed for 1-3 years. Henri Kinna was the treasurer and interpreter for the group and the collective farm. Henri, it seems, returned after a couple of years with Jaan Smitt. August Posti, it seems, came back a year earlier. Henri’s return ticket and the security for Canadian authorities were provided by his brother Sam.

Lembit Kingsep’s story: The resettlement to Russia took place in the early spring of 1923, a few days after the Co-op’s annual general meeting. Several of the resettlers spoke at the meeting. (Jaan and Henri Moro, Peeter Koot) They were convinced that the collective farm in Russia had a promising future. In addition to a \$500

deposit and the price of the ticket, they placed all of their money earned from the sale of land and possessions in the future collective farm. "To build a strong collective farm" (Jaan Moro's expression). I (V.M.) asked why August Posti would leave for Russia alone. Based on available information (his accounts and diary) he was quite well off and a keen participant in community work. Lembit's answer was that August apparently was not very happy with his family life; his wife, Miili, governed and commanded at home. I remember that it was harvesting time when August returned from Russia. I happened to be at the railway station. Since no one was there to meet him, I gave him a ride to his farm. When he stepped into the house he found no one there. His son Hugo arrived later and his first question (in an unfriendly tone) was: "Well, how did you like it?" The same scene was repeated when his wife came into the house.

Jaan Koot: The auction of Peeter Koot's possessions was held on February 22, 1923 and the resettlers departed together for New York from the CPR railway station in Eckville on February 28, 1923.

From August Posti's accounts (Reference #11) it appears that he went to Calgary on July 4th (\$5.20), bought a fountain pen (\$1.00), pictures (50 cents), made a deposit of \$5.14, bought a ticket for \$226 and on July 29, paid \$2.00 for a passport. That was the last entry in the accounts until January 1925. Hugo (the older son) took over his father's duties in 1924. Hugo kept his own accounts (Reference # 13). They contain the following entry on January 24, 1924: "Ticket Moscow-Eckville sent to dad with Anna's money, \$151". These accounts come to an end on September 25, 1924. The father, August Posti, must have been back by then. (See Appendix #32)

Henri Posti's explanation: In order for father to be able to come back, Hugo had to provide security. Father waited six months in Moscow. The Estonian collective farm "Koit" (Dawn) was located in Rostov-on-Don.

Juhan Pihooja: The Koit collective farm was in the region of Kubanskaja.

Appendix #37

Organization of land in Western Canada

Prairie Provinces

Extracts

Grant MacEwan*, "Between the Red and the Rockies"

"The township plan of survey was adopted 1871...Townships would be six miles square and comprise 36 sq. sections of 640 acres per section. The international boundary commission established the boundary at latitude 49° and principal meridian lines were extended northward. Tiers of townships were numbered from the base line northward and ranges of townships were numbered from one meridian westward to the next.** Time confirmed the appropriateness of the system".

"The Land Act, providing for homesteading in the Northwest came in 1872. It was a spark that set the prairies afire. The head of a family or any person 21 years of age or over could make entry for a quarter section farm on even-numbered sections. The fee was 10 dollars and title could be obtained after three years provided proof was furnished of occupancy and certain specified improvements. A homesteader might add to his holding by pre-empting or buying another quarter section of crown land at a price about \$ 2.00 - # 2.50 per acre."

"The Canadian Pacific Syndicate received its charter in 1881 and agreed to complete a transcontinental railroad in ten years. By the terms of the contract, the company was to be granted 25,000,000 acres of prairie land, \$ 25,000,000 in cash and the ? miles of railroad that the government had already built. Other concessions included exemptions from land tax for 20 years and freedom from import duties on materials for construction".

"Calgary was on the railroad by 1883.... The Calgary - Edmonton line was built in 1890 - 1891. The Crow's Nest Pass Railway was built in 1897.

* Grant MacEwan was born in Brandon, Manitoba; studied agriculture in Ontario, taught university for 18 years in Saskatchewan and was Dean of the Department of Agriculture for six years at the University of Manitoba. He has lived in Alberta since 1953, was a city councillor in Calgary and later mayor. From this position he was appointed Lieutenant-Governor of Alberta in 1965. He was a very prolific writer and recognized as an author on agricultural and historical issues. Red here means Red River. V.M.

** The Medicine Valley Estonian settlement location is: Range 3, townships 38, 39, 40, 41 and Range 4 townships 39, 40, (41); all west of the 5th meridian. The Sylvan Lake Estonian settlement covered: Range 1, township 39 west of the 5th meridian and Range 28 township 39 west of the 4th meridian.

Regulations for ownership of homestead

Settling on a homestead was actually simple and financially within the means of settlers. (Appendix #27) However, the process of becoming owner of a homestead at the beginning of the 1900s for the Medicine Valley Estonians was quite complicated and lengthy given their lack of knowledge of English. At the time, the province of Alberta did not yet exist since it was created only in 1905. The Crown land in the area was governed by Ottawa (Department of the Interior, Dominion Lands Office). There was only a government agent in Red Deer. (35 miles away) An applicant for land had to go in person to the agent's office and pay an administrative fee (\$10.00) to obtain an Interim Homestead Receipt from the agent. This was a permit to settle on the land called a

Homestead Entry. The document showed the location (number) of the land (the quarter) and a notice printed in red that the right to the minerals on the surface or in the ground belong to His Majesty. Once a settler had actually lived on the land and over a three year period cultivated 15 acres of new land, he could apply to become owner of the land. It was necessary to send a written application well ahead of time (six months) to Ottawa to obtain a title or patent. After examining the conditions on site, the local agent sent his recommendation to Ottawa for certification. Ottawa, on this basis, sent a Certificate of recommendation to the settler and issued a patent which was sent to Edmonton (Land Registration District of North Alberta) for registration. The settler had to present a written application and pay the required fees to obtain a transcript or copy of the land title.

This is the process followed by August Posti whose documents listed above and correspondence have been preserved. Since he was the first Estonian in Medicine Valley to obtain a Homestead Entry, the process took him five years and 9 months.