

## Amo's Blacksmith Shop

## A VANTAGE POINTS FLASHBACK

It's no place for fancy clothes, that's for sure. Everything we touch, and the air itself, is thick with dust. And yet, we seem to attract the whole community. Busy place.

My husband Ren Amos built Waskada's first blacksmith shop in 1899. He and a couple buddies built a basic shed in two days. The need, at the time, was mostly for horseshoes and plowshares. It was wide open prairie then! When the CPR announced they were coming through town with a rail line, we jumped at the opportunity. We already had a shop on the farm, but we figured we'd get a lot more business in the new village. Two years later we built a house two doors down, and never did go back to the farm.



*The Blacksmith Shop is now part of the Waskada Museum*

Saturdays are our busiest days. Everybody's in town. But, we've no time to shoot the breeze. We don't always need the people. But we do need their problems. I'm Geralda, Ren's faithful helper. He makes the metal magic. But try to imagine a day when I don't show up. Ren's forge needs air blown in to create enough heat to melt metal. It's 1920, so we don't have electricity. I'm needed to crank the fan that pushes air into Ren's forge. I spend a lot of time here.

Ya, know. Even this smelly, smokey, noisy, gritty place has its charm. Right now, I can see Ren plunging red-hot horseshoes into a bucket of water. A cloud of steam rises. He wipes the sweat from his brow. With a shirt sleeve that was clean this morning. Honest. In winter, I see massive horses stomping in. Frosty, glistening silhouettes, darkening the open door. Our kids

are growing up in this shop, as much as at home. I have memories of the older ones sweeping and cranking, and also entertaining the farm kids that come in with their Dads. Children are just expected to help. So they do. We have 12 children so far! The building's not so special perhaps. But the moments sure are.

Back when the whole village was wet behind the ears, the field work was done with oxen and horses. But these days, that's changing, as steam and gasoline engines take over. Our business needs to change as well. We do a lot less shoeing of horses and much more making and repairing parts for machinery. You see, we can't wait for parts to be sent out. Farmers need to get back out there. And quickly! The machines are simple enough. So we just make parts.

Through the change, our business isn't missing a beat. In fact, we're getting busier. The shop has been good to us. At some point we'll want to slow down. There'll likely be new businesses here offering parts for fancy new machinery. So our services and skills will just not be needed. Oh well, we've done well for the time we're in.

One day we'll walk away from the business. Leave our out-dated tools behind. The Waskada Museum Committee can take it all, set the place up as if we're coming back in the morning. That's a happy thought to go out on.

*Amos's Blacksmith was adapted from a story in Vantage Points 4.*

*Vantage Points Flashbacks were written by David Neufeld with help from Betty Sawatzky. They were originally aired on CJRB Radio out of Boissevain, Manitoba in the early 2020s.*