

Before photography became a do-it-yourself thing, most towns had a photo studio. The record they left behind is invaluable!

Take a look at the inscription on the photo below of the Waskada Railway Station. It reads: *Winnipeg Photo Company, Napinka*. One finds that notation on many old photos from the region. In the early 1900s Napinka had a photo studio. As most towns did.

Technology has always had a tendency to eliminate jobs, when labor-saving machinery, as the term implies, reduces the need for ... labor. Other businesses fade away when technology gives people the tools to do previously highly specialized tasks.

Once settlers got established and their basic food and shelter needs were met, they went looking for less essential amenities, like family portraits. Every town used to have a photographer or two. Cameras were expensive and required training.

Here are two excerpts from the Deloraine history book...

*"...1893 - George Davidson, Photographer, has overhauled and refilled his showcase with farm and threshing scenes, which gives it a very attractive appearance."*

and here's another....

*"... A woman next door, Carrie Jenkins, has an equally fascinating occupation. She is a photographer, in fact, she is the photographer for Deloraine. Inside her small shop next to the Jubilee theatre, the smell of chemicals used in photo processing is pervasive. And as a side note, her father operated the first movie in town."*

Changes in the photography industry started when the Kodak Brownie, an affordable and easy-to use camera, was introduced in 1900. There was still a need for a professional photographer, but the business changed. Those Brownie snapshots still had to be developed. Photographers could branch out into retail, while there was still a demand for formal high-quality portraits and commercial work.

The end result was that a photography business could still be viable in larger centres such as Boissevain, until improved transportation links,

especially cars and roads, made it easier for shoppers to find better deals and selection in the cities, most often Brandon.

One sideline that helped out was the growing popularity of postcards. Local photographers produced hundreds of varieties featuring sites of interest in the community. Thankfully many of these have survived.

*Small Town Photo Studio was taken from the latest book of Vantage Points in this 6-book series where we share history from the southwest corner of the province. Visit [www.vantagepoints.ca](http://www.vantagepoints.ca) for more wonderful stories in the Vantage Points series.*

*On behalf of the Turtle Mountain Souris Plains Heritage Association, I'm Betty Sawatzky.*

See ya' later!

