CHALLENGING FRONTIERS

THE CANADIAN WEST

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PRAIRIE GRAIN ELEVATORS:

An Old Purpose in Search of a New Form

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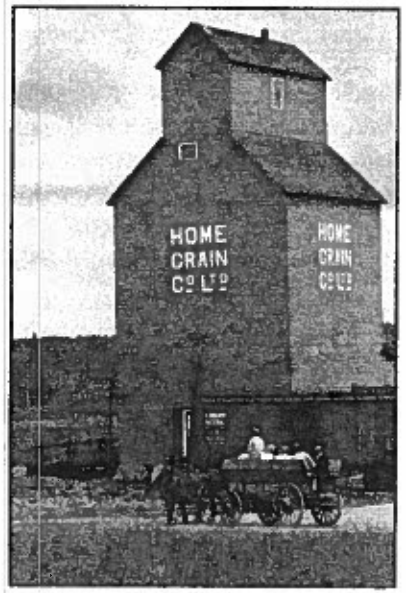
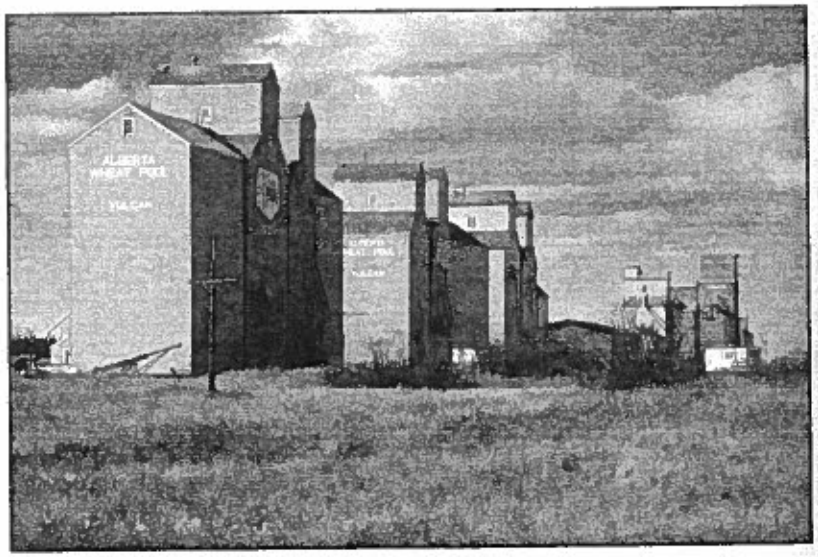
When most people think of grain elevators, they think of what is known as the standard type – a tall, slope-shouldered form that until recently was a ubiquitous feature of nearly every prairie town of substance.



11: Home Grain Co. Ltd. Standard wooden grain elevator common throughout western Canada from 1920s onward. Provincial Archives of Alberta 9548/8719254.

In the little more than one hundred years since the Prairies have been settled by those of European extraction, the standard grain elevator, perhaps more than any other building type, has become emblematic of the presence of settler culture in the Canadian West. Symbolic of both rural agriculture and town life, grain elevators, with their characteristic vertical profile and sloping shoulders, testify to the peaceful settlement of the agricultural hinterland. And yet the grain elevators that punctuate the Prairies are rapidly disappearing; one age has passed, and another,

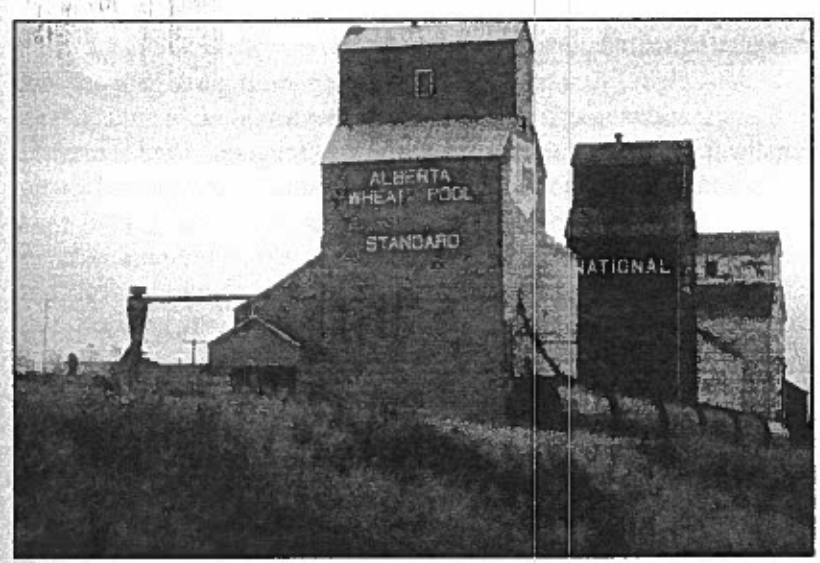


12: Vulcan, Alberta, which once boasted the greatest number of elevators in southern Alberta. Author, November 1995.

much more uncertain but certainly dynamic, follows on its heels. How did grain elevators achieve the status of icons? Can they be considered beautiful? Why should anyone care if a particular type of grain elevator disappears? What will replace them?

THE DEVELOPMENT OF GRAIN ELEVATORS

In answering such questions, it is important to consider not only the technical and historical aspects of grain elevators, but also their social and aesthetic connotations. Even though grain elevators started as quintessentially pragmatic solutions to a specific engineering problem, now that they have been here for a while people have become attached to them. Grain elevators are now seen by many as romantic icons that reinforce the mythology of prairie settlement. To many people, prairie grain elevators are much more than technical solutions: they are objects of beauty, even of sublimity. Their aesthetic value consists of the sudden, even breathtaking suddenness with which they are encountered by the traveller as vertical objects in a predominantly flat prairie landscape. And they have social connotations because the elevators seem to symbolize a peaceful cohabitation with the prairie, a way of marking human presence and harmony with nature. Seen in this light, the attempts to preserve traditional grain elevators in western Canada pit



13: Primary grain elevators, Standard, Alberta. Most of these have been demolished. Author, November 1995.

hard-nosed pragmatists against dewy-eyed romantics. Pragmatists have always won out, and, it seems, will continue to do so. Some might say that the decline of the primary elevator system on the Prairies testifies to the uncertainty regarding whether people can continue to flourish on the Prairies. On the other hand, this might also be seen as overly negative: had the elevators not evolved, the Canadian grain companies would have certainly gone under. According to Blair Rutter, manager of policy development of Agricore United, the last decade alone has seen nearly half a billion dollars reinvested in the primary elevator system.[2] This surely testifies to an ongoing commitment to agriculture on the Prairies.

Whether grain elevators are architecture, or merely technical ingenuity at work, is another question worth considering. The answer depends largely on how one defines architecture. For some, grain elevators are not architecture because they are too ordinary and vernacular. In recent years, however, ordinary buildings have been attracting more attention by historians of architecture and society. In the words of Peter Nabokov and Robert Easton, authors of *Native American Architecture*, "the term 'architecture' refers to more than just the design and decoration of buildings. It embraces what happens whenever human thought or action makes order and meaning of random space: naming places

designating sacred parts of 'wilderness,' clearing village areas and garden plots, claiming food-gathering areas, planning and constructing buildings, and arranging the spaces that surround and connect them. Finally, it includes often unseen social and religious meanings which are encoded into buildings and spatial domains" (Nabokov and Easton 1989, 11). This broad definition is a useful means of defining grain elevators as architecture, and it is the point of view that is followed here.

How did grain elevators develop? Although grain has been grown and shipped for thousands of years, until the mid-nineteenth century, grain was loaded in sacks. This was labour-intensive and time-consuming. It took nineteenth-century American ingenuity to transform the way it was handled. Two innovations transformed all of that: the continuous belt elevating system, which takes advantage of gravity; and the cribbed storage system. Who devised this continuous elevation system? No one knows for certain, but it is generally accepted that the elevating leg was first used during the 1840s in American Great Lakes cities – to unload grain from barges. Gradually, the potential for its use in land-based storage systems was realized, and the first grain elevators were built.

These elevators were tall in order to take advantage of the way that grain behaves as a bulk commodity – like a liquid. The anonymous inventors of the grain elevators reasoned that if they could devise a way to elevate the grain, they could make gravity work for them. To do this, the grain was dropped into a receiving pit, from which a continuous belt elevator with buckets on it scooped up the grain, elevated it to the top of the elevator, and then let it fall into separate storage compartments known as cribs. The beauty of the system was that the grain did not have to be shovelled by hand. To ship the grain out, it was simply returned to the pit, re-elevated, then routed to a shipping arm, directly into rail cars or ships. When small motors were developed, all the essential characteristics of the grain elevator were in place.

The separate storage compartments, or cribs, found in all grain elevators are their second major technical feature. Conventional stud-wall construction could not stand up to the immense lateral forces exerted by the flowing grain. Cribbing – which consists of dimensioned boards laid on top of each other and spiked to the one underneath – solved the problem. Each batch of grain was stored in its own compartment, which also made it easier to store; sometimes quite different grains were stored in adjacent cribs. And so this is why most grain elevators were tall, square in plan, and contained cribbed storage areas. Under the

pitched roof, movable spouts could direct the grain either into cribs to a shipping spout. Grain elevators were technically superior to co ventional warehouses, with their heavy timber-frame walls, horizont iron banding, and tie-rods.

Very quickly, standard types of grain elevators developed, most them sharing the following features:

- driveway and receiving scale;
- grain pits;
- elevator leg (vertical bucket system for grain elevation and rotation);
- distributing spout(s) – (at first a single, fixed spout, and eventually a multi-head type);
- spouts to bins;
- bins for storage;
- external loading spout to box car, barge, or truck;
- internal loading spout to truck (under driveway);
- scale hopper;
- shipping scale;
- grain cleaner;
- spout from cleaner to scale;
- leg drive motor (originally in base of elevator; in more recent examples, at top);
- "man-lift" (that is, a small elevator) and other devices enabling servicing;
- horizontal conveyors (in the case of elevators with annexes);
- office.

All elevators, large or small, exhibit some combination of these feature Remarkably, while the capacity of grain elevators has increased mar edly over the years, and although different materials and constructio techniques are now used, the essential characteristics of the prair grain elevator remained virtually unchanged until very recently.

The railroad companies exerted a large influence on the for and capacity of early prairie grain elevators (Clark 1916). The fir Canadian prairie grain elevators were constructed during the 187 and 1880s, shortly after the national railway was completed. Rail co panies typically owned the rights-of-way beside the track, and made

advantageous for entrepreneurs who built elevators of a standard type. The only variable feature in these early elevators was the roof-type: some featured a prominent gable roof, while others, particularly in early years, featured a hipped or pyramidal roof. Eventually the gable-roofed form came to predominate, likely because it involves less complicated rafter framing for the carpenters. These standard country elevators usually had a capacity of twenty-five thousand bushels. By 1910, at the end of a decade of unprecedented immigration, grain elevators dotted the Prairies, located every eight miles or so because farmers were limited as to how far they could travel in a day. Discriminating agricultural settlers in the West soon realized that it was usually better to choose to locate near towns that boasted one or more grain elevators. The elevator at Heritage Park in Calgary, which was built in 1910 and once stood in Shonts, Alberta, is typical of the small-town so-called "standard" or country type. Another good historical example is provided by the former Home elevator at Bellis, Alberta, constructed in 1920, decommissioned in 1975 and moved in 1980 to the Ukrainian Cultural Village east of Edmonton.[3]

The standard elevators may have become ubiquitous on the Prairies, but they were not without technical deficiencies. Although relatively inexpensive and quick to build, wooden grain elevators were particularly susceptible to fire – both because of sparks from machinery, and also because of grain dust. Archives are full of photographs of grain elevator infernos and their aftermath.

If grain survived its sometimes hazardous sojourn in the elevator, its destination was the metropolitan Canadian cities as well as the far-off countries that used Canadian grain. From the points of production and the primary elevators, grain was carried on the national rail lines to port cities on the Great Lakes and the Pacific Ocean. A sophisticated interlocking transportation system of shipping and receiving evolved, from the farm through to ocean-going freighters via what became known as process, transfer, and terminal elevators.[4] Terminal elevators were built beside shipping points along the Great Lakes and in Toronto and Montreal. At first they were constructed in wood, and their form, with gabled roofs, recalled standard elevators, only many times larger. These elevators, too, were subject to the risk of fire; because of this, as well as the inherent limitations of wood for truly monumental-scaled construction, elevator engineers began to employ reinforced concrete and steel construction. Canadian elevators of this type were more commonly constructed in reinforced concrete. These monumental elevators featured rows of cylindrical storage tanks reminiscent of farm silos, but much larger. Grain was moved around in the different tanks by means of a bewildering array of horizontal belts. By the mid-1920s, some huge elevators had been built in all the major lake cities, and in Montreal, Toronto, and Vancouver. These were the kinds of elevators that the German architect Walter Gropius and French architect Le Corbusier so admired and that Le Corbusier eulogized in his 1923 manifesto of modern architecture, *Vers une architecture*. As subsequent historians such as Rayner Banham have realized, Le Corbusier and Gropius knew little about how these concrete giants actually worked. They saw them as works of art, *symbols* of industrial potential. Some of these elevators remain functional even today. The Vancouver terminal of Agricore, the successor to the Alberta Wheat Pool, erected during the 1920s and modified gradually during the years since then, is typical of these concrete giants. (It is now known as the Cascadia Terminal, and is operated as a joint venture between Cargill Ltd. and Agricore.)[5] Although the Cascadia Terminal's operations are now computerized, and the ships and storage capacity much larger than ever before, its essential grain handling characteristics remain the same. Grain still arrives by rail, and is released into pits, is elevated by a belt system (cleaning systems have been continuously improved), placed in bins for storage, and then shipped out to world ports.

The number of Canadian elevators of all types (with the largest category being primary standard elevators) climbed sharply until a peak of nearly six thousand was reached in the late 1920s. Since then, there has been a steady decline, with a steeper reduction in the last decade.[6] Then too, due to shifts in international grain marketing and shipping, the grain elevators on the oceans have become more important than those on the Great Lakes. In 1960, for instance, the ratio between lake and Pacific shipping was about nine to one in favour of the lakes. By 1993–94, the ports of Prince Rupert and Vancouver alone shipped 16,481,000 tons of grain – about 59 per cent of the total. Vancouver led with 43 per cent. By contrast, Thunder Bay was a distant third, with about 10 per cent of total annual shipping. The prairie elevators shipped more grain directly (usually by trucks) than Thunder Bay. The same proportions were evident in the numbers of vessels shipping grain in 1993–94: 620 at the Pacific ports, versus only 82 at Thunder Bay.

To understand how and why the form of grain elevators changed, it might be helpful to envisage the grain shipping system as a kind of continuous narrative, starting with the producer and ending with the ocean liners on the coasts. (Some observers liked to extend the story to include those eventually eating the food products made from Canadian grain.) When the story unfolded as it should, there was a seamless transfer between producer, shipper, and consumer. But a problem arose because the standard primary elevators on the Prairies could not process grain fast enough. Nor could they store much grain if there was a delay in the shipping. The primary prairie grain elevators were perceived as the weak link in the chain.

As before, both rail companies and producers sought rationalized and standardized solutions. After the rail companies began to close branch and spur lines, they became reluctant to schedule stops in tiny prairie towns. They encouraged the grain companies to build larger-capacity elevators in towns served by main rail lines. These main lines accommodated longer trains, and hence the rail companies could ship more grain more quickly and more profitably. And so the rail companies' perception of the speed with which grain could be handled became the main factor driving changes in the form of grain elevators – although it must be noted that the discriminating producer also preferred the faster elevators. It was not just the rail companies that preferred the faster elevators: the entire system was geared to favour a lower cost per unit, so as to lower the cost of grain handled.

Meanwhile, the Canadian grain-handling and marketing system was increasingly affected by international commodity markets, all of which became characterized by razor-thin profit margins. As one author remarked in 1989:

> From the 1960s to the 1980s, Prairie farmers more than doubled their output, although their labour inputs diminished by more than 50 per cent during this period. This productivity improvement came at a high price: many individual farmers bought more land, invested heavily in labour-saving machinery, enlarged the size of their operation, and went deeper into debt. Then came high interest rates, a sharp decline in grain prices, and several years of drought. That put many farmers into serious financial difficulty and forced some of them into bankruptcy. There are fears, today, that many more will be struck down unless grain prices on world markets recover or unless the federal government continues to provide hefty subsidies. (Auer 1989, 1)

Then too, the 1980s witnessed the elimination of the 1897 Crow's Nest Pass Agreement, which had for many years ensured that farmers faced fixed costs for shipping grain to the coast. This was replaced by the *Western Grain Transportation Act* (WGTA), which was implemented in 1984.[7] As if that weren't enough, the emergence of a truly global economy (although some might argue grain producers had for nearly a century been operating in a global economy already) made necessary even more economies of scale.[8] All these factors made it inevitable that the older standard elevators simply could not compete. But what would replace them? There was no clear answer.

Instead of fundamental structural changes, there were continuous refinements to the existing grain elevator types, as well as increasing experimentation with new types. For example, as an interim measure, larger cribbed elevators were constructed. As of 1995, there were fifty-three single elevators with no annexes in Agricore elevators (an annex is simply a storage element in the grain elevator without elevating equipment of its own). These ranged in date from 1906 (Hobbema) to 1988 (Three Cities). In terms of capacities, these elevators range from 40,000 to 220,000 bushels. Sometimes existing elevators were enlarged by constructing steel tank annexes. By 1970, 130,000-bushel elevators had become common. Depending on the needs of the individual station, these might have front and rear, or else just front legs. Double elevating legs were eventually introduced, permitting grain to be received and shipped at the same time.

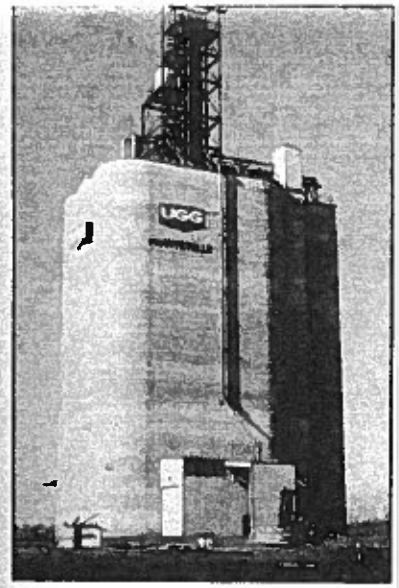
During the 1980s, designers of grain elevators experimented with a number of different forms. Most of these innovations were one-offs, underlining how technically "perfect" (for its time) the standard elevator was. By 1983, for example, elevators with flat roofs were being built. A flat roof gave a stable platform on which the elevator's machinery could be located, rather than inside the building where it had traditionally been situated. This reduced the fire hazard. In these examples, two legs were located at the front as well as front and back legs. Post-1983, there was a move toward what are known as "high through-put" elevators. Elevators

of this type were designed less for storing grain than for simply processing it quickly – up to 60,000 bushels per hour. Machinery became more complex, with a bulk weight scale and all other machinery on the top of the elevator. During the 1980s, two Agricore grain elevators in Bawlf and Bow Island were built with double front and double back legs, flat roof, and very large capacities – 196,000 to 220,000 bushels.

Grain elevators such as these were so much larger than the old 25,000-bushel type that it wasn't really accurate to speak of these any more as being "primary" elevators – except in the sense that they served as the point at which grain was received from the producer. Elevators such as these were clearly designed to receive grain from a much larger area than the old standard grain elevators. Farmers drove large-capacity trucks, not wagons, and driving a relatively longer distance to a newer and faster elevator made more sense than waiting for an older elevator to process grain.

With these new large-capacity elevators being constructed, it was only a matter of time before wood construction became superseded for primary elevators. The last wooden grain elevator in the Agricore elevators at Woodgrove, Alberta, in 1988, had reduced storage capacity (70,000 bushels) but higher-capacity grain-handling abilities. Steel-frame elevators, featuring steel and waffle-wall construction, were built at Etzikom, Valleyview, Vermilion, and Camrose. So were steel tanks or silos, featuring bolted and/or continuous steel-wall construction to form round bins. Most had hopper-bottom tanks to speed up loading. An example is found at Vermilion. Metal hoppers (that is, slanted-bottom storage tanks) and steel beams were used. A single leg was driven from the top of the elevator.

Perhaps even more common than steel was reinforced concrete, of three types: precast, jump form, and slip form. Slip form construction (continuous pouring to form monolithic walls) has been in use since the 1910s, especially for larger terminal elevators. It has been less common in western Canada for primary elevators until economies of scale made its use feasible. Examples of slip form construction, which features continuously poured-in-place concrete walls, are found at Legacy, Lloydminster, Smokey River, Magrath, Dawson Creek, Lloydminster, and Camrose. Precast concrete, manufactured either on or off-site, is common, although not in Alberta. Precast concrete construction was experimented with during the 1970s and 1980s but seems to have become less common since then. Jump form construction is essentially a



14: Former United Grain Growers high-throughput elevator of reinforced concrete construction, Fannystelle, Manitoba. Courtesy of Canadian Grain Commission, Winnipeg.

self-climbing wall system using jump shoes embedded in concrete to raise the walls.[9]

In the case of Agricore, precast concrete elevators have been restricted to ones designed in the late 1970s by an Edmonton-based engineering firm, which gave its name – Buffalo Engineering Limited – to the resulting elevators. The elevators are known as "buffalo slope" elevators. The distinctive sloping-sided roof is both technically and visually characteristic of this form of elevator. Examples are found in Magrath, Fort Saskatchewan, Vegreville, Lyalta, Foremost, and Boyler. By the time of Boyler (a modified buffalo slope elevator), the machinery had become extremely complex. For example, the distributor had thirty outlets. In this example the drive was located on the same side as the rail, thus reversing a practice of eighty years.

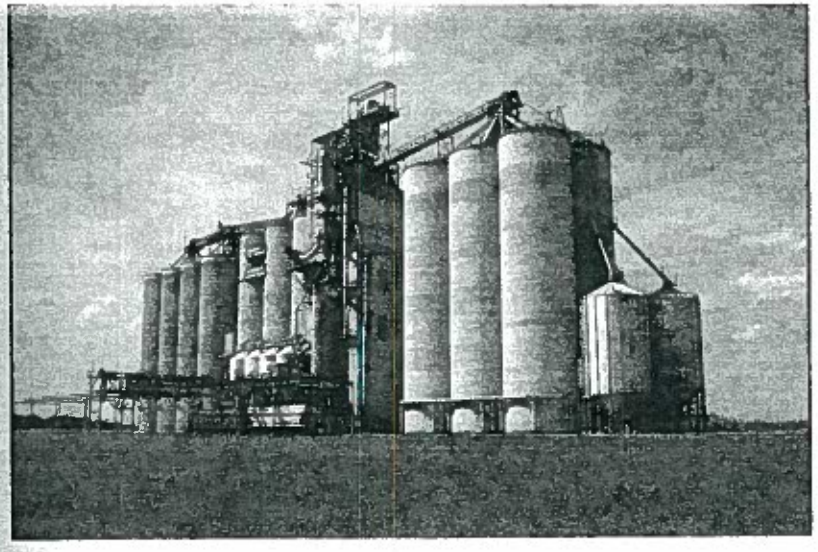
Still, all the tinkering in the world with existing grain elevator types ignored the fact that rail companies were just finding it too slow to bring a few cars into the restricted sidings characteristic of most prairie towns. It became apparent that it was more efficient to build much larger elevators away from existing towns, so that rail sidings could accommodate larger numbers of rail cars. And when the elevators left, the towns have characteristically had difficulty in surviving (although the loss of local schools and places of worship has had an equal bearing). The buffalo slope elevator at Lyalta provides a good example: it is built away from the existing town, out in the middle of nowhere. What it gains in efficiency it loses in social meaning.

Besides the architectural transformation of grain elevators, during the 1970s and 1980s there was also further experimentation in grain storage and delivery. These innovations shared an interest in reducing storage time and increasing the speed with which grain was brought to market.

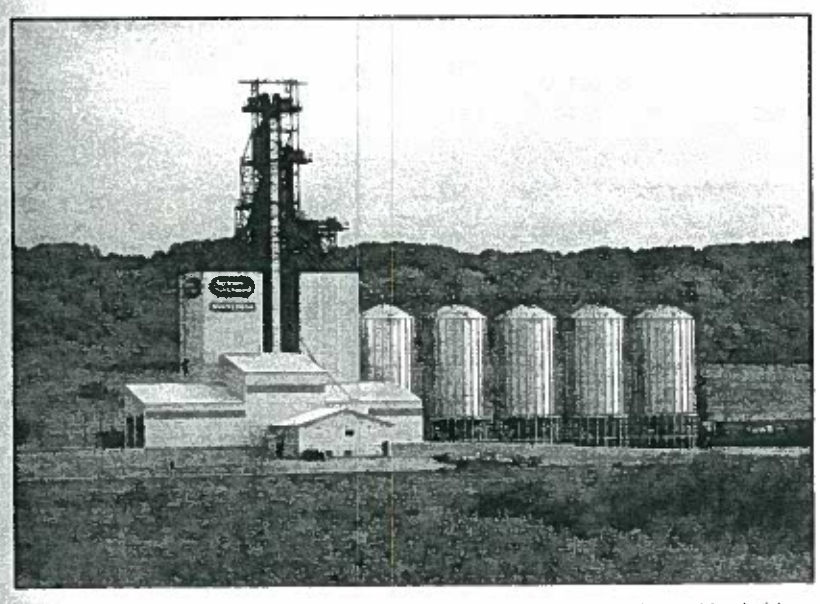
15: Agricore United Grain elevator known as Agassiz. A high-throughput (26,000 tonnes) elevator that fills many cars at one time. Courtesy of Canadian Grain Commission, Winnipeg.

They included "graintainers" – container shipping that bypassed elevator systems (this was an experimental system during the 1970s that does not appear to have been retained). "Condominium," or shared grain facilities (e.g., at Camrose), developed to reduce grain company capital costs, were also experimented with. These systems did not technically advance the elevator, but they did make more choices for the farmer possible, and they continue to be used in larger, high-throughput elevators, where a portion of the storage space is dedicated to condominium storage. For example, the Agassiz, Manitoba grain elevator of Agricore United has 7,000 tonnes of condominium space to go along with 34,200 tonnes of regular storage.

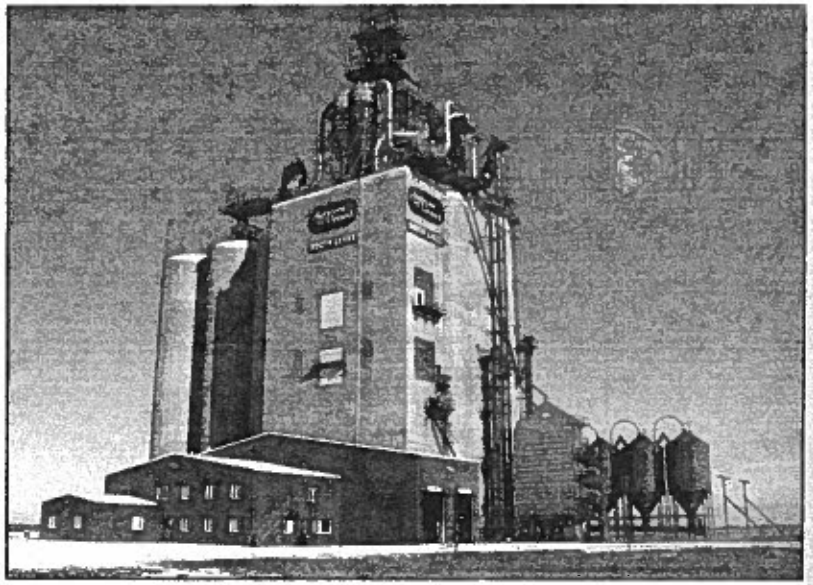
During the 1990s, technological developments of grain elevators accelerated. In 1993, a railway house journal trumpeted new elevators, include Manitoba Pool's largest country elevator at Starbuck, southwest of Winnipeg, constructed of slipform poured concrete, with a storage capacity of ten thousand tonnes in twenty-eight bins. Its twin legs were capable of handling twelve thousand bushels an hour. Overhead scale allowed weighing and loading of grain into cars simultaneously. Fifty rail cars could be loaded quickly. The United Grain Growers built one high-throughput elevator at Fannystelle Manitoba, southeast of Winnipeg, and another at Dundonald.[10]



16: Agricore United elevator known as Legacy Junction. A high-throughput (34,200 tonnes) elevator that also has 7,000 tonnes of condominium storage. Courtesy of Agricore United, June 2003, photo by Tom Price.



17: Agricore United elevator known as Minnedosa. Note steel storage tanks combined with concrete structure, indicative of the many different approaches taken in contemporary elevator design. Courtesy of Agricore United, May 2003, photo by Tom Price.



18: Agricore United elevator known as South Lakes. A high-throughput elevator (26,000 tonnes) with concrete construction. Courtesy of Agricore United, Winter 2002, photo by Tom Price.

19: Agricore United elevator known as Alemada. Note tall steel storage tanks and external machinery, much safer than enclosed machinery seen in traditional wooden elevators. Courtesy of Agricore United, May 2003, photo by Tom Price.

But even these impressive capabilities were dwarfed by elevators opened only a few years later. To demonstrate how rapidly grain-handling technology is continuing to evolve, it is perhaps worth considering the example of a new series of four new high-volume grain elevators completed for ConAgra Grain.[11] These elevators were constructed at a cost of approximately $10 million each, in Corinne, Nokomis, and Yorkton, Saskatchewan, as well as at Souris-Brandon, Manitoba. The terminals were constructed of steel, which ConAgra decided had greater flexibility and allowed for more growth than concrete. The capacity of the new terminals was impressive – forty thousand bushels per hour, or more than ten million bushels of grain per year. To put that into a practical perspective, a one-hundred-car train could be loaded in eight hours. Computers run every mechanical aspect of the terminal. Producers don't have to just stand around with a straw in their teeth waiting for their load to be processed: while they are waiting they can buy fertilizer and seed from a large agri-retail facility located on the site. And because today's producer has many choices in marketing grain, the new terminals of ConAgra feature farmer-owned condo storage units that are fully integrated with the overall terminal facility.

Similar trends are evident in the other prairie provinces. For example, in Alberta, Agricore (as noted above, the successor to the Alberta Wheat Pool) opened in April 2000 a high-throughput elevator in Viking. This steel elevator boasts a storage capacity of 13,600 tonnes, and, more to the point, it has two driveways each equipped with a 120-foot platform scale (that is, capable of handling the largest trucks and trailers, which are taking a larger and larger portion of grain). Trucks have not yet replaced trains by any means, and the Viking elevator can load fifty-six cars (half a train) in a single shift. It is also capable of simultaneously processing wet and dry grain, because it has both a wet and a dry leg. Any relation to its historical antecedents is purely coincidental. Illustrations 14 through 19 give a good idea of the evolution of the primary elevator in recent years: all of these are constructed either of reinforced concrete or steel or both in combination.

Cumulative statistics from 1998 through 2003 demonstrate the rapid decline in the number of primary elevators. In 1998, there were 1,058 primary elevators on the Prairies (this includes all types, old and new). The following year, this number had plummeted to only 976, a decline of approximately 8 per cent in a single year. The total number of

elevators declined to 1,033 from 1,115 – the decline exclusively accounted for in primary elevators. In 2003 (the most recent statistics available), the number had declined still further, to 382, including some eight elevators "not on tracks" (that is, serviced mostly by trucks).[12] And remember that the peak had been nearly 6,000.

Did all these changes make the grain industry in Canada any more profitable? The jury is still out. The mergers and new forms of doing business initially resulted in some unprofitable years for both the pools and the private sector, but after the new millennium there seemed to be a new stability reached. The Saskatchewan Pool, for example, suffered a debilitating $14.1 million loss in 1999, its seventy-fifth anniversary. But by 2003, it reported a $15-million profit for the fourth financial quarter ending 31 July – the Pool's first quarterly profit in some years. As one financial analyst observed, under the headline "Pool finds green pasture":

> It's a modest start to a new era, but a welcome contrast to the turbulence of the past four years where some analysts doubted the Pool would even survive.[13]

Where is the farmer in all of this? Some feel that the farmers were and remain passive victims of large, predatory multinational grain companies eager to make a profit at the farmers' expense. This is hardly the case. Grain farmers have been continuously involved in grain-marketing and storage since the days of the early co-operative wheat pools in the 1920s. When, during the 1990s, the pools merged with previously private-sector companies (leaving only Saskatchewan as an independent pool), some farmers wanted to continue to market their grain independently. This was one of the driving forces behind the development of the Weyburn Inland Terminal (WIT), a farmer-owned and managed company operating an inland terminal and grain condominium complex on the CP Rail network near Weyburn, Saskatchewan.[14] Some background to this interesting development seems in order. From the WIT Web site we read:

> The initial concept for WIT began in the early 1970's when a group of some 1,450 Farmer/Shareholders identified a need to improve the existing grain handling and transportation system. They decided that it was necessary to construct their own facility, keeping in mind the principles of economy of scale and leading edge technology.

> Construction began in 1975 and operations commenced in 1976. The original facility was an efficient 1,000,000-bushel high throughput terminal with extensive grain cleaning, drying, and rail shipping capabilities. In 1992 an additional 545,000 bushels of condominium storage was added. The addition of a second 668,000-bushel condo and the complete automation of the facility followed this in 1994. The 1994–96 period also saw the re-tooling of major conveying and cleaning systems enabling the facilities' throughput to be doubled within the existing facility's "concrete envelope." In 1998 a third 816,000-bushel storage unit was added, along with a new pellet mill, and upgraded farm supply facilities including a fertilizer blending plant. In 2001 WIT increased pesticide storage capacity and built a new office. In 2002 the addition of the 1.1 million bushel east annex brought the total storage capacity to approximately 4.15 million bushels, providing tremendous flexibility for taking deliveries of several grains and grades from farmers simultaneously, and for maximizing the blending opportunities provided to farmers.
>
> 'The Terminal' is Canada's first farmer-owned grain terminal and continues to explore new opportunities and ideas to make sure that the WIT remains a leader in the industry.[15]

Certainly the WIT demonstrates that there continue to be many different ways for producers to remain involved in grain elevators. And while the long-time success of the WIT cannot be predicted with certainty, it does seem to be a promising development. Whatever the future holds, one thing seems worth betting on: the prairie grain farmer will continue to adapt to meet challenging economic circumstances, and the prairie grain elevator system will adapt as well.

CONCLUSION

As the many changes in marketing and in grain elevator form discussed above amply demonstrate, the days of the standard primary elevator on the Prairies are already long past. And given that the wheat pools and private companies have been quietly decommissioning and demolishing elevators for some years now, it is certain that no standard elevators will survive, unless saved as part of a museum setting or for other nostalgic reasons. Indeed, the transformation of the Canadian grain elevator has