

Schramm

I was asked to give a little background on the man that founded Schramm. He is quite an interesting character.

In 1886, Baron Raimon Von Horrum Schramm, a 40-year-old, short, bearded man came to Yuma. He came from Germany by way of New York. His plan was to ride the milk train to Hyde, but when the conductor announced that Yuma would be the only stop, he stepped off the train.

He was a pioneer looking for land, but not the usual pioneer. He was of royal birth, unlimited wealth, a linguist and a Doctor of Philosophy. It is believed that he was the black sheep of his family in Germany, and they gave him a large dowry along with a large boot out of the country. Schramm had a big dream of building an empire for himself.

News of his arrival spread like a prairie fire among the real estate men and they soon convinced Schramm that Yuma was where he should settle instead of Hyde. Always impetuous, energetic and a dreamer, Schramm bought a section of land southwest of Yuma where the Roger Chrismer home is now and a section of land that later became the site of Schramm.

Soon he built his own brick yard where the Yuma city park is now and he built the first brick structure on Main Street, the Schramm Building which housed a bank, a general store, and the Yuma County offices. On the main floor was the hotel. (Jim Powell's Photography now) He built more brick buildings on main street representing huge investments.

Despite his background, he was first of all a farmer. Far ahead of his time, he encouraged farmers to try new ways.

He urged that particular attention be given to livestock for breeding purposes. In 1905 the U.S. government selected Schramm's farm for experiments in tree planting.

Unfortunately, Schramm was a poor businessman. Many of his projects "bloomed and withered like prairie flowers." He was always traveling and couldn't look after his financial interests. At one time he left Yuma and was gone for ten years. 1893-1903

In 1906 Schramm left his home in New York City to live permanently in Denver. Since he always considered Yuma his home, why did he choose to live in Denver? Perhaps because he was never popular with the people of Yuma, Nearly everyone who knew him said, "he was odd or he was arrogant." There was also a spirit of resistance among pioneers that Schramm failed to understand: They were against titles and authority. Schramm died in Denver at the age 61 in 1907, his wife died a few years later. They are buried in the Yuma Cemetery.

Now for the story of how Schramm came into being. Schramm, who controlled a large portion of Yuma's businesses, ran for mayor, but the people did not elect him. Schramm declared, "Make me mayor, or I'll take my buildings and start another town of my own". Initially, the townspeople ignored the threat. However, they stopped laughing when Schramm began moving his frame buildings six miles east. When Schramm started to dismantle his brick buildings, the townspeople held another election and elected him mayor. And that is how the town of Schramm came into being. This would have been in the late 1800's.

At one time Schramm consisted of a grocery store, cream station, post office and school. There also were two elevators that met the needs of the area farmers, the Farmers Co-Op and the Hart Bartlett, and Sturtevant Elevator. I have no idea when the grocery and cream station ceased to exist, but I do think that I remember the remains of a building to the east of the county road. The post office which began in 1913 closed in 1927. The school closed the year I turned six which would have been 1954. I have been told that the school building was moved to Yuma to serve as the concession stand at the high school football field.

The Burlington Northern Railroad played an important part in the growth of Schramm. In the early days, emigrant cars from Nebraska and farther east would stop. Horses and mules would jump out, and then the family belongings were unloaded. This is how my grandparents came to homestead, only they got off in Eckley. Trains brought in supplies for the grocery store after it was established. Grain cars were left off for the bushels of wheat and corn destined for distant markets. Even during my childhood trains would stop at Schramm to pick up passengers. I especially remember the Christmas when my Dad caught the train to go to my aunt's funeral in Eastern Nebraska. That would have been in 1955.

Elevators have always been an important part of Schramm. Even today Schramm is known for grain storage and the Andrews Brothers Seed business. The first elevator was built in 1918 with Roy Blakeley as manager. In 1944 Frank and Eva Hall moved into the house across from the Bartlett Elevator. The house had no electricity or water. Frank made a sled to bring water from the well across the road, where the old grocery store had been. I remember the elevator having a hoist that lifted the front of the truck, or in our case pickup, up to dump the grain. My dad spent many a cold winter day playing cards at the elevator. Later when Steve and I lived in the Schramm house, Steve would spend time there playing cards. If there was a phone call for him, I would look out the window and if I could see his pickup at the elevator, I would give them his "office number" that of the elevator.

Johnny Andrews graduated from high school in 1956 and at that time was working for the Bartlett Elevator. He was drafted into the army in 1961 and served until 1963. Upon his return John again worked at the Bartlett Elevator. In March of 1967 Johnny and Bob Stallings purchased the elevator which they named Yuma County Grain. Johnny passed away in 2017 and that brought on the demise of Yuma County Grain.

About the school I do have information and memories to share. My mother's first teaching job was right here at the Schramm School. That was in 1937. (She was Edith Stillahn and taught fourth grade, in Yuma for many

years. Probably some of you had her for your teacher.) There were five girls attending school that year. She made \$75 a month for eight months, then the money ran out.

Now I would like to read what was written in her own words. "School started in September and the gnats were so thick, flying around your face so you could hardly breathe. The out houses were full of black widow spiders because they hadn't been cleaned all summer. There was no well at the school so I hauled water from home, in three-gallon cream jars. I put the stone jar on a shelf. It had a faucet on the bottom and you pushed a button to get your drink. The kids each had their own tin cup that hung out in the hallway."

"The school had a coal burning stove. Each day I had to clean out the ashes and start the fire. The stove pipe ran the length of the school to a chimney. This was the source of heat. Sometimes the kids brought food in a jar which they put in a dishpan filled with water on the stove and by noon the food would be warm and they could eat it. That was the hot lunch program."

The second year she taught she had thirty-one kids in all eight grades. She continued to teach in country schools until the end of WWII. She and my father, Edward Stillahn, had dated before the war and after he returned they were married in 1946,

Again quoting my mother, "I finished out that school year and then part of another year at the Schramm School. My husband never wanted me to teach after we were married. He wanted to make the living." Mother went back to teaching twelve years later, after my father passed away 1958.

There was what I would call a people gate between our house and the school. I can remember skipping down this trail to the school to play on the swings and merry-go-round and I'm sure I went to the school programs and picnics.

Other businesses, that came later, were the feedlot and a chemical supply company.

Al Ward Sr. owned land north of the tacks. He traded one quarter to Ceres Land Company, who started a feed lot. It in turn was purchased by the Schramm Feedlot in 1978 and is still operating today.

The Wycon Chemical Company was started east of the road between the highway and the railroad in the 1960's. Later they sold and it became Agri Chem which was still in business in 1986, but has since closed.

Now I will talk about the farm that Steve and I now own. Early records show that Frances M. Ridpath cash-claimed the east quarter in 1891, where you now see the red barn and corrals. Mary E. Lingle proved up on the west quarter in 1911. That is where the farmhouse is.

Early in 1920, Guy and Elizabeth Sewell decided to move to Colorado. They felt there would be better opportunities for their three boys. They bought a 320-acre farm ¼ mile south of Schramm from John Pletcher.

The family moved into a three-room unpainted house. (which would have been on the east side north of the barn) There was a fair-sized living room, small kitchen and a cook shack bumped up against the north side, which served as a bedroom for the boys. Guy, Elizabeth and Annabel, their daughter, slept in the living room. In the fall of 1920, a two-story house was started and completed the following spring. It was across the road to the west and a little to the south. This was a craftsman style house, probably ordered from Sears and delivered by train. (This is the farmhouse you see now). Included in the construction were plumbing and wiring for electricity. Neither was available at that time. Electricity didn't come to Schramm until 1949.

In 1946 the Sewells sold the farm to my parents. I can't remember a time when we didn't have a toilet, but I do remember helping my Dad install fixtures in the upstairs bathroom. My father passed away in the fall of 1958. Mom, my brother and I moved to town the next spring and Mom returned to teaching. Mom kept the farm and rented it out.

In 1972, after my husband returned from the service, Steve and I and our oldest daughter moved there. Our other two daughters were born while we lived at Schramm. In 1978 we left the Schramm house to live where we are now. The farm again was rented to others.

In 1998 our middle daughter, Janelle, and her husband Ryan Remmich moved into the Schramm house. They lived there until 2005 when they built the home where they now live. Since my mother's passing in 2002, Steve and I have been the owners and have rented it out. The Saucedo family lives there now and has lived for more than twelve years.

Google calls Schramm a ghost town, but to me and other members of the community it is much more than that.