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### Lifestyles of the Past and Present: Wall Residents

The early days of Wall, dating back to 1907, when the town was established, were much different than the day to day lifestyle we are use to today. Wall began with just three hundred people, which is much smaller than Wall's most current population with eight hundred and eighteen people (*Centennial Wall* intro). Starting with a lower population than now, this small, country town didn't allow for as many businesses as there are today. However, by no means were these businesses less important than they are to the existence of our town today. Wall was a much more spread out community then than it is now. You had to walk a little farther than just down the block to see your friends or family. The traditional lifestyle of Wall residents has changed dramatically from the establishment as a town to the present lifestyle you know and love today.

Wall began as a town that formed from the Chicago/Northwestern Railroad system. The railroad still runs through Wall; however it is now the DM&E Railroad system. Wall got its name because it is located on the "wall of the Badlands" (Lewis 9). It took many years, but Wall finally pulled itself together to form a better community.

The Extension Club, organized in 1934, twenty-seven years after the establishment of Wall, was the beginning foundation of the community. With an abundance of forty-two members, the club was able to accomplish many activities and projects in order to improve themselves and the community. Some of the projects they were involved in included putting on

skits at the Teacher Receptions, making Christmas treats for children around town, sewing for the Red Cross Foundation, sponsoring 4-H clubs, organizing a P.T.A., organizing a cemetery for Wall, and putting on Wall Celebration every tenth day of July. They were also involved in many other activities to raise funds for improvement in the town of New Underwood (*Eastern* 35). Today, the town contains numerous organizations that seem to have branched off of the original Extension Club. Some of these groups include The Lion's Club, the Greater Wall Foundation, and the Celebration Committee. The Lion's Club is a club organized to help local kids with diabetes and other medical needs. The Greater Wall Foundation is an organization that gathers donations, which are matched by the state, and then used to improve or build things in the community or other surrounding communities. Lastly, the Celebration Committee, which is a group that finds funding for activities for the Wall Celebration in July, is a very small but powerful group of people. Over time these groups have grown and expanded to meet the many needs in the town.

Apart from all the committees organized to get this small town going, businesses around town played a huge role in making Wall a livable and enjoyable place to reside for its three hundred residents. A hospital, which was originally the home to A.C. Kingsbury of Cottonwood, was run by Dr. Mills. The ground floor was used mainly for examination rooms. On the second floor is where he would actually perform surgery and keep any patients overnight. This hospital was also the home to Dr. Mills (Lewis 14). A hardware store stood on Main Street where the Badland's bar currently is and was owned and run by Josh and Cora Street. People who owned a business generally didn't live in a separate house, but rather lived above their business in an apartment type space. It was a privilege for business owners to have a separate house in the alley of Main Street like the Street family did (Lewis 23). There were two banks in town at this time.

The one on the west side of Main Street was the Farmer's State Bank of Wall. It was formed by a group of men who weren't even bankers. There was another bank on the east side of Main Street that didn't last long. The two banks quickly merged into one in 1908 (*Centennial Wall* 314). Later on, in 1953, the First Western Bank appeared; which had originally been started in Quinn. Since the establishment in Wall, only four presidents have served in the bank, with the longest being Norbert Sebade from 1983 to 2008. Today the bank is no longer a First Western Bank, but instead is called the First Interstate Bank. The library, today, served as the "community hut," which held dances and other community oriented activities (Lewis 68). In an attempt to contribute to the community, Rufus Campbell, a Wall local, started his own business by attempting to create a city park. He planted trees all the way around the park. Within a few years the park and the trees had died. This area then turned into the Prairie Village Apartments (Lewis 12). This quote from Mayor Dave Hahn shows how businesses have grown and changed over the years in and around Wall. He explains, "The businesses that have survived over the years are now offering more complete and applicable services. Competition in Rapid City has forced these changes." When comparing Wall now to back in the 1940's Eileen Flatt, former Wall resident, stated, "At one time, Wall had four grocery stores." This seems a bit strange considering there is only have one grocery store now and eight times the amount of people; however, jobs were needed and people then weren't able to jump in the car and drive up to Rapid City to find work. Also, grocery stores didn't have as big of a selection as they do today. Flatt added, "Wages were low, people bought only necessities, and no luxuries like people do today," (Flatt).

Besides the wonderful people and businesses working hard to make Wall a better place, surrounding towns were a big part of helping our town grow into what it is today. Quinn, a small

town about five miles East with a population of one hundred people (*Centennial Wall* 310), was Wall's rival (Lewis 70). They had many of the same businesses as Wall such as hardware stores, barber shops, a theatre, bars, drug stores, meat markets, and grocery stores; not to mention better sports teams (*Centennial Wall* 310). Flatt explained "Wall, Quinn, Wasta, and Cottonwood all had grade and high schools, banks, you name it. Most towns had every type of business." If someone needed something, but couldn't find it in Wall, it wasn't too far to go to Quinn and find what he or she needed. Quinn also had a school with dorms and a diner attached to it (*Centennial Wall* 311). That made their school just a little bit better than Wall's. Cottonwood, another town just a few miles past Quinn, wasn't a very safe place to go. There was on average at least one killing per year in Cottonwood (Lewis 70). Most Wall folks tried to stay away from there unless looking for a good fight. Pedro, a town sixteen miles north on the Cheyenne River with a population of forty, was where everyone received their mail (*Centennial Wall* 310). Quinn and Cottonwood are still considered towns, but have greatly decreased in size; however, Pedro no longer exists. In the beginning, surrounding towns were a big part of helping Wall to continue growing. "It seems so many towns have lost the enthusiasm of working together like we did through the years in Wall," stated Eileen.

Transportation played a major role in the lifestyles of many Wall residents. Unlike today people weren't able to get in the car and head wherever they desired. There weren't as many roads as there are today in Wall. Most of the time, a road formed from several cars following the same path; it wasn't purposefully put there. The main street alley was, over time, paved with cinders because all of the coal stoves and furnaces, which was the most common form of heat (Lewis 23). Because of the lack of safe and easy-to-travel road systems at this time, a horse was the easiest and most common method of transportation. It was important for kids living in and

around Wall at this time to be able to ride horses. During these early years, kids were taught to ride bareback in fear that if they rode with a saddle they could easily get hung up (Lewis 48). Today, when surveyed, 52% of the kids in grades three through six in the Wall School stated that they knew how to ride a horse bareback. Most of the students who replied that they did not know how to ride a horse bareback also stated that they had never even ridden a horse before (Wall Elementary). This suggests that although the number of kids learning to ride a horse may be decreasing, the parents of children that do know how to ride horses still find it important that their child knows how to ride bareback instead of just with a saddle. Having children ride with a saddle was a big concern during the early years of Wall because kids would often ride several miles to run errands for their parents or help other families with chores and such (Lewis 55). If they were by themselves, there wouldn't be anyone there to help them if they were to get caught up in their saddle because of a spooked horse or any other accident that might happen (Lewis 48). Another reason for riding bareback is because a saddle was an expensive item that a kid would soon outgrow. Mind you, a saddle in the 1930's cost around fifteen dollars, which was a pretty fair amount of money at this time for something that was not a necessity (Lewis 49). As Flatt stated, "Most families were poor, but we did not know we were poor."

In accordance to the mass amount of horses in this small country town, rodeos were huge events that almost the whole town and other surrounding families attended. They were much less safe at this time and took a very long time. The horses used for bareback and bronc riding were actually wild horses that roamed the nearby area. Twice a year these wild horses were run into town, through people's yards, and down to the sale barn. Here they were put in chutes and beat with clubs causing blood and hair to fly. A group of men would take down each horse one by one and tie their feet together for several hours. The horses were then either shipped east or

kept for riding in town rodeos. These rodeos were called “two beer rodeos” because between each ride you would have enough time to drink two beers. The chutes were wooden and didn’t hold up very well to wild horses pushing and kicking on them. A carpenter would have to be nearby in order to fix the chute for the next ride (Lewis 51). Sometimes the horses were so wild that they would break through fences and land on cars (Lewis 51-52). Rodeo clowns were much more into their job then than they are at rodeos today. It was much more than just crazy clothes and face paint. They would actually bring cannons, ride donkeys, bring in pet skunks, perform tricks, drive little cars around, and tell jokes (Lewis 52). They were a huge part of the rodeo scene. Rodeos today are a lot more safe and controlled than back then.

As times continued to change, so did the interests of Wall children. In the 1940’s, children had to be a lot more creative with their fun than kids do today. Instead of plastic toy guns, children would find old laths out at the sale barn and use them for guns and swords (Lewis 41). These toys allowed children to use their imaginations by making something very simple into a weapon or anything else they desired. Playing marbles was also a very popular pastime for young children. One sack of marbles cost a nickel at the Gamble’s Store (Lewis 21). The Badlands were like a huge playground to children in these days. Using old steel signs was a great way to go sledding down the steep slopes of the Badlands. In the summer, kids would go exploring the caves and make forts out of old wood and newspaper (Lewis 39). Today, when surveyed, the top three pastimes of kids in grades three through six were playing sports, playing videogames, and riding bikes. One child out of sixty-one of the children interviewed had stated that one of their favorite things to do was use his or her imagination (Wall Elementary). Because sports are becoming more and more popular in school, parents, teachers and coaches are working hard to get younger kids involved in sports so they get an early start and have more practice for

high school. Playing sports was the number one interest of these children whether it was basketball, volleyball, football, or even soccer. With the advancements in technology, almost every child has some type of videogame device ranging from a Wii, PSP, Xbox, and ect. Riding bikes has been something that all kids have enjoyed doing for many years, so this aspect of kids hasn't really changed much. Also, after a big snow storm, you can look down at the Badlands and find children sledding and snowboarding all over the place. This is also something that has been an interest of Wall kids because of the closeness of the Badlands. Although the interests of children have changed somewhat over time, there are still things that have remained the same throughout Wall's history.

As for adults, their interests have changed also. Dances used to be a big deal for adults (Lewis 70). The Community Hut, which is now the city library once held dances and other town functions for adults (Lewis 68). "Wall never had good dances, but all the neighboring towns did," (Lewis 69). This statement still stands true; however, it is now more directed toward the teenage crowd. Adults don't put on dances anymore. Instead they have house parties or go to other towns such as Deadwood.

Much has changed from the year 1907 to the year 2010 in Wall, South Dakota when it comes to tradition. In 1923, the basketball team, which was only boys, had no gym to play in. Instead they played outside on dirt (Lewis 33), which was pretty much what the town of Wall was made of at the time. Instead of green lawns in front of every house during the summer like we see today, there were patches of dirt with dried up grass and weeds (Lewis 22). During this time Wall had a pet antelope named Andy. Andy would eat anything from vegetables to cigarette tobacco and was known as the "notorious moocher" (Lewis 56). Another aspect that has changed is that Wall used to celebrate its birthday on July 10<sup>th</sup> of every year no matter what

day it landed on. Today, we celebrate this over a three day weekend with various activities.

Flatt recalled, "I remember saving dimes all year to ride the carnival rides."

Wall hit a huge turning point when the road through the Badlands was built. During the early 1920's, Senator Peter Norbeck started the construction of the road when he drove from Quinn to the base of the Badlands. As he looked around, he took out his red handkerchief, tore it into shreds, and drove them into the ground with stakes. He then shouted "The road goes here!" (Lewis 29). Norbeck made happen what several engineering firms thought of as impossible. The road first started out with a tunnel, which was later taken out for safety reasons. Creating many jobs, WPA workers completed this job with picks and shovels. Other men wore harnesses strapped on to wheelbarrows to haul the dirt away (Lewis 18).

Through the years Wall has changed for both the better and the worse. "Wall is slowly losing all of its volunteer organizations," says Mayor Dave Hahn. However, Hahn also stated that one of the strongest aspects of the "changing" Wall is that "with the hard work of a limited number of Wall Citizens the one tradition that has survived is the annual Wall 10<sup>th</sup> of July Celebration." There are both good and bad aspects of a changing community. Today, Wall has grown tremendously from its birth as a small country town. Almost every building in Wall has been newly remodeled or recently built (Hahn). With hard-working and dedicated people like this, Wall will continue to grow and change for both the better and, unfortunately, sometimes the worse. Nevertheless, there will always be people around in this close-knit community to keep, change, and make new beneficial traditions to develop Wall into an even better place than it was yesterday.

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