

Brick chimney sentinel of family dreams

By IDA SANDERSON

Across the road from the Leary farm home southwest of Roseisle, Manitoba, is an abandoned brick factory. Built about 1900 on the bank of the South Boyne River, it is sheltered by the densely wooded hills of the Roseisle valley.

When Don Leary returned in 1975 with his wife Elsie and family to farm in the valley in which he had been born, he began refurbishing a home constructed of brick from the factory. The house had been vacant for 22 years but he believed its sturdy construction would warrant their efforts.

Leary remembers well the heyday of the Leary Brick Works. For two summers he worked with his father, William Leary, carrying bricks from the press to the grated floor of the kiln and stacking them one finger width apart, cutting wood for firing and packing the finished product in straw on railway cars. The bricks would then be shipped from Learys, the nearby railway siding.

The brick factory was conceived when Leary's grandfather, George Leary, realized the mud on the hillside across the Boyne from his home was suitable for making brick. He dreamed of houses, schools, churches, office buildings and factories made of Leary brick.

The Chronicle, a turn of the century publication, recorded the unfolding of that dream. It noted that Leary had a large gang of men at work building the factory and making brick; a large boarding house was built to accomodate them. The article mentioned that heavy machinery — the brick machine alone weighed 29 tons — had been brought on sleighs from Altamont, nine miles distant.

"The drying shed, 85' x 40' and three storeys high is all ready to receive the manufactured article which is being turned out in large quantities in the neighboring engine room. This building is 56' x 40' containing 45 h.p. engine and boiler, the brick-making machine, etc. The water (for the boiler) is pumped from the Boyne flowing past the works and necessary clay and sand are