

The Devil's Hill by Joe Stonehocker

If it is only the last few years that you have traveled the Pierceland road towards Cherry Grove you could be excused for being a little skeptical about the small hill two miles east of Highway 28 being called the Devil's Hill but it came by its name honestly. In the 1930's after the road was built on the road allowance instead of wandering along where the going was better it had a very short steep side on the west while on the east there was a long half mile rising grade before reaching the last little pitch. I think it was Matt Gelowitz of Pierceland who christened the hill. Matt started in the mid 30's to truck from the end of steel, known as the Y, to Pierceland working first for Dan Flegel, his uncle, and later for himself.

One trip he had a full load of flour for the Pierceland area, and the hill was his problem. After several trials proved to him that there was no way he could get up with the load, he was forced to unload a couple of tons of flour somewhere near where Lehsners live now and haul his half load up the hill. There he had to unload the half load, go back for the other half. When he got it up the hill, of course there was the other half to load up again before he could start on his way to Pierceland. So he called it the Devil's Hill — a rather genteel name that stuck through the years. In fact I imagine it has been called much worse than that by those who had trouble on it.

I remember Lynn Burgess who had to travel to Grand Centre, Beaver Crossing corner and out to Cherry Grove to church being late one day because it took him a half hour, in his Sunday clothes, to make the hill.

I remember two instances when it caused me problems with a school bus. On the first occasion we couldn't get up the west side on the way home from school. Elben Dilcox had had car trouble with the mail, had a carton of baby-chicks which he couldn't leave sitting beside the road so he had piled in with the kids. We would drive as high as I could, then back down, and try again. We finally made it to the top after Elben and Lois Hatch, who was attending school at that time, kept blocking the back wheels of the bus with a couple of fence posts so we wouldn't have to back clear to the bottom, but just far enough to get another go at the ruts. We finally made it after about twenty minutes of struggling. On the second occasion a big semi-trailer loaded with culverts for the airbase didn't know of the long slow grade approaching the hill. He couldn't make it — his outfit jackknifed about two thirds of the way up and blocked the road. We came along with the school bus and had to take off through the field to the north, through a couple of gates and back to the road by Lehsner's. There were no cats available to assist the trucker and it was three or four days before his firm, from Saskatoon, was able to winch him out of his difficulties. Outside of some chuck holes on its crown today the "Devil's Hill" is just an easy slope on the way to Cherry Grove.