

The History of E. Bourassa & Sons Ltd.

“A Fourth Generation Business”

Part 1 – From the Beginning

E. Bourassa & Sons Ltd. was founded in 1924 by Emile Bourassa, a successful grain farmer from the Lacadia district who had retired from farming for health reasons. The Emile Bourassa Homestead is presently owned and farmed by Mr. Maurice Riviere southwest of Radville.

In the spring of 1924, after his farm possessions were disposed of by auction, Emile bought out John Carlson’s coal and wood business in the town of Radville. Emile added other items to his business such as flour and feed, parts for wagons and sleighs, neck yokes, eveners, wagon wheels, spokes, sleigh runners and sleigh shoe steels, bolts, iron, hardware, kerosene for lamps and lanterns, binder twine and the ever popular Maytag washers. This led to the creation of the first mobile laundry service in the Radville area when Emile mounted a wringer style square tub Maytag washer on the front bumper of his 1927 Buick sedan. He would travel from home to home offering the washing service for a fee of 50 cents.

Emile, a lover of horses, always kept horses in somebody’s pasture, as he would often take them on trade for appliances and machinery. With a family of eleven children to raise, Emile Bourassa had cows all over the place and always kept one in town to supply milk for his family. All of the eight boys and one of the three girls worked for Emile at one time or another, often weighing coal and wood in the office, counting out bolts and nuts, unloading carloads of coal and wood, hauling grain and selling various products such as flour and feeds.

In 1948, a partnership was formed between Emile and his two sons Romeo and Albert. The firm then became known as E. Bourassa & Sons. In 1950, the partnership was dissolved as Emile retired for health reasons and Albert purchased the business. In 1953, Emile Bourassa passed away in Phoenix, Arizona, to which he had relocated in 1950 after retiring. In 1962, upon incorporation, the firm became known as E. Bourassa & Sons Ltd., with Albert and his wife Madeleine as owners.

The operation was originally located in downtown Radville, now designated as 634 Healy Avenue. The small office, which housed the controls for the outside scale, was the scene of many checker games between old timers who dropped in to chat and visit by the fire. In 1946 the service/shop area was greatly expanded and a new showroom was added in the spring of 1953.

Part 2 – “The Next Generation”

E. Bourassa & Sons Ltd has handled many different equipment lines throughout the years including Massey Harris in 1928, John Deere from 1932 – 1967, and Oliver and Cockshutt lines for some time as well. The Morris Rod Weeder line was acquired in 1950 and Versatile in 1962. In 1967, following a parting of ways with John Deere, many additional short-line farm equipment franchises were added, as well as Allis Chalmers Farm Equipment and Gleaner combines in 1981. Bourgault Air Seeders and sprayers, Ford New Holland Canada Ltd, and Flexicoil were among the ever-expanding number of equipment lines available at E. Bourassa & Sons Ltd right into the 1990's.

There have been several boom and bust cycles throughout the years, making it difficult at times to keep every employee busy all year round. But this was always a priority to Albert, and due to the large variety of product lines and merchandise carried by the company, as well as the inventive genius of Albert Bourassa, the business was able to meet this goal most years. Following the war in the late 1940s, Albert kept his men busy converting farm tractors from steel wheels to rubber tires. He also had several trucks hauling grain to the Weyburn mill for farmers in southern Saskatchewan before and during the war years. In the mid-1950s Albert started installing hydraulic truck hoists on farm trucks, and in the 1960s he was manufacturing PTO drives for hammer mills and shipping them all over the province. Other years saw Albert and his men installing new pick-up attachments on all makes of combines, and they even manufactured a twin rotary snow blower out of 2 single units. During the drought in the Dakotas in the late 1970s, Albert had his men hauling feed and hay by the semi load to the dried out areas. This business of trucking hay carried on throughout the years of drought in Saskatchewan as well. Some years saw several trucks hauling hay into and out of Manitoba and Alberta also.

The company had continually grown and the need for more space was inevitable. A new facility was constructed in the spring of 1979 just south of Radville on land then owned by Ray Dionne. The official Grand Opening was held on March 23, 1981 with an overflowing crowd on hand, as well as Mayor Allan Roth who brought greetings from the Town of Radville, and Gordon Young who represented the Rural Municipality of Laurier No. 38.

It was during this period that Albert designed and engineered the famous “Bourassa 3-Point Hitch”. The hitches were designed for use on most farm tractors with the appropriate mounting kits for different models. The manufacturing was done in the welding shop in Radville and units were shipped into Manitoba, British Columbia, Alberta, all over Saskatchewan and the United States. This also led to the manufacturing of other items such as rock diggers and 3-point hitch cultivators.

Albert's wife Madeleine and two of Albert's boys were also very active in the business over the years. Madeleine was the bookkeeper for the company for many years and because everything was done manually, it proved to be a full time job keeping everything in order for Albert. Albert's oldest son Dan became involved in the business in 1964 and Richard entered in March

of 1968. Over the years Albert hired other family members as well, including his brother Armand in 1950 and his 3 boys throughout the 1970s and 1980s.

Part 3: The Baby Boomers

Albert and Madeleine had 3 boys, Daniel (Dan), Albert Jr. (Peter), and Richard (Dick), as well as 2 girls, Giselle and Suzanne (Sue). Dan and Richard both entered the business as young teenagers where their first job was helping out in the back shop and setting up machinery. Peter worked for E. Bourassa & Sons Ltd. for a short while but ended up pursuing other interests in the carpentry trade. Peter moved away from Radville and currently resides in Calgary where he owns and operates a construction company. Giselle and Sue did not actually for the company growing up, but Giselle ended up entering the business in 1996 and is currently the Office Manager in the Radville Store. Sue never did become actively involved in the company and is currently employed with the Radville Star newspaper as the Office Manager.

In 1964, Dan completed a welding course then started working for E. Bourassa & Sons Ltd. in the welding shop in Radville. Dan continued welding until 1967 when the farming industry in southern Saskatchewan started slowing down. At this time Dan decided to leave the business in search of new endeavors. From 1967 through 1974 Dan traveled the USA working as a Custom Combine Owner/Operator. On his return from the USA, Dan once again went back to work for the company, holding various positions until the late '70s when he became the Sales Manager and soon thereafter the General Manager. Dan's wife, Cecile, first entered the business in the '80s, cleaning, writing letters and filing. As times change, E. Bourassa & Sons Ltd. was forced to change with them. One of the biggest changes for the company was the introduction of computers in the mid '90s. It took a lot of convincing, but Cecile eventually worked computer systems inside the doors of E. Bourassa & Sons Ltd. Cecile remained with the company over the years and is currently the Controller and Secretary/Treasurer.

Richard enrolled in tech school from 1969 through 1971 where he completed his mechanic course. Upon return, Richard entered back into the business as the only technician in the shop. With no experienced mechanics left on staff, Richard was forced to learn everything on this own. Although this was not way, over the years Richard taught himself how to diagnose and repair just about anything. As the years passed by and Dan continued to sell equipment, Richard would have as many as 6 men working for him in the shop in Radville. Still to this day, Richard is known far and wide across Saskatchewan and into the states for his expertise on Versatile tractors and his vast knowledge of hydraulic systems.

By the late '80s, Dan and Richard had taken the reigns of the business, and Albert was starting to step back. Albert and Madeleine started travelling to Phoenix in the winters as the boys had things handled back home. With the sudden passing of Madeleine on June 2, 1999 and the passing of Albert on December 23, 2001, Dan and Richard became the sole owners of E. Bourassa & Sons Ltd. Richard remained with the company as the Service Manager until 2001 when Dan purchased his shares in the business. At this time, Richard purchased Dan's shares in a trucking company they had owned and operated together. Richard still owns and operates Dan-D Trucking Ltd. in Radville where he provides oil and water hauling services and truck repairs for the oil industry in Southern Saskatchewan.

Several other Bourassa's worked for the company over the years, including 3 of Albert's brothers, Roland, Armand and Lionel, as well as his sister, Marguerite. Armand's boys, Ken, Kelly and Michael all worked for the company throughout the '70s, '80s and '90s as well. Ken Bourassa eventually took over for his dad as the Parts Manager in Radville and still holds that title today. With a history dating back to 1924, there are several others that were involved with the company, but too many to list.

The main equipment lines sold into the '80s were Versatile and Morris, among various other short lines. Ford Motor Company purchased Versatile in the mid '80s, and New Holland purchased Ford in the late '80s. E. Bourassa & Sons Ltd. has been a New Holland dealer ever since. Many other lines were carried and added throughout the '80s and '90s, including Bourgault, Flexicoil, Haybuster, Unverferth, Ezee-On, Farm King, Sakundiak, Westfield, Wheatheart and Leon, just to name a few.

As the need to diversify and expand continued to present itself within the implement industry, E. Bourassa & Sons Ltd. saw opportunity when Jones Implements Ltd. closed in Pangman. The grand opening was held in Pangman on December 7, 1996. It wasn't long before that opportunity arose again, this time in Assiniboia.

Part 4: The Fourth Generation

Dan's oldest son, Daniel (Dan Jr.), was the first to enter the business after obtaining an Accounting/Marketing diploma at SIAST in 1995. Dan Jr. started in sales working for Dan Sr. in the Radville area, since this was the only store at this time. Dan Jr was one of three traveling salesmen working for Dan Sr at the time and was able to learn a lot in a short period of time. Dan Jr. continued in sales for about a year before he began the initial inquiry into the purchase of Jones Implements Ltd. in Pangman. It had been several years since there was a New Holland dealership in Pangman. Jones was the New Holland dealer several years previous but was operating primarily as an AGCO White dealership at the present time. Originally, Dan Sr. and Richard had mixed feelings about the idea of expansion into the Pangman area. Dan Jr. continued to push his belief in a multi-store company, and eventually E. Bourassa & Sons Ltd. purchased the Jones Implements Ltd. building in Pangman and opened for business as a New Holland dealer in 1996.

The company was able to retain/re-hire most of the previous staff from Jones Implements Ltd., which was a key element in the success of the store. Some of the staff hired that is still employees today includes Rodger Sambrook, Bryce Colbow and Tim Loucks. Being a single store operation for the previous 72 years made the transition difficult to say the least. A lot of resources and people were used from the Radville store to get things up and operating. Cecile made daily trips for several weeks to implement a new computer system and make sure the day-to-day book keeping functions were up to speed. Dan Jr. traveled every day for over a year, as he was the only salesman in the Pangman store. Several equipment lines were added immediately and several more over the course of the next few years. The service shop added a full time welder and complete inventory of new iron to service the area's welding and manufacturing needs. It wasn't long before equipment salvage became popular, as it had for several years in the Radville store.

Doug Bourassa, Dan's third son, entered into the business full time following his graduation in Parts Management in 1997. Doug had previously worked for Dan Sr. in the Radville store as a teenager doing various jobs in parts and in the salvage yard. Doug started out in the parts department in the new Pangman store in 1997, where he began using his knowledge immediately. Dan's second son, Kurtis, also spent a summer working out of the Pangman store while on his summer break. Kurtis worked for Rodger in the shop doing various repairs, service and maintenance work.

In the fall of 1997, the company acquired another parts person, which allowed Doug to move into sales and Dan Jr. to go back to selling in Radville. Doug spent the next year traveling the Pangman territory as a salesman. By the fall of 1998, Doug was back in the office in Pangman selling both equipment and parts. Dan Jr. eventually moved into the Sales Manager position in Radville in the fall of 1998, as Dan Sr. wanted to concentrate his time in other areas. In 1998/1999 Dan Jr. started to hire some of his own staff in the Radville store as sales continued to grow. When Scott Biss graduated with a Marketing diploma in 1998, Dan Jr. was quick to hire

him as a full time salesman. Scott has since moved into the parts department in Radville. Today, Dan Jr. manages the sales departments for all stores from his office in Radville.

Following Doug's return to the Pangman office in 1998, E. Bourassa & Sons Ltd. developed a relationship with Assiniboia Westview Semi Service out of Assiniboia, Sk. The two companies were working together to sell New Holland parts in the Assiniboia area, since the New Holland dealer had recently gone out of business. Doug was now selling equipment in Pangman, helping in Parts and managing the parts business with Assiniboia Westview Semi Services. By the summer of 1999 it was becoming too much to handle for Doug, and the company decided it would be viable to operate out of Assiniboia. In August of 1999, a deal was made with Westview Semi Service to rent the front of their building for parts and wholegoods sales. In addition, Westview's service staff was hired to do all the required service work for E. Bourassa & Sons Ltd.

In the summer of 1999 Doug moved from Pangman to start his new venture in the town of Assiniboia. The response from the customers in the Assiniboia area was overwhelming. There was definitely a need for a full line New Holland store in the Assiniboia area.

By late 2001/early 2002 it was decided that more space was needed in the Assiniboia store. Currently still renting space from Westview Semi Services, E. Bourassa & Sons Ltd decided to purchase some land in the R.M of Stonehenge and build a new facility. The building was designed and drafted by Kurtis Bourassa who was working in the Civil Engineering field in Saskatoon. With the construction scheduled to be complete in the spring of 2003, Kurtis decided it was time to join the family business and moved to Assiniboia. The new store officially opened for business in March of 2003 and the Grand Opening was held in October of 2003 with hundreds on hand for beef on a bun, door prizes, speakers and an entire staff introduction from all stores. Kurtis worked as the store manager in Assiniboia for the first couple years and eventually became the General Manager of the company.

When the doors opened in March of 2003 there was only 8 staff working out of the Assiniboia branch. The support of the community and continued growth and diversity has since grown that number to over 20 full time staff and several part time/seasonal. Several other equipment lines were added following the recent expansion of which included Arctic Cat snowmobiles and ATV's, McCormick tractors, Kuhn and Kuhn Knight spreaders, mixers and rakes, Demco grain carts and Vermeer balers.

In 2007 E. Bourassa & Sons Ltd saw another opportunity to diversify and purchased the local Napa Auto Parts franchise in Assiniboia. This was just one more step towards the continued goal of "one-stop" shopping for their rural customers and farming partners. The business was operated out of the previous owners building until October 2007 while a 2400 square foot addition was added to the facility on Highway 13 west in Assiniboia. Parts inventories were more than doubled with genuine Napa parts and a world-class showroom was incorporated into the store. The grand opening was held in the spring of 2008 with several hundred attending.

Diane Bourassa, Dan's only daughter, entered into the business in 2007 after a few years of working in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Diane graduated from the U of R with a Bachelors of Business Admin Degree majoring in Finance in 2005. Working out of the Radville store, Diane shares several of the Controller tasks with her mother Cecile in addition to taking care of several of the accounting functions as well as payroll.

Part 5 – Growth and Change

December of 2009 proved to be another monumental year as the business known as E. Bourassa & Sons Ltd. was purchased from Dan and Cecile by Dan Jr., Kurtis, Doug and Diane and officially became known as E. Bourassa & Sons Partnership. While business carried on much the same as before, expansion was on the mind of the new owners and this time opportunity arose to the East.

On March 2, 2009, E. Bourassa & Sons purchased the assets of KeOEd Equipment in Weyburn and Estevan and added these two New Holland stores to create a 5 store dealership spanning Southern Saskatchewan.

The Weyburn location operated out of the building on 17th Street in the middle of the city for the first 5 years but the location and size of the building as well as the growing customer base caused the business to outgrow the facility and in March of 2014 E. Bourassa & Sons moved into their current location on Highway 13 just west of Weyburn. The 48000 sq ft building sits on 19 acres of land and was built to best serve the customers of Weyburn. The new building in Weyburn also houses E. Bourassa & Sons second Napa Auto Parts store. October 23, 2014 marked the Grand Opening of the Weyburn store with over 700 people on hand for a trade show, lunch, speakers and even a draw for a new Boomer tractor.

At the same time the building in Weyburn was being constructed, an expansion and renovation was also underway at the Assiniboia store. This expansion included a new Service Department as well as expanded Parts and Sales areas. The construction was completed and the new shop was operational in early 2015.

While new construction in Weyburn and Assiniboia was a memorable part of 2014, the event that everyone still remembers best were the E. Bourassa & Sons 90th Anniversary celebrations. Celebration events were held in early November in Assiniboia, Radville and Weyburn with customer and staff being treated to an evening of food, music and memories. Each event included a delicious meal, speeches by E. Bourassa & Sons suppliers and owners, live music by Codie Prevost, Samara Yung and a special local guest from each location including Tenille Arts (Weyburn), Dallas Elder (Assiniboia) and Lexie T (Radville) and each evening wrapped up with guests socializing and dancing late into the night.

In May of 2016, due to lower than expected customer activity and the increasingly difficult time recruiting employees at the Estevan store, the decision was made to relocate the Estevan business to Carlyle, SK. Construction on a new 20,000 sq ft Carlyle store began in May 2017 with a projected move in date of spring 2018. The new store will feature a large Sales display lot and state of the art Parts and Service Departments. Carlyle was a natural choice for a new location since there were no dealerships in the town and it is a hub of the local agriculture community serving a large area in all directions. The Carlyle store is expected to employ 12 full time staff with the ability to expand up to 20 employees as the business grows.

At the end of 2017 E. Bourassa & Sons will employ over 130 people continuing with a focus on customer service, family values and the business of agriculture in Southern Saskatchewan. Everyone is very excited to see what the future has in store.