Hartney

The railway companies usually put towns wherever they needed them. But in 1889 local farmers heard that the CPR was going to build a town to the northeast of where Hartney is today, settlers protested. They insisted that the new town should be near where James Hartney had established a post office and store on his farm.

Mr. Hartney moved to the area in 1882 with his family. He imported a carload of Red Fife wheat from Minnesota and soon had a good wheat crop. This gave the district a reputation as a first-class wheat producing area. His success attracted more settlers and Hartney's farm became the centre of a new community. The post office, which he named after himself, and a store, were first operated out of his home. He brought men into the community to operate this business as well as a blacksmith shop that he later established.

When the surveyors did appear they selected a spot within a mile of the Hartney farm and, the settlers, were happy. When the C.P.R named the town Airdrie they made another request. They wanted the new place named Hartney already in use for the post office. Once again, the CPR made the change.

Hartney grew quickly on each side of the new railway track. The Mill and Elevators were important services.

When the train whistle sounded for the first train on Christmas Day 1890, there were already two elevators, a boarding house, a store and post office. Dr. Frank McEown had set up a practice and started work on a drug store.

As the town grew, two brickyards, a flour mill, and a sash & door factory contributed to the economy. In 1902 A.E. Hill built the two-story brick block that still stands on the corner of Poplar and East Railway.

The A.E. Hill store.

A second railway, the Canadian Northern connected Hartney to Virden to the west in 1900. By 1904, in addition to being the home of eight operating elevators and 10 clergy members, 51 businesses were listed in the town newspaper.