

# A Walk to Remember...

## Part Three 1905 to 1939

Dear Diary: It's one of those good news bad news type of years here in Carnduff. We are officially Carnduff, Saskatchewan with the arrival of the province of Saskatchewan. We've also achieved incorporation status as a full fledged town thanks to the leadership of Mayor Preston and the council. They are excited to be moving into the floor of the old school as their official council chambers as soon as the new school is finished being built next year. It's a magnificent looking two-storey structure standing proudly on the west side of town. It will be nice to have the fire hall, library and town office in the one location.

Sounds like the fire bell will also be moved here from its anchor on the elevator corner opposite Preston's store. That old bell has saved the day several times as it sounded calls for volunteers to fight the prairie fires. The Northwest Mounted Police, oh correction, I guess they are now the Royal Northwest Mounted Police do a good job rounding up all the locals to fight the fires. It's such dirty work beating at the flames with soaked grain sacks. Many try to hide in the livery stalls or in their hotel rooms but most get dragged out to help. As a result we haven't lost many farm homes to fires over the years. It was a tragedy when we lost that one fellow south of town though. A young family man – no one knows what happened for sure. He headed for home from the race track and sports ground when he saw the smoke in the distance but never made it. They found him the next morning probably overcome by the smoke.

In other bad news, the judicial court centre is being moved to Estevan. Who would have anticipated that in five short years they'd become such an industrial centre and grow to be the hub for the southeast. Oh well, we shall continue to grow at our own pace and hold our heads high with every new accomplishment we have here at home.

Dear Diary: Okay I admit I had to try it out the new telephone system in town. I don't get the big deal. What would you ever need to talk about that you can't wait for a letter or at least a telegram. Guess that's why we only need 4 phones in town in 1906: one at the hotel, one at the hardware, one at Taylor's store and then one at the bank. It was a shock when I picked up the phone and heard my neighbor one of the other phones talking to his sister in Winnipeg. Guess that's what they mean by it being a party line. I don't get it. If I want to have a party with them I'll just go visit them. Oh – his sister's got a new job by the way, but she doesn't want anyone to know....

I also heard John's getting water in his cellar too! The CPR said we had to move the town here for a better water supply, well it's like we built on a slough. There's water and plenty of it. This new town council is going to have its hands full figuring out a way to manage it. Big city engineers suggested drainage ditches be dug all over town to handle spring runoff. Objections by residents quickly put a stop to that idea and the ditches have been filled back in. Guess there will always be water problems of one kind or another. I don't envy council.

Dear Diary: July 16, 1908 and so excited to be hosting a lawn party this afternoon. Tennis will be the main amusement. Being English homesteaders, we've enjoyed the cricket matches on the court south of the trap shooting grounds. Good on Dr. Lockhart and some of the others for keeping some of the old country in play but tennis is more speed. Our turn to show some of the others another English game. Wonder which one if either will still be played in town in 100 years? I suppose it will all be hockey and that curling thing I still don't understand.

Dear Diary: Well the Prime Minister said, "As the 19<sup>th</sup> century was that of the United States, so I think the 20<sup>th</sup> century shall be filled by Canada." Well here we are in 1909 and I don't know about this progress thing! First we had Doc Brereton running around on his motorized bicycle making rural calls. Some called it his 'Go Devil' – all I know is we started taking the back trails if we knew he was out and about so he didn't spook the horses when he went flying by!

Now they just had a car load of those McLaughlin Buicks arrive in town – six of them I think. I don't see the need – no other town around has more than 2. At least with common sense they have put a speed limit on them of 10mph in town and 6mph at the intersections. Frankly I don't see the need for them especially when they are basically a summer thing and have to be put up on blocks with the water drained out of the radiator and battery removed for winter. They can't do anything a team can't do better. In fact, just last week even after their fancy driver training by that guy that came out and showed them how to run a car, those two managed to wander off the trail and into a slough – it wasn't another automobile they called to bail them out. It was a team of horses that pulled them out. They tried to keep it quiet but it was all over the Gazette. That's turned into a fine newspaper – considering that first guy that ran it left town in the middle of the night never to be heard from again!

But back to progress diary – last night we had our first 'moving picture show' in Elliott's Hall. 15 cents it cost to watch a flickery black and white screen with words written across the bottom telling the story. What could be more annoying than listening to those slow readers trying to keep up with the story by reading out loud. Well maybe if they were shining lights in the darkness and pretending they were talking back and forth on their telephones that everybody seems to have in their homes now! Anyway, I don't see those motion picture things lasting. We'll be back to the magic lantern shows before you know it.

One thing that will last is that impressive new Avonmore Hotel that just opened. The boys that owned the Clarendon should have taken the initiative and built a new one but when they didn't Brandon Brewing Company came in and we've got an impressive hotel. The barroom is stately, a nice long counter and of course the mirror behind it runs the full length. Lots of room for patrons to stand and rest their weary legs on the railing til they fall over and its time to head home. Rooms are nice too from what I hear but they never make money – the money's in the liquor.

Dear Diary: May 20, 1910.. There was a good turnout today in the Opera House today to pay their respects for the passing of King Edward. We've been a country now for over 30 years but the ties to England remain strong. Mayor Lockhart knows this and it was an honorable gesture to order the businesses closed for three hours to "show due and proper respect to His Late Majesty."

Respect seems to be lacking at times compared to what it was back in my day. Sad the town even had to put in that bylaw in with the fine for spitting on the sidewalks. I have no problem if the gents want to have their chew of tobacco but really – is it necessary to leave that mess on our fine wooden sidewalks that the town works so hard to maintain. Especially when the sidewalk inspectors are already giving them grief about their upkeep. I hear we are now being told our streets are graded and graveled too well now and the inspectors think it's causing too much wear on the sidewalks. Too bad – because our main streets are among the best in the district and add to the beauty that this town has always tried to maintain.

Speaking of the best in the district, that's quite the impressive building the Merchant's Bank just opened south of Elliott's Hardware. I thought they had a fine location in the Smith Block but this is a nice addition to the town. There's some speculation that if the government changes again next time around as expected we'll end up with the Post Office moving into their old location.

Dear Diary: So three short years after the first new ones arrived and I broke down and bought myself an automobile. When we made that 112 mile run to Napinka in 9 hours I have to admit I was convinced it was worth it. There are talks these new roads along the grid system will all be graded better for automobiles so its only going to get better. I was a nay sayer.. I guess not all progress is bad progress.

Dear Diary: August 1914 – It's good to see our local boys doing their part for the war in Europe. We wish them well and a speedy return home. I'm so proud of men like Major Elliott and Dr. Lockhart or should I say Captain Lockhart who are leading the way, organizing the first contingent of the 20<sup>th</sup> Border Horse detachment set up here last year. They'll head to Valcartier, Quebec before heading over to England for further training this fall before seeing active duty. If the conflict

continues, additional volunteers may be called upon. Let's hope it's a brief service for our soldiers and one that doesn't prove too costly.

Dear Diary: News from the front continues to be troubling. At home the Carnduff & District Ladies Patriotic Society have been doing their part: knitting socks, making garments and sending parcels of food to our boys overseas each month. Here at home, the town's been in a bit of turmoil these last few years over that gasplant we bought. It was supposed to be so much cheaper to operate than electric when we put it in and it seems to do the job. I pity the town utility guy that goes around each night even in the middle of winter to individually light each street light and then again in the morning to extinguish them. He sure wasn't impressed that night his buddies tricked him by following along behind and putting them all out so he had to start over. Anyway, back to the gas plant. We lost a good man over it last week when Mr. Langford resigned from council. He opposed the gas plant from the beginning and what with people refusing to install it in their homes, having wanted electric it's been running in the red and kind of become a white elephant so he up and quit over what he says is mismanagement of the affair. Oh well, as they say hindsight's 20-20.

Dear Diary: November 1916 and the Oddfellow's Hall is complete. The movie theatre on the main floor even opened a week ahead of schedule. It's a shame to see all these things moving from Elliott's Hall but I guess that's progress. That hall had so many stories what with its annual visits by the Kickipoo Medicine Man and his sidekick Indian – funny how you never seemed to catch sight of the sidekick in daylight to get a good look at him. Then there was the time E. Pauline Johnson visited and read some of her poetry, the musical entertainment both local and national. Memories... Oh well between the That building was deteriorating though and when Mr. Defoe agreed to buy and move the Red Onion building from its location it was the perfect opportunity for the Oddfellow's to build their new building on Broadway. Amazing the way the Red Onion could be split into two houses and moved to Spencer Street. It was obviously sturdy construction. I'll bet one of those houses could literally still be standing and in use 100 years from now!

Wish things were as rosy for the Carnduff Land Company. It started out as a great idea. With some of the old-timers now 20 years in and looking to retire, the Land Company was set up in 1913 with \$50,000 capital to try and bring new settlers in and place them on the land. It seemed to be working well. They produced a fancy brochure showing the area and the plans for those extra railways that are planned to join us to Arcola and Sherwood. A trip was made to Kansans and they brought a whole group of Mennonite farmers to the district. Good people and good farmers, they worked their land and faithfully made their annual payments to their land agent. A disgrace how the agent disappeared and the real land owners never received the money. Most of the farmers have gradually lost the land as a result and drifted back to Kansas. A few of the younger guys have stuck around though and become family men here. Like I said they seem like real good people.

Dear Diary... Well it's late April and most of our boys have returned from The Great War with its end last November. The town should be jubilant but it's hard to be totally happy these days. This influenza is taking its toll on everyone's spirits. Some are calling it an epidemic. Poor Dr. Brereton hasn't had a change of clothes or a night at home for close to a week now. Mrs. Wilson lost her daughter and having had enough decided to move. Now we've lost two new mother's with babes in arms already this month from this flu. Thankfully West End Livery has been running Dr. Brereton from place to place night and day, by cutter through the winter and now with horse and buggy, and he's able to catch what sleep he can during the travels through the district.

Dear Diary... Did you ever have one of those years? I am a positive person but how can I look back on 1919 as a positive person. First I lost my wife to this wretched flu. They say it hit worst out here in the rural areas where there are a shortage of doctors and medical facilities – but we're people too and I just felt so helpless. Then we finally deal with this sadness and we watched as our crops were laid bare by hoppers. The sky was dark as the sun's light was blocked out. They say it's the worst its been since the early 90s. Fairbairns set up a mixing station at their implement shop where a concoction of molasses, bran and ground up oranges and lemons was made to spread on the land to bait the hoppers. Not sure if its doing any good but it's just another example of how nature seems to have the final say no matter how much

progress we make. At least the number of flu cases is starting to subside. Only time will tell how much longer it will persist but experts claim it may take the arrival of cold weather again in the fall before it's finally brought to an end.

Dear Diary... The roaring 20s is what they are going to be called they say – whoever they are? The only things roaring these days are the high powered engines of those American cars that roll through town at night on their booze runs! We've been a dry province since 1915, yet we seem to roll out more liquor than we did before with it being okay to send it out of province. Those two export warehouses in town, boozoriums as I like to call them have cars visiting all night to load up. There'll be a driver and a guy literally riding shotgun. Meanwhile the backseat is pulled so more sacks of liquor fit in for the run back down south. Lots of money to be made but it's a risky business too! Just last week two of the warehouse workers got hijacked and run a couple of miles out of town during a break in before being let go for a cold walk back to town.

The only other guys making money off booze these days are the doc and pharmacist because with the proper ailment you can get a prescription to buy liquor. Did I mention I'm good friends with the doctor? But enough said about that!

Prohibition has been hard on the hotel what with the barrooms being closed. The government offered grant money to subsidize it a bit but its still had an impact. Gotta give them credit for keeping it running. I expect give it a another five years and the government will back off and we'll be able to buy liquor again. They'll probably keep their hand in regulating it and getting some tax money from it, but it'll be back. Mark my words.

Dear Diary... February 1922 and the last load of booze has left the West End export warehouse. Licensing is going to be restricted to bigger centres for the boozoriums in the future. I think they were getting tired of hauling the liquor 12 miles with a team and sleigh to meet an American sleigh when the cars couldn't travel the backroads all winter. Oh well, I hear the Sairs are going to sell the West End to a Mr. Lownsbrough for a garage. Some say it's actually the CPR that owns the building and they were just renting it. Either way the garage will be good for the community too!

Dear Diary... Holy smoke! What else can you say... This fall will definitely be known for the fire of '23. Not sure what started it but wow. It wiped out the Massey Harris and moved west, cleaning out Jack Yee's restaurant, the old Queen's Hotel which had been vacant since back when it was used as a poultry killing station after the hotel closed. Then it also wiped out the Campbell & Curle building and the original Smith and Hamilton store building. Luckily the brick wall of the Lloyd and Heller hardware stopped it from continuing further west but talk about a lot of history gone!

We've had our share of fires in the past what with livery barn fires, the Ash residence, and then the previous fire in the Massey dealership when the intoxicated guy kicked over the coal oil lamp. That was a wild one, what with the Rifle Club's guns and ammo stored on site. No wonder the volunteer firemen just stood by and watched it burn rather than risk their lives to try and fight it.

Dear Diary: Well 1927 and the old gas plant is finally being retired after being such a sore point in the community. It served its purpose though and now we're able to move ahead with an electric light plant. The price was right picking up that used one from Mohall as they are moving to hydro. Probably within just a couple of years someone will contract to bring us hydro as well but in the meantime this plant will serve us well.

The creamery here in town has been doing great business since it was built in 1919. Adding that artisan well to supply water made it more profitable. Wow, when it was drilled that water was shooting out of the ground 8 feet with no pump needed. They had to drain it into the Antler Creek from the cesspool and the kids sure have fun since they piped that in, sliding down what they call the Creamery slide in winter. It caused a bit of a ruckus when seepage contaminated the water tower supply and they couldn't use the water for the train engines but they got that fixed once they realized the cesspool had no floor. I hear rumblings cream supplies are getting in short supply what with Oxbow creamery so close. Somethings going to have to give and they figure one of the creameries will close within a few years. Hopefully it isn't us but you know how politics works. Oh well, kids will probably be tobogganning down the Creamery slide long after the business is gone!

Dear Diary: Well the north side of the tracks are really shaping up into something special that Carnduff can be proud of. For years already it's been a gathering place for traveling concert troops, actors, orators and entertainers. Men seem to be into the lectures, while the women are drawn to the romantic plays, and there's always been great turnouts for Chatauqua's annual visits. Definitely worth the scramble to find guarantors each year to cover their charge to visit the community.

I have to admit after being a nay-sayer in the beginning, John Griffin's idea of a Park for the community has really taken shape. It has added so much to the beauty of the community. Now with the dedication of the swimming pool and cenotaph coming up on July 16 1933 our fallen and veterans will finally have a lasting tribute to their sacrifice for our country. It's another credit to the way Carnduff takes pride in itself. It will be interesting to watch the trees grow to maturity and provide a wonderful setting for future activities and celebrations.

Dear Diary: Well, here's hoping 1936 brings better things to our small community and also to those around us. It's been a rough few years for everyone. Finally things were looking a little brighter on the farming front last summer and then that 2 weeks of rust in July pretty much decimated the crops. Amazing how the town continues to come together and keep the community spirit going through the rough times as well as the good though. Elliott's Hall continues to be packed for the high school plays. And there was a good turnout once again for the Grand Challenge curling tournament last weekend. Not sure if the winners will have a lot of use for the bottle of bath salts they won. Not sure if they even have bath tubs, most people don't – but it's all the prize sponsors could afford and nobody complained. Even the book and bridge clubs seem to still be going strong. I guess it helps to keep a smile on people's faces and give them some respite from their worries.

I think one of things I'm missing during the 30s most has to be the summer fair. The Carnduff Ag Society had been so vibrant and active in all the years of Carnduff and even before, back in the old location. They started with judging things like handmade horseshoes and the best harness set. It gave the kids incentives too as they rewarded handwriting and essay writing. Things got so good later on that they even bought that land south of town and put in a race track, grandstand and exhibition hall. We were on the racing circuit like the big boys in Deloraine, Hartney and Melita.

Even when interest waned and they sold the land after a windstorm wiped out the exhibition building they persevered on with the new ag grounds they bought from the CPR. Oh it helped that they arranged with the town for the rinks to be built on the land but they did their part. Selling life memberships to the Society was a great idea. They were able to contribute \$1500 to building the rinks and in return they get to use them for agricultural purposes. Here's hoping that as times improve the fair comes back. I hear that even though they are not active they are making sure they continue their membership in the Association.

Another old elevator was closed and torn down last week with the lack of crops to keep it open these days. Oh well, it gives the kids a chance to collect the bent spikes and make 2c per pound for them as some spending money for treats at Carlton Café. They are eager to get out there and collect it and quite put out when they have to get out of the way as I pull up the dray team to meet the passenger train to pick up the mail and freight or a load of coal to haul into the warehouse for selling this winter.