

A Walk to Remember...

Block 2, Lot 24

Marval's

This site was picked for the first hotel in Carnduff; a basement was dug and stone foundation put in. When it was finally



Red Onion Relocation (c. 1915)

established that, rather than passing south of this location, the rail line would run along Railway Avenue, plans were abandoned and construction of a hotel began on Railway instead.

Mr. Gibson (Wesley) Halstead bought this property, and being a baker by trade, completed construction of a bakeshop, restaurant and boarding house known as The Red Onion. By 1902, Mr. Halstead had turned the restaurant management over to John and Mary Walker. In 1903, shortly after the local mill owner, W.A. Smith recruited another baker to set up shop in Carnduff, Mr. Halstead sold out and moved to the farm.

The boarding house and restaurant remained in operation for some years afterward under new ownership. The Red Onion was run by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Campain from 1905 to 1912 when they leased the business to a family by the name of Terry. In November of 1912, Mitchell Terry and his wife moved into Carnduff and ran The Red Onion until March 1914 when Mr. Campain sold the property to the I.O.O.F.

The I.O.O.F. had met in Thompson & Elliott's Hall on Railway prior to buying this site with interest in building a new lodge. They sold the Red Onion building from the site to Mr. William Defoe. In the spring of 1916 Mr. Defoe had the main part of the building moved to the north side of town where it was split and converted into two residences, one of which continues to stand today.

In 1916 the Oddfellow Hall was constructed, with plans for a theatre to operate on the main floor, and the Oddfellows and their sister organization, the Rebekahs, occupying the upper floor. The first movie was shown in October 1916 by Jenkins Movies, a week before the actual grand opening of the building. The early shows were silent films, as were the first movies shown in town, at the Thompson & Elliott Hall on Railway. The lodge also sponsored "At Homes" in the building during the early period which included lunch, entertainment and a dance.

Mr. Ted Watkins, show operator, was very interested in the movie business and brought many changes during his tenure from 1924 to 1932, including alterations to the building to permit a raised floor at the rear so everyone could see better. Attendance began to suffer after 1930 with movie buffs travelling to Sherwood, N.D. to experience the 'talkies'. On May 14, 1931 Mr. Watkins showed "Dawn Patrol", the first full feature picture with sound in Carnduff. Soon after, he modified the sign on the front from 'Moving Pictures' to 'Talking Pictures'. This sign would remain in place on the hall for many years, although in the early days with sound being on a separate reel from the movie, it was not always in sync with what was seen visually.

The town was without a theatre for a period when Mr. Watkins moved to Alberta and then Mr. Les Ramsey interested a number of citizens into taking over the show and operating it. Being one of only two theatres between Melita and Estevan at the time, crowds were seldom less than capacity or overflowing.

This changed however during the depression with few movies shown from 1933 to 1938. During this period the Carnduff band played dances at the I.O.O.F. on Saturday nights with admission for guys at 10c. Girls were admitted free just to get them there. Proceeds were split: 40% to hall 60% to orchestra.

In 1938 and 1939 Wallace McLeod of Estevan traveled to Carnduff to present the movies. In 1940, the Carnduff Community Theatre Co-operative Association was formed. With capital borrowed from the Bank of Montreal, and \$50 from each shareholder, equipment was purchased and set up in what was formerly the Methodist Church. The era of movies in the Oddfellows' Hall came to an end.



I.O.O.F. Hall (c. 1920)

The tough economic times and war years had taken their toll on the Oddfellows Lodge as well. It became inactive for a period, being revived in 1945 but with only 58 names on the register. By 1979, this number dwindled to 7 active members and the lodge was soon dissolved.

After the loss of the theatre, the lower level of the building served many purposes including rental suites, a beauty parlor, and serving as the location of the Rec Board office. In 1979, the building was purchased Dennis and Dianne Kolybaba from which to operate KO Advertising Specialties until the fall of 1985, shortly after which it relocated to Estevan. The Kolybabas sold the building to Mar-Val Sewing & Western Wear, which had been operating in the Martel Electric building. Selling tack, work and western boots, work wear and dress clothing Mar-Val continues to operate in this location. For a period, space was leased to Carnduff Accounting, but owner, David Sheard has subsequently relocated to a property on Railway Avenue.