

A Walk to Remember...

Block 29, Lot A

Royal Canadian Legion

In both World Wars and during other times of conflict and crisis since residents of Carnduff were quick to answer the country's call. They have served with valor and sacrifice on the sea, on the land and in the air. At home, organizations such as the Ladies Patriotic Society established in 1915 did their part to add to the comfort of the soldiers, the sick and the wounded overseas. With the end of the war, the Society remained active for a time contributing to other causes before becoming dormant. In 1928, reforming as the Carnduff Community Memorial Club the organization became the driving force behind a swimming pool and memorial dedicated to those that had paid the ultimate sacrifice.

During the same time frame, a number of splinter Veterans groups and regimental associations nationwide had united with a common goal – to help returned servicemen in need. The result was a unified group, the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Services League being founded in November of 1925 in Winnipeg. On October 3, 1938 a local branch of the Legion was organized by veterans with 16 applicants initiated. Minutes of the meeting reflected the times, as payment of the Watt's hall rental bill in the amount of \$1.25 had to be deferred, and 'paid when funds are available.'

The Official Charter received from Provincial Command on January 13, 1939 reflected member names: Dr. F.C. Stewart, J.E.R. Ramsay, K. Elliott, A.E. King, H.H. Emrick, J.M. Spencer, A.V. Perrett, H.W. Rice, J.R. Phillips and W.D. Thompson.

Initially the objectives of the Legion were to provide a strong voice for World War I Veterans and advise the government on Veterans' issues. World War II brought with it an influx of new demands and the Legion increased efforts to help Veterans and returned service members, as well as those serving abroad. The local branch supplied basic training to a large number of young men, resulting in them immediately entering advanced training on sign-up and a shortened learning curve to produce a fully trained soldier. War finance was another focal point with branches being a focal point in driving War Bond sales.

On a local level the branch became active in community affairs as World War II ended, and continues to be supportive of many community projects. As early as the late 40s the Legion sponsored the Ice Carnival and fostered the Carnduff Fancy Skating Club. Ensuring the rink was utilized year round, the Legion operated the Carnduff Park Gardens in the summer, a concert series in the summers that brought in well-known orchestras, bands and other performers to entertain.

The Legion found its permanent home in the upper floor of the town hall which had begun its existence as the Court House. In 1951 they agreed to vacate the premises temporarily to allow for their use as a dental clinic and doctor's office. This decision ultimately threaten the existence of the Legion as they floated from place to place, and in 1953 after going 14 months without a regular meeting contemplated disbanding and surrendering their charter. The branch decided to forge ahead, finally returning to their upper floor meeting room in 1954. In 1960, granted royal patronage by Elizabeth II, the Legion organization in Canada was officially renamed the Royal Canadian Legion.

Anticipating the end of life for the Court House building on the horizon a building fund was established a few years later. Car bingos as well



as weekly community bingos drove the fundraising efforts. Soon the community bingos outgrew the location and were hosted in the school auditorium, not returning to the Legion Hall until the new building was opened in 1967. Weekly bingos still continue at this location but the challenges of a busy society, on-going lottery draws and casinos have resulted in dwindling crowds over the years.

On December 1, 1967 the new Legion hall officially opened as home to both the Legion members and the Ladies Auxiliary of the Legion who had worked hand in hand with them since 1945. Over the years the Legion supported community projects such as a student loan program, Cadet Corps, and junior sports. Canvassing support organizations such as the Salvation Army, curling and skating rinks, swimming pool, Senior Citizen's Home and Lions Band has been given in addition to the annual canvas for the Legion Poppy fund.

As the number of active Veteran members has declined, Legion membership has been changed and is now open to anyone over 18 years of age wishing to apply to join. Membership locally has suffered as well but the local branch continues to be active supporting the community when it is able with such worthwhile causes as the Handi-van, Telemiracle, student memorial award, track and field camp, literary and poster contests.

The Legion organizes the local Remembrance Day service, poppy campaign and associated contests within our schools to ensure the contribution of our Veterans remain in our minds and our hearts. As the Veterans age, their time of volunteering is coming to an end. They have paid their dues. New volunteers are always welcomed to carry on their legacy. Lest We Forget....