

# A Walk to Remember...

# Church History

Worship and church life were fundamental for early settlers across the prairies and when the first homesteaders in the Carnduff district arrived in the early 1880s, Gavin Middleton was instrumental in organizing and leading prayer services among the early farming community. Sunday school services started for the children as early as 1886 from lessons published each week in the Winnipeg Tribune. The wife of James Preston arrived in 1887 and brought with her an organ. Their home became host to as many as 3 services each Sunday as Presbyterian, Methodist and Anglican ministers moved in and out of the growing community.

Settlers tended to support whatever church was available in their area in early days. Both the Presbyterians and Methodists began holding services in the hall above Smith & Hamilton's store on Railway Avenue when the town moved to its present location in 1891. A working arrangement for the growing population of rural congregations saw the Presbyterians tending northern church attendees at churches like Calvin and at Millions School while Methodists supported the southern congregations of Wheatland and Florence.

Reverend John Cairns became the first resident minister in the new community of Carnduff when the Cochrane store was purchased and moved from Railway Avenue and moved to the lot immediately west of the present St Andrew's United Church. This small building served as home to the Presbyterian Church for several years. After Rev. Cairns death in 1898, his replacement Rev. McTavish purchased the six lots on Pacific Avenue between Railway and McKinnon in hopes that a new church would be built.

The Methodists continued to use the hall for services but also were making plans for a new church buying lots on the corner opposite that of the Presbyterians on the east side of Broadway. By the time, the Methodists laid the cornerstone of Grace Methodist on October 4, 1901, the Presbyterians had a new manse on the west side of their property complete and by 1903 the two historic brick churches anchored the corners of Pacific and Broadway.



Both congregations flourished but in 1925 church union resulted in a decision to utilize the Presbyterian Church as the new home to St. Andrews United Church. The bell from Grace Methodist was moved over to St. Andrews and the cornerstone originally laid in 1901 followed in 1962. The Methodist Church building was subsequently sold and continues to be utilized as home to Carnduff Community Theatre while services continue to be held weekly in St. Andrew's United Church.

Religious worship in the Carnduff district has been varied and welcoming from the beginning and never limited to just the Presbyterian and Methodist congregations. As early as 1888 an Anglican minister by the name of Cartwright was also holding services in the Preston home in the old Carnduff townsite. By the late 1890s, a

larger core of English settlers had arrived in the area and St Mary's Anglican Church became their first established home in the Oakley district north of town.



More and more settlers from the old country arrived and settled right in Carnduff. Town worship services were initially held in the Presbyterian church but in 1905 St. James Anglican Church and vicarage on 1<sup>st</sup> Street East were built. In 1962/63 a major undertaking saw the church building moved so a basement with water and sewer could be placed under it. As numbers dwindled the church vicarage was sold and the church joined the Greater Parish of Oxbow. The ability to attract a full-time ordained priest became a challenge lay people stepped up for a period. While the building remains standing, it no longer holds regular services.

Baptist services were held east of Carnduff at Empire School in the Carievale district and on the farm of Henry Firth. Occasional services began to be held in the Presbyterian Church on Broadway and numbers dwindled at services at the rural locations until those points were closed. In 1907, adherents prompted by R. A. Anderson built the Baptist church on the northeast corner of 1<sup>st</sup> Street East and Pacific Avenue.

The church began with a strong congregation and remained active through the depression and into the 1940s. As some supporting families moved from the district, attendance declined and a decision was made to close the church. After a period when the facility was not being utilized it was taken over by the Associated Gospel Church in 1964. The church remains active serving the youth and adults of their community with a variety of programs including weekly worship services.

The Catholic population remained small in the Carnduff district throughout the early years and was served mainly from Estevan with occasional Catholic gatherings at the home of Frank Rabeau. In 1954, the Hastings school was purchased and moved to 1<sup>st</sup> Street East to become the first home of St. Jude's Catholic Church. With upgrades and repairs the building served the parishoners for the next 13 years until a new church was built in 1967.

In 1971, ten pin bowling lanes were added to the basement of the church as an independent enterprise and operated for about 10 years in the location before being closed. The church continued to serve its community of about 50 families until a fire destroyed the building in about 2000. A new church has now been built on 2<sup>nd</sup> Street West and with Carnduff's population growth in the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it appears to be thriving and will remain an important part of the community for the foreseeable future.

Carnduff's newest addition to our church community has returned worship services to the original Methodist Church building for the first time in close to 90 years. The Well is an evangelical, non-denominational church



established in 2015. Weekly services are held in the Carnduff Community Theatre and they are a welcome addition to our worshipping groups.