

A Walk to Remember...

The Theatre

Movies have been a part of Carnduff since October 1916 when Jenkens' Movies showed films in the Oddellows' Hall. They were continuous performances from 7:00 to 11:00 in the evening and were screened a week before the official opening of the hall. From 1924-1932 Ted Watkiss operated the theatre in the Oddfellows' Hall. During this time movies



Methodist & Presbyterian Churches.

underwent a major change when the "talkies" came to town. On May 14, 1931, the first "talking picture" was shown in Carnduff, a feature entitled "Dawn Patrol". There were few movies shown between 1933 and 1938 due to the depression. In 1938 and 1939 Wallace McLeod of Estevan travelled 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 share-holder, equipment was purchased and set up in what was formerly the Methodist Church.

Throughout the 40's the theatre was a well-used building. The movies screened were of good quality and were shown to capacity crowds. In 1947 the

building was improved to meet fire regulations and new comfortable theatre seats were installed to replace the chairs. From 1944-1947 the Department of National Defence rented the basement of the building for the sum of \$15 per month.

Throughout the early 1950's moviegoers turned their attention to watching movies in their own homes via television and theatre attendance declined. In 1956 with the advent of the Cinemascope the patrons returned to the theatre to watch the stars on the "big" scree. Carnduff was the first theatre tin the area to make Cinemascope available to its patrons. An addition to the building was completed at a cost of \$12,000 and new projection equipment was purchased for \$6,000. The screen, projection and sound equipment were installed by Earl Harrison.

During the later 50's and early 60's, moveis were shown siz nights a week but attendance declined once again. The frequency of the shows was reduced to two nights per week.

In 1977 a new screen was installed at a cost of \$664 which was paid for the the Carnduff & District Lions Club. By 1979 the theatre was in trouble and the doors were going to be closed. A town meeting was called and enthusiastic people came forward and the doors remained open. At that time, the admission prices were increased to Adults \$2.50, Students \$2.00 and Children \$1.00.

Throughout the 80's there were many ups and downs. In 1980, the basement was rented out to the local boxing club. In 1984



the theatre had to close its doors from January through April due to financial problems at which time a Ways and Means committee was set up to assist with operating costs of the theatre. In 1985 some of the seats were replaced for a cost of \$500. In 1986 the Town & R.M. agreed to share the cost of the insurance bill for the theatre.

In 1991 the federal G.S.T. was implemented and thus after 10 years an increase in admission prices were made. Adults \$3.25, Students \$2.75 and Children \$1.25. Concession prices were also increased for the first time in years. Popcorn increased to \$0.60, drinks to \$1.00 and bars to \$0.90. Throughout the 90's focus was put on extra fundraising and making small upgrades to the theatre including some electrical work and bathroom upgrades. In 1995 a large overhaul of the projection room was completed to accommodate the new projector that would be purchased for a price of \$33,000 as the parts for the old system could no longer be found. An agreement was also made with the Archery Club and they began their renovations in 1996.

In 2005, the year of the Provincial Centennial, funding was received and upgrades were done to some of the equipment including the sounds system and equipment that would now allow for projections of DVD's and computer presentations.

2014 saw our local theatre upgrade to a fully digital system. This means exciting times for our small town theatre and will allow for eventual 3D movie viewings.



Source: Carnduff and District "A Stake in the West" and "Echoses of the Stake" History Books