

A Walk to Remember...

Block 1 - Lot 1, 2 & 3

In the early days, settlement of prairie communities was a somewhat haphazard task with little pre-planning, government oversight or intervention. The community of Carnduff was no different when becoming established in its original location two and one half miles to the west. Recognizing common needs, neighbors drew together and gradually stores, blacksmith shops, and even a small school developed to serve settlers. When the railroad finally arrived in 1891, this blossoming settlement moved to its present location. The decision to move was driven, not by community consensus, but rather by the C.P.R., who needed better access to water for their depot and also looked to sell lots on their own land.

Entering the newly situated hamlet from the west, the first building seen on Railway Avenue was Mr. Cochrane's small store built on this location. With the railway in place and reports of opportunity drawing more people, Carnduff was booming. On March 29, 1899 village status was official. A year later, with a population greater than Estevan, Carnduff became the centre of the Judicial District and a new Court House was built in the community.

This first school was built in 1892 on the corner of Pacific Avenue & McKinnon (1st Street East). A second storey was added within a few years to deal with overcrowding among its 61 students. By the turn of the century a small cottage was built on a lot immediately south for the younger grades as enrollment continued to grow. Among the first trees in town grew from a small bag of maple seeds which a Mr. Anderson scattered around his property. Growing rapidly, they attracted the attention of Mr. Langford, the local teacher. He was given permission to transplant some to the school property on Arbor Day (May 10), 1897. Many of these historic first trees still stood on the school location over 70 years later.

The opening of the coal mines meant Estevan was rapidly becoming an industrial center and the Judicial Court was moved there in 1905 leaving Carnduff's Court House empty. Continued population growth meant a new school was needed, and a new two-storey brick school was built in 1906. The old school, across the street from the Court House became vacant as well.

In 1905 Carnduff officially became incorporated as a town with the first mayor being J.B. Preston. Seeking a permanent home, the town council moved into the main floor of the old school building. They were joined by the library, and the fire brigade, who relocated the fire bell, ladders and pails to this one centralized location. The first fire chief at the time was John B. Wilson.

One of the early issues council was forced to deal with was basement water. On the recommendation of engineers from Regina drainage ditches were dug to handle spring run-off. After objections from residents this plan was abandoned, the ditches filled in and basement water continued to be an issue for years to come. Early councils already believed in town beautification and ensured streets were graded and gravelled. One of the first initiatives was to promote tree planting within the community. A by-law was introduced which paid residents 50c to plant trees on the boulevard along their property.

The old Court House served many tenants before sitting vacant until 1941 when it was taken over by the town and became home to the town office, library and telephone switchboard. The fire department continued to reside in the old school building until 1943 when it relocated to the stone building that had housed Walter Stovin's blacksmith shop on Broadway. During their time in the Court House building council oversaw many major town projects including sewer lines in 1957, followed by water service in 1959. By 1963, mercury vapor street lights were installed and natural gas heat had replaced coal and oil furnaces in the community.

In the early 60's the Court House building was reaching its end of life and a new home was needed for council. The original Cochrane store back on Railway had only been in use for a short time when Mr. Cochrane relocated the business to Broadway. In 1894, the building was purchased by the Presbyterian Church and moved to Pacific Avenue. This location remained vacant over the years other than a period when it was home to a storage shed for the municipal grader.

Long before there was a municipal grader shed, local government of rural areas was the responsibility of a series of local improvement districts throughout the territory and later the province. Road improvements were a priority for these districts, as well as responsibility for such things as noxious weeds, gopher control, bounties placed on wolves and maintenance of a 'pound' for stray farm animals. In December of 1911, the local improvement district evolved into the R.M. of Mount Pleasant No. 2, governed by Reeve John Cairns and six elected councillors.

Money was limited in the municipality's early history with farmers struck by disasters such as rust, drought, grasshoppers and of course the depression. Taxes were often allowed to be offset by work-in-lieu, with man and team offering hours for road construction and maintenance in the pre-grader days. With the advent of better times and better equipment, the grid road system and large scale gravelling provided farmers and later, the oil industry with a better means to get their product to market. Better times meant the municipality could also become an important contributor to many community projects and services including the Gainsborough Hospital, Senior Citizen's Home, Carnduff Veterinary Clinic, and the Fire Department.

In 1964 the growing partnership between the Town of Carnduff and R.M. of Mount Pleasant took another step forward when Mayor Archie Reid and Reeve Alex Bonnor began discussions of a joint Town and R.M. office building. On Oct. 16, 1966 the new Municipal Office and Fire Hall was dedicated on this location. The building became home to The Town of Carnduff, R.M. of Mount Pleasant No. 2, and the renamed Carnduff and R.M. No. 2 Fire Department. In the council chambers, a Blackthorn walking stick from Ireland, given to early overseers of Carnduff by a Mr. Shouldice of Elmore, Saskatchewan continued to serve as a symbol of the responsibility granted to council by residents to oversee their affairs. The Fire Bell, now replaced by modern technology anchored the corner of the lot, serving as its own symbol of service to the community.

Council continued to be guided by many dedicated individuals in its new home, probably none more deserving of recognition than Mayor Dwight Anderson and Town Clerk, Dalton (Bud) Preston. Mr. Anderson had served on town council in the late 50s during the period when water & sewer were installed. During his 23 years as Mayor, he headed many other changes including the paving of all streets in 1977. Mr. Preston served as town clerk from 1954 right through until retiring in 1991.

In 2011, the on-going relationship between the Town and R.M. was renewed, as they opted to relocate once again to the vacated Rural Service Centre building on the western outskirts of town. In 2012, Jamie Powell purchased this building. After renovations, it remains home to her business Zaanti Relaxation Spa and a host of other esthetic, massage and salon services.



Town Hall (c. Late 1960's)



Town Hall Grand Opening (c. 1966)