

## Chapter 7 - Cultural, Religious, and Sporting Groups

### Co-Operation among Denominations

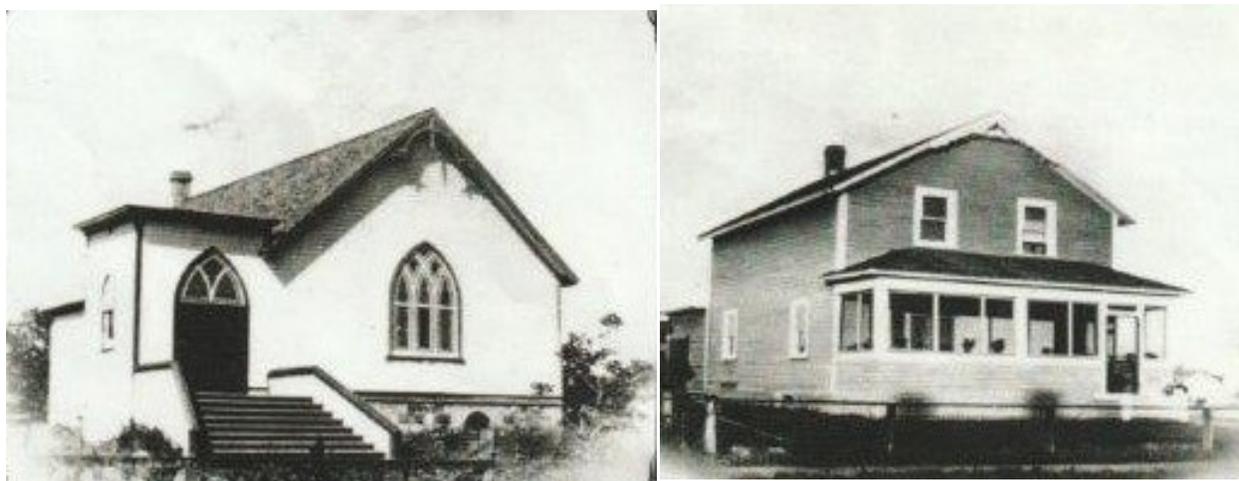
#### Theodore's Union Church

Although both the Presbyterian and the Methodist churches sought to establish themselves in as many communities as possible in the early years, conditions on the prairies were such that both denominations found their resources were stretched very thin. In 1899 the Methodists and the Presbyterians began formal talks on unification.<sup>1</sup> At the same time many settlers in the new communities on the prairies were discovering that co-operation rather than competition among the various groups was proving to be both economically and socially beneficial and they began to extend that philosophy to their religious lives as well. Although formal Church Unions was still years away, the Methodists and Presbyterians began forming local union churches in a number of prairie communities.<sup>2</sup> The first such union church was formed in Melville in 1908.<sup>3</sup> In Theodore the local union occurred six years later.

In the summer of 1914 the Theodore correspondent to *The Yorkton Enterprise* reported that the Methodist conference had decided, by mutual agreement to withdraw from Theodore and not appoint a successor to the minister, Mr. Irwin.<sup>4</sup> The Methodist church was turned over to the Presbyterians who agreed to carry on the work the Methodists had started.<sup>5</sup> The following week it was reported that the first service of the newly amalgamated church was well attended and that a new board would be elected.<sup>6</sup>

Theodore's Union Church continued to operate under the guidance of the Presbyterian Church until June, 1925 when the formal union of the Methodist, Congregationalist and many of

the Presbyterian congregations took place. The fact that the formal union of these three organizations received scant coverage in the local news is an indication of how well the idea of Church union was accepted locally.



Theodore United Church and Manse - Courtesy Bruce Frederickson Collection

In March, 1925, the members of Theodore's Union Church were able to burn the mortgage on the building that had been taken out in 1907, and almost immediately began to think of purchasing a residence for their minister. Consequently the United Church congregation in Theodore together with the congregations at Beaverdale and Creekside began to explore the idea of a manse, and in March 1926 each congregation was asked for an estimate of the amount it thought it could raise for the project.<sup>7</sup> A week later the president of the Ladies' Aid at Theodore reported that the women of the Theodore church would guarantee \$200 a year towards the purchase of a manse.<sup>8</sup> Having once made the decision to purchase a manse, the matter moved along very quickly. The Missionary Society of the United Church gave \$1,000 towards the purchase and provided a five-year loan of \$1,000, and in early April, 1926 the Theodore United

Church purchased the home of Mr. and Mrs. C. L. Markham, located on the corner of Main Street and Yorkton Avenue.<sup>9</sup>

### **Theodore's Union Sunday School**

The attempt to erect a single building to house the various denominations in Theodore in 1907 was not the first attempt at co-operation among the various denominations in the district. In the late 1890's it appears that several Sunday Schools were organized to serve all the children in each rural community. In August 1900, for example, it was announced in the Theodore news column that a Union Sunday School had been started at the school house and was progressing nicely.<sup>10</sup> One of the leaders of the Sunday School movement in the Theodore area was Mr. H. J. Gregory. In 1901 and 1902 there were announcements in the Theodore news that there would be Sunday Schools during the summer months in Theodore.<sup>11 12</sup>

On May 8, 1904, the four denominations in Theodore, Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist and Presbyterian, formally created a Union Sunday School in the village. According to McVey, prior to the erection of the Presbyterian and Methodist churches the Sunday School met in the waiting room of the train station.<sup>13</sup> One of the people responsible for the success of the Sunday School in Theodore was H. J. Gregory, a lay preacher with the Methodist Church, who every week, summer and winter, drove with horse and vehicle the six miles from his farm to Theodore to be present and act as superintendent.<sup>14</sup>

After the Presbyterians completed the construction of their church on Main Street it is most likely that classes were held in there because it was the only church building in the village at the time. Children of all denominations were encouraged to attend the Union Sunday School and

it appears that the teachers were also recruited from the different denominations.<sup>15</sup> Further evidence that the Theodore Sunday School was a shared responsibility is a news item from 1927 in which ladies representing the various churches were asked to meet to prepare the Christmas Stockings for Santa Claus.<sup>16</sup> A leading figure in Theodore's Union Sunday School was Mrs. Mary Tracy who served from 1908 as teacher and superintendent until she left the village in 1926.

One of the Sunday School's most popular activities was the annual Concert or, "Christmas Tree," as it was called at the time. This tradition began in 1900, before the village of Theodore even existed, when the ladies of the district organized such an event at the home of Mr. Pinder.<sup>17</sup> There was entertainment for the children, presents for everyone, and as usual, a lunch provided by the ladies who brought baskets full of food.<sup>18</sup> According to the Theodore news column, many of the families in the district enjoyed themselves until early morning.<sup>19</sup>

Anyone who ever attended a Christmas concert at Theodore is likely to recall the familiar pattern of carols, readings, songs, and recitations. The following news item from 1908 is the only description of a "Christmas Tree" from the years prior to the Great War to appear in *The Yorkton Enterprise* and seems to have established the pattern that was followed for many years.

A concert and Christmas tree was given in the Methodist Church on Christmas Eve with Mr. P. Yeman taking the chair. The first item on the program was; "Hark the Herald Angles Sing" by the choir followed by a prayer by the Rev. Maunders; recitation, Obert Reese; recitation, Ida Brown; flag drill, Maple Leaf forever; choir; recitation, Della Hope; recitation, Nellie Tracy; recitation, Minnie Hanson; solo, Ocean Foam, Stanley Irvine accompanied by Mrs. A. Wylie; encore solo, Robinson Crusoe; Recitation, Bertha Gregory; recitation, Edith Brown. Dialogue, "Uncomfortable Predicament" by the Misses B. Irvine, Lizzie Spencer, Mary Hope and Mr. Maunders; recitation, Tom Tracy; recitation, Dolma Larson; recitation, Alma Brown; "A Merry Christmas," the little folks concertina; solo, Minnie Hanson; lantern drill, "Canada Dear Canada," by the young ladies; recitation, Ella Brown; recitation, Dora Tracy, "Popping Corn"; chorus, "Jolly Skaters." A collection was taken up in aid of local expenses, the sum of \$9.45 being realized. Then followed Santa Claus, a part taken by the barber who acted his part to

perfection. After the prizes had been presented, the meeting was brought to a close, all having had a very enjoyable time.<sup>20</sup>

A second popular event was the annual Sunday School picnic. It was supported by many of Theodore's leading citizens who provided prizes for the events and on at least one occasion by one of the Jewish merchants who rowed the children around Theodore lake in his boat.<sup>21</sup> That the Sunday School was supported by many of the residents of Theodore as evidenced by the high attendance numbers. On 28 May, 1916 there were 87 children in attendance at the Sunday School and in October 1923 about half the children in the village attended the Sunday School Rally day with 78 children being present and sixty or seventy village children not attending.<sup>22 23</sup>

From time to time there were other concerts and events that were either held in support of the Sunday School or showcased children who attended the Sunday School. For example, in the spring of 1905 a Sunday School concert provided funds which aided the organ fund.<sup>24</sup> The Presbyterians had the only church in the village, so the organ was likely housed in that building.

### **Other Early Youth Activities.**

In addition to the Union Sunday School several other youth groups were organized and run by the various churches in the community. One of the first of these groups was the Epworth League, a Methodist youth organization founded in 1889 to promote fellowship, worship, Christian service, and the study of the Scriptures, was organized at Theodore in 1907.<sup>25</sup> A girls' group called the "Willing Workers" was associated with the Presbyterian church held a sale and concert in 1912.<sup>26</sup> There are two other references to young people's work in the Theodore

churches prior to the outbreak of the Great War. In 1914 the Theodore correspondent to the Yorkton Enterprise commented on the attendance of young people at the Presbyterian church<sup>27</sup> and the formation of a Young People's Society at the Lutheran church.<sup>28</sup> The Lutheran Church also had organized its Luther league at some point prior to 1921 when it hosted a two-day Luther League Convention in Theodore Lutheran Church.<sup>29</sup>

### **Missions, Missionary Work, and Church Music**

Another examples of how the people of Theodore worked together occurred in the Spring of 1903 when they decided to hold a social for the benefit to raise money for their respective missions.<sup>30</sup> The social was held at the home of J. A. McDonald, the manager of the Seeman farm, and the admission price was 25 cents.<sup>31</sup> The house was crowded with people, and as usual, the ladies supplied the supper. The social was judged to be a splendid success in every way and the proceeds from the event amounted to \$22.50.<sup>32 33</sup>

In a similar manner an interdenominational, community choir was formed in the Theodore district by 1902 and it was reported that, the Theodore choir was quite an acquisition to the settlement and was progressing favorably.<sup>34</sup> It is important to note that it was the Theodore choir rather than the Methodist choir or the Presbyterian choir. Musicians, it seems were more than willing to share their talents whenever and wherever they were needed. In 1914 the choir from the Presbyterian church sang at the Anglican's Thanksgiving service.<sup>35</sup>

## **Children and Youth Activities at Theodore After World War I**

The various children and youth activities were begun by Theodore's churches in the years following World War I. Although the different churches each offered a distinctly different program, all of the youth organizations were always open to all of the children and youth in the Theodore area.

### **Boy Scouts and Girl Guides.**

The first mention of a Boy Scout troop at Theodore occurred in May, 1921, when it was announced that a strong organization of Boy Scouts had been formed with L. L. Larson acting as the Scoutmaster. The Scouts met once a week on the Union Church grounds.<sup>36</sup> By the end of August, 1921, an executive had been organized, and a Cub pack had been formed.<sup>37</sup> The group Committee for the Theodore Boy Scout Troop in 1921 consisted of the following: Mr Ralph Thistle, president; Rev E. R. May, secretary; Mr. E. F. Westerman, Scoutmaster, and Mr. L. L. Larson, Cubmaster.<sup>38</sup>

The high hopes for a good turn-out of boys to the Monday night meetings expressed in one of the news reports appears to have been fulfilled. By early September, 1921, there were 13 Scouts and 13 Cubs identified in the Theodore news.<sup>39</sup> The following program for 14 February, 1922 appears to have been typical for a Scout meeting during the troops first year 7:30 Role Call, 7:45 Scout Call, 8:00 Signaling, 8:15 Story - Tom Gregory, 8:20 Debate: "Resolved :Traveling is More Educational Than Reading" - Affirmative: Tom Gregory, Bob Tracy, J Hooge, Don McCrea, Negative: Cyril Houlder, Roy Reese, Gordon Erstead, Frank Tracy, 8:45 Talk on "Evils of Smoking" Dr. O. A. Turner, 9:00 Dismissal.<sup>40</sup>

During the winter of 1921-1922 a Scouts hockey team was formed at Theodore and from reports in the Theodore news column it appears that a number of games were played against Scout troops in Foam Lake, Sheho, and Springside. A game played against a team from the Victoria School in Yorkton was described in some detail by the Theodore Correspondent to *The Yorkton Enterprise*. "Of course, hockey wasn't the only sport at which the Theodore Boy Scouts excelled. In the spring of 1922 a Scout sports day was held at Theodore at which the Theodore boys defeated the Springside Scouts by a score of 18 to 2 in a baseball match. A newspaper report from a year later indicated that the Scout sports day was intended to be an annual event."<sup>41</sup>

During the later part of July, 1922 thirteen boys from the Theodore Scout Troop were transported to Gunn's Beach on what was then known as Devil's Lake in two cars while a wagon load of tents and supplies followed. The adults attending the camp with the Scouts were The Rev. Mr. And Mrs. May, Mrs A. D. Tracy, and Mrs. A Fernie.<sup>42</sup> While at camp one of the patrols prepared a daily paper which was read at the evening camp fire. Selection from this paper were published in *The Yorkton Enterprise*, and give the modern reader an insight into Scout Camping of a century ago. Two boys, for example were appointed to be cooks for a day, and had to be up early to prepare breakfast for the rest. The Theodore Cub Pack was allowed to visit the camp and each Cub was paired with a Scout for the overnight experience. Fishing and water sports such as water polo were part of the camp program, as was working toward completing the requirements for various badges.<sup>43</sup>

It does not appear that the Scout Troop survived very long in Theodore. There is a mention of a Father and Son banquet, an important part of Scouting tradition, in May 1923, and another summer camp with the Girl Guides at Gunn's Beach the following summer.<sup>44 45</sup> After the

announcement of a Scout/Guide Hallowe'en party in late October 1923 both groups disappear from the Theodore news until 1940.

### **C.S.E.T. Programs: C.G.I.T., TUXIS, and Trail Rangers**

Canadian Standard Efficiency Training (C.S.E.T.) Programs had their beginning during the First World War as a specifically Christian alternative to the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. While it was originally developed by the YMCA, it was soon adopted by Canada's major protestant denomination (Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian) as a foundation for their work among the youth of the country. Three of the C.S.E.T. programs proved to be popular in Theodore. They were the C.G.I.T., TUXIS, and Trail Ranger Programs.



Irma and Ella Jensen in their C.G.I.T uniforms - note the bloomers

Canadian Girls in Training, (C.G.I.T.) is a church-based program for girls and young women aged 11–17 throughout Canada. Although founded in 1915 this group is not mentioned in the Theodore news column until March 1922, when Miss Jessie Maxwell, Girls Work Secretary for the Presbyterian Church in Saskatchewan addressed the congregation of the Theodore Union Church on the importance of girls work in the church and outlined the C.G.I.T. program.

The C.G.I.T. programme endeavours to develop the four-fold life – physical, intellectual, spiritual and social. This programme calls for a steady growth and development from early youth to womanhood. There is a great call for efficient leadership, the speaker declared. Parents should support the leaders, who should not only tell them how to live, but show them. The home is a mighty factor in either hindering or helping the church in its work with boys and girls.<sup>46</sup>

In the 1920's there were two groups of the C.G.I.T. in Theodore, a senior group called “The Willing Workers” and junior group identified only as “The S.O.S.”

The TUXIS and Trail Rangers programs were first offered to Canadian boys in 1918. Each program had its own emblems, crests, ceremonies and badges.<sup>47</sup> The Trail Rangers program was geared for boys 12 to 14, and the TUXIS program served boys aged 15 to 17 years.<sup>48</sup> Some sources state that the acronym TUXIS stands for “Training Under Christ (X) In Service. Like the C.G.I.T., the TUXIS and Trail Rangers’ programs focused on four elements: intellectual development, physical development, social events, and a strong religious or spiritual element.<sup>49</sup>

While the exact date on which the TUXIS and Trail Ranges programs were first offered in Theodore is not known, it is clear that they existed prior to February 1925 when it was announced in the local news that they had challenged their fathers to a game of hockey, and that the father and son banquet was to occur on March 8.<sup>50</sup>

Each year the C.G.I.T. and TUXIS groups each lead a church service in Theodore United Church and in the associated rural congregations of Beaverdale, Creekside, and other points. From the various description of the services, it appears that they were arranged and conducted by the boys and girls themselves. They formed their own choirs, read the scripture, lead the prayers, and delivered their own addresses to the congregations.

A second important event for these groups occurred each spring when the girls hosted a banquet for their mothers and the boy hosted a banquet for their fathers. Each boy or girl had a parent or a surrogate parent at the banquet. Again, as with the church services, it appears that the youth members of these organizations were responsible for making the banquet arrangements. The toastmaster for the event was usually one of the senior members to proposed the toast to the king and introduced the speakers.

The programs for the banquets included a series of toasts by the youth members and the appropriate reply by an adult. These toasts were to the parents, the school the church, the Sunday School, the community, and so on. The guest speaker was usually a prominent person from either Theodore or another community, and the banquets always included the singing of "O Canada," "The Maple Leaf Forever," and at the end of the evening, "God Save the King."

The big summer event for both the boys and girls was the camp at Gook Spirit Lake. These annual camping trips necessitated the need for fund raising activities. While it is unfortunate that there is no indication of how the boys raised money for their camps, the girls appear to have had numerous fund raising activities. There are several news items describing the concerts that the C.G.I.T. presented, and in which they performed musical numbers, and with the aid of some of the TUXIS boys a play. There are also references to the C.G.I.T. having a booth at the annual

Ladies' Aid Bazaar, at which they would sell such handmade items as aprons, serving teas and holding bake sales.

It was also the custom in Theodore to buy a carnation from the C.G.I.T. to wear on Mother's Day. Men, whose mothers were still living, generally wore red carnations, women, whose mothers were still alive, wore pink carnations, and if one's mother was dead, one wore a white carnation.

The TUXIS boys had one activity that was not open to participation by the girls, The Older Boys Parliament, held in Regina each year between Christmas Day and New Year's Day. The focus of the Boy's Parliament was to learn parliamentary procedure, by producing and debating legislation on topics of interest.<sup>51</sup>

In 1925 Wilfrid Mickelson of Theodore represented the Kamsack District in the Boy's Parliament.<sup>52</sup> In order to finance Wilfrid's trip to Regina the members of the Theodore TUXIS and rail Rangers sold bonds. A news item from 1925 states that the Theodore "Stick Together Camp" of Trail Rangers had again won the Constituency Shield for selling the most bonds for the Boy's Parliament, and that the shield was hanging in a conspicuous place in the United Church.<sup>53</sup> The same report stated that six boys had also won individual bronze medals for selling bonds.<sup>54</sup>

According to Wikipedia, there were no session of the Boy's Parliament during the great depression and World War II. It was revived in 1945 as the Saskatchewan Older Boy's Parliament. In 1972 Girls and non-Christians were permitted to participate and the name was changed to Saskatchewan Youth Parliament.<sup>55</sup>

The C.G.I.T. groups would occasionally join with the TUXIS and Trail Rangers groups for a joint social event. Once such event took place in September, 1923, when they hiked to

Kerstuik's Lake where they spent an enjoyable evening toasting marshmallows, singing, and giving yells.<sup>56</sup> Other joint events included picture shows, sports days, skating parties and concerts.

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