

Chapter 7 - Cultural, Religious, and Sporting Groups

Social and Recreational Activities in the Early 20th Century

Balls and Dances

As in the late nineteenth century, balls and dances continued to be a popular social activity in the twentieth century. After the village was established local musicians continued to provide the music and the local ladies continued to provide the refreshment. Various community groups such as the Theodore band, the village Bachelors and the Maiden Ladies, the Theodore Community Club, and all the various sports teams found that sponsoring a dance was an effective way to raise funds. Theodore's Ukrainian settlers sponsored numerous dances which appear to have been popular with just about everyone in the community. Many dances had special themes. For example, there were often masquerade balls in late October to celebrate Hallowe'en, and in February in honor of Valentine's day. During the various economic recessions, hard times dances were popular. Old times dances, married peoples' dances and the occasional barn dance, sometimes held in John Hooge's barn, were other dances with special themes.

One very popular dance was the annual New Year's Eve dance. For many years part of the evenings entertainment was the election of the "King of the Bachelors." During the coronation ceremony the village bachelors "moaned the loss" of those single men who had joined the ranks of the married.

Theodore's First Halls

While dances and balls were as popular in the twentieth century as they had been in the nineteenth century, one thing that did change was the venue. As the village of Theodore and the surrounding district grew larger and more populous, more and more dances were held in public buildings such as schools, the local train station, and places of businesses. Because of their larger size, stores and pool halls could accommodate larger crowds. However, it was not long before the crowds that attended Theodore's balls and dances outgrew these spaces, During the first three decades of the twentieth century several different halls were established in the village. It appears the earliest hall in the community was the second story of the school.¹ While Theodore's school may have been used for a number of different community functions, nothing has been found to indicate that dances were held in the Theodore school.

One of the earliest references to a community hall occurs in January 1909 when it was reported that a very pleasant hop had been held in Eckhard's hall, and that the crowd had enjoyed itself immensely.² It appears that the hall was located above A. D. Eckhardt's store on main street. Over the years several other halls are mentioned in the Theodore news. Theodore lost this hall when Eckhardt's store burnt down prior to World War I.

In 1918 it was rumored that the site of the old Leland hotel site had been sold to A.. Sant, who would be erecting a large up-to-date store there.³ Although that particular rumor proved to be unfounded, it appears that a new, large store, complete with plate glass windows, was built on Railway Avenue for the A. Sant Co. Ltd. in 1918.⁴ In 1920 it was announced that Sant was discontinuing business in Theodore and that Messrs. Cohen and Died would occupy the store left vacant."⁵

The firm of Cohen and Died remained in Theodore for only two years, discontinuing their business in Theodore in 1921. Mr. Cohen returned to Goodeve, where he was expected to open another business and Mr. Died was looking up a suitable location in the west.⁶ In the spring of 1920 the large building on Railway Avenue was sold to Nicoli Kitzul who turned it into the community hall and movie theatre that served Theodore until its new town hall was built in 1931.

Two other halls are known to have existed in Theodore. From the little information available it appears that they existed from the early years of World War I to about 1920. The first was owned by Frank Baxter, but there are very few references to it and its location is not mentioned. The second was opened by Chris Bates and was located on Main Street across from the sports grounds

Traveling Entertainment

On occasion the people of Theodore were treated to various traveling entertainments. While there are no records for many of these traveling entertainers who performed in Theodore, a few, such as the Toronto Ladies Quartette who performed in Theodore in 1916 had toured across Canada on several occasions.⁷ A few American artists also performed in Theodore. One of these was humourist Rube Allyn, who in 1908 performed before an audience in the basement of the Methodist Church.⁸ The Dixie Jubilee Singers, a group of six African-American singers who toured Canada on several occasions before they started recording their music in 1924, appeared in Theodore in December 1916.⁹

One group that made several appearances in Theodore was the Musical Eckhardts, a vaudeville troupe based in Toronto.¹⁰ The Musical Eckhardts, who apparently toured both in

Canada and the USA, were reported to charm their audiences with cleverly executed bell and glass ringing and marvelous music performed on a variety of instruments.¹¹ It seems that they always played to a full house in Theodore.¹²

It is interesting to note that the ticket prices for some of these traveling entertainments could be quite inexpensive when compared to concert prices in the twenty-first century. In 1912, for example, the Presbyterian Ladies Aid sponsored a talented soprano, Mrs. Libbe Beach-Knox, who had, apparently, been well received in other locations. The ticket price for this concert was 50 cents.¹³ Various inflation on-line calculators indicate that in 2018 the price for the concert would be about \$12.00.

Chautauqua

Perhaps the most popular form of traveling entertainment in the Theodore area were the annual Chautauqua shows. These shows toured the country every summer presenting a varied program by speakers, teachers, musicians, entertainers, preachers, and specialists of the day.¹⁴ The earliest reference to the Chautauqua in the Theodore news column occurs in 1917 when it was announced that a number of people from the village and district had attended the Chautauqua in Foam Lake.¹⁵ Beginning in 1918 and continuing for a number of years Theodore had its own Chautauqua. The Chautauqua tents were usually set up on Railway Avenue near the railway station where they remained in the village for three or four days, and everyone was encouraged to attend the program of lectures, music and so on.¹⁶

One of the problems associated with the Chautauqua shows was financing them. During the post war recession of 1922 Theodore was unable to secure the financial resources needed to

guarantee a Chautauqua show for the following year. By the fall of 1923, however, economic conditions had improved to the point that the performances could once again go ahead.¹⁷ The problem arose again in 1930 when, in spite of providing splendid entertainment, ticket sales did not cover the amount that had been guaranteed to the Chautauqua organization, and the local backers were forced to raise a considerable sum.¹⁸

Money as scarce during the great depression, but that fact did not dampen Theodore's enthusiasm for Chautauqua style programs. The village simply found its own alternative. In 1936 for example, the United, Church sponsored a program in the village hall that featured local talent. The first night took the form of an amateur night with judging by the holders of adult tickets. The next evening was a "Know Your Canada Night," in which seven different groups from nearby districts present characteristics of the various provinces throughout the Dominion.¹⁹

More than 350 people crowded into the village hall for the first evening's program which featured thirty five items including a number of songs, instrumental selections, imitation bird whistling, and some tap dancing. In addition to performers from Theodore people from Creekside, Foam Lake, Insinger, Invermay, Rocky Dell, and Springside helped to make the two evening event a success.²⁰

Circuses

As in almost every other location, the arrival of a circus in the area drew a large crowd. In 1917 a number of people from Theodore went to Yorkton to attend a circus there and in 1923 dozens of automobiles found their ways over the various routes from between Theodore and Yorkton to attend the Ringling Brothers Circus there.^{21 22} The CPR ran a special train to

Yorkton for the circus and 110 tickets were sold in Theodore.²³ In 1926 the Cooper Brothers Animal Show and Wyoming Bill's Wild West Show drew good crowds when they put on two shows in Theodore.

Unfortunately, not all traveling entertainment was a positive experience for the people of Theodore. In 1920 the Campbell Brothers Circus gave two performances in Theodore, and left many people unhappy.

The Campbell Bros. show has come and gone and with a good deal of money that should be in the pockets of the rightful owners. One party stated being victimized to the extent of \$36 shortage in making change when buying tickets. This is only a sample of the many [complaints].²⁴

Theodore's First Motion Picture Shows 1910 - 1922

Various items in the Theodore news column indicate that the first motion picture shown in Theodore was also traveling entertainments because after a brief mention of it in 1910, there is no mention of another motion picture show until January 1912, when the Theodore news reported that moving picture shows had attracted large crowds to Eckhardt's hall four times a week for a period of two weeks.²⁵ ²⁶ Another report dated a week later stated that Newell's picture show concluded their engagement on Saturday night playing to a good house.²⁷ Four years passed before there is mention of another moving picture show in Theodore. In 1916 the Hartman's picture show entertained a full house at Baxter's hall, the music especially pleased the audience.²⁸

As World War I was drawing to a close in 1918, movies became very popular. One of the attractions at the School Fair was a moving picture show provided by Mr, A. Wicks, the movie man.²⁹ Frequent mention of movies provided by Mr. Wicks, who apparently resided in

Bredenbury, a community located on the CPR line east of Yorkton, and traveled the district with his movies during the years following 1919, indicate that movies were a regular and popular entertainment. With the creation of the Community Club in Theodore, movies became a regular and permanent part of Theodore's entertainment scene³⁰.

Local Entertainment

Public Speaking

Much of the local entertainment prior to World War I involved the ability to speak in public. The ability to speak in public whether it be in a formal debate, or a recitation at a Literary Society meeting, or participation in the local drama club, was a highly regarded skill in the early years of the twentieth century, and much of the local entertainment at Theodore was dependant on this skill. An elocution contest in 1908 was described as follows:

A gold medal elocution contest was held in the Theodore Union Church, on Friday evening, January 17th., commencing at 8 p.m. The first item on the program being a selection on the gramophone, recitations by Marable Tracey, Song by Mrs. Hunter, accompanied Mr. Brierly, recitation by Gladys Tracey, selection on the gramophone, recitation by Sadie Yeoman, Duet by Mr. and Mrs. Brierly, recitation by Lizzie Spencer, concertina solo, Farewell Killarney, by C. Tracey. At this point the judges retired to count up the points and determine who should be the winner of the gold medal. Mr Hunter said a few words and hoped that the defeated girls would try again and perhaps they would be successful in the future. The judges having returned and announced their verdict, Mr. Hunter said that it gave him great pleasure in awarding the gold medal to Miss Lizzy Spencer. The meeting closed with the singing of the national anthem.³¹

One of Theodore's earlier teachers, Miss Mabel Harbour, who has arrived in 1911 to teach the junior department of the school was a holder of the Gold Medal of the London Academy of Music for her ability as an elocutionist. Reports in the Theodore news column say that she was a very popular entertainer whenever she participated a local concert.^{32 33} Over time entertainments that

focused primarily of elocution became less and less frequent and the last one to be staged prior to World War II occurred in November 1934.

Like many other communities on the Canadian prairies Theodore had a Literary Society in its early years. There is no indication as to when the society in Theodore was first organized, but an item in the Theodore news column from December 1900 reminds the residents of the district that there would be a meeting to elect new officers on the Wednesday of the following week.³⁴ The Literary Society appears to have relied on local individuals to provide material for its programs. For example, in the fall of 1906 the Rev Mr. Hunter gave a series of addresses on The Reformation, and good attendance was reported.³⁵ In October of that year the Literary Society arranged for a musical evening at which songs and recitations together with tea and cake were the attractions.³⁶ The evening was described as very pleasant, and similar entertainment was planned for the rest of the winter.³⁷

In addition to Literary Societies many communities also organized debating societies, and Theodore was no exception, having organized one in the 1890's.³⁸ Debates between local members or between communities appear to have been a popular entertainment and was often reported in the local news columns. In October 1906 the Theodore Literary Society debated the topic, "resolved that the pen is mightier than the sword."³⁹ In 1908 a debate "Resolved that departmental stores are detrimental to the best interests of the country," was won by the Theodore debating team of M. Maunders and J. S. Anderson who argued for the affirmative against the Beaverdale team of C. Dunning, Rev. Gow and W. Wilson.⁴⁰

Drama

Another popular form of entertainment that depended on the ability to speak in public was drama. The Theodore Ladies Dramatic Club presented a few plays in 1914 and a group from Foam Lake presented a play in Theodore as well.⁴¹ In the spring of 1915 Theodore's amateur dramatic society presented the play, "The Bachelor's Divorce,"⁴² Unfortunately, the drama club disappeared from the news during World War I, but was re-activated in 1919. There are reports of plays staged by this group for a number of years thereafter. Sometimes other groups such as the local Legion or the United Church Ladies' Aid would stage a play in order to raise funds for a special project of their own or in order to assist the efforts of another community group. In the spring of 1924 a play staged by local Ukrainian artists and well attended by those who understood the language.⁴³ In the late 1920's Theodore's amateur dramatic club again disappeared from the local news for several years, but their place was soon filled by Springside Dramatic Society who presented a number of plays in Theodore that, according to the reports in the Theodore news column, were well attended and enjoyed by Theodore's residents. Drama in Theodore was revived in the mid 1930s and several productions were staged during the winter of 1935-36. The United Church Ladies' Aid and the CGIT girls both presented plays in Theodore that winter as did drama clubs from Springside and Jedburgh.

Concerts featuring Local Talent

During its early decades Theodore was home to a number of very talented people who enjoyed entertaining their friends and the community as a whole. Every year saw a number of concerts featuring local talent that often received high praise from the community as a whole.

On Friday last the school children gave a concert. Depend upon a crowd of lively children to make you forget the worries and cares. They had us laughing or intensely interested from start to finish. The characters enacted in the little sketches were so real that a professional actor might feel envious of the true and unaffected ability shown. A couple of "Chautauqua numbers" compared favourably with the real thing, And the singing – children like to sing, and can sing, and these children sang with all their heart. The concert was in aid of Theodore's rink and as the financial returns from the concert are considerable, Theodore should have considerable skating this winter, once Jack Frost is here in earnest and we are sure the ice will not thaw as it might do at present with the mild sunshiny weather we have been having.⁴⁴

The proceeds from many of these concerts usually went to some worthy cause in the community. During the first World War, for example, the proceeds of many concerts went to the Red Cross. After the war the proceeds of some concerts went towards building and maintaining the local skating rink. Some concerts, such as those during the Christmas season, were presented simply for the enjoyment of the performers and the audience. Christmas concerts featuring young performers were especially popular. Children enjoyed participating and their parents enjoyed watching them, and of course the visit from Santa Clause was always an important feature of Theodore's Christmas concerts.

From various news reports of Theodore's concerts it appears that the programs were often a selection of musical numbers interspersed with skits, recitations and sometimes short plays. There are many references to songs presented as solos, duets, trios, quartets, and by a full choir, as well as references to all kinds of instrumental music by individuals, orchestras, and the local band. Sometimes the program would consist of performances by groups from other communities such as Creekside, Springside, and Yorkton.

Minstrel Shows

One form of entertainment that was almost universally popular on the Canadian prairies during the 1920's was a minstrel show, and these were as popular in Theodore as anywhere else. This, of course, was a time long before anyone thought that a minstrel show in which white men dressed up as black men and women might be considered to be culturally insensitive, offensive, or in any way inappropriate. Writing in 1947, J. S. Anderson recalled that Theodore's first Minstrel shows was a financial success, even though some of the Scandinavian, Ukrainian and near-Cockney accents which issued from blackened faces of the performers would have curdled the blood of any American southerner.⁴⁵ One of the minstrel shows is described as follows"

One of the largest crowds ever seen here jammed the big Kitzul hall to the doors on Monday night to witness the performance of the Theodore Minstrels who put on a show under the auspices of the Community Club.

The audience was kept in a constant uproar of laughter for nearly two hours by the local Minstrel Troop. This constituted the first minstrel performance ever put on by local talent in this district and the success of the undertaking was doubtful, and the boys thought they had undertaken something they could not handle. The audience were pleasantly surprised by the success of this performance and were almost unanimously in the opinion that this was the best entertainment that they witnessed by Theodore talent for a long time. The minstrel show was a success in every way. Those responsible for the success of the show are: John Smith, who occupied the interlocutor's chair; G. Darrach and D. Herron, end men and J Hanson, C. Bonney, J Leaman, T Sanders, J. Dory, J. Hill, T. Hayes, A Thompson, Westerman, J. McCrae, H Kletzky, and J Conn. John Smith was severely reprimanded by some of the school boys because he was the only one of the Minstrel Troop that did not wear black face. They told him that he was too proud to blacken his face.

G. Danah and D. Herron certainly put their jokes over in grand style and were assisted by J. Smith who acted as if he had acted in that capacity of interlocutor with some big Minstrel Troops. J Hanson, C. Bonney, T. Sanders, J. Dorey, and J. Hill surprised the audience with their performance and put on their tunes in great style.

Mr. Westerman, A. Thompson, A. Frederickson, W. Frederickson, and Tom Hayes supplied the audience with several local treats which were encored.

Rev. Geo. Washington Jefferson delivered a message to the audience on which he took for his subject, "Miracles. It will be a miracle if any one who has heard him can hold a straight face when J. Leaman adorns the robe of a parson again."

James McCrae, H. Kletzky, Carter and J. Conn comprised the Orchestra and filled the gap when intermission time came.

The Minstrel show realized almost \$100.00 clear on this performance.⁴⁶

That Minstrel Shows were a popular form of entertainment in the 1920s is evidenced by items in the Theodore news column indicate that Theodore's Minstrel shows were attended by residents of other communities such as Buchanan and Insinger. Springside also put on Minstrel shows and would bring their entertainments to Theodore and the Theodore group took their show to Springside.

Theodore's Brass Band

In the fall of 1915 Mr. James Twentyman, a watchmaker and jeweller who had been living in Saltcoats opened a business in Theodore in Mr. Brown's furniture store.⁴⁷ At the time he moved to Theodore it was reported that he was a very capable musician and taught both vocal and instrumental music.⁴⁸ Shortly after his arrival his musical skills were demonstrated to the local community at an ice cream social sponsored by the Presbyterian Ladies' Aid and were much appreciated by the large audience.⁴⁹

There is little mention of Mr. Twentyman in the Theodore news until early February, 1916 when it was announced that a brass band of 27 instruments had been formed under his direction and management was making rapid progress.⁵⁰ The band practised every Monday night and by Easter 1916 were ready to give its first performance.

The band concert held on Monday evening was one of the best entertainments ever given in Theodore, The eight selections given by the band were very well rendered in deed, and considering the fact that twenty of the twenty-seven members had never had an instrument in their hands until ten weeks ago, the performance was wonderful. The Theodore waltz composed by Conductor Twentyman especially pleased the audience. The orchestra was

the best ever heard here while songs by Mr. Edge and a solo by Mr Kirstuik were well received. The quartettes were excellent and on one occasion were called back three times. The band deserves the heartiest support of the community. They have the talent and the determination to make a first class band, and are fortunate in having an instructor of Mr. Twentyman's ability and earnestness. We doubt there is any other instructor could do so much in ten weeks time. We wish the band every success.⁵¹



Theodore's Brass Band - Courtesy Colleen Bilokreli

The band proved to be popular and in June, 1916 subscriptions were being taken for the erection of a bandstand on the Theodore sports grounds.⁵² The bandstand was completed in time for Theodore's annual Sports Day on July 1, at which the band again performed. Over the course of the next few years the Theodore Brass Band played numerous concerts both in the village and in neighbouring communities.

In August, 1918 Mr. Twentyman bought a jewellery store in Wynyard and moved from Theodore.⁵³ His departure along with several other band members meant that the band had to be

re-organized in 1919 and a new leader found.⁵⁴ No information regarding either the new band leader or the re-organization has been found, but in 1921 reports of band activity again appeared in the Theodore news column with the announcement that Mr. Joseph Conn, the local agent for the Imperial Oil Company, was leading the band.⁵⁵

Theodore's Brass Band was a feature of the sports day celebrations until at least 1930, It was also sometimes invited to perform at public functions in nearby communities.

Miscellaneous Entertainments

From time to time Theodor's residents would become fascinated with a certain activity for a short while and then quietly drop it. One activity that became popular for a short while in the early 1920s was checkers. In November the author of the Theodore news column reported an epidemic of checker playing, in December proclaimed that no one in the village could beat Harry Austin, a local contractor, at the game.^{56 57} In 1922 Lawrence Larson's confectionery store was the headquarters for the village checker players who could be found there on any evening enjoying a game.⁵⁸

In 1936 a Model Aircraft Club was organized in Theodore by E. V. Jones, the newly arrived agent for the Imperial Oil Company. At the second meeting of the club, Jones explained the principles of flight to the members, answered questions, and explained how to assemble the first flying model kits, which were to be completed at home. A third meeting was scheduled, but there is no further information on the club.⁵⁹

Notes:

1. "Theodore News" *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 14 March, 1907.
2. "Theodore News" *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 28 January, 1909.
3. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 28 February, 1918.
4. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 22 August, 1918.
5. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 3 June, 1920.
6. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 10 February 1921.
7. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise* 9 November, 1916
8. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 9 January, 1908.
9. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise* 14 December 1916
10. "Talbert Carey," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*. Retrieved 10 March 2018 from:
<http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/talbert-carey-emc/>
11. "The Musical Eckhardts," *The Chilliwack Progress*. 22 October, 1913.
12. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 9 April, 1925.
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<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chautauqua>
15. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise* 27 October, 1917.
16. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 17 July, 1919.
17. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 24 September, 1923.
18. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 5 August, 1930.
19. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 21 May, 1936.
20. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 4 June, 1936.
21. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise* 26 July, 1917.

22. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 10 August, 1923.
23. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 10 August, 1923.
24. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 17 June, 1920.
25. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 14 July, 1910.
26. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 25 January, 1912.
27. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 1 February, 1912.
28. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 2 March, 1916.
29. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 12 September, 1918.
30. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 18 May, 1922.
31. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 30 January 1908.
32. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 7 September, 1911.
33. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 22 February 1912.
34. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 12 December, 1900.
35. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 24 October, 1906.
36. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 31 October, 1906.
37. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 31 October, 1906.
38. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 12 April, 1900.
39. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 31 October, 1906.
40. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 9 April, 1908.
41. The Foam Lake Chronicle 2 April, 1914.
42. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 11 February, 1915.
43. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 2 May, 1924,
44. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 9 December, 1920.

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46. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 21 March, 1924.
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49. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 9 September, 1915.
50. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 3 February, 1916.
51. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 20 April, 1916.
52. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 22 June, 1916.
53. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 22 August, 1918.
54. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 13 March, 1919.
55. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 17 March, 1921.
56. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 11 November, 1920."
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58. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 10 October, 1922.
59. "Theodore," *The Yorkton Enterprise*. 26 November, 1936.