

Bru



Class at Bru School, taken between 1890-1895. Top Row: Gudrun Simonar , Thorun Sveinson, Thorbjorg Gunnlaugson, Thorbjorg Jonson, Thorun Jonson, ?, John Frederickson. Second Row: Ingibjorg Sveinson, ?, ?, Jakobina Johannsson, John Th. Johnson, Beggi Sveinson. Bottom Row, Centre, Sitting in Chair: Rev. B.B. Jonsson, Teacher. At his right shoulder, Dr. Jon Steffanson. Second to his right, sitting, S.A. Anderson. Last three standing to right: C.B. Jonsson, Paul Anderson, Sigvaldi Gunnlaugson.

Some writers record Bru S.D. No. 368 as having been established as early as 1885, with Mr. McBain as the first teacher. However, the first official register of attendance is for 1887, with 19 pupils enrolled. The first school building was on SE 16-6-13, the homestead of Bjorn Jonsson, and the present residence of Claire Johnson.

In 1897, it was moved to the northwest corner of SW 11-6-13. Records show that in 1898, enrolment varied from 40-55, depending on the season and age of the pupil, with trustees being Harvey Hayes, Halldor Anderson and C.B. Johnson.

This building served until 1921, when it was replaced by a new school on the northwest corner of 11-6-13.



Class at Bru School, taken in 1906 or 1907. Top Row: Pauline Johnson, Thorbjorg Jonsson, Laugi Gudbrandson, Clifford Hayes, Victor Frederickson, Albert Anderson, Helgi Oliver, Fred Johnson, Thor Sigurdson, ? Axford. Second Row: Mary Bjornson, Gunna Steffanson, Ida Hayes, Dora Landy, Mattie Knight, Teacher; Fjola Johnson, Emma Landy, ?, Jonas Helgason. Third Row: Sigrun Einarson, Hilda Anderson, Bjorn Sigurdson, Fred Isfeld, Hringur Isfeld, Kristinn Gudbrandson, B.K. Jonsson, Ben Johnson, Svava Steffanson, Margaret Isfeld. Fourth Row: George Isfeld, Gudny Sigurdson, Veiga Anderson, Pauline Jonsson, Sigrun Jonsson, Lauga Oliver, Gudny Gudbrandson, Arthur Hayes.

Monthly salaries varied from \$40 in 1898; \$70 in 1932; \$50 in 1935; \$150 in 1948 to \$280 in 1959.

Christmas concerts and the annual picnic in June were highlights of the school year.

As with rural schools, enrollment decreased during the 1940's and early 1950's until in 1959, only 11 pupils were in attendance. It was voted to consolidate with Cypress River.

Bru School was sold by auction to Leon DeSmet and moved to be used as a shop. It was later destroyed by fire.

(BRU) FRIKIRKJA CHURCH

Some of the first settlers in the Argyle district were folk from Iceland and by 1884, their numbers were sufficient to band into organized groups and start to plan the building of a place to worship. On New Year's Day, 1884, the first meeting took place at Mr. and Mrs. Bjorn Walterson's. Thirty-six persons agreed to form the first Icelandic Lutheran Congregation and thus be the charter members. This was named Frikirkju Congregation at Bru.

On Jan. 6, 1884, a second meeting was held in the western part of the community where 35 more members were added to the congregation. Within a year the congregation had grown to 90 members. First deacons were Bjorn Jonsson, Kristjan Jonsson, and Jon Olafsson. First trustees were Bjorn Jonsson, Skafti Arason and Skuli Anderson. First service was held Oct. 24, 1884, with the pastor Rev. Jon Bjarnason, who became supply pastor.

Distance and mode of travel hampered the progress and continued growth of the congregation. The result was that on July 26, 1885, the Frelsis Congregation (Grund) was organized to serve the western community. The two congregations later reached a compromise to build a church at Grund. This was done and the church built in 1889. Therefore these two congregations of Frikirkju (Bru) and Frelsis (Grund) worked together in harmony for over 20 years and shared the same church building. During these years they were served by Rev. Hafsteinn Petursson, Rev. Jon Clemens, and Rev. Fridrik Hallgrimson.

To overcome, somewhat, the problem of distance and travel the members of Frikirkju (Bru) Congregation decided on the need for a church closer to their homes. Discussions and plans for a new church began at Bru in 1906. Three years later the decision was made to build a new church. In 1910, it became a reality and the church was built on southeast corner of 21-6-13, with Jon Olafson of Glenboro as head carpenter, and was called Frikirkju Lutheran Church. The \$5,000.00 structure was composed of three sections: the main part 36 ft. x 28 ft., the east wing for the choir, organ and minister's room 12 ft. x 24 ft., and the altar portion 12 ft. x 16 ft. Beautiful stained glass windows adorn the entire building. In the book, "Lutherans of Canada", Dr. V.J. Eylands has written, "This is a beautiful church with a seating capacity of around 200, and was valued at the time of construction at about \$5,000. The beautiful furnishings of the church and its very fine liturgical floor plan have lead it to be described by many visitors as the most beautiful country church they have seen."

Following Rev. F. Hallgrimson's recall to Iceland the parish has been served by: Rev. K.K. Olafson, E. Fafnis, Eric Sigmar, Johann Frederickson, Donald Olson, Kristjan Robertsson, Morris Green, Alan Pope, and Larry Glaeske.

Conrad Nordman was elected organist when the church was built and served at his post for 47 years until his death in August, 1957. He was replaced by Dorothy Nordal, who is still serving in this capacity.

Gradually, as the farms have become larger and hence fewer families in the area and the families somewhat smaller, there has been a distinct reduction in membership.

Today, only five or six special services are held annually, plus funerals and weddings.



Frikirkja at Bru

BRU LUTHERAN LADIES' AID 1895-1981

On June 13, 1895 several ladies of the Frikirkju Church congregation met at Josef and Malmfridur Bjornsson's home, NW 16-6-13 (Holmkell Josephson's parents) to organize the Bru Ladies' Aid. Those present were:

J. Valgerdur Bjornsdottir (Mrs. J.T. Frederickson) Gudrun Kapnasyurdottir (Mrs. Jon Halldorson) Gudrun S. Jonssdottir (Mrs. S. Stefanson) Anna S. Jonsdottir (Mrs. J. Fridfinnson) Kristin Hansdottir (Mrs. B. Walterson) Malmfridur Hallgrimsdottir (Mrs. J. Bjornsson) Gudrun Josepsdottir (Mrs. Finnbogason) Valgerdur Bjornsdottir (Mrs. Andres Johannson) Thorbjorg Bjornsdottir (Mrs. Bjorn Jonsson) Halldora Sigvaldadottir (Mrs. B. Gunnlaugson) Helga Jonasdottir (Mrs. Jon Olafsson) Margrjet Halldorsdottir (Mrs. H.H. Johnson) Steffania Jonsdottir (Mrs. Magnusson) Gudrun Bjarnadottir (Mrs. Th. Johnson) Geirthrudur Jonsdottir (Mrs. S. Pjetursson) Anna Kristjansdottir (Mrs. Hjalmarson)



Bru Lutheran Ladies' Aid, 1950. Standing: Margret Josephson, Sigrun Johnson (Dori), Osk Isleifson, Laura Nordman, Vala Hallgrimson, Gusta Anderson, Sigrun Johnson (Emil). Kneeling: Clara Johnson, Gudny Sveinson. Last Row: Emma Hallgrimson, Paula Johnson, Sylvia Isfeld, Mary Sveinson, Sigga Hanslip.

The first officers were: President - Helga Jonasdottir, Secretary - Anna Kristjansdottir, Treasurer - Gudrun Bjarnadottir.

It was agreed that each lady should pay a 25 cent fee to belong to the society. At this meeting, their first, after making and reading the rules and regulations for the society, their big project was to buy the communion ware for the church then in use. From then on they worked very hard, having concerts, tombolas and dances, admission being 20 cents and lunch sold for 10 cents. As little money as the people must have had in these days, the members often donated \$1.00 each to swell the coffers. By so doing they were able to donate to Winnipeg General Hospital, Betel Home, to help build and furnish Bru Hall and to help the needy.

The most important thing they did was to purchase all the beautiful oak pews and most of the furnishings for the Bru Church, which, after much hard work, was completed Nov. 6, 1910.

Mrs. Helga Olafson (Oliver) who, by this time, had been made an honorary member of the society, requested that no flowers be given in memory of her, instead the money be used for the needy. Therefore after her death on Nov. 10, 1913, the ladies decided to form a special fund and call it "Memorial Flower Fund" and donated \$50.00 in her memory. To this day the fund is being used for many useful projects, such as redecorating the church, setting up a steel fence around the graveyard and helping the needy.

After 86 years the society, having 13 members now, is still active and continuing the good works of the pioneers. The transition from Icelandic to English was made in December, 1954.

A post office was established at Jon Olafsson's home at Bru in the early 1880's. It was named Bru Post Office, the word "bru" being the Icelandic word for bridge. The Olafsson home, later Albert Oliver's home, was near the bridge on Oak Creek. The location was the northwest corner of NE 16-6-13. At first Mr. Olafsson walked to Millford for the mail, but later, when the railroad came through Cypress River in 1886, he would get the mail at Cypress River. In 1914, Jon Olafsson passed away. After that, the Bru area got their mail by rural route.

BRU LITERARY SOCIETY

A Literary Society was formed in the early years of the settlement. The Icelandic people love reading and although the pioneers had brought their Bibles, Books of Sermons, Hallgrimur Petursson's Passion readings, hymns and the sagas, they were hungry for more Icelandic literature, as they could not read English. They, therefore, banded together and formed a society which lasted into the 1970's. Originally the library was kept at the home of Halldor Amason (later Snorri Anderson's home). The books were later moved to Emil Johnson's where they still are, in Donald Johnson's home.

BRU HALL

The Bru Hall was built on the northwest corner of NE 16-6-13. The land was given or sold by Albert Oliver for the sum of \$1.00. The deed for the land was dated April 27, 1898. Apparently the hall was built that year. Quoting from Rev. J.J. Jackson's book, "In Praise of Pioneers", the Bru Ladies' Aid records that it met in the Bru Hall on May 18, 1898. It was also used by other organizations such as the Young People's Society, Literary Society, Dorcas Society, and for other public functions such as dances, receptions, plays, fowl suppers, showers, card parties and dinners for synod conventions. For many years the Bru Hall was the centre of activities for the district. The hall was finally closed down in the 1960's due mainly to the cost that would be involved in renovating to conform to health and safety standards. It was sold to Marcel Verstraete and torn down in 1972.



Bru Young People's

The Bru Young People's Society was organized by Rev. E. Fafnis in 1930-31. Membership in 1931 was 64. In 1942 membership was down to 11. During the 1930's the society was very active, holding meetings regularly. Each meeting was followed by entertainment, lunch and a dance. Numerous plays and concerts were put on by the young people. The Society became inactive about 1942.

BRU CEMETERY

The Bru Cemetery was established in 1884, on the northeast corner of NE 16-6-13. A one-acre plot was donated by Jon Olafson (Albert Oliver's grandfather). The cemetery is still being kept in good condition. In 1972, a fund was started - to which people with relatives buried there, made contributions. The interest earned by this fund goes toward the maintenance of the cemetery.

THE DORCAS SOCIETY OF BRU

The Dorcas Society was formed in early 1918, with Thorbjorg Jonsson as first treasurer. This society was a group of young women, who organized for the purpose of making money to do good works. The annual fee was set at 50¢ per member.

They raised money in these ways: they sponsored dances at Bru Hall; had whist drives, bazaars, tombolas, and barn dances in the area; annually took over the fruit stand at the Cypress River Fair; put on and sponsored plays which were shown at Bru, Glenboro and Greenway, the two most popular being "Dust of the Earth" and "Eyes of Love"; and they put on minstrel shows.

They spent their money almost as quickly as they made it. They bought wool and made socks and mitts to send to the soldiers overseas. They made wool comforters for needy families. They gave liberally to the church, the patients of Ninette Sanatorium, Christmas gifts to the elderly and bed-ridden. Wherever there was a need the Dorcas Society would help if possible.



Some members of the Dorcas Society of Bru. Thorbjorg Jonsson, Gudny Sigurdson, Villa Anderson, Lauga Helgason, Miss Olson, Josie Anderson, Svava Stefanson with Ester on Knee, Steinlaug Gudnason, He/ga Jonsson, Alice Anderson, Clara Josephson.

In 1922, Lauga Helgason became treasurer, and still held that post when the Dorcas closed down in 1930, and the young women joined the Bru Young People's Society which was organized by Rev. E. Fafnis.

This was a fine fellowship which strengthened the bonds of friendship throughout the lives of these fine young women.

EXCERPTS FROM THE BALDUR GAZETTE

March, 1909 - "Bru - At a Lutheran congregational meeting held here on Tuesday, it was decided to erect a new church in the district. It was also decided to vote down any proposal for the erection of a parsonage, but instead the pastor's salary received an additional boost of \$200 per annum."

"Approximately 100 invited guests were right royally entertained Tuesday night, at the magnificent country residence of Mr. and Mrs. Hannes Sigurdson, of the district. Speeches were delivered, songs and duets rendered, the Argyle Band played, and in general, the evening was spent in having a jolly good time. During the evening, the genial host and hostess were presented with a beautiful solid silver tea service."

Nov. 25, 1915 - "The 5th anniversary service of the Lutheran Church at Bru was celebrated on Friday, Nov. 19, in the church at 3 p.m. A good program of songs and speeches was rendered, the executive having been fortunate enough to secure Miss Oliver, a noted singer of Winnipeg, to take part. After the concert, all adjourned to Bru Hall, where a splendid supper was served. No admission fee was charged, but a collection

was taken, which amounted to \$88.

It may be interesting in this connection, to note, that all the Icelandic churches in this district are out of debt.

"Rev. Mr. Hallgrimson's three congregations, have presented him with a motor car. This is treating a minister in the right way. The members of a congregation like to be visited by their pastor and this gives facility for the maximum amount of visiting among his parishioners."

November, 1910 - "The consecration of the handsome new Lutheran Church at Bru took place last Sunday. Rev. B.B. Johnson, President of the Icelandic Synod, of Minneota, Minnesota, assisted by Rev. J. Bjarnason D.O. of Winnipeg and Rev. F. Hallgrimson. Communion was administered after the consecration. "

November, 1924 at Frikirkja Bru - "The church was well filled and service, which lasted from 2 to 4:30 p.m., was most impressive.

In the evening the President preached in Immanuel Church in Baldur, after which Rev. Dr. Bjarnason gave an address on the subject 'The Christian Home'."

April 8, 1909 - "The concert and dance held in the Bru Hall on the 29th, under the auspices of the Argyle Band to commemorate the 4th anniversary of their establishment, was pronounced success. The first item on the list was the national Anthem played in harmony with a prelude specially composed for the occasion by the able bandmaster Mr. A. Oliver. Some splendid music was rendered, which included a number of quartettes and sextettes, by members of the Band, double violin, cornet and piano solos, violin solo by Mrs. Jho. Carey, vocal solo by Miss Hjalmarson, piano solo by Mr. Peter Josephson (graduate of Gustavus Adolphus, St. Peter, Minn.), vocal duet by the Misses Hjalmarson and Arason and a number of other choice selections by local talent. A few congratulatory remarks were then made by the Rev. F. Hallgrimson. Upon the conclusion of the program, dancing was begun to the dreamy strains of the Band, the piano and several violins."

Aug. 15, 1918 - "Icelandic Celebration - Aug. 2 is the national day of Iceland. The day was celebrated at Bru in Anderson's grove under the auspices of the Ladies' Aid of the district. The weather was fine and the people gathered there in large numbers. A platform was erected in the grove and a well-selected program was arranged. Reeve Johnson was in the chair and conducted the program in his usual style. Rev. B.B. Jonsson of Winnipeg gave a stirring address. Arni Sveinson delivered a splendid message. B. Walterson recited a poem composed by himself and made a few remarks. The Argyle Band entertained at intervals. The sports proved very interesting. The proceeds netted \$127.30 for the Overseas Club. "

FOOTNOTE: Following the immediate settlement of the Bru district, the pioneers were very fortunate to enjoy many productive years which resulted in a proud community. Some had very fine homes in the area and therefore the women took pride in their homes. Their culinary skills were well known. Who can forget the food at the annual fowl supper enjoyed here as in other communities?

The neighbours worked together, helping willingly wherever necessary. One was always invited in, whether neighbour, travelling salesman or bill collector.

There was much talent in music and drama. Amongst the early Icelanders this was a must; if you had talent you must develop it and share it with others.

Those who are left cherish happy memories that linger on, as they recall the many men and women, who have passed on, from this community.

There is a Destiny that makes us brothers, None goes his way alone;

That which you put into the lives of others, Comes back into your own.

Anon