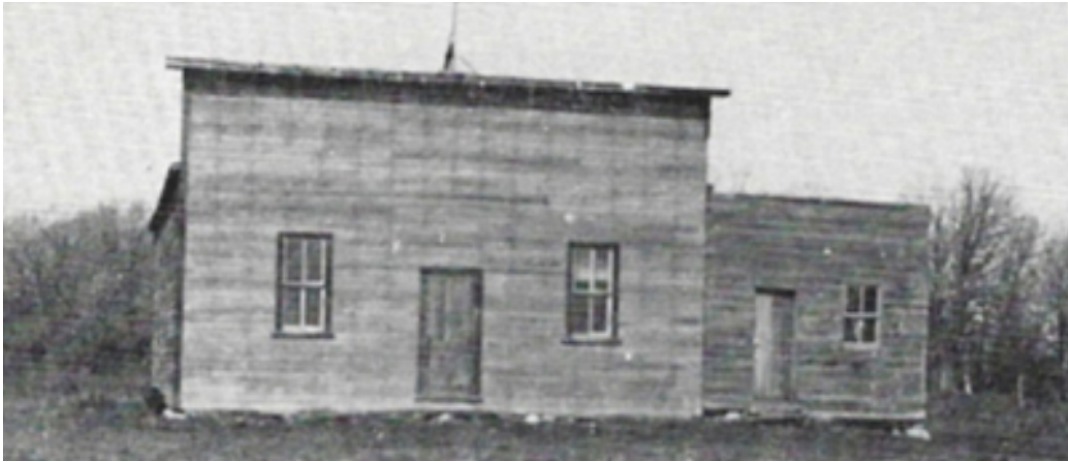


## "SKJALDBREID" (Broad Shield)



*Skjaldbreid Hall, 1912.*

The first community hall in the Grund district was built in 1896, at the eastern end of the oak bluff on Sigurdur Kristofersson's land. Just north of the bluff there was a small lake, upon which people often enjoyed themselves in small boats. The hall was named "Skjaldbreid", and it was a big roomy building.

The Library Society was instrumental in having Skjaldbreid built, and for many years it was the scene of concerts, dances, plays, and various celebrations. There the Good Templars met, the Ladies' Aid held their tombolas; the Young People organized their club; and there were Sunday School picnics.

Many plays were performed in this hall, but perhaps the one most memorable was a 3-act play (in Icelandic) called "Skugasvein". It was performed on a cold winter night in 1897 to a packed hall. Admission was 25¢ for adults, and 15¢ for young people. List of characters and players was:

Skugasvein (a man of good deeds): Gudni Davidson Haraldur: Jon Sveinbjornsson Asta: Kristin Christopherson Sigurdur i dal: Einar Sigvaldason

Syslumadurin (Reeve): Arni Jonsson Studentar (students): Hjortur Josephson and Kristjan Reykdal Pukar (snoopy kids): Peter and Paul Gudnason Ketill: Hjortur Sigurdson Kolski (the Devil): Kristjan (Jonsson) Thordarson Marja: Thorgerdur Sigurjonsdottir Christopherson)

June 18, 1898, saw one of the biggest weddings in the district when Lara Arnason and Kris Thordarson were wed at Frelsis - the church was packed and all of these guests then travelled to Skjaldbreid for a large meal. A poem was written by Sigurbjorn Johansson (community poet) and read aloud "to Lara and Kris on their wedding day".

A celebration was held Dec. 31, 1899, to welcome in the 20th century - this was an all-night affair!

On July 19, 1902, the Icelandic community celebrated the silver wedding anniversary of four of its pioneer couples: Ami Sveinson and Gudrun Jonsdottir; Skafti Arason and Anna Johannsdottir; Kristjan Jonsson and Arnbjorg Jonsdottir; Sigurdur Kristofersson and Caroline. Taylor. These couples had been married in 1877, at Gimli. Close to 500 people gathered at Skjaldbreid and a very entertaining program was enjoyed by all out among the trees. In the hall, a banquet was prepared by the women in the community. Rev. Jon Bjamason, who had married three of the couples, gave the anniversary speech. After the meal, toasts were proposed.

1905 - 25 years had gone by since the first homesteads were filed, and this called for yet another celebration. On June 13 of that year, Arni Sveinson took his water tank (used for his steam engine) filled with water, over to the hall. His wife Gudrun accompanied him to help prepare for the lunch to be served the following day. Wednesday, June 14, a special train bringing Icelanders from Win-nipeg for this celebration, arrived in Glenboro at 11 a.m. Buggies, democrats, and wagons were waiting at the station to bring the visitors to Skjaldbreid. Meanwhile, back at Skjaldbreid, the large crowd waiting for the visitors began to make bets on who would reach the hall first. Herman Arason was driving his father's democrat and fine team of horses. It was the general opinion that he would be first. However, when the race finally came into sight, Hannes Sigurdson, who did not have an impressive team at all, was in the lead, closely followed by Siggi Skardal. A short distance from the hall the hat of one of Sigurdson's passengers blew off and Hannes had to stop and go back for it. Siggi Skardal came in first, but there was still no sign of Herman - he was last to arrive. His team had nearly run away at the station and with five visitors in his rig he didn't dare but keep tight rein on his lively team to avoid another near runaway!

A race track had been built north of the hall about the year 1897, for horse and buggy races. Then motor cars arrived upon the scene. At a Sunday School picnic in 1921, a race was held to see who could drive the *slowest* without stalling his car. S.A. Anderson won with his Model T Ford. August Arason had an Overland, and nearly won but stalled near the finish line. In the early 1970's three of the pioneer's descendants thought they would like to tryout the track. They forgot that it should have been a "slow" race, and that their cars were much bigger, with more powerful engines than those in the early days. It turned out to be more of a demolition derby!



*Log cabin built in 1931 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Icelandic settlement.*



*50h anniversary celebration at Grund of the Icelandic settlement in Argyle.*

1931 - 50 years had gone by since the first families arrived from Gimli. Once again a large celebration was planned with picnic, flags flying, games, singing, band music and speeches. A small log cabin with sod roof was built in the Grund woods near Skjaldbreid - it was typical of the first homes the pioneers built for themselves. This celebration also marks the last time Skjaldbreid was used as a hall. Although the Sunday School picnics continued there until the early 1940's, no longer could the Union Jack be seen flying from the flag pole of Skjaldbreid.

Today Skjaldbreid is no longer standing, but if you wander through there, you will see where it stood, and where the log cabin was built; you will see the race track and be able to imagine the small boats on the lake. And if you close your eyes and concentrate very hard, you might be able to picture in your mind the Devil from "Skugasvein" appearing suddenly on centre stage, as if from nowhere, but actually through a trap door in the stage floor!

"GOOD ETIQUETTE, GOOD TEMPLARS, AND THE ARGYLE HALL"

Always concerned about the upbringing of their young men and women, the Argyle Icelanders organized a "Good Etiquette Club" (Sidabotafelagid). If one were caught swearing, which was against the rules, one would be expelled. It wasn't long before only a few members were left. These beginnings led to the forming of a new organization - "The Independent Order of Good Templars, Idunn Lodge No. 36". This was to have a longer life than its predecessor, although it, too, would lose its share of members due to violation of rules.

The Good Templars held their early meetings and concerts at Skjaldbreid. They wanted to acquire legal ownership title to the lot, but Sigurdur refused to give in to them on this matter. This led to them purchasing, in 1903, a parcel of land near Frelsis Church and there they built a Good Templars hall. The Good Templars were active for many years, producing diverse good effects. When prohibition became effective in Manitoba, there was less work for them to accomplish.

At a meeting Feb. 6, 1905, it was decided to enlarge the hall, making it suitable for all occasions and gatherings. The new kitchen and dining room would make it easier to serve meals and lunches. At dances in those early days, everyone sat down at tables in the dining room to eat their lunch while the band took its break.

Arni Sveinsson has recorded in his diary - "at this time (1905) the name has been changed to 'Argyle Hall' and it is now so complete that people who have seen it consider it to be the best community hall, and of the most painstakingly good construction they have seen in Manitoba or the North West!"

The stage was much smaller than Skjaldbreid's because of the hallways on either side of it, (these hallways led to the coat-room, kitchen, and dining room at the back) but it boasted a fine roll curtain with red and gold scroll surrounding a large scenery - hand painted by Fred Swanson, a painter and decorator in Winnipeg.

At a meeting April 1, 1905, the shareholder company, "Eining" was formed. A person had to be a member of the Good Templar Society to own shares in the company.

On March 8, of that same year, Olgeir Frederickson and Arni Sveinsson measured the G.T. Hall lots: 8x10 rods - 12 rods from the road allowance west of the hall and 10 1/2 rods from the southern line of the lot and a lane down to the Baldur road 1x6 1/2 rods.

Church conventions, fowl suppers, minstrel shows, tombolas, concerts, dances, and Ladies' Aid bazaars were some of the many events held at Argyle Hall. Some of the later ones bring back memories such as: watching with fascination as Oscar Josephson beat out a rhythm on his drums at dances; a young lady with beautiful long red hair playing the piano for some of those dances; and "Shorty" calling the square dances. Young girls, longing to dance, were thrilled when their fathers would take them for a whirl around the dance floor!

When Frelsis merged with Baldur congregation, the Grund Ladies' Aid decided to close their books. They had helped with a lot of the upkeep of the hall the last few years. One of the main shareholders of the hall thought he might move the building, but this was not a popular idea and Argyle Hall was eventually sold to Siggie Johnson for taxes. It is still standing but has since been turned into an implement shed and granary.



*"Grund," the Sigurdur and Caroline Christopherson home. The site of the Grund post office until the 1920's.*