

History of St. Saviour's and the Maples

The mission of St. Saviour's was first established by a Lay minister, Thoms Bunn, in 1878. He fenced in 2 acres for gardens, and he erected a building large enough to be a house and a mission. Apparently, he was much better at carpentry than clergy work and he became discouraged and resigned.

The Rev. Brick replaced Runn in 1882. Brick was very keen on proving the Peace River country could grow crops. His interest in the practical need to have a local food supply made him more of a farmer than a priest. It has been reported that a sample of his wheat went by dog sled from Peace River Landing to Edmonton and from there to the Chicago World Fair, where won a prize. Now people from Shaftesbury claim that the wheat was from their mission.

In 1886 the third and last priest arrived at St. Saviour's. The Rev. Garrioch has been credited with spreading the seeds of the Manitoba Maples around the area of the mission. Garrioch was fluent in the Beaver tongue, and it was hoped his fluency in the native language would bring them back. He was also to provide the physical needs of the destitute Beaver peoples. He opened a soup kitchen with canned meat from England and vegetables from his garden. One winter 240 gallons of soup were dispersed. By 1891 there was only a few native families at the outpost of Dunvegan as fur bearing animals had become scarce and the Hudson's Bay Company had moved its headquarters to Lesser Slave Lake and the native population was seriously diminished by disease and starvation. During this time the Rev. Garrioch also lost his two-year-old daughter, Caroline. The Garrioch's, having suffered the loss of their daughter, loneliness and hardships, left in 1891 to return to Manitoba. After a visit to the Maples in 1951, The Garrioch's daughter Verna wrote an article in the Winnipeg Tribune about her visit and related stories her mother told of their time there. A quote, "my dream came true as I stood by the old maples their boughs gnarled and battered by the winds that came down from the north. I shed a few tears by the tiny grave, I felt humble and proud and happy at the same time."

When the mission fell into disrepair after the Garrioch's left the diocese eventually dismantled the building and the windows and doors were taken to Shaftesbury. Eventually two windows were given to the Anglican Church in Waterhole. This church made the move to Fairview and now on the west wall of our church, St. Helen's, Fairview, in the mall. So, we believe St. Saviour's lives on with us today.

In 1923 Robert and Lily Peters purchased 32 acres from the Hudson's Bay Company. The land with the Maples was included as the church were squatters on the land. The Peters family was very hospitable, and they encouraged church services and picnics to be held. The Rev. Trow, in 1926, was the first priest to hold an open-air service and Sunday School picnic at the Maples. This was a tradition until 2007 with the Rev. Phyllis Locke. The Diocese of Athabasca also held services once a summer at the Maples. A picture from between 1929 and 1934 shows 17 black robed priests at the service, a full choir and an organist.

In 1942 or 43 the Peters family sold their land to the Marisiak family (Bridgeview Gardens) except for 11 acres call the maples which they donated to the Diocese of Athabasca with the stipulation that it "was to bring pleasure to the peoples of the Peace." St. Helen's was

responsible for the upkeep, but it got to be overwhelming and in 1975 the diocese sold the land to the Municipal District of Fairview with the stipulation that it remain open to the public and never be sold for development.

In 2015 the camp kitchen was designed by Stan Burkholder, paid for by the Municipal District of Fairview and the murals on the walls commissioned and paid for by the Fort Dunvegan Historical Society. Stan also started the interdenominational service on the third Sunday in August with different churches rotation in leading the service.

The Municipal District of Fairview has also donated the aboriginal themed playground, replaced the cairn with a bench commemorating the Peter's family's vision. St. Helen's has donated a bench acknowledging St. Saviour's. Down the road Alberta Culture has erected a cairn that lists all the peoples they have records of that have passed away at Dunvegan including the Catholic missions.

I will finalise with a few more things. This winter Stephanie M. from the visitor centre and I are working on creating two or three information boards to be erected on this site. Secondly, to Marjorie, Amanda and family – when the time comes, I hope to pass the torch about St. Saviour's to you all to see over the Peters' vision of a welcoming place for all in the Peace and our Anglican stipulation that it remain open to the public and never sold for development. I have had to remind the MD a few times of our important role here.

Shirley Lof
People's Warden, St. Helen's, Fairview