

The Riverland Community Hall – Dylan Zurba

For the Lac du Bonnet & District Historical Society – August 31st, 2023

The Riverland Hall was built in 1919 on the corner of what is now Anderson Way and Davies Road on the east side of the Winnipeg River, near the ferry landing across from School Point and stayed a place of gatherings and celebrations for a great many years. But how did it get there?

The Riverland Hall, brought into existence by the Riverland Recreation Association, formed in 1919, and the efforts of the community was born after realizing the need for such a facility. Shares for the Riverland Recreation Association would cost \$5 and you would get one share of capital stock with a share certificate embossed with the official stamp of the Association. The Swedish settlers of Riverland and Brookfield on Treaty 1 and Treaty 3 territories then pooled together their time, resources labour and land to construct the two storey building complete with a stage and kitchen. The land it was built upon was donated by K.J Erickson and there it stayed for most of its time.

As for the intricacies of the Riverland Hall it was 30ft wide and 55ft long. It was built as a long hall with a high gabled roof, however the interior featured a half-hexagon barn style ceiling, which only went up about maybe 20ft high to the top, while the pointed roof of the outside went up around 32ft if you give or take a little bit. The hall had 3 exterior doors on 3 different sides, each glass paned and each a little different from the other. The hall had a total of 11 windows, single glass paned with a basic wooden frame, 4 spanned across each of the lengths of the building, while 2 were up on the loft along the width and one beneath that on the floor level. Highlights of the building included a loft that hugged the edge of the buildings siding, making a large square around the dance hall where kids could look down and watch their parents dance on the floor below. It was held 10 feet and 4 inches off the ground, and was lined with an 8 inch spaced spindle railing all along it. The only way up was a lone stair case. With a basic build it was 3ft wide and a total of 14 steps up, it also carried the same railing as the border of the loft down to the floor. Other things included a stage for musicians, polished wood dance floor and even a kitchen which could send food up to the balcony with the clever use of a wooden dumb waiter. As you entered the hall you could hang your heavy winter jacket in the cloak room after a chilling walk from your car on a cold winter night. The building was heated by a wood burning barrel stove. The majority of the building was made with full 2 by 6 inch wooden studs that were sawn from a nearby mill, along the studs there are clearly visible saw marks. The building's roof is now covered with tin, to protect it from rain while the interior ceiling was decorated with varnished planks.

All the music played would be provided by local musicians and would only get better as the night went on, they would lose any shyness or anxiety they might have brought with their arrival. And a good old time waltz could be followed by a lively polka, Swedish schottische (schottis), or even a hambo.

The building was used for dances, weddings, 70th birthday parties, socials, anniversaries, concerts, holidays, etc. etc. Cars would pile in around the buildings perimeter and everyone would head inside as the party would start, and as the night came to a close you could see everyone leave just as fast as they had arrived.

Alcohol was prohibited inside the building, however, that never stops anyone now does it? People would come with a bottle in their cars and go to hide it somewhere, sneaking off every once and awhile to take a swig of the spirits or whatever they had. As the evening dance would end and everyone went

home the following day if you woke up early enough you could head outside and collect all the empty bottles to be sold to the vendor for extra spending money, making the job of the buildings caretaker, Walter Anderson, a little easier.

Within the Riverland Hall there hung a 30inch by 23 1/2inch poster mounted on hard board next to the staircase on the landing, "Roll of Members – Riverland Recreation Ass'N (Association) is proudly displayed in blue and yellow, the colours of the Swedish flag along the top, and it entails a list of shareholders in the Riverland Recreation Association, which goes as follows.

E.G.Anderson, I.Anderson, M.Anderson, N.Bleken, G.W.Botchett, J.Botchett, G.Carlson, A.M.Doyal, M.Danzker, R.E.Emmett, H.Erickson, J.Ellstrom, K.J.Erickson, C.Forse, P.Frank, A.Gillie, S.Granovsky, J.Hanson, W.Hammerstead, J.Hammerstead, W.D.Halliday, J.Halliday, J.Hendrickson, A.Hendrickson, H.Joahson, E.Joahson, C.Johns, P.Lindgren, J.Lindgren, A.Lindgren, E.Lindgren, E.S.Lunedquist, E.Lecoy, A.Markusson, K.Markusson, H.Markusson, A.E.Magnusson, I.Manisto, G.Malcom, G.Melquist, H.Nystedt, J.Ongman, E.Ongman, Elias. Ongman, H.Petterson, O.Petterson, E.Petterson, T.Petterson, W.Petterson, A.Petterson, F.Pearson, .Pelletier, J.Rosenholm, F.Soderholm, N.Solderholm, E.Solderholm, S.E.Soudquist, Ernest.Soderholm, A.Sacks, M.J.Stanbridge, P.S.Specht, O.Soderholm, J.C.Tindall, E.Texmore, A.Welin, ~~J.A.Welin~~ – Harold, and lastly W.Childe L.D.B. signed in the bottom right, he was a well-known sign painter from Lac du Bonnet & the one to have created the sign.

The names all printed very nicely with William Childe's penmanship, all done in ink atop the paper. It is completed alphabetically, however some letters are missing, I k q u v x y z, which I would assume is because no one had a last name with said letters.

The Riverland Recreation Association had unfortunately went defunct in 1981, the Riverland Hall was sold to Maurice Boulanger for \$500 plus the cost of a new fence, and the property was returned to the Erickson family or its descendants. The building was moved to Maurice Boulangers and was used as a workshop for many years.

The Riverland Hall now sits on the property of Ron Boulanger at the end of Whitecrest drive. The Hall nothing more but an ashen remnant of the past. The once beautiful wood flooring has been all stripped out and replaced with a concrete floor, much of the siding on the walls is now drywall, windows are cracked and shattered, the stone chimney torn down and replaced with a metal Selkirk chimney, all of the kitchen and coat room gone, only one section and pieces of the loft and its railing remain and the stairs leading up to it are rotted and decaying. Where the coat room once was there's now an opening in the wall large enough for a loader or truck. Much of this report was possible because of Ron Boulanger and his willingness to help, as well as his generous donation of the Riverland Recreation Association Roll of Members poster to the Lac du Bonnet & District Historical Society.

The Riverland Hall, once a place of dancing and laughter, holding many events and festivities, is coming to a quiet end.

Sources: Kathy Willis – Undated Essay Lac du Bonnet & District Historical Society, credit B&W photo

Logs & Lines of the Winnipeg River – Pg. 301, 374 & 388

W.D.Halliday – Riverland Recreation Association share certificate dated March 1921

Personal visit – August 24-25, 2023



Riverland Hall – Circa 1948



Riverland Hall – August 2023



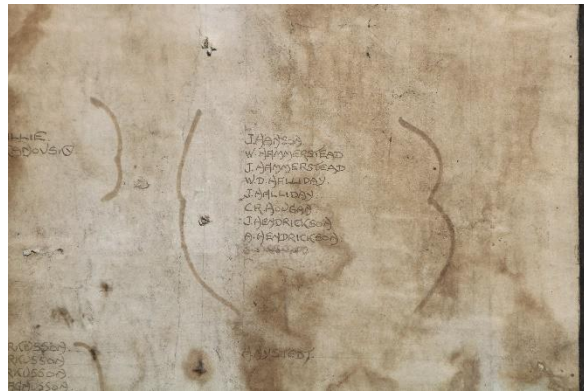
Rough sawn lumber (full 2x6 inch floor joists)



Wrap around Balcony with railing



Newel post and stairway with RRA sign



W.D. Halliday RRA share certificate. Dated March 1921