

THE CARMAN BIBLE SCHOOL

By Shelley L. Jacobs

Presented to the

Canadian Churches of Christ Historical Society
2009 Annual Meeting

Great Lakes Christian High School
August 15, 2009

THE CARMAN BIBLE SCHOOL
SHELLEY L. JACOBS
CANADIAN CHURCHES OF CHRIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ANNUAL MEETING
AUGUST 15, 2009

The influence of James A. Harding and the Nashville Bible School plays out historically in Canada in significant ways. American preachers with connections to the Nashville Bible School came to Canada to hold protracted meetings, and American students of the Nashville Bible School came to work in Canada. Canadians studied under James Harding at the Nashville Bible School and most returned to Canada to work. Some of the earliest evangelistic work in western Canada was carried out by men with connections to the Nashville Bible School. James Harding is considered the father of the Bible School movement in acappella Churches of Christ,¹ and the first two Bible Schools in Canada were established by students of Harding at the Nashville Bible School.

The Church of Christ in Carman enjoys the status of being the first congregation of acappella Churches of Christ established west of Ontario (1889), and the first location among acappella Churches of Christ to have an established Bible School in Canada. The Carman congregation had significant connections to James Harding and the Nashville Bible School. James Harding is reported to have preached in Manitoba by 1883,² and he was the guest speaker at the grand opening of the Carman church building in 1892. The following year he returned to hold a protracted meeting in nearby Rosebank, and baptized the Laycock family, whose descendants are still members of the Carman Church of Christ.³

In the early years, a number of American preachers with connections to the Nashville Bible School visited the Carman congregation to hold meetings. E. A. Elam held a protracted meeting in 1895, Abraham Foster labored for the Carman congregation from 1898-1903, and S. M Jones held a protracted meeting in 1907.⁴ In January, 1919, Don Carlos Janes held a protracted meeting in Carman.⁵ Canadians who had studied at the Nashville Bible school labored in Carman for more extended periods of time. Charles Petch was in Carman in 1902 and 1904,⁶ and labored with the Winnipeg congregation from 1927 through 1929. W. F. Cox laboured for the Carman congregation from 1911-1915,⁷ and C. G. McPhee laboured with the congregation from 1917-1920.⁸

The first Canadians to attend the Nashville Bible School were from the Carman area. John Mallory and Wilson Mallory attended from 1895-99, and Ernest Stirling

¹ John Mark Hicks and Bobby Valentine, *Kingdom Come: Embracing the Spiritual Legacy of David Lipscomb and James A. Harding* (Abilene, TX: Leafwood Publishers, 2006): 22.

² Lloyd Cline Sears, *The Eyes of Jehovah: The Life and Faith of James Alexander Harding* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Company, 1970), 49.

³ Elizabeth York, "Carman Church of Christ," in *Up to Now: A Story of Dufferin and Carman* (Altona, MB: D.W. Friesen & Sons Ltd., 1967), 127-28.

⁴ W. Eatough, "The Church at Carman," *Gospel Herald* 7 (March 1941): 10.

⁵ Church Record, Church of Christ, Carman, MB.

⁶ "Chas. W. Petch," *Bible Student* 4 (July 1907): 1; Chas. W. Petch, "Manitoba News," *Bible Student* 1 (September 1904): 3.

⁷ Church Record, Church of Christ, Carman, MB.

⁸ Church Record, Church of Christ, Carman, MB.

attended from 1895-97. Also from the Carman area were John Saunders, who attended from 1897-98; 1900-01 and Norman Mallory from 1897-1900.⁹

Strong ties between the Carman congregation, James Harding and the Nashville Bible School are evident in the history of the Carman congregation. Thus it is not surprising that the first Bible school for acappella Churches of Christ in Canada was established in Carman by a student of the Nashville Bible School. Reports of the Carman Bible Schools are scarce, but the available details reveal a strong curriculum intended to prepare young people for work in the kingdom.

CARMAN BIBLE SCHOOL (1899-1902)

The Carman Bible School was organized and run by Abraham Foster, an American student of the Nashville Bible School. As the school was sponsored and financially supported by the Carman congregation, no tuition was charged. Students who came from the area found their own lodging and attended the Bible school during the day. Evening programs, debates, recitations and monologues attracted other young people from town.¹⁰

According to Verna Perry Husband, the Bible School ran from 1897 -1902,¹¹ however, other sources suggest a start date of 1899. The Carman church records show that Foster labored with the congregation from 1898-1903, a year later than Husband's start date for the Bible School. In June, 1900, James Harding reported in his periodical, *The Way*, that "Several Bible schools have been started by students of the [Nashville Bible] School - one by Kh. B. Yohanna in Persia; one by A. Foster, at Carman, Manitoba, Canada; and one, I believe, in Texas by Brother Jones."¹² A local Manitoba paper, *The Morning Telegram*, reported that the Carman Bible School was founded in 1899,¹³ and H. A. Rogers implies that 1899 was the beginning date for the Carman Bible School, the year that he relocated from Meaford, Ontario to Carman, Manitoba.¹⁴ As Verna Husband lists H. A. Rogers as one of the students for the first year of the Bible school,¹⁵ 1899 is the more likely date.

Abraham Foster was the headmaster of the school and was assisted by P. Crossley from Wales, and some of the students.¹⁶ For the first year, the Bible school was held in the Carman church building and ran from December 1, 1899 through March 31, 1900.¹⁷ Abraham Foster taught New Testament, physical culture, voice culture, English grammar and public speaking, while Daniel Stewart taught Old Testament and Miss Tolton of Meaford, Ontario, taught singing. Verna Husband listed her classmates as Herb and Elsie

⁹ Catalogue of the Nashville Bible School, imprint Nashville, Tenn.: Gospel Advocate Pub. Co., 1894-1897; The ... annual announcement of the Nashville Bible School, imprint Nashville, Tenn.: Gospel Advocate Pub. Co., 1898-1917. Dates compiled by Marie Byers, Special Collections, Beaman Library, Lipscomb University.

¹⁰ Torkelson, *Radburn's Memoirs* (n.p.: Western Christian Foundation Press, 1970), 119.

¹¹ Torkelson, 118-119.

¹² James A. Harding, "Scraps," *The Way* 2 no. 6 (June 1900): 1.

¹³ "Carman Bible School," *Morning Telegram* (22 December 1900): 11.

¹⁴ H. A. Rogers, "Education," *Gospel Herald* 20 (March 1954): 3.

¹⁵ Torkelson, 119.

¹⁶ Torkelson, 119.

¹⁷ *Morning Telegram*, 11; Torkelson, 118.

Sterling, H. A. Rogers, Chris Stevenson, Fred Dafoe, Stanley York, Amy Mallory, Allen Mallory, Maggie Mallory, John and Minnie Sterling, Arthur and Maria Laurenson, George and Mary Laycock, Bertha Rogers, Ora and Ozro Tallman, Willie Saunders and his wife, and Elizabeth York.¹⁸

The second year, the Bible school was housed in a newly built, large brick building on the corner of Hermin Avenue and Walnut Street,¹⁹ which was across the street from the church building.²⁰ The forty by sixteen foot building cost one thousand dollars to build,²¹ and was financed by contributions, mainly from Brother and Sister P. Hill and Brother and Sister P. Mallory, who operated a general store in Carman. The building had a school room on the main floor, and living quarters for Foster and his wife on the second floor.²²

The second session commenced January 28, 1901 with final exams running the week of April 15-20. The school taught both academic subjects and Bible classes, including English, Mathematics, History, geography, science, Latin, natural and physical sciences, philosophy, Latin, Greek and physical culture.²³ H. A. Rogers wrote that Abraham Foster had also been trained at the Ralston Health School and taught health exercises every day.²⁴ Rogers shared some of the health tips in his book, *How the Church Began and Grew in Saskatchewan*. He suggested that “If you want health, avoid cake, pastry, white sugar, and white bread and use only whole wheat bread and muffins. Some black strap molasses, once or twice a day will add to your health.” He also gave eye exercises that would strengthen the muscles of the eyes and therefore, improve eyesight. Fifty years later, Rogers acknowledged that he was still following some of Foster’s health practices.²⁵ H. A. Rogers said of Abraham Foster, “Brother Foster was a fine teacher and I think we all really loved him. It will take eternity to tell the good that was done in that school.”²⁶

Students of the Carman Bible School became strong church leaders. In 1901, Ora and Ozro Tallman and Gordon Tovell established the church in Winnipeg. The Tallman brothers later attended Potter Bible College, studied under James Harding and taught at Potter. They later came back to Canada and established the Maritime Bible and Literary College in West Gore, Nova Scotia.²⁷ H. A. Rogers became an evangelist who established Churches of Christ in Saskatchewan.

The Carman Bible School closed in 1902, when heavy flooding caused irreparable damage to the building. The flood caused financial hardship for the whole community, which meant that resources weren’t available to replace the building. That, along with Foster’s failing health, brought about the demise of the Bible school.²⁸

¹⁸ Torkelson, 119. H. A. Rogers moved to Carman in March, 1899, thus it is possible that this list is actually from the term 1899-1900.

¹⁹ *Morning Telegram*, 11.

²⁰ Torkelson, 118.

²¹ *Morning Telegram*, 11.

²² Torkelson, 119.

²³ *Morning Telegram*, 11.

²⁴ Rogers, “Education,” 3.

²⁵ H.A. Rogers, “Health Means Wealth,” in *How The Church Began and Grew in Saskatchewan* (n.p.,n.d.): 40.

²⁶ Rogers, “Education,” 3.

²⁷ “Biographical Notes,” *Bible Student* 7 (May 1910): 8.

²⁸ Torkelson, 120.

The summer of 1903 found Foster and William Dafoe on a preaching trip into the heart of Assiniboia, which became Saskatchewan in 1905.²⁹ After leaving Carman in 1903, Foster moved to Calgary, where he passed away from tuberculosis on June 28, 1908. He is buried in the Union Cemetery in Calgary.³⁰

Arthur Weston wrote of Foster, “Bro. Foster was well known among many of the Churches in the Southern States and our brethren, Lipscomb, Sommer, Harding and many others will receive the news of his death with profound sorrow. The brethren in parts of Southern Manitoba have also in years gone by benefited much by his loyal and indefatigable work of faith and labor of love.”³¹

CARMAN BIBLE TRAINING SCHOOL (1921-27)

The Carman Bible School was resurrected in 1921 at the urging of H. A. Rogers. He recognized the value of the training he had received at the earlier Bible school, and saw the need for Christian education in western Canada. Rogers persuaded H. L. Richardson to move from Ontario to Carman to conduct the school. At the time, Richardson was conducting a successful commercial school on Manitoulin Island in Ontario. The Carman congregation financially assisted Richardson with moving his school equipment and re-establishing his school in Carman.³² Richardson conducted the Bible School for half of the year, and evangelized in western Canada for the rest of the time. Richardson was not new to western Canada as he had taught school near Bromhead, Saskatchewan in 1911.³³

Richardson announced the opening of the Carman Bible Training School in the *Christian Monthly Review*, and explained,

We do not intend to teach Commercial Courses, but to specialize on the Bible and kindred subjects to train young Christians for greater worth in the Master’s Service. – The greatest service in the world; – such as Vocal Music, English, Composition, Letter Writing, Article Writing, Punctuation, Spelling, Good Reading, Public Speaking, Logic, Bible Geography, Church History, Christian Evidences, Proof of Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures, Bible Criticism and Greek if considered wise.³⁴

The school opened in November, 1921 with an enrollment of eighteen students,³⁵ and ran until the end of March, 1922. Although few reports of the Bible School were published, several issues of the *Christian Monthly Review* published articles that were

²⁹ James A. Harding, “Some Interesting Letters,” *The Way* 4 (19 February 1903): 386-87.

³⁰ “Obituary: A Hero Gone To Rest,” *Bible Student* 5 no. 8 (August 1908): 7. “Obituary: Foster,” *Gospel Advocate* 50 (26 November 1908): 766. The obituary in the *Gospel Advocate* was a reprint of the one in the *Bible Student*.

³¹ “A Hero Gone to Rest,” 7.

³² Church Record, Church of Christ, Carman, MB.

³³ “Our Associate Editors,” *Christian Monthly Review* 6 (September 1921): 16.

³⁴ “News and Correspondence,” *Christian Monthly Review* 6 (June 1921): 22-23.

³⁵ The student list included Alonzo Rogers, George Morgan, Laurie McGill, Frank Tovell, Wilfred Orr, J. C. Bailey, Walter Stebbings, Lynn Perry, Bethel Vine, George Johnson, Daniel Stewart, Myra Hjorth, Eileen Campbell, Halfrid Strom, Lloyd Eby, Rene Nass, Henry Liesterkost, Pearl Perry.

written by students.³⁶ The Bible School closed on March 31, 1922, with a closing program in the evening. Students gave presentations that reflected things learned through the Bible school.

The numerous songs, recitations, speeches and declamations were given in a way that showed careful preparation, practice and study of the scriptures; and demonstrated a little of the training received at the school. Besides the many other studies taken up, a number of the students merited Special Diplomas by passing the National Tests for Rapid Calculations and also Penmanship Diplomas and Certificates.³⁷

In reporting on the success of the Bible School, Daniel Stewart wrote,

Brother Richardson and the students have worked hard, and I can see the reward for their labour. The young people in the class are finding pleasure in hard, earnest study rather than trying to find it in the vain amusements of worldly things. They have no time for the dance or picture shows. Sunday night two young men confessed their Saviour and were buried in baptism and rose up to walk in the new life.³⁸

The second term of the Carman Bible School ran from November 1, 1922 through April 1923. For the second term twenty-four students were enrolled.³⁹ There are no reports for the second and subsequent years of the Carman Bible Training School, although monthly advertisements for the Bible School ran in the *Christian Monthly Review* from August 1921 until December 1924.⁴⁰ Richardson conducted the Bible school until Spring 1926, when he reported to *Word and Work*,

I am planning to leave this place, and this School work soon. I have an engagement with the Living Message Publishing Company for the summer

³⁶ Bethel Vine, "A Greater Than Solomon," *Christian Monthly Review* 7 (January/February 1922): 19-20; Alonzo Rogers, "A Greater Than Solomon," *Christian Monthly Review* 7 (January/February 1922): 20-21; L.L. McGill, "A Greater Than Solomon," *Christian Monthly Review* 7 (January/February 1922): 21-23; J. C. Bailey, "A Worthy Neighbour," *Christian Monthly Review* 7 (January/February 1922): 23-24; M.B. Hjorth, "A Worthy Neighbour," *Christian Monthly Review* 7 (January/February 1922): 24-25; R. R. Nass, "Temptation," *Christian Monthly Review* 7 (January/February 1922): 25-26; H. Strom, "A Worthy Neighbour," *Christian Monthly Review* (May 1922): 14-15; Clarisa Stevens, "Scripture Meditations," *Christian Monthly Review* 7 (May 1922): 16-17; Pearl Perry, "Bondage and Exodus of Israel," *Christian Monthly Review* 7 (May 1922): 17-19; Myra Hjorth, "The Bondage in Egypt," *Christian Monthly Review* 7 (June 1922): 11-13; L. L. McGill, "Bondage and Exodus and Antitype," *Christian Monthly Review* 7 (June 1922): 14-15.

³⁷ L.L. McGill, "News and Correspondence: Carman Bible Training School Closing," *Christian Monthly Review* 7 (April 1922): 22-23.

³⁸ "News and Correspondence," *Christian Monthly Review* 7 (April 1922): 18.

³⁹ Henry [?], Verna Watterworth, Rene Nass, Alonzo Rogers, Walter Stebbings, [?] Campbell, Bethel Vine, Mary Greer, William Floyd, Lynn Perry, Halfrid Strom, E.N. Golphenee, Ruth Magoon, Goldie Tallman Richardson, Lorne Laycock, Eileen Campbell, [?] McDougall, Henry Leisterkost, Nellie Orr, J. C. Bailey, Myra Hjorth, [?] Bulmer, Daniel Stewart, Celia Buckingham.

⁴⁰ "Advertisement: Carman Bible Training School," *Christian Monthly Review* 6 (August 1921): 30; CMR 9 (December 1924): 31.

months, which will give me an opportunity to make the acquaintance of a goodly number of brethren in the South. How our plans will work, remains to be seen.⁴¹

The Bible school continued for one more year under the directorship of A. T. Purcell,⁴² and closed in the spring of 1927.

It is possible that the lack of reporting was due to the fact that the school was plagued with faction from the beginning. J. C. Bailey had planned to study at the Carman Bible School for three years, but left at the end of the second term because he disagreed with Richardson's premillennial theology. Later, Bailey speculated about whether he might have been converted to premillennialism if he had stayed another term at Carman.⁴³ H.A. Rogers also had issues with what he saw as Richardson's "digressive" tendencies, and this created significant conflict in the Carman congregation.⁴⁴ The validity of those concerns came to light when Richardson went to preach for the Home Street congregation of Disciples of Christ in Winnipeg. At the end of 1926, H. A. Rogers reported to the *Christian Leader*, "Please note that H.L. Richardson has left or forsaken the right way of the Lord and gone over to the Digressives, and has been preaching for the Digressive church in Winnipeg since last summer."⁴⁵ J. C. Bailey lamented the loss of Richardson and recalled that Richardson had been a good teacher, and that "his ability was such that the work in western Canada might have been different if he had remained faithful to the true ways of the Lord." Bailey wrote that he had "tried to reason with [Richardson] about the course he had pursued but it never availed anything."

Although the Carman Bible Training School came to an untimely end, its impact was significant for Churches of Christ in western Canada as strong leaders emerged who had been trained there. H. A. Rogers began concentrated evangelistic work in Saskatchewan in 1916, and by the end of 1928, Rogers had baptized three hundred eleven people and established sixteen congregations in Saskatchewan. J. C. Bailey joined Rogers in the Saskatchewan work in 1928. He and Rogers continued to do concentrated evangelistic work in the province. Bailey was responsible for establishing the Ogema Bible School in 1932, which led to the formation of Radville Christian College in 1945 (now Western Christian College). Bailey served as the head of the Bible department and business manager of the school from 1947-55. He also played a role in founding the *Gospel Herald* in 1936 and edited the paper from 1940-53. Wilfred Orr was a vocational preacher, who worked alongside Bailey and Rogers. He often assisted them by leading singing at their evangelistic meetings. These three men, who had been trained at the Carman Bible Schools, were responsible for establishing Churches of Christ in Saskatchewan.

Students of the Carman Bible Schools became strong leaders in Churches of Christ in Canada. Their legacy can be seen in congregations and schools that they established that in turn trained a new generation of leaders for Churches of Christ in Canada.

⁴¹ "News and Notes," *Word and Work* 19 (June 1926): 168.

⁴² "News and Correspondence," *Christian Monthly Review* 11 (December 1926): 13.

⁴³ J.C. Bailey, *My Appointment With Destiny* (Fort Worth, TX: Star Bible and Tract Corporation, n.d.), 15.

⁴⁴ Church Record, Church of Christ, Carman, MB.

⁴⁵ "Field Reports," *Christian Leader* 40 (14 December 1926): 12.