

## **The Legacy of Henry Carr and the Basilian Fathers in Saskatoon**

Thank you all for coming and especially for making the contributions you have made to this wonderful new addition to the College. In doing so, you have contributed to a continuing legacy, the legacy of the Basilian Fathers in their contribution to this incredible institution. I dare say, one of the finest of its kind, if not *the* finest, in the country.

In giving as you have, you have helped further a dream, a vision, that began long ago in what is today the heart of downtown Toronto, where one young Henry Carr, then a newly ordained Basilian and assigned to teach at St. Michael's High School had a vision of the potential for Catholic education in the wider Canadian context. For the first fifty years since the time of their arrival in Canada in 1850 the Basilians had pursued a curriculum that they inherited from their French origins in which the emphasis was on preparing young men for the priesthood.

Carr, ever the pragmatist and visionary, saw that the effort had reached a point of stagnancy. He prevailed upon his superiors to revise the curriculum to better meet the needs of the then emerging generation of young Catholics who were more than ever eager to take part in the newly maturing Canadian society.

The success realized in that endeavour led Carr then to focus on the possibility of expanding the school into a College federated with the University of Toronto. His credentials as an outstanding lay student in the university stood him in good stead with many of the administrators of the university having been his professors. And that dream became a reality.

Not satisfied with mere incorporation, Carr believed that the success of such operations hinged on two factors: good teaching and good relations. The College had not just to be a college but one that offered a first rate education to its students. To that end, he wanted all Basilian teachers to have educations from the top secular universities in the world. Ironically, at least from a contemporary perspective, opposition to this came from his Basilian superiors all of whom at the time were of French origin and possessed of a mindset influenced by the French Revolution which regarded secular higher education as anticlerical and antireligious. In this, as in many other tasks, Carr persisted and eventually won the day.

With regard to his second point on effective institutions, Carr knew that the success of a Catholic college hinged on the collaborative dialogue it established with the parent institution with which it was federated. In his view neither a physical building nor a legal arrangement were sufficient for a thriving university federation: there must be, in his view, understanding, sympathy, a genuine spirit of cooperation, friendship between faculty and

administration across institutional lines, and a willingness to concede a point in the interests of genuine progress.

As good fortune would have it, it was Henry Carr who was at the helm of the Basilian Fathers in 1938 when fortuitously President Murray approached Bishop Murray to inquire into the possibility of a Basilian college on the U of S campus. And the rest, as they say, is history.

STM not only became a reality, but an outstanding reality, in part due also to Henry Carr's tenure as principal of STM from 1942 until 1949, years which he described as the most satisfying in his life.

When Carr arrived in Saskatoon STM consisted of a wooden frame house, standing on the very grounds of this new addition. It had been built some years earlier as a residence for a Catholic chaplain, with a chapel seating 27, and a basement for social gatherings. In the early stages of the excavation for this new structure, they were digging up fragments of speckled reddish concrete that had formed that basement floor.

With this addition, we very much complete a circle. As the Act of Incorporation of 1936 read, STM would, when finances permitted, build sufficient classroom space to accommodate its student body. Even with the ever expanding size of that body, we have over the past two decades finally been able to fulfill that promise. For that, we are much owing to you generous donors. Henry Carr would be proud to see how in so many respects this addition facilitates his two objectives of federation: good teaching and cooperative relations.

Again, I can't thank you enough for your assistance and support. On behalf of the Basilian Fathers I am most grateful. Thank you.

Fr. Ron Griffin