

Aftermath

The world did not pause long. Radclive returned to the Brunswick Hotel and got a few hours of sleep.¹ In the afternoon, a number of citizens made a point of calling upon Mr Willis of the Coontown 400 and convincing him to return to Brandon in two weeks 'to give another of their creditable performances'.² Predictably, the hall was again packed to the doors when they did return. The day after the hanging, the First Baptist Sunday school held its Christmas entertainment, for which the children had been busily training,³ and on New Year's Day the Brandon Gun Club, which contrary to rumour 'had not died a natural death', returned with a spectacular pigeon shoot, featuring 300 live birds.⁴

Rev. McLaurin announced that on 14 January he would be speaking on 'A sigh heard in a prison cell'. Not unexpectedly, there was a very large attendance at the Baptist church that Sunday.⁵ Such a title so soon after the hanging, and after McLaurin's prominent role in it, held the promise of revelations. But as a minister who had earlier refused to give information about Blake's confession, McLaurin could hardly liven his sermon with too many specific details. In later years, after 16 years as superintendent of Baptist Missions in Alberta and after having a Grande Prairie church named in his honour, he reminisced, 'Occasionally I was tempted to announce a sensational topic, which to my surprise brought a crowd. When they discovered that I had in my display windows what I did not have in my shop, they did not come again. It requires a genius to hold an audience by eloquence, learning or sensation. Few of us are equal to it. But if you give the Bread of Life, from that inexhaustible supply, the hungry will come.'⁶ Although he preached many sermons over his long career, it