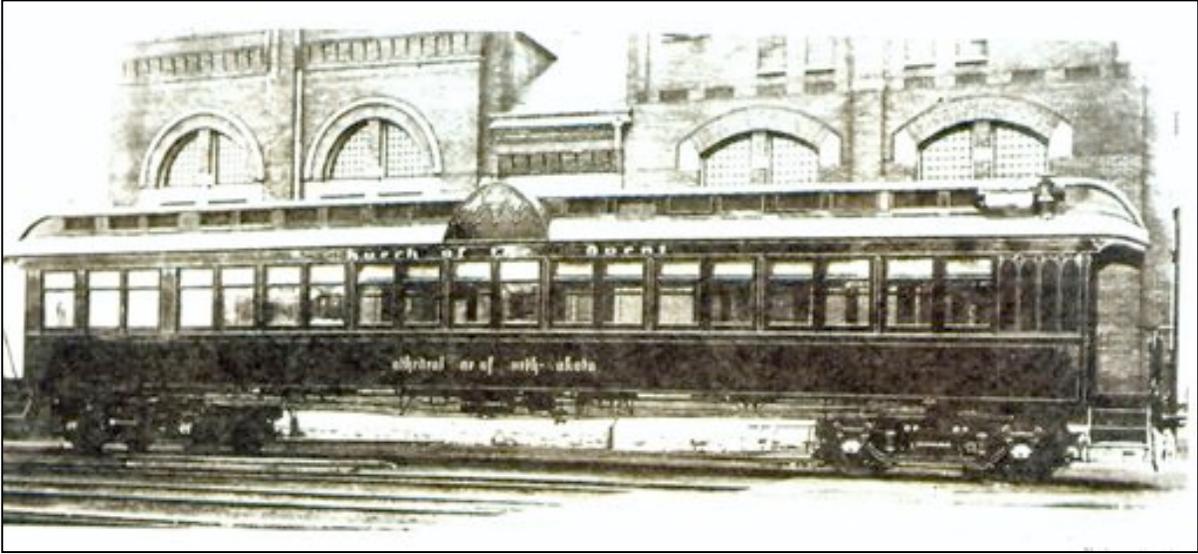


Chapter Two

Bishop Walker's Cathedral Car of North Dakota, Church of the Advent



A Russian Orthodox chapel car on the Trans-Siberian Railway inspired Bishop William David Walker to create the *Church of the Advent, the Cathedral Car of North Dakota*, the first American chapel car. With gifts from Cornelius Vanderbilt, the Pullman Palace Car Company built the car in 1890. [Norman T. Taylor Collection]

In 1883, a fifty-year-old native of New York City, a Columbia University graduate with doctorates from Oxford and Trinity, came to North Dakota—a journey of extremes. He had advanced to the priesthood in Calvary Church, New York, where he displayed ability as a man of affairs, wise judgment, and conservative churchmanship, which added to his powers as a preacher and sermonizer. His sympathies for all classes led the House of Bishops to nominate him for the missionary episcopate of North Dakota. He was consecrated in Calvary Church, New York, December 20, 1883.

Even as a young priest he was known for his innovative and courageous approaches to missionary work. He would need all those traits in his new home. A year after William David Walker came to North Dakota and before “it had been toned down much by civilization,” *The Illustrated American* [March 21, 1891] reported that he proved his compassion for the common men and their condition in that frontier.

In front of a saloon he saw seventy or eighty men forming a ring around two others, who were engaged in a desperate fight. The clothes of the combatants were torn and bloodstained, and one was nearly blinded. Bishop Walker broke into the ring, and going up to one of the struggling men, who was kicking the other in the face, attempted to drag him away. Unaided, he [Bishop Walker] could accomplish nothing, and was himself in danger of injury. He appealed to the crowd.

“Will no one of you help to separate these men?” he asked.

The crowd jeered. “Let them have it out,” one man cried.

Then the bishop lifted himself up to his full height and cried, with eyes blazing with indignation: “Is it possible that the manhood of all of you is gone? Are you only wolves? Shame on you!”

This was not a prudent way to address an excited crowd in Dakota in those days. The whole crowd stood dazed and amazed for a moment. Then four or five men rushed forward and helped the bishop. His hands and clothes were stained with blood and dirt in the struggle, but he had the demeanor of a conqueror. Standing between the two combatants, who were glaring at each other

and eager to renew the fight, he directed two or three of the crowd to take each man home and see that they did not begin the struggle over again. The crowd meekly obeyed.

The challenge of mission work in North Dakota seemed fitted for the Bishop, but this was generally not the case. A vision for missions was not at the top of the agenda for many in the Episcopal clergy. James Thayer Addison, in his history of the Episcopal Church in the United States, describes the situation when Walker became bishop of North Dakota.

Development was rapid in the West, and by 1890 five of the eight territories of Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Idaho, Washington, Utah, New Mexico and Indian Territory had become states, and their population had risen to 1,500,000 whites, drawn largely from the Middle West.

“The census of 1890 officially recorded the passing of the frontier. Thenceforth there was to be no fringe of settlement in the United States, for the whole country belonged in the ‘settled area,’ although in some parts the settlement was still thin . . . [but] much of the West remained a frontier region for the Church long after it had ceased to be a frontier for population.”

Support for mission work in these territories was weak, “painful evidences of wide indifference and of inadequate support,” and if money was hard to raise, so were men. According to the bishops, writing in 1895, “It is the fault of much of our training for the ministry that it fails to produce the kind and number of clergy demanded by the Church for its missionary work at home and abroad . . . To call for such men, and to call in vain, is the bitterest experience that can befall the Church.”¹

At that time, the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota had eighteen churches, and about thirty-five missions, services being conducted in hotel parlors, stores, school-houses, halls, skating-rinks, and theatres. Across the state Bishop Walker found stretched four great lines—the Northern Pacific, the Great Northern, the Milwaukee and St. Paul, the Minneapolis and Pacific, with feeders thrown out in all directions. “A large number of hamlets dot the country at short intervals. Many farms are grouped around each station of the principal and branch railways.” The bishop could count as many as sixty or seventy of these very small places on the railroads. “In frequent instances such settlements contain no school houses or churches,” and often he could find no room large enough to hold twenty people.²

After seeing the Russian Orthodox cars, the missionary bishop pondered on a situation in his wild diocese for which creeds were not responsible—a lack of church buildings of any kind. Walker felt that the innovative approach of rail cars was what he needed to reach the outposts of his diocese. In 1889 Walker approached friends in the East for money to build a railway chapel. A member of the Mission Board of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Cornelius Vanderbilt II, whose grandfather made the family fortunes on steamship and railway lines in ways that many thought scandalous, made the first contribution.

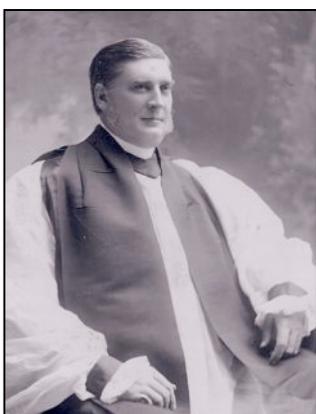
George Pullman and His Palace Car Company

On April 28, 1890, Bishop Walker contracted with the Pullman Palace Car Company, in an agreement signed by George M. Pullman, to build a 60-foot long, nine-foot, eight-inch wide, oak finish car. According to the Newberry Library’s Pullman Collection, \$4,224.16 was paid November 14, 1890, for Lot 1746.

The shop where this first American chapel car was built was a busy place at the close of 1890. When Pullman signed the contract to build the *Cathedral Car of North Dakota*, his Pullman Company had 2,135 vehicles running over 120,686 of the approximately 160,000 miles of railroad track in the United States. Prospects looked even better for the 1890s because of demands for the upcoming

¹ James Thayer Addison, *The Episcopal Church in the United States: 1789-1931* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951), 230.

² *Harpers Weekly*, January 31, 1891, 90.



Bishop Walker's commitment to the unreached in his vast North Dakota Diocese led him to build the first American Chapel Car. [Episcopal Diocese of North America archives, Austin, Texas.]

proposed work. On the second day, three of them returned, two of them most likely Boston W. Smith and the Reverend Wayland Hoyt, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Minneapolis. They asked more questions and then stated that they looked on it as solving a difficult question: what to do spiritually with the small towns on the railroads during the transition period.

“We have therefore, bishop,” said one of the gentlemen, “concluded to have one built for the Baptist church.”

The bishop replied, “I haven’t a patent on it, and so of course you can.”

Walker related later that about three days thereafter the Twin City papers announced that an order already had been given for such a car, and in about six months it was running in these northwestern states.

Harper's Weekly [January 1891] described *The Cathedral Car*.

This car is sixty feet long, and arranged with what has been known to the manufacturers as a “state-room” at one end. In the centre of the exterior on either side is an elevation with sunken panels to give in some degree the cathedral appearance. This transept plan was arranged by Mr. C. [Charles] C. Haight, of New York, well-known architect for Trinity Church Association, Columbia College, and the Episcopal Theological Seminary, in addition to a general course of important work in this city and its environs.

The finish is in oak, and the car is equipped with double windows on account of the cold country in which it will be used. A Baker heater is selected for warming this moving house of worship. Toward the rear of the car is the chancel with its altar, lectern, and font. A cabinet organ provides the music. The seating space is filled with portable chairs to the number of about eighty. The room partitioned off in the rear is ten feet long by about nine feet four inches wide.

Its twofold use as vestry and bedroom is best signified in the bishop’s words: “In it I can put on my robes. It will also be a dormitory for me when the people of the hamlet will not have room to shelter me. It will be simple in decoration and in its equipment.”

When Bishop Walker boasted, “This is, of course, the first church of the kind that has been built in the world, in all the ages of its history,” he must have had a memory lapse, for he failed to mention the Russian cars that had inspired his chapel car. He emphasized the simplicity of the car. “It would be incongruous for a missionary bishop to go about in a luxurious and pompous way. The object is in a simple way to preach Christ’s Gospel and administer the sacraments to many who have few or no opportunities to avail themselves of these spiritual comforts.”³



Pullman Palace Company print of *Church of the Advent, the Cathedral Car of North Dakota* before leaving the Pullman, Illinois, shop in 1890. [Smithsonian Collection]

³ *The Illustrated American*, 223.

The Illustrated American described the furnishing, which reflected involvement of Episcopalians across the nation. For example, the altar was given by a Summit, New Jersey, church, the lectern by a Philadelphia clergyman as a memorial of his father; Mrs. Colt, of Hartford, Connecticut, widow of the manufacturer of small-arms, gave the silken altar cloth; the altar linen was provided by the wife of the Bishop of Fredericton, New Brunswick. The church school of St. Catharine's at Davenport, Iowa, contributed the Bishop's chair; and the Sunday school of St. James's Church in Brooklyn sent the books for the altar. The font was the gift of the Missionary Society of Calvary Church, New York; and the Bible a memorial of the late General George W. Cass, long time senior warden of Christ Church. Chicago friends of Bishop Walker supplied the communion service; the kneeling cushions came from the family of the Bishop of Iowa, and the Young Ladies' Missionary Association of the Church of the Heavenly Rest, New York, presented the organ.

In the same issue, Bishop Walker described why he wanted the chapel car. He felt that to erect churches in towns, until their stability was assured, would be a waste of capital. In the neighborhood of each town large numbers of farmers had taken claims.

To meet these people's spiritual wants, a church on wheels would be effective. His plan was to send a placard announcing his coming, to be posted in the railroad station ten days before he arrived. The car would then be drawn to the place by a freight train, and switched to a sidetrack. After the service was over, the car would be attached to another train when it appeared and dragged to the next place at which services were to be held. Thus the work would go on from day to day.



The Cathedral Car had portable chairs that were filled with the settlers of the North Dakota prairie — town folks, farmers, trappers, and Indians. [Episcopal Diocese North Dakota]

The Cathedral Car's ministry was seventy thousand square miles within the jurisdiction of the Northern Pacific and the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba railroads. Of his mission field, Walker, wrote, "I do not believe it to be a western exaggeration to say that a larger torrent of able-bodied people has swept into this section than ever entered any section of land since time began."⁴

Walker wrote,

I reach through the occasional ministrations of the 'cathedral car' thousands of people whom I could not otherwise touch. I am now on another tour in it. Everywhere it is filled or crowded. The only exception was at a little place last night. The hamlet, however, consisted of only four dwelling houses, two wheat elevators, and a railroad station. Yet there were from thirty to forty persons present at our worship. The same service in a cheerless school-house, if there had been one, would probably not have called out one quarter the number of people, and this is the story everywhere. The compactness, the dignity, the simple beauty of the car wins the people. Its hearty service, too, reaches their hearts.⁵

Bishop Walker found the population of North Dakota, including large numbers of Englishmen of good family, Canadians, and industrious, orderly

⁴ *The Spirit of Missions*, October 1892.

⁵ *The Illustrated American*, 224.

Scandinavians, remarkable in several respects, especially in education, intelligence, and cultivation, even in the smallest farmhouses.

In such homes refinement is shown in the books carefully treasured, in the tasteful if inexpensive decorations of the rooms, and in the speech of the occupants.

The proportion of college-graduates who are farming in North Dakota is surprisingly large. In one settlement, consisting of twenty houses, a visitor was assured that there were twelve college-graduates among the inhabitants. Many of these remarkable inhabitants were led to settle in North Dakota through



Main Street, Granville, North Dakota early 1900s, a town similar to the many Bishop Walker visited with his chapel car. View from an old postcard.

Northern Pacific bonds held by them or by relations. When payment of interest on these bonds was stopped, after the panic of 1873, while the bonds themselves were quoted at very low figures in the market, they could still be used at face value for the purpose of buying lands included in the Northern Pacific grant.⁶

People were moved by the Episcopal Chapel Car's compactness, dignity, and simple churchly beauty, and the bishop's

spartan way of living probably accounted for much of his success with rough pioneer men. He cooked his own meals, made his own bed, swept the floor, distributed leaflets, made the fires, and kept the car in order; he usually had to play the organ as well.

Bishop Walker acknowledged that many people were prompted to come to visit the church car by curiosity alone. One farmer told him, "I've been to a good many circuses, and I've seen all the grandest exhibitions that have come west; but this is the biggest show yet."⁷

By July 1891, accounts of the Cathedral Car had appeared in China, Japan, India, New Zealand, Canada, Australia, Scotland, Great Britain, Germany, Norway, Syria, Italy and the West Indies. In a somewhat mangled report, The Reverend Mr. Dooman, in a letter from Nara, Japan, wrote: "A couple of days ago, I saw in a Japanese secular paper the following item: 'Mr. Dakota has built a railroad car in the city of New York to use it as a church in which he will travel all over the United States.'"

Church Ambulant Recognized As Success

An 1891 *Illustrated American* wrote that the *Church of the Advent, Cathedral Car of North Dakota*, was already bearing fruit, even though the car had not been in operation long enough for great results to be achieved:

Upon his next tour of visitation he [Bishop Walker] expects to make a number of confirmations and two or three missions have already been established in consequence of his work. Another striking result is that several agnostics, professed infidels, and other persons, who made a practice of never going to church, have attended services conducted in the car, not once, but again and again. Perhaps it is the novelty; but there seems to be something particularly attractive in the atmosphere of the car which draws in those for whom ordinary churches have no attraction.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ *The Spirit of Missions*, December 1890, 470.

Wherever the chapel car traveled, large crowds gathered to see it. Robert Wilkins and Wynona Wilkins, in *God Giveth the Increase*, tell of the reception of the car. As many as ninety persons crowded into the car, and often three people had to share two chairs. In some villages, car attendance some times equaled twice the population.

During the first three months, the Bishop visited thirteen places and in only three of these, the car was not filled to capacity.

When the bishop was at a dinner at Christ Church College, Oxford, in 1894, “one of the Oxford MP’s said ‘Bishop, you don’t belong to the Church militant or the Church triumphant.’ I asked, “What do I belong to then? His reply was: ‘To the Church ambulant.’”⁸

It seemed to many other bishops that Walker’s commitment was more to a church ambulant than to a church permanent. Although Walker was sometimes called a builder of churches, he had refused to build a Cathedral in Fargo, suitable as to its position as the see city of the diocese. The *Church of the Advent* chapel car was the Bishop’s church—his Cathedral, the seat of his See. Because of the name of the Cathedral Car—*The Church of the Advent*, several people asked whether the bishop was a Seventh-Day Adventist. They were burning to ask his view regarding the millennium and the date when the world would end. The bishop pleaded dense ignorance on the subject.

On another day, the car was anchored at a small village. Service was announced for that evening. The place upon the sidetrack where the car had been switched was somewhat inconvenient. The bishop asked the agent to have it removed to a more suitable location. He promised to request the conductor of the next freight train to change it.

In about an hour a freight train arrived. It was a very long one. The bishop observed that the conductor had great difficulty in managing it. He was quite excited and the brakemen were in the same condition and were running about with a great deal of vim. Suddenly the conductor jumped from the caboose and came to the bishop. He said, “Elder, I want to ask you a question. Don’t you think a conductor of a freight train has more right to swear than a preacher?”

The bishop replied emphatically, “No, but why do you ask such a question?” “Well,” said he, “I have the dumbest brakemen that ever you saw on that train. They are so stupid that I am afraid they will break it in two. I feel like ripping out oaths at them and I can’t help it. I guess you’d swear too if you had them to deal with.”

“Well,” said the Bishop, “I don’t think I would give vent to my wrath in oaths. Now, what good does it do you? What do you accomplish by it? Does it add any force to your order or any ability to your men to do their work?”

“No,” was the reply, “but I feel so mad that I can’t help it.”⁹

“Now let me ask you a question or two,” said the bishop. “Do you swear when you are in the presence of preachers?”

“Of course not, I would not insult them by swearing before them.”



Walker would frequently stop at Bismarck, one of the larger towns in the territory, and hold meetings near the depot. [Family Old Photos Website]

⁸ *The Spirit of Missions*, May 1891,169.

⁹ Robert and Wynona Wilkins, *God Giveth the Increase: The History of the Episcopal Church in North Dakota*, North Dakota Institute for Regional Studies, Fargo, 1959, 450.

“Do you swear in the presence of ladies”?

He said “no” again. “That would be very impolite.”

“Well,” said the bishop, “if you can restrain yourself in the presence of parsons and ladies you can just as well in the presence of those under you. They are men and they are entitled to polite usage as well as anybody else. Besides, the Bible tells you and me that it is a sin to use profane language. Remember there is such a thing as insulting God Almighty.”¹⁰

At this point the train began to move away. The conductor took hold of the Bishop’s hand and said, “goodbye” and leaped upon the caboose. Two days after the Cathedral Car was stationed at another point. In the course of the day, the same conductor appeared with his train and assured the bishop that he had no occasion to use profane language since this conversation.

Traveling in sleighs or walking over the prairies, the bishop’s missionaries were often in serious danger, especially when they were overtaken by the blizzards that could develop without warning. The thermometer frequently fell to 35 or 40 degrees below zero. One winter when the mercury reached 52 degrees below zero, Walker froze both cheeks and one ear. Even indoors the risk was great. One priest’s nose was frozen on a night when the temperature in an unheated room fell to twenty-five below zero.

The severity of the winters affected both the missionary efforts of the clergy and the zeal of the laity. Unless they were warmly clad, people ran a great risk in attending services during the winter, and they were thus inclined to attend the nearest place of worship, regardless of denomination. It was therefore more important that Episcopal churches be centrally located if members were not to be lost.

When the railroads crossed the North Dakota prairie, they established water stops every thirty miles or so and shop stops every hundred miles or so. Some of those stops became towns, and major rail shop towns along the Northern Pacific line were Fargo, Jamestown, Bismarck, and Dickinson. A surprising effect of Walker’s chapel car ministry was with railroad workers.

As a rule, railroad men were not churchgoers. They were away from home so much that they were not reached by the ordinary church methods, and often they were obliged to work on Sundays. *The Cathedral Car* could not have had greater success among them if it had been designed especially for them. It was only natural that they should feel at home in it and that they should regard their railroad uniforms and working clothes as the proper thing to wear in a car, although such attire would be out of place in an ordinary church.¹¹



Bishop Morrison upon arriving at his new missionary jurisdiction in Fargo was disappointed to find a railroad church car not a beautiful cathedral.
[Norman T. Taylor Collection]

Walker reported that the men joined in the services, took part in the responses, and sang with a spirit rarely manifested in ordinary churches. “This is in part due to the fact that the members of the congregation have to sit so close together in the car. They feel none of the awe or embarrassment about raising their voices that is inspired by a large hall not well filled.”

As is true with any innovation, there were those who criticized Bishop’s Walker’s *Cathedral Car*, even though the January 31, 1891, issue of *Harper’s Weekly* stressed a positive approach.

¹⁰ *The Record*, August 1895, 5.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

The only possible criticism to which this journeying cathedral may be subject is indicated in this fine simplicity. The hope must prevail; nevertheless, that no detriment to the triumphant course of the institution is foreshadowed in its extremely simple form—in similitude with the plan of the new French court drawn up by M. de Remusat at Bonaparte's request, of which, the emperor said, 'There is not sufficient display in it, all that would not throw dust in people's eyes.' No one can doubt that a wise bishop knows as clearly and comprehensively for what he had built as did ever a political sovereign. Although not without dignity and elegance, this novel type of cathedral will depend for popularity on its usefulness rather than on its stateliness.

The bishop and his chapel car were a familiar sight from the rolling woodlands of the Red River Valley to the Montana border as Walker officiated at church services, conducted marriages and funerals, and tended his scattered sheep. Bishop Walker with the Cathedral Car visited Drayton, a town of seven hundred inhabitants, in 1895. "It touched his heart to hear a farm hand singing beautifully at one of the meetings and to learn that this man used to sing in the choir of Lincoln Cathedral, England, "Your car," said the man, "seems like a bit of home to me."¹²

Walker Leaves His Cathedral On Rails

In the spring of 1897 Bishop Walker was called to serve in western New York State, again a journey of extremes, and Bishop James Dow Morrison, bishop of Duluth, was asked to take charge of the jurisdiction of North Dakota. Presiding bishop for the occasion was J. Mott Williams, who one year before had been elected to the newly created position of bishop of Northern Michigan. Bishop Williams had something in common with the departing Bishop Walker. He too operated a chapel car, the second such car to be used in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan.

Bishop Morrison, upon assuming his responsibilities at the annual meeting of September of 1897, was overwhelmed at his temporary charge.

I doubt if you can find anywhere, in a missionary jurisdiction, mission churches that will compare with those beautiful little houses of worship with their walls of prairie boulders, which we find so frequently in this state. If some of our stations have languished we must remember that they have only suffered the fate which had overtaken everything during those trying years of scarcity and financial depression that told so heavily on North Dakota. But now that God's kind Providence is permitting us once more to see the smiling face of prosperity, it is our duty to open every church door and make every altar and chancel beautiful with the sight and sound of praise and prayer and to remember gratefully the splendid work of good Bishop Walker, whose energy and devotion have given us these churches to occupy and if please God to fill with worshipers.¹³

The acting bishop, although he praised Bishop Walker's missionary energy and devotion, was dismayed that there was not a better church building in Fargo. Somewhat critical of Bishop Walker's decision to build the *Church of the Advent* chapel car cathedral instead of a traditional edifice, he commented about his tour of the territory,

The last place that he visited was the church in Fargo, "While I was delighted with the spacious church lot, and its excellent location, I was surprised not to find a better church building. I am sure that the churchmen here have only been reserving their energies that they might erect here a stately and beautiful church, which would be in keeping with the principal town of the state and the In his tour of the diocese, down the North Dakota line of the Northern Pacific Railroad, Morrison discovered that Dickinson had a nice church but no services; Mandan and Bismarck had churches but no pastors. Jamestown had both a church and an active pastor, but he was too busy with his own parish to fill the needs of Carrington, which had neither a church nor a pastor. He found the

¹² *Harper's Weekly*, January 31, 1891, 90.

¹³ Personal Papers of Reverend H "Mac" Kennickell, Asheville, North Carolina.

same situations along the Langdon branch and the Mayville line of the Great Northern.

Bishop Morrison also had a bone to pick with the railroads, in this case the Northern Pacific, and the subject of his ire was public access to the steel and wrought-iron railroad bridge which had been built over the Missouri in 1882, ten months before the northern route of the transcontinental railway was finished. Up to that time, the only way to get across the Missouri at that point was by steamboat or ferry, or in the winter by crossing the ice.

On Sunday, June 19, 1898, he held service in the church at Bismarck and preached, and afterward Morrison visited some of the people who were ill. He had intended to hold evening service at Mandan, but was unable to cross the river as all permits to cross the R. R. bridge had been revoked that morning, and an effort of his kind host, General Hughes, to obtain a concession in his favor was fruitless.

Angered now, the Bishop pronounced, "The Northern Pacific Railway has received many favors in North Dakota, and its existence is only justified at all, on the theory that it serves the people of the state. Some of its officials seem to have forgotten this. There is no reason why the railway bridge over the Missouri should not be made a public highway where the foot passenger could safely cross at all times. The cost would be a trifle, and the accommodation to the public would be appreciated by many in the wretched condition of the train service."¹⁴

Only once, according to Bishop Walker, probably in 1891 on *Evangel's* maiden voyage, had the Baptist Car and the Cathedral Car been together in the same town. It was at a junction, where the end of one touched the end of the other. It was like a clasping of hands. In neither was service held on that night. There was therefore no conflict of theology in the churches on wheels. The following morning they parted, one being hauled west and the other northwest. Walker added, "Since that time the Baptist church, finding the work of the chapel cars effective, have built three more, and they are accomplishing much on several railroads west, south and east."¹⁵

Cathedral Car Parked, Sold

In 1899 Bishop Samuel C. Edsall became head of the North Dakota diocese. The new Bishop, busy getting diocese matters back in order after thirty months without a resident bishop, had other interests than chapel cars. After his arrival, he found the much-publicized *Church of the Advent* in need of repairs in its shed in Fargo on the Northern Pacific track, and more than \$100 in arrears in its rent. Edsall felt that while the car had attracted much attention, it was too cumbersome and expensive to be practical. Moreover, Bishop Edsall explained, it ran only at the convenience of the railroads, and as railroad business increased, they were less and less disposed to move the car free of charge (although Bishop Walker earlier and the five Baptist cars in operation at this time were not having any difficulty with obtaining free passage).

The bishop, unable to negotiate for its handling by the railroads and seemingly unwilling to see its value as a missionary tool, sent the Cathedral Car—no longer the Bishop's Church—to Carrington to be used as a chapel. A lay reader held Sunday services in the car until winter when extreme cold made it impossible to continue.

Bishop Edsall did have a concern for missions, and he was disheartened at the lack of financial support he was receiving from the board of missions. He had observed certain problems in planting the church on the frontier. "A missionary was often successful when he first appeared in a new town, but interest in his services soon fell off as "civilization" came in the form of fraternal lodges, hotels, and women's clubs." He felt the problem was that because the people were so scattered and too few to support a minister, they must have outside

14 Edward C. Murphy, "The Northern Pacific Railway Bridge at Bismarck," *North Dakota History, Journal of the Northern Plains*, Spring, 1995, 10.

15 Journal of Proceedings, North Dakota Convocation, 1898, 16.

help. And that help was not coming. In his vision, that outside help was not in the form of a chapel car. At the annual convocation in 1900, Edsall reported:

On the day of my Consecration, (Wednesday, January 25, 1899, St. Peter's at Chicago) Bishop Walker turned over to me \$8,205 and subsequently \$500 additional which he had accumulated and held in trust for the church in North Dakota. He has also deeded to me a block of ground in Fargo and quarter section of land in Foster County and given me a bill of sale of the Cathedral car. These properties were turned over to me without any terms of restriction as to their use; although some of the money had been received at a time when it was hoped that a Church school for girls might be built at Fargo, and a smaller portion had been tentatively promised to Gethsemane Church Fargo, toward the erection of their new Church.¹⁶

At a meeting held November 30, 1901, the bishop reported that eleven years after it was put into service, the *Cathedral Car* had been sold for one thousand dollars and the mortgage on the bishop's residence had been reduced by that amount. The bishop had a beautiful new residence, "a dignified structure in the colonial style, spacious, comfortable and home-like." The house was equipped with modern plumbing; five brick fireplaces ensured "physical comfort, even in coldest weather." At the rear of the lot, a barn was built of lumber taken from the dismantled shed of the Cathedral Car.¹⁷

On the North Dakota prairie, the need was still great, and a chapel car could have been a blessing to one young priest. On Ascension Day in 1900 he went thither and, after investigation, decided to start a mission, but he had no place to meet. Thirty-four children and adults were baptized in the mission within a few months and twenty confirmed, and there was still no church for them to meet in. As late as 1906, Protestant Episcopal Reverend E. W. Burleson of Minnesota, said, "we are so short of clergy, only twenty in an area of almost 71,000 square miles with a population of some 600,000, it is impossible to seize these openings as should be done, . . . there are by the thousands 'sheep having no shepherd' . . . and scores of children who never saw a missionary and countless others who see one only at long intervals."

Cathedral Car Lives On

Even though Bishop Walker's cathedral on rails had been sold, that was not the end of the *Church of the Advent, Cathedral Car*. McHenry, North Dakota, a typical Dakota town, was started in 1899 when the Northern Pacific Railway extended a branch line. "It is now, and likely to be for some time, the terminus of the branch, and so is a place of considerable importance, being the headquarters and distributing point for a large tract of surrounding county."

The new town had a population of three hundred within a year, including two communicants of the Episcopal Church, but not a church building of any denomination. The Reverend D. H. Clarkson of Jamestown visited the village, and he and Bishop Mann organized St. Michael's Mission. Outfitted with furniture from the dismantled *Cathedral Car*, a building was completed and the first service was held in 1903. But in 1913 the building had to be sold, since it seemed impossible to interest the largely foreign-born population in the Episcopal Church.¹⁸

Still, parts of the *Cathedral Car* continued in use. During the summer of 1919, St. Mary's Church was built in Guelph, and among its furnishings were the font and lectern from the *Cathedral Car*." When St. Mary's Church in Guelph was combined with nearby St. Mark's Episcopal in Oakes, the font and lectern came along and were incorporated into the worship of the new St. Mary's and St. Mark's Episcopal Church of Oakes.

¹⁶ Wilkins and Wilkins, 67.

¹⁷ Missionary District of North Dakota, 1902, Appendix C, report of secretary and treasurer of the standing committee, 29.

¹⁸ Reverend Edward Welles Burleson's account in *Spirit of Missions*, March 1906, 171.

Rising high above surrounding suburban housing on the outskirts of present-day Fargo, the See city of the Diocese of North Dakota, is a striking church. Praised for its pure prairie architecture, its soaring towers emulate the clean lines of Dakota grain elevators that still dot the landscape. It is the Cathedral church of the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota—Gethsemane Cathedral. It is a fitting cathedral, one that Bishop Edsall would have approved.

Two treasured brass chandeliers from the *Church of the Advent, the Cathedral Car of North Dakota*, converted to electric lights, are mounted on a wall in a church lounge, and in a display case is a glass globe from a lighting fixture used in the car. At the west end of the Great Hall, light from the striking “The Great Commission” stained-glass window dances across tables where members enjoy a coffee hour.

This window is the history heart of Gethsemane’s historic congregation. Recorded there in the vivid art glass blues and reds and shades of gold are scenes depicting the founding of the church. A Northern Pacific Railroad surveyor’s tent at Northern Pacific Avenue and Broadway in 1872 is pictured at the lower left. At the lower right, there is another scene—*The Church of the Advent, Cathedral Car of North Dakota*.

That chapel car too was a fitting cathedral, one of which Bishop William David Walker, a man with true missionary vision, was proud— a Cathedral to take to the people who could not come to it.



The beautiful prairie-style Gethsemane Cathedral of Fargo, North Dakota, honors its chapel car history. [Gethsemane Cathedral Website]