

# Bibliography

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We wish to apologize for any errors or omissions as much of the information was gathered from the memories of those still living. We realize there may be gaps in the coverage and that some facts may not be completely accurate. However, we have attempted to set down as complete and accurate a history as possible.



Agriculture is a large part of who we are in southern Alberta. Ranching and farming have, since homesteaders arrived in Alberta, been one of the most predominant and defining characteristics of our area.

## **SCHULER**

Alberta Wheat Pool elevator No. 1 at Schuler was built in 1928 with a capacity for 40,500 bushels of grain. In 1940 a 27,800 bushel annex was added, and in 1954 a 39,700 bushel annex was constructed. This elevator was demolished in March 1978 to make way for a new elevator which could contain and store 170,000 bushels of wheat. This new elevator was completed in September 1979 and officially opened October 19, 1979.

The last Alberta Wheat Pool elevator in Schuler was demolished in 1997.

The Pioneer elevator was built in 1928. May 16, 1997 was the last day of operation for the Pioneer Grain elevator. The amount of grain handled during the lifetime of the station was 365,360.2 tonnes or 13,423,334 bushels.

## **PRAIRIE CRUCIBLE - Bingville, Atlee, Iddesleigh, Tide Lake, Jenner**

Since WWII, advanced technology in dryland farming has changed the success of this previously risky venture. New varieties of seed wheat, barley, and cultivated grasses, especially developed to thrive in the climatic conditions here, as well as mechanization and other farming practices, have all made important improvements.

The farm club movement began in Alberta in 1917. The original name, "Boys' and Girls' Clubs" was changed in 1952 to the "4-H Clubs of Alberta."

The sheep wagon was a small building on a 4-wheel wagon, designed by early sheep ranchers as a home on wheels for their herder out on the range.

## **WALSH**

The first recorded irrigation scheme was established in Alberta in 1879. A settler named John Glenn dug a ditch to divert water from Fish Creek to irrigate 15 – 20 acres of native hay meadow.

In the 1880's those engaged in the cattle ranching business in the Walsh district counted on favourable climate and an abundance of pasture to enable their herds to look after themselves year round. Cold winters with deep snow and prolonged cold spells and no major Chinooks meant disaster and could even wipe out whole herds.

Mange was a dreaded disease that affected both cattle and sheep. If livestock were left untreated, a great loss of weight would occur in the animals. As a result, ranchers built dipping vats to handle their stock; one such vat was located west of Many Island Lake. A dip-vat was below ground level. To move cattle through special pens, funneling chutes, and sliding gates to control the cattle were required. Water, sulphur, and live lime made up the solution in the dip vat which was heated



in the pit by steam to 110 – 115 degrees Fahrenheit. Cattle were run through the chute, single file, into the pit where the solution was deep enough to cover them. Men along the side forced the heads under so that every part of the body was covered by the dip. From there the cattle came up into a draining pen and then out to a holding corral. There were two dippings, 10 days apart.

By an act of 1917 the Soldiers Settlement Board could loan Veterans of WWI \$2500.00 for livestock and equipment to begin farming or for payment of indebtedness on a farm. Designated settlement areas set up to be purchased by a second act passed in 1919. The bulk of the settlements were made in 1919 – 1920 when prices were high. By the time they were able to put land under cultivation and increase cattle herds, deflation had hit, so few managed to make payments. In 1920 wheat was \$1.50 per bushel and \$100.00 per cow. In 1921 wheat was \$0.45 to \$0.75 per bushel and \$30.00 - \$40.00 per cow.

With the outbreak of War in 1939, and the army call up of men, trouble started for the ranchers when the strong young men who used to pitch fork all the hay put up on the ranches, left to go to War. Mechanical help had to be found as there were no hydraulic front end loaders. However, small rubber tired tractors like Ford's 9N had just come on the market in 1940. It was on one of these John Fulton dreamed up a mechanical hay loading fork that became very popular locally. It could load hay racks five times as fast as by hand. This, combined with the tractor mower and rake, was the end of hard labour in the hay fields before the days of mobile balers. Fulton's machine was made from the scrap iron of his grandfather's old wooden grain separator, and the winch from the rear end of an old Star Car. It was put together in his farm workshop. This fork led the way for modern mechanical hay handling.

After WWII the federal government established the Veteran's Land Act to entitle veterans of the Services to purchase farm lands; which a number took advantage of to establish their futures.

A heavy wet snow fall on August 22, 1993 meant heartbreak for area farmers. The crops, which were five feet tall, were flattened to a few inches by this devastating storm.

### **PLAINS, TRAINS, AND WAGON WHEELS - Bullshead, Coleridge, Dauntless, Dunmore, Little Plume, Longfellow, Norton, Pashley, Rosebeg, Wisdom, Woolchester**

The eastern part of the district (Norton and Tothill) had a milk route that served many customers. In the 1940's, milk, in 8-gallon cans was hauled. The area south and west of Medicine Hat was the real home of the dairy industry and many families made this industry their livelihood.

Irrigation in the area was started when water was diverted from the Little Plume Creek as early as the turn of the century. It was not until 1954 that water was

brought to the Dauntless area. Water from the St. Mary's Reservoir began flowing and irrigation was started on a large scale. The canal that brought the water

to the area took over 5 years to build and was 220 miles long. In the mid-1960's people began to purchase sprinkler systems; wheel-move systems came first, fol-



lowed by water-drive pivots. The first water rights were \$10.00 per acre, payable over 10 years and water rates were \$2.50 per acre.

In June of 1981, the Rusty Spur Trail Riders Club was started. In September the first trail ride was held – a 20 mile ride from Rusty Spur Ranch to Eagle Butte. The 15 riders rode out the first day and returned the next.

**CYPRESS HILLS - Tothill, Robinson, Evergreen, Graburn, Eagle Butte, Elkwater, Thelma, Fox**

After their mandatory 3-year enlistment each NWMP recruit was promised 160 acres of land. As a result many NWMP officers became part-time ranchers and upon discharge many took up ranching on a full-time basis.

Some of the first settlers in Graburn were Scotty Gow and William Strothers who took their leave of the NWMP in 1890 and started ranching in the area.

Between 1879 and 1880 important government decisions were made whereby the Canadian West was to become an agricultural hinterland, built upon international immigration and the family farm, and integrated with a growing manufacturing sector in Central Canada. This National Policy was hinged upon the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

The railroad built to the north of the Cypress Hills facilitated settlers coming to the promise of free land. The greatest influx was between 1894 and the advent of WWI in 1914. Settlers came in groups to an area, established ethnic communities, ploughed the native grass and fenced the land, putting an end to the open range.

Under the Homestead regulations of 1905, those who could make entry for a homestead had to be eighteen years of age; a British subject; and had to pay a fee of \$10.00. The applicant had to reside on the land for at least 6 months of each year for 3 years and the land had to be worked each of these 3 years and seeded in 2 such years. They had to break 30 acres of which 20 acres had to be cropped. However, a choice could be made to substitute breaking or seeding: the first year applicant had to have at least five head of stock; the second year they had to have at least ten head of stock; then up to the date of patent there had to be at least sixteen head of stock (ten sheep or hogs were equal to one head of cattle or horses); a yearly declaration had to be made and the area enclosed with a fence.

The drought and depression in the 'dirty thirties' drove many of the settlers from the land as there were no crops and no income.

Beef prices in 1927 were very good. Three year old steers were selling from \$75.00 - \$90.00 per head. Calves ranged from \$20.00 - \$30.00 per head. Grazing dues in the Forest Reserve were \$0.10 per head per month for horses and \$0.08 per head per month for cattle. Permit fee was \$1.00.



### **FORGOTTEN CORNER - Comrey, Catchem, Hooper-Pendland, Onefour, Wild Horse**

Markets for beef began to develop in the late 1870's as Mounted Police detachments provided a basis for these first markets; and the construction of the CPR main line ushered in the heyday of Alberta ranching. However, by 1896 the day of the big ranch was over and by 1905 homesteaders had started coming into the area. The last decisive blow to the cattle barons was struck by the winter of 1906 – 1907. It saw fantastic amounts of snow and losses amounted to 75% of the herds.

During the winter of 1903 – 1904 mange among cattle became quite prevalent and as a result dipping vats were built. The government ordered that all cattle south of the CPR be quarantined and dipped. The first dipping of cattle began in 1904 and the government appointed mange inspectors who were trained in the work of running down the pest. There were three mange inspectors at work in southern Alberta during these early years.

Before auction sales of livestock were commenced in the late 1930's and early 1940's cattle and sheep were usually sold on the ranch to independent buyers who made a deal with the owner looking after the stock.

Before 1912 the beef industry on the open range was thriving but little information had been recorded about the best methods of using range lands. Although a lot of practical information was known among the ranchers the range land became badly overgrazed and the need was felt for experimental work to be done with the objective of finding out how range land could be improved. In 1926 a survey of the range land was conducted by Sydney E. (Doc) Clarke and Leonard B. Thomson of Swift Current. They decided that experimental work should be done and a site in the driest area of southern Alberta was chosen for the work. 1927 marked the birth of the Dominion Range Experimental Farm, the first of its kind in Canada. Initially associated with Manyberries it was discovered in 1965 that savings could be made by changing the postal address to Onefour. That was adopted as the official address, and the Onefour Range and Livestock Substation came into being.

### **HILDA**

In 1871 the Conservative government of Canada sent surveyors to the Western Provinces to divide the land up into townships; and there was continuing debate about the suitability of grain farming in this area. In the late 1800's and early 1900's a large portion of land in the Hilda area was controlled by ranchers. By the year 2000 most farmers in the Hilda area were both grain and cattle producers.

Homesteaders began arriving in 1909; the largest influx being between 1910 – 1913. Many of the homesteaders were "Germans from Russia" who had heard about the fertile and rich soil available in America and wanted to start a new life in a new country where there would be more opportunities.

At its peak Hilda boasted six elevators. The Alberta Wheat Pool started operating in Hilda in 1928 and the service it provided to Hilda and surrounding area came to an end in May of 1997. The E.A. Mantz – Federal Grain elevator was constructed in late 1923; and the N. M Paterson & Sons Ltd. elevator was constructed in



Hilda in 1924 shortly after the railroad was built. The Alberta Pacific Grain Company elevator was one of the first elevators built and one of the first to come down; it was closed and taken down in the early 1950's. The Ogilvie Milling Co. elevator was constructed in the winter of 1923 – 24 and was one of the first to open; it was demolished in approximately 1985. The Lake of the Woods elevator first appears on the tax assessment in 1927 and was torn down in 1978.

The first wheat grown on the prairies was Red Fife. After 1910, Marquis was also grown. No other wheat varieties were registered until 1935. Wheat and Durham are still prevalent crops in the Hilda area, but as of 2000 other crops such as barley, triticale, peas, canola, mustard, and corn were also being grown.

In the 1920's gas tractors such as Fordson started to appear in the area. During the 1930's many tractors sat idle as people did not have money to buy fuel. In the 1940's 'horse power' was being replaced by tractors but they were hard to obtain because of the war. Combines were used although some farmers still threshed some, or their entire crop, to get the straw and chaff for feed.

Farming methods have changed as drastically as the machinery. In the 1920's and 1930's plows were used to work the fields. The moldboard plow which would cover and bury residue as it tilled was the most widely used. The theory was to work deep and bring up the hard lumps so the soil would not blow. When dry conditions and winds prevailed in the 1930's the exposed soil started eroding and blowing causing dust storms and drifts of top soil. Some historians say the main cause of the dust storms in the 'dirty 30's' was the moldboard plow. Gradually implements such as cultivators, blades, diskers and rod weeders were being used for summerfallow. These did not work up the soil as deeply and left trash on the surface to decrease erosion. Today our farmers are able to make use of GPS to collect data from orbiting satellites. This data, in combination with data from sensors on the farm equipment allow the creation of precision maps. Using precision mapping it is possible to determine where more fertilizer is required in the field to increase yield; while some combines calculate the yield as the field is harvested making yield mapping possible. Computers are now becoming indispensable farm management tools and the number of people required to do the farm work has decreased as machines have taken over many tasks.

#### **IRVINE & DISTRICT**

The arrival of Russian-German settlers and the semi-arid nature of many areas influenced the growth and development of ranching and grain farming, with several large ranches being found around the Irvine area. Long hours of sunshine and many frost-free days help the crops to mature rapidly. Moisture conditions – over a 60 year period – average an annual approximate 12 inches in the area and encourage the farmers. On the other hand, the often hot dry month of July often causes the grain to wither and fade away.

The warm Chinook winds made the area, especially in certain regions, very adaptable to raising cattle and sheep. These winds often bring spring-like days in winter to the whole of this southeastern region. The rapid removal of the snow by the Chinook winds provides winter grazing for the ranchers. Conversely, in summer, these winds become hot and may be a bane to grain farmers and can, at times,

blow from 5 – 75 miles per hour and cause the scanty moisture in the soil to dry out rapidly and crops may ripen prematurely and can be ruined.

The cattle industry was not established in the Northwest Territories until the arrival of the railroad. With the West opened, settlers arrived and began to file homestead claims at which time the cattle industry in southern Alberta was born. From 1883 through to the early 1900's the range was open. Cattle drifted from the river at Medicine Hat northeast to the Many Island Lake district, east to Maple Creek, and south to the Cypress Hills. In the fall, ranchers sent out roundup crews to gather and separate the herds. Many of the earliest ranches in the Irvine area were established near suitable shelter and water. The Cypress Hills and creeks such as the Ross, Box Elder, Bullshead, and the McKay became the home locations of many of the early ranches.

The first elevator in Irvine was built in 1907 by the Irvine Elevator Co. with a capacity of 35,000 bushels and at a cost of \$7,000. Two years after it was built this elevator was sold to Ogilvie and was destroyed on October 31, 1913.

A number of horse ranches were established and flourished until the 1920's. Their markets were the settlers who required horses to begin their homesteads and the US Cavalry who sent buyers to Alberta to purchase remounts for the army. Horses were available to buy or rent from the livery stable located at the east end of Irvine.

Irvine had a stockyard operated by the CPR and located at the east end of town. Cattle were trailed in from local ranches and shipped out by rail for markets in the east. During the late 1920's and early 1930's a number of ranchers shipped carloads of cattle from Irvine directly to the stockyards in Chicago. Prices ranged from \$0.02 – \$0.03 a pound for 3 year old steers and was, in many cases, not enough to pay the freight charges. Weaned calves sold for around \$5.00 a head at the time.

Seeding was usually done with a disc drill, and implements used to prepare the land for seeding were ploughs, discs, and cultivators. These implements had a raised steel seat which often proved to be very unstable, especially when the plough struck a big rock.

The header was an intriguing machine in that it was not drawn but rather pushed by a team of four horses. The steering was done by the driver who reined the horses and manipulated with his legs a lever which was attached to the seat. The lever guided the swivel wheel below like a steering wheel. The pushing of the horses activated the gears which moved the sickle that cut the grain.

The Alberta Wheat Pool had its beginnings in Irvine in 1929 when a 40,000 bushel capacity elevator was built.

**Bowell, Bowmanton, Box Springs, Chappice Lake, Finn's Lake, Harvest Vale, Lake Valley, Pearsonville, Vale**

To break up the land, what was called 'a breaking plough,' was used. A walking plough guided by the hands of the farmer was common and later they were designed so one could sit on them. In later years, when the tractor was more commonly used for power, a cultivator with special shovels ripped the land by working the ground in different directions a number of times. If time permitted breaking was often done in the fall. Discers, harrows, packers, and floats are the equipment that seemed to be usually used to level and prepare the ground so seed could be planted.

An annual chore was the removal of the rocks off the field and putting them into 'rock piles.' This was done by hand, by putting the rocks on stoneboats to haul them off the fields. Rock picking machines used in later years made the task easier.

A fanning mill, run by hand, was used to clean the seed and the farmer mixed the herbicide with his shovel.

Hauling the grain to market was often done in the winter months and at first had to be done to the main railway lines. Before the use of trucks it was done with horse and wagon or sleigh.

The first Hereford cattle were brought to Alberta in 1900 and for many years dominated the cattle industry. But the killer storms of winter 1906 and spring 1907 almost wiped out the cattle industry. Many of the large ranchers lost 70% – 80% of their cattle in driving blizzards and extreme cold.

During the 1920's there was said to be 50,000 sheep between Redcliff and Tilley. The larger sheep ranches were situated around Suffield, Alderson, and Tilley, but flocks up to 2000 were found in the Bowell district.

**SUFFIELD**

By 1886 there were 58 ranchers in southern Alberta leasing over 2 million acres. The average size, of the grazing leases in the Suffield-Medicine Hat area, was 13,000 acres.

In 1904 irrigation projects were becoming widespread in an attempt to improve crop yields and therefore encourage settlement.

Although large sheep companies had existed below the Block in the 1890's they had declined with the growth of cattle ranching. Sheep were introduced to the Block by a number of ex-British homesteaders in the mid-1920's. They were initially treated with contempt by those true North Americans who felt that beef and not lamb was the staple diet of a strong developing nation. When the sale of the wool and meat made a tidy profit even the most stubborn 'beef' man was won around.

Those farmers who did remain in the area after 1924 increased the size of their holdings. During 1910 – 1922 the average homesteader farmed about 1.5 sections of land (960 acres). Those who remained were farming about 2 sections (1280 acres) and could lease a further 2 or 3 sections. Their perseverance was rewarded with a record harvest in 1928. However, the euphoria was short lived as 1929 saw a disappointingly small crop, and marked the beginning of a long drought which lasted until 1938.





Life in the county was exciting no matter what community you were in. Things were and are constantly changing and growing. From the advent of the CPR to the local community halls, churches, and groups – there was always something going on for everyone.

**PRAIRIE CRUCIBLE - Bingville, Atlee, Iddesleigh, Tide Lake, Jenner**

The hamlet of Atlee was never very large. There was only 1 street and the post office, barber shop, and pool hall were all combined. One of the great summer events was the Sunday picnic at the Atlee ferry.

Several oil wells were drilled in the Atlee area during the 1940's. The first was in the cattle lease to the south, it was a sort of test well. A large outfit came in next, along with a crew to assemble the derrick which arrived in pieces on a number of large trucks. In April 1949 an outfit moved up from the US. They were Southerners who know nothing about Canada; not even knowing what clothes to bring or weather to expect. This outfit drilled several wells before they left for Saskatchewan.

In 1918 or 1919 a heavy flu hit the Atlee area.

A railway station house was built and completed in Atlee on June 12, 1914. In 1917 the station house was added onto, this addition included a waiting room as well as a bedroom for the agent. A privy house was also built. In 1927 stockyards were built and in 1936 grain loading facilities were added.

Until 1917 grain produced by the Atlee District farmers had to be delivered to Buffalo or Jenner. In 1917 the Alberta Pacific Grain Co. built an elevator to take care of grain deliveries at Atlee.

The Iddesleigh townsite was laid out in 1913 and the first building moved onto the townsite was a blacksmith shop. Upon completion of the railroad, the town began to grow. It consisted of a blacksmith shop, restaurant, boarding house, grocery and hardware store, post office, and hall. In 1915, 2 grain elevators, Home and Alberta Pacific were built.

It was the policy of the CPR to provide housing for their section gang. For the single section hand, a bunkhouse was provided with just the bare necessities such as single cots, kitchen table and chairs, and the coal/wood cook stove. The men were required to provide their own bedding, cooking utensils, and dishes.

By 1917, with a population of 500, Jenner had 28 businesses including 4 general stores, 4 restaurants, 3 elevators, 3 liverys, 2 lumberyards, a bank, a drugstore, as well as a NWMP barracks.

Dome Canada, an oil company operating in the area, moved several trailers into Jenner starting in 1975. Their demand on the spring proved too much, so the Special Areas drilled a deep well. At 250 feet they hit soft water. The Jenner co-op was formed and water lines were laid to all of the houses, double plumbed with a line for soft water and one for hard. Gas service was installed in 1970.

In 1980, with grants from the province of Alberta's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration, the Diamond Jubilee Recreation and Cultural Centre was built in Jenner. It housed a new hockey arena which couldn't hold ice in the warm spells.



Health care was not a steady commodity in Jenner. The first recorded doctor in town was in 1917. In 1935 a large clinic was set up in the local hall by a doctor and several nurses. Children, 15 years and under, were checked over and care was recommended; or if you consented, they would take out tonsils, adenoids, and appendix.

In the early 1940's, a Catholic Ladies' Aid was organized, which promoted thoughtfulness and goodwill in the Tide Lake community. The group remembered those hospitalized with gifts of fruit, organized stork parties, wedding showers, silver and golden wedding anniversary parties, birthday parties for 70 year old residents, presented gifts for departing residents, sent gifts to local men in the services, and made donations to the Red Cross.

The first Jenner Brownie Pack started in September 1976. The Brownie pack came from Jenner, Idlesleigh, and Buffalo districts. The first Jenner Cub Pack began Monday, November 25, 1975, in the Jenner Hall.

### **WALSH**

Due to a teacher shortage during WWII, Many Island School closed in February 1943. Harvey Jeske drove the children to the Long Valley School, 8 miles away, using his half-ton truck with a wooden shell on the back. The only heat in the shell came through a small window from the truck cab making it a very cold journey in the winter. The school was reopened two years later.

The Grad Café at Walsh was owned by Mr. & Mrs. Louie Smith. The café was the meeting place for many local residents. The ranchers would gather there to socialize and have something to eat. Even after the café closed for the day, it seemed there were always people playing cards or just visiting. Also in Walsh, Lee Sing's café was a popular place to go for entertainment for the whole family, not like the pool hall or beer parlors where only men were welcome.

It was a common task to make your own soap for washing clothes. After rendering the lard from the pig that you had butchered you would put the lard in 10 or 20 pound syrup pails and store it in the cellar or root house. This lard was used for pie crusts, frying doughnuts, bread dough, as well as other baking. The oldest lard was used to make laundry soap.

### **SCHULER**

The Good Hope Church building was the largest of all Lutheran church buildings in the country. It was built in 1917 and in 1956 it was moved from the Surprise area of Saskatchewan to Schuler and set on a full basement. However, on June 28, 1992, with numbers declining, the congregation made the decision to disband.

The decision to build Schuler's community hall happened on April 25, 1929. The original building, 30X60 feet was still in use in 1998 with a 16X72 foot addition being added in 1971 to the west side of the hall. The community hall has been



used for bake sales, fowl suppers, Friday night shows, dances, socials, Sports Days, Christmas parties, showers, and anniversaries.

The first meetings regarding the organization of the Schuler Community Curling Club were held in November, 1954. The building was completed by 1956. The construction of the rink was financed by a loan from a local Alberta Wheat Pool delegate. The loan was repaid from storage charges received from the Alberta Wheat Pool for wheat storage in the curing rink. Wheat was stored in the rink until 1959. In all 60,000 bushels of wheat were stored and November 22, 1985 saw the completion of a new curling rink.

### **CYPRESS HILLS**

Elkwater Lake lies at the northwest margin of the Hills and residents of the region gradually developed the custom of visiting the lake shores during summer to escape the prairie heat. These gatherings make Elkwater Lake one of Alberta's oldest summer resort regions. By 1929 the summer ritual had become so well-established that Elkwater Provincial Park was formed.

The Elkwater community hall was started by Elkwater and district ladies on November 13, 1950. It was agreed to be a social and work club and the ladies called themselves the Busy Bee's Club. In the summer they held tea and coffee bazaars to sell their fancywork.

The steep northern slope of Cypress Hills Provincial Park provides one of the few opportunities in southeastern Alberta for downhill skiing. This opportunity is a result of the 1,400 metre elevation and high amount of precipitation occurring on the site. A few interested skiers recognized the potential and in 1966 formed the Cypress Skiers Association which developed the first ski facilities.

The Graburn Church of God was built starting in March, 1932 by a group of members of the Graburn United Church after differences of opinion in their religion caused a rift in the congregation. The new church was erected one mile south of the United Church on two acres of land donated by Henry Reiman. In the earlier years there was quite a large congregation with worshippers coming every Sunday, by car, horse and buggy, and on foot. Sunday services started at 10:00 a.m. with Sunday School followed by a Morning Worship service. Lunch was brought by the worshippers and served in the church. After lunch there was an Afternoon Worship service. As most of the worshippers were farmers they had to go home for chores, however, after supper they were back for the Evening service.

The early settlers of the Thelma district had to contend with many hardships. In the late 1800's and early 1900's they shared the country with Native Canadians that still called this home. Timber wolves and cougars as well as the odd black bear were still prevalent in the area. Wolves often preyed on the ranchers' cattle and horses, especially if they were in a confined area. Many of the farmers and ranchers in the area had a team of cayuses or mules, which was their main mode of transportation. Everyone looked forward to the annual stampede held at the Henry Delmas rodeo grounds, one of the most popular stampedes of the time. Contestants came from far and wide to participate; and there was no such thing as an enclosed arena; when the cowboy came out of the chute he took his chances on the wide open prairie. Even though in the earlier years, prohibition

was still in effect, there was always a good supply of refreshments with beer coming in a huge heavy sack, 100 bottles per sack.



Goose Lake School District was registered with the Department of Education in 1908 and school classes were conducted in someone's home. The first Goose Lake School was built during 1910 – 1913 and was used until the new school was built in 1952. The new building, on the same site, was complete with a furnace in the basement, new desks, and instructional material. In the 1930's and early 1940's it had an enrolment of over 30 pupils and also had a very successful baseball team.

### **PLAINS, TRAINS, AND WAGON WHEELS - Bullshead, Coleridge, Dauntless, Dunmore, Little Plume, Longfellow, Norton, Pashley, Rosebeg, Wisdom, Woolchester**

After Alberta became a province land titles were obtained from Calgary, when the Land Registration district became known as the District of South Alberta. A homestead consisted of 160 acres of surveyed agricultural land.

The pioneers in the Dunmore South area came from many nations with many different backgrounds. Many of the settlers, at the turn of the century, were second generation Canadians who came out west from Ontario; at the same time the flow of immigrants from Russia had begun.

The first wave of homesteaders came in 1883 with the arrival of the railroad and continued through the 1920's with the arrival of more European and Russian immigrants.

In September 1883 the first church service to be held in Dunmore was conducted by Rev. J.A. Williams, and was held in a CPR building. The congregation consisted of 15 men and a few women. The pulpit was an anvil draped with a blacksmith's apron.

Prior to 1905, when Alberta and Saskatchewan became provinces, educational matters for this area were administered through the Board of Education centred in Regina. There were several schools established in this area before 1905. After 1905 schools were operated under the dictates of The School Ordinance Act or The School Attendance Act. Such things as compulsory education, conduct of schools, contagious diseases, departmental reports, school libraries, language to be used in teaching, religious instruction, school attendance, vacations,

engaging and dismissing teachers, pupils, and trustees, as well as education of non-resident children all came under the above named acts.

Alberta Clay Products Company established a plant in Medicine Hat in 1908. A large deposit of good quality clay was found in the bluffs along the Bullshead Creek just south of Dunmore. 8 or 9 carloads of clay per day were required to keep the plant going, so a spur line was built from the yards in Dunmore to the clay pits 2 miles away. This operation continued until 1962 when the plant in Medicine Hat was destroyed by fire and never rebuilt.

In 1914 the cost to residents for heating, lighting, and cooking, in Dunmore, was about \$2.00 per month.



On January 28, 1952 a meeting was held, for all farmers, in the greater Medicine Hat area interest in having electricity on their farms. The cost was established at \$1,565.00 with a down payment of \$265.00. The average distance between farms was 1.5 miles at an average cost of \$0.17 per foot.

In 1967 the Bellcott Gas Co-op was organized. Each member paid \$1,000.00 to have gas piped to their yard. Ten year loans were available from the Treasury Branch and there were about 18 members at the start of the project. Gas costs were \$0.45 per MCF and \$0.38 for irrigation purposes. These rates were to be guaranteed for 20 years; however, this part of the contract was not fulfilled. The Co-op was disbanded when Plains Western purchased the assets.

#### **FORGOTTEN CORNER - Comrey, Catchem, Hooper-Pendland, Onefour, Wild Horse**

Prices and wages in the 1930's are a sharp contrast to those we have now. Cattle were sold for less than \$0.01 per pound. Sheep sheared for \$0.06 per head. Ranch wages were \$15.00 - \$25.00 per month. Butter was \$0.10 per pound and eggs sold for \$0.10 per dozen. Kerosene and Aladdin gas lamps were used for lighting. Ice was harvested from stock-watering dams and stored in sawdust in cellars and used to supply ice refrigerators for cooling food in the summer.

In this dry area, one of the greatest challenges was finding drinking water. Many barrels were hauled from sloughs or creeks, strained through a cloth to remove mosquito larvae and tadpoles, and boiled to make it safe for drinking. Shallow wells from 10 – 40 feet deep were dug with pick and shovel and numerous 'dry holes' were dug. The successful wells were usually seepage wells, located near a slough or water hole. In the 1940's deeper wells were drilled to a depth of 700 feet. Water from these was very soft, with considerable mineral content.

Prohibition came into force in Canada on July 1, 1916. Stills were made from everything available on-hand including wash boilers. Chokecherries, saskatoons, dandelions, and potatoes were some of the ingredients used to make wine, rye, and whiskey. In 1924 prohibition in Alberta came to an end.

Dances in barns or homes were a great source of entertainment. They usually started around dusk, lasted all night and broke up at dawn. The ladies always brought sandwiches and cakes for lunch. The whole family always came to these functions for babysitters were unheard of.

If someone was building a house, barn, or anything the neighbours always came to help and a social time always followed. With so many people to help, the building did not take long at all.





### **HILDA**

Golf was enjoyed by Hilda residents as early as 1924. This very first golf course was located on a stretch of prairie in the southwest corner of Hilda.

The first road to Medicine Hat from Hilda was a dirt road going through rough coulee terrain and was only passable when weather conditions were good. Snow or rain made travel treacherous and almost impossible. Later the road was graveled. Highway #41 came into existence in the early 1950's.

In 1966 the town of Hilda was serviced with natural gas. Anyone wanting to be hooked up had to pay \$100.00. Service was supplied by Plains Western Gas and Electric Co.

January 9, 1981 saw the official opening of the new Hilda Community Hall. The new hall came equipped with bowling alleys, recreation facilities, a large kitchen, dance floor, and meeting areas.

### **IRVINE**

The majority of immigrants who settled in the Irvine district came from Russia and were of German descent. According to the Dominion Lands Act of 1872, every immigrant to Canada could obtain for \$10.00 a 160-acre homestead in the West which became his property after 3 years. Tens of thousands of German-Russians were attracted by Canada's land agents and recruitment advertising. They took up the offer to come to Canada, especially between 1900 – 1913, when expanding railway branch lines made the prairies readily accessible to new settlers. Many homesteaders built their first homes with sod, calling them 'sod shacks.'

The population of Irvine in 1903 was 250. The Weiss General Store and Golden West Hotel were built in that year. The CPR station followed in 1905, the same year a sanitarium building was constructed and then quickly converted to the Alberta Hotel. A grain elevator had just been completed and a major business in the town was a meat packing and canning business. The first school was built in 1904 with a student population of 80. By 1907 the town's population had grown to 500.

The services of doctors in Irvine began in 1904 and in 1908 Irvine had its first dentist. Not only did Irvine have local doctors they also had a drug store; the first drug store was operated in 1908.

The Lutheran Church congregation in Irvine was formed in October 1909. The congregation met in private homes until the church was built in 1912. Offering at the first church service, October 10, 1909, was \$1.35 for the church and \$6.55 for mission work. The first Christmas program was in 1914 and the first record of confirmation in 1915.

The first record of organizing a fire brigade in Irvine was noted on June 4, 1908 at which time a chemical engine was purchased. On July 20, 1910 town council voted to buy a newer type engine and build a fire hall and a cistern to store water for fire fighting purposes. This holding reservoir was to be located on the north-east corner of Ross St. and was to have a capacity of 20,000 gallons; and all this at a total cost of \$3,160. The engine and all necessary appliances arrived in

December of 1910 and the building was completed by December of 1911. In 1912 a fire bell was purchased.

During the 1920's Irvine hosted an annual stampede and horse race. The grounds were located on the northwest side of town. Many of the local cowboys and ranchers took part in the events.

The Cinder Block Plant was established in Irvine in 1947 – 48. The plant required three men to operate the machine for manufacturing the cinder blocks and would manufacture about 1,000 cinder blocks per day. The finished product was a much lighter block than the present day cement block; it was made from Portland Cement, and cinders which came from the CPR – the waste from the old coal burning locomotives.

**Bowell, Bowmanton, Box Springs, Chappice Lake, Finn's Lake, Harvest Vale, Lake Valley, Pearsonville, Vale**

A woman's tasks were endless. Washing clothes on a wash-board with very little water, baking bread in an outdoor oven and cooking over an open fire with little wood unless near a wooded area. There was butter and cheese to make if they had a cow. Lamps had to be filled and trimmed and candles had to be kept on-hand for the times when oil for the lamps was unavailable. In the winter there was knitting and mending to be done.

Apart from the trains which brought many settlers to the area, the only other mode of transportation was by horse or oxen.

In this area, most of the homesteaders came in the years between 1909 and 1914. However, some did locate in the 1890's and early 1900's.

In January 1912 the Bowell School was opened and Bowell had a barber shop. The population of Bowell in 1914 was 50, and a 50,000 bushel capacity Wheatland elevator had been constructed; this was dismantled and moved away in 1924.

In 1914, the Hanna-Medicine Hat railway project employed many farmers, supplying employment for the drought stricken area. In 1921 the government made arrangements to begin road work in the country west and north of Redcliff to

relieve the desperate situation many of the farmers had found themselves in. The rate for this work was \$6.00 per day for a man and his team; \$9.00 per day for a man with a four horse team; and \$3.00 per day for labourers. Each farmer could work until he accumulated \$100.00 in pay.

Doctors from Redcliff and Medicine Hat travelled to Bowell for medical emergencies and a mid-wife aided in the delivery of many babies in the area.

The hub of the Box Springs community was the UFA Hall built by community volunteer help and donations in 1915. The Box Springs hall boasted a grand piano.

In 1916 a half bushel of beets sold for \$0.50, a half bushel of carrots sold for \$0.50, and 25 pounds of cabbage sold for \$1.00. The average cream account income was \$5.00 per month, per cow. In 1920 a man's suit cost \$24.50, calf leather

men's shoes cost \$9.95, boy's running shoes were \$1.45, work pants sold for \$3.50, men's elk leather work boots cost \$5.45, GWG bib overalls sold for \$2.95, and a panama hat cost \$3.50.

Hudsons Bay Oil and Gas became active in the Bowmanton area in about 1960, purchasing the gas reserves there, held by Mic Mac Oil and Gas. In 1961 – 1962 they drilled and completed wells to bring their well total to 23.

In 1962, following approval by the General Manager of Alberta Government Telephones, the Lake Valley Mutual Telephone Company was formed. Members agreed to help gather the required material and put up the estimated 14 miles to connect with the main line. In October 1962, location of the required material began, trying to keep to a limited budget. Due to distances between members the cost of material was estimated at a minimum of \$425.00 per member. However, all members worked to get and prepare materials consisting of approximately 375 poles, used telephone wire, transposition brackets, and over 1300 insulators. Working together diligently they had the 14 miles of telephone line all put up and getting hooked up to the main line by July 3, 1963. Service charges were set at \$2.50 per month per member, with maintenance on the completed telephone line at \$1.00 per hour, and \$0.10 per mile travelled.

### **SUFFIELD**

Although the CPR reached Medicine Hat in 1883 the Suffield area was not home-steaded until 1910.

Building construction commenced in Suffield in 1910. Thereafter followed the boom years when Suffield became the fastest growing town in the west. It housed the Headquarters of the Canada Wheatlands and the Southern Alberta Land Company. Suffield boasted business blocks, a 2-storey school, a branch of the Bank of Montreal, a Chinese laundry and restaurant, pool hall and barber shop, confectionery, meat market, two lumber yards, a post office, and 3 hotels.

Prairie fires were a constant threat. The prairie at Suffield dried out quickly after the spring thaw and the dry summer winds evaporated any remaining moisture,

leaving acres of dry grass that was a fearsome fire hazard. A fireguard around the house was often the best answer. This was created by ploughing a few furrows, then leaving a space and ploughing more; the grass between the two ploughed areas was then burned off.

In 1922 the Government revoked the Homestead Act, closing the dryland area of southeast Alberta and southwest Saskatchewan to homesteading. The Alberta government operated a scheme between 1922 and 1927 which offered a free 'ticket out' and the opportunity to farm on better land in the Province to those heavily in debt. Many took this option and there was a mass exodus. The population of the Suffield Reserve area dropped from a high of 2,386 in 1920 to 645 by the mid-1920's.

In 1938, under the Special Areas Act, the Suffield Block was declared unfit for agriculture and by 1941 only 452 people remained in the area. Therefore, it came as

no surprise, when, in 1940 the Canadian Government was looking for an area suitable for gas and chemical warfare research, Suffield was one of the areas short-listed. The final agreement was signed on April 11, 1941 and the existing farmers were ordered, under the War Measures Act, to vacate their property by June 30 of the same year.

In 1941 the Defence Research Establishment Suffield (DRES) was established as a combined United Kingdom-Canadian chemical warfare experimental station. In 1946 the station became an all-Canadian enterprise when British financial support was terminated. The station was officially taken over by the Defence Research Board on April 30, 1947.

In December 1942 a chemical warfare school known as S-11 was established at the station. This school, which was set up for the training of mortar companies, also conducted experimental field trials with mortars and rockets using gas-filled shells.

Entomological research for the Allied Forces was another war-time activity at the station. Officials recognized that the vast technology built up in the development of methods of disseminating chemical warfare agents would be of value in studying the various factors governing the efficient employment and application of the new organic insecticides.

In 1969 Britain lost their armoured training grounds in Libya. After a series of brief negotiations a 10 year access agreement was signed with the Canadian Government in August 1971. This agreement was negotiated for another 10 year period in the summer of 1981. Under its terms the British Army Training Unit Suffield (BATUS) had priority use of approximately 650 square miles of the Reserve for armoured training.

In 1974, the gas reserves in the Suffield Block were evaluated by the Suffield Evaluation Committee with the drilling of 77 wells to various depths throughout the Block. Alberta Energy Company Ltd. purchased the petroleum and natural gas lease rights for the majority of land contained within the Block. Access agreements for the exploration and development of natural gas and oil were sub

sequently negotiated with the Department of Defence. As of 1985, approximately 2,600 shallow gas wells had been drilled and completed on the Suffield Block. An additional 400 wells were scheduled for drilling in the last half of 1985.



When white traders and explorers came into this region they encountered bands of nomadic people; a number of groups utilized the area including bands of Cree, Assiniboine, the Gros Ventre, Blood, and Piegan.

### **PRAIRIE CRUCIBLE - Bingville, Atlee, Iddesleigh, Tide Lake, Jenner**

Smallpox, the dreaded disease, for which the natives had no immunity, wreaked havoc among the tribes. When some members of the tribe died from the disease, or victim was found, clothing was taken and used by others. This spread the disease as they did not see the harm. Later it was thought to be taboo to use things of a dead spirit, so articles were laid to rest with the owner.

### **WALSH**

When the white traders and explorers came into this region they encountered bands of nomadic people.

The prairie Cree, of Algonquin origin, became famous buffalo hunters. In 1838 half of the prairie Cree died of scarlet fever and smallpox.

The Assiniboine are a branch of the Sioux. The name means “one who cooks by use of stones.” They used clay pots or pots made of rawhide to cook the fish and small animals that they hunted while camping by lakes.

The Blackfoot, a branch of Algonquin, got their name because their moccasins were discoloured or blackened by the ashes of the prairie fires which often swept over the region. They followed the stampeding buffalo which fled ahead of the fires.

The Chippewa were constantly hostile to the traders and immigrants in the west and were often called “snake or adder” by their enemies. The word Chippewa was corrupted by the French to Sioux. Chief Sitting Bull led a Sioux band into Canada for refuge after the Custer massacre.

### **CYPRESS HILLS**

A story of the 1870's involves 2 American whiskey traders who were camped north of the Cypress Hills in the Josephsburg area. Probably due to the manner in which these men handled the dealings with the Native Canadians, one of them was shot and some horses were taken. The other vowing revenge returned to the US and brought back to Canada some blankets infested with smallpox. He dropped them off near the Cypress Hills and a major outbreak of smallpox occurred.

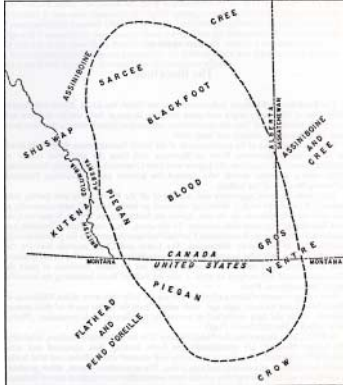
The Eagle Butte valley was frequently used by the Blackfoot and Blood for their Sundance and initiation of young braves. Native Canadians named this area the valley of Medicine Lodge. This area is at the junction of 3 main valleys – one to the north, a valley to the east commonly called the Jackpot, and one to the south.

Between 1800 – 1870 Native Canadian groups habitually utilized the Cypress Hills these included bands of Cree, Assiniboine, the Gros Ventre, Blood, and Piegans. Other groups known to have passed through the area were the Crow, Blackfoot,



# Cypress County Celebrating our History

## Native HISTORY



Arapaho, and the Kalispel, as well as others from west of the Rocky Mountains. Small parties of Europeans (Canadians, English, and Americans) and Metis utilized the Hills particularly between 1870 and 1885. This period marked the demise of the main food source, the bison, and the termination of the hunting and gathering lifeway which had characterized the area from the time of earliest human occupation.

The Cypress Hills could and did provide fuel, shelter, and subsistence required by hunter gatherers over the course of winter. The Assiniboine regarded the Cypress Hills as their "winter home."

Metis families occupied a winter village site along the northwest side of the Cypress Hills during the 1870's.

### **PLAINS, TRAINS, AND WAGON WHEELS - Bullshead, Coleridge, Dauntless, Dunmore, Little Plume, Longfellow, Norton, Pashley, Rosebeg, Wisdom, Woolchester**

The Atsina were Arapaho, part of the Algonkian speaking nation of the western plains and residents of the southern prairies during the 18th century. The Atsina moved south into Montana as a result of pressure from the Assiniboia and Plains Cree. The Atsina were known as the 'Gros Ventre,' French for 'big bellies,' an approximate translation of the symbol by which they were designated in the inter-tribal sign language used on the plains.

### **FORGOTTEN CORNER - Comrey, Catchem, Hooper-Pendland, Onefour, Wild Horse**

Before the corner drugstore became an institution North American Indians turned to the world around them for remedies of all shapes and sizes. In what we see as weeds they found essentials like diapers, pain killers, shampoo, oral birth control, drugs, and even love potions. Toothaches were treated by chewing on the root of wild licorice and holding it in the mouth while earaches were treated by chewing the leaves of this same plant and holding them against the throbbing ear. Acne was treated by boiling the leaves of fern (wild bergamot or horse mint) and applying this to the pimples; and the procedure for removing warts and moles was to rub in the fuzz from the prickly pear cactus or to stick the growth full of spines which were then ignited. The lighted spikes that sputtered and sparked were thought to have done the most good.

### **SUFFIELD**

The earliest proof of man in southern Alberta was the result of a find on the banks of the Oldman River near Taber. He was a primitive hunter from 11,000 years ago who had killed a buffalo by crushing its skull with a crudely made stone hammer which, when found, was still embedded in the bone.

Before the arrival of the horse in southern Alberta, which was during the first half of the 18th Century, probably about 1730, aboriginal groups were pedestrians. They employed dogs to transport their goods and continued to do so, in some cases for a further 100 years. It is estimated that a dog could transport a 50 – 75 pound load for only about 5 – 7 miles per day.

Before the practice of driving buffalo over steep slopes or cliffs, known as jumps, was developed, small bands of aboriginal people would drive buffalo into a corral or pound which had to be constructed by hand. They were usually made out of wood and the stout fence surrounded a deliberately dug pit or possibly a natural hollow on 3 sides. On the Suffield Block, timber was scarce but in spite of this, a most successful pound was built by using rocks and boulders, which is now known as the Ramillies site. It was discovered and excavated during the summers of 1972, 1973, and 1974. The pound was quite small and would not have held more than 20 – 30 buffalo.

The Blackfoot occupied most of the prairies south of the North Saskatchewan River and down as far as the Yellowstone River in Montana; and from the southwest corner of Saskatchewan to the Rocky Mountains. They were a nomadic people who roamed the prairies and surrounding Parkland, following the cycle of the buffalo. They were the most aggressive and warlike of all the Plains tribes and during their century of power they tolerated no interlopers and were constantly at war with their neighbors. The Lewis and Clark journals mention the Blackfoot as the only tribe against which their expedition was compelled to use firearms.

The average size lodge was 14 – 16 feet in diameter and supported by 14 – 26 poles. 2 extra poles were used known as 'ear poles' to allow smoke to escape. The best poles were made of slim, straight mountain pines, which the women cut, peeled, and then seasoned slowly, to keep them straight. They were usually 15 – 30 feet long according to the size of the lodge and a good set of poles was carried everywhere. The skins for the lodge were tanned white but each would have its own motif painted on the outside. Because of the smoke, the upper part soon became blackened and when this part was eventually ready to be discarded and replaced, it was cut up for moccasins, because they would not harden or shrink.

The early part of the 19th Century saw the Blackfoot at the height of their wealth and power, but sadly, this privileged position would not remain

with them for long. Throughout North America the White Man was pushing further and further west. This advance brought with it diseases that were unheard of by the Native people including smallpox, measles, and mumps. These diseases decimated whole bands and spread like wildfire.

Eventually, the Native traditional way of life was transformed and out of economic necessity, rather than intensive political and military pressure, Native Canadians agreed to settle in reserves with the promise that the government would look after their welfare and help them adjust to the changing economic conditions.

In August, 1877, Lieutenant Governor David Laird and Colonel Macleod were appointed commissioners to negotiate a treaty with the Blackfoot and other tribes in the area. The government was anxious to complete the last treaty on the Canadian Plains, to formalize its friendship with the Blackfoot. The details of the offer were to allow the White Man to live on the Native hunting grounds; in return they would receive a piece of land, cattle, potatoes, \$5.00 annual treaty money, and ammunition.

Over 3000 archaeological sites have been found and recorded within the area of the Block. Stone circles are the most common feature present, followed by cairns, stone alignments, buried campsites, surface campsites, medicine wheels, and buffalo kills.

The Ellis site medicine wheel was examined in 1974, 1975, and 1976. In 1980 a crew resumed work on the site and mapped the entire site area in great detail. During the excavations human skeletal remains were found situated in the central portion of the medicine wheel between 5 and 20 cm below the surface. It is believed this material represents the remains of an adult elderly man. Other items were recovered including projectile points, tools, and a painted wooden post. From radiocarbon analysis of these items the construction of this medicine wheel was probably about AD 1430,  $\pm 160$  years.

# North West Mounted Police



Disturbing news of general lawlessness was arriving in eastern Canada frequently in the early 1870's; and in order to subdue the activity and administer justice, the Government of Canada established the North West Mounted Police.

## **WALSH**

Early Spring 1873 saw the Cypress Hills massacre where between 20 – 60 Assiniboine were killed, including some women and children. The news of the massacre broke in eastern Canada two months later and the federal government lost no time pushing ahead with the creation of the NWMP.

When word of the whiskey trade in the Cypress Hills reached Ottawa an order was issued to establish an outpost there. Major James Morrow Walsh, Jerry Potts, and about 30 men were sent to the Cypress Hills in 1875. The 160 mile trek was completed on June 7, 1875 and the construction of a fort, stables, and other buildings began. Taking 6 weeks to build, the establishment in the Battle Creek valley became known as Fort Walsh.

A horse camp was also set up northwest of the Fort near Graburn Gap.

Fort Walsh faced the usual problems of whiskey traders, fur traders, horse thieves, and inter-tribal fights between Native Canadians. However, the first major event to develop was the arrival of Sitting Bull and his group of approximately 5,000 Sioux; this 'invasion' occurred after the Custer Massacre in the US and proved to be a challenge for Major Walsh. Because of the influx of Native peoples to the area the NWMP recommended the formation of Government farms and ranches to feed all these people, hence, another responsibility of the Force. One of these farms was on the Elkwater Golf Club in the Thelma area. Because of all this activity at Fort Walsh, more troops were moved from Fort MacLeod in 1878; also in 1878 Fort Walsh became NWMP headquarters.

In 1883 the buildings at Fort Walsh were dismantled and some logs were moved to the Maple Creek detachment and made into barracks. The remaining logs were moved to the Medicine Hat detachment; Major Walsh having been transferred east and then to Qu'Appelle resigned in 1883.

## **CYPRESS HILLS - Tothill, Robinson, Evergreen, Graburn, Eagle Butte, Elkwater, Thelma, Fox**

Disturbing news of general lawlessness among whiskey and fur traders, wolfers, and Native Canadians, was arriving in eastern Canada frequently in the early 1870's.

To subdue the lawlessness and administer justice in the North West Territories the Government of Canada, under the leadership of Prime Minister John A. MacDonald, established the North West Mounted Police on May 2, 1873. Originally, the Force was intended to be approximately 300 men, divided into 6 troops; however, by time recruits were assembled at Collingwood on Lake Huron, only about 150 men were the strength of the Force.

On July 8, 1874 the 6 divisions began their trip west bringing with them horses, cattle for slaughter, teams of draught oxen, Red River carts, guns, portable kitchens, mowing machines, and various other supplies.



The route west from Dufferin, Manitoba was approximately 800 miles. Due to bad weather, lack of food for their horses, exhaustion, and fatigue, Commissioner George Arthur French headed the entire group south to the Sweetgrass Hills, where advance scouts reported good grazing and water. Here they made camp.

Assistant Commissioner James Farquharson MacLeod, some officers, and a guide left for Fort Whoop-Up. It was here that Jerry Potts was engaged as a guide and interpreter. One of his first duties was to construct an outpost for the establishment of law and order. This fort was constructed on the banks of the Old Man River and called Fort MacLeod; becoming the headquarters of the NWMP on October 9, 1874. By this time NWMP officers were located throughout the area.

The Graburn Detachment was built in 1887, located on Battle Creek. In 1892 the buildings were demolished and a log house rented about 5 miles north on McKay Creek. Originally known as the McKay Creek Detachment, this outpost became Graburn Detachment, named after Constable Graburn, who was murdered, at the age of 19 years, at a spot nearby in November 1879. This detachment was closed in the winter of 1895-96.

Because of the infiltration of whiskey and fur traders, the NWMP established the Medicine Lodge Detachment located in the Eagle Butte Valley in 1894. It was one of the largest detachments and included a log house and kitchen, officers' house, storehouse, well, and a corral for ten horses. It was abolished in the summer of 1917.

The year 1886 saw a NWMP detachment established at Elkwater which was there for 2 years.

**PLAINS, TRAINS, AND WAGON WHEELS - Bullshead, Coleridge, Dauntless, Dunmore, Little Plume, Longfellow, Norton, Pashley, Rosebeg, Wisdom, Woolchester**

The Bullshead detachment was established April 5, 1886, in a low spot on the Piegan Creek. During the first year 6 men lived under canvas, and after running out of water were forced to temporarily relocate to a railway crossing and the use of a water tank in the Seven Persons Coulee. In 1887 a permanent outpost was built. The Bullshead detachment was a summer detachment with forces withdrawn for the winter except for the winters of 1890 – 91 and 1891 – 92. In 1894 the Bullshead and Willow Creek detachments were abandoned and demolished and the Medicine Lodge detachment headquarters was erected to serve both areas.



### **FORGOTTEN CORNER**

Wild Horse is a Canadian Port-of-Entry and Customs Office on the road between a number of destinations in southeast Alberta and Havre, Montana. Customs services were first performed at Wild Horse by the RCMP on a 10% commission basis of collections made. It was established in 1904 and it was intended that members of the detachment would be under canvas for the summer and would board with a rancher during the winter.



### **HILDA**

On May 28, 1932 the RCMP detachment of Hilda was opened. The first detachment quarters were located in a 5-room frame house which was rented for \$20.00 a month until June 30, 1941. The detachment was then relocated, and moved again in 1943. It was officially closed in 1959 by which time crime in the Hilda detachment area was almost non-existent.

Bowell, Bowmanton, Box Springs, Chappice Lake, Finn's Lake, Harvest Vale, Lake Valley, Pearsonville, Vale

One of the earliest recorded visits to the Medicine Hat area by the NWMP, occurred in the fall of 1876, when 23 year old Bob McCutcheon and three other members from their headquarters at Fort Walsh rode into the area to search out a band of horse thieves

In 1883 a decision was made to move the headquarters of the NWMP from Fort Walsh to Regina. To coincide with this move away from Fort Walsh and the Cypress Hills area, and to maintain a presence along the route of the new railway, NWMP posts were established at Maple Creek and what is now Medicine Hat.

The first police post, about a mile east of the new frontier town of Medicine Hat, was established early in 1883 near the Police Point Park.

During the early years, once the settlers were able to come into the area, only one member was assigned to the settlement of Medicine Hat; the remainder, were all assigned to the 3,528 square mile district.

Among the varied responsibilities of the police in the early days was the operation of a ferry service across the South Saskatchewan River at Medicine Hat.

# Postal SERVICES



The post office was usually the first thing set up in a community. Contact with 'the folks back home' was very precious to the settlers and parcels from Eaton's or Simpson's containing ordered goods were always eagerly awaited.

## **WALSH - Many Island, McKay, Graburn, Cypress Hills, Fox, Rocky Mound, Heller, Muller, Box Elder, Newheim, Red Lake Spring, Cummings**

The Tarves post office was established on February 1, 1913 and changed its name to the Many Island post office October 1, 1919. It was closed January 31, 1929.

Walsh's first post office was 2 miles east of Walsh. It was then moved to the CPR station in Walsh in 1891; after a number of different moves it was eventually located at the Shell Service Station on the highway.

The Neuheim post office was opened in 1909 and closed July 22, 1912.

## **SCHULER**

Norman Banks (Tim) Schuler came to the Schuler district in the spring of 1910, settled on a homestead and began farming. In the fall he was given the post office and named it Schuler. In 1923 the CPR was built and stopped where Schuler is presently located and the post office was moved. In 1992 the franchise of the post office was set up in the Mac's Cash Store.

## **CYPRESS HILLS - Tothill, Robinson, Evergreen, Graburn, Eagle Butte, Elkwater, Thelma, Fox**

On May 1, 1900, a local rancher named Robert Scott established the first Eagle Butte post office which was in operation until July 15, 1963.

The first post office serving Elkwater was established April 1, 1901 and was located three miles northeast of Elkwater. It was moved to Elkwater in 1935.

The Fox post office, named after its first postmaster, Jim Fox, opened on July 1, 1912 and was officially closed on March 7, 1964.

The Graburn post office, named for NWMP Constable Marmaduke Graburn, who was shot to death near a horse camp northwest of Fort Walsh, was established July 1, 1895 and officially closed on March 31, 1912.

Josephsburg post office came into service June 1, 1890 after the residents of Josephsburg petitioned the Post Office Department of Canada to have one established in their area. It was closed on November 14, 1917 and the mail for the area was handled through the Elkwater post office, which proved to be an inconvenience for the residents of Josephsburg because of distance; so once again, they petitioned the Post Office Department to have a post office re-established in their area.

The Robinson post office came into service May 1, 1923 and was named after James Robinson, an early homesteader in the area. It was permanently closed on January 6, 1964.

The first post office in the Thelma area was called Strath Martin and was established in 1905. It was moved and changed to the Thelma post office on March 15,



## Postal SERVICES

1911 as Harry Mudie, who ran the Strath Martin post office, as well as hauled the mail, was away a great deal of the time, making it difficult for people to get their mail. The post office was officially closed on January 12, 1969.

The Tothill post office was officially opened January 1, 1924 and named after its first postmaster, Alfred Tothill. This post office remained in operation until February 29, 1932; and was reopened on August 1, 1932, with Alfred Tothill again the postmaster. The post office was officially closed on October 30, 1959.

### **PLAINS, TRAINS, AND WAGON WHEELS - Bullshead, Coleridge, Dauntless, Dunmore, Little Plume, Longfellow, Norton, Pashley, Rosebeg, Wisdom, Woolchester**

The post office in Dunmore was known as Coleridge before 1957, at which point the postmaster had a petition circulated among the residents of the hamlet and district requesting the Postmaster General to change the name of the post office from Coleridge to Dunmore. This was done on August 16, 1957 and more or less put an end to the double name of the community.

The Norton post office was named after its first postmaster, Mr. H.A. Norton, and opened on February 1, 1907. It was closed on August 31, 1916. On March 1, 1923 the Gros Ventre post office, which was opened February 1, 1907, officially became the Norton post office; it was closed May 25, 1957.

Woolchester post office was established May 1, 1900 and closed July 15, 1963.

Bullshead post office was established February 2, 1910 and closed October 10, 1912.

The Dauntless post office was closed on November 30, 1917.

The Little Plume post office was established October 15, 1903 and closed on July 15, 1963.

The Pashley post office was established on October 1, 1910 and closed in 1956.

The Rosebeg post office was opened on February 14, 1911 and closed September 24, 1940.

The Wisdom post office was located 25 miles south of Medicine Hat, just off the Black and White Trail. It was established June 1, 1913 and closed July 15, 1962.

### **FORGOTTEN CORNER - Comrey, Catchem, Hooper-Pendland, Onefour, Wild Horse**

The Comrey post office was established in 1910 and was moved from farm to farm depending on who was the postmaster.

The Onefour post office was opened in 1913 and was eventually moved to the Research Station.



## **Postal SERVICES**

The Wild Horse post office was opened in 1913 under the name of Sage Creek and eventually replaced by a set of mail boxes.

### **HILDA**

Stan Koch operated the post office and a small store. He named the post office after his daughter Hilda. The post office was established December 15, 1910 and was destroyed by fire in 1921. It was rebuilt on another section of land and moved in 1923 when the railroad came to Hilda.

### **IRVINE & DISTRICT**

The Irvine post office came into service January 1, 1900. In 1903 efforts were made to get a post office moved into the village. In March 1904 the first post office was located in the CPR section house; and by 1914 not only could people mail letters but parcels as well.

The Newburg post office came into service on September 1, 1904 and was closed on March 16, 1918.

### **Bowell, Bowmanton, Box Springs, Chappice Lake, Finn's Lake, Harvest Vale, Lake Valley, Pearsonville, Vale**

The first general store and post office in Bowell opened in about 1907.

In about 1910 post offices were established in the rural communities of Bowmanton, Vale, Waddington, and Rose Glen; these were closed in 1959.

Box Springs' post office opened October 1, 1911 and was closed March 28, 1919.

### **SUFFIELD**

In 1921 a store and post office opened in New Holland.



Southern Alberta hosts a vast array of plants, animals, scenery, colours, sounds, and textures. It is constantly evolving and changing as the seasons and weather move us on into the future.

## **PRAIRIE CRUCIBLE - Bingville, Atlee, Iddesleigh, Tide Lake, Jenner**

The Iddesleigh-Jenner-Rainy Hills area is a great block of grassland lying within the southeastern portion of Alberta.

In 1857, Captain Palliser surveyed southern Alberta and declared the treeless, southeastern portion as unfit for cultivation. There are no trees because of little rainfall and the frequent winds cause even that to evaporate quickly. Yet where there is shelter from the wind and a source of ground water, such as along river bottoms, tall cottonwood trees and willow grow.



Winters here are cold, and winds sweeping over the open plains, make the region uninviting for outdoor activity. Often, however, those winds out of the southwest suddenly become warm and almost miraculously the ground is bare and dust blows in the fields. These, warm, dry winds, called Chinooks, are named after a Native people in the northwestern US.

The grasses on the range have been designated as shortgrass prairie. The blue grama grass, which has flower heads like little tooth brushes, originated in the highlands of Mexico. With it grows needle-and-thread grass that you will have no trouble recognizing when you pull its little spears from your clothing; the Blackfoot bound bundles of these 'spears' together to make their brushes. Associated with these grasses are prickly-pear cactus, and the little pincushion cactus. Sage brush, wild rose, wolf willow, and snowberry are the major shrubs which are scattered over the grasslands.

As spring arrives the prairies are favorite nesting areas because they have an abundance of insect life to feed hungry birds. Flocks of horned larks and longspurs are the first to arrive, soon joined by lark buntings, meadow larks, numerous sparrows, kingbirds, yellow-breasted chats, and many more. Broad winged hawks are very numerous over the prairies as are marsh harriers, burrowing owls, and the daylight flying short-eared owls. Prairie falcons and golden eagles can also be found along the rivers and coulees.

Two additional game birds have been introduced to southern Alberta; the European grey partridge (Hungarian Partridge) and the ring-necked pheasant.

Mammals of the prairies include the badgers, common skunks, Richardson's ground squirrels, prairie hares, white-footed mice, and meadow voles.

The most famous snake of the Alberta plains is the rattlesnake, a pit viper with a rattle on the end of its tail. One may also find garter snakes and bull snakes.





#### **WALSH**

The Cypress Hills are a series of 3 flat-topped plateaus (called blocks) of which a small portion is actually in Alberta. The area is centred in some of the driest land in North America but sees a great deal of meltwater.

The Horseshoe Canyon, with its semicircular cliffs, is close to the Head of the Mountain in the Alberta part of the Cypress Hills. From the top, you can see south 100 kilometres into the US, where the Sweetgrass Hills and the Bearpaw Mountains hold up the arch of the Montana sky. Down the canyon wall is an outcrop of conglomerate called the Cypress Hills Formation. This formation, overlain in places by one or two metres of loess, is the geological key to the origin of this green haven.

Scattered herds of antelope can be seen all around the edges of the hills and sometimes on the summit plateau; their large livers and kidneys allow them to digest poisonous plants, such as larkspur and locoweed that other grazers avoid. One enemy of the antelope is the golden eagle which snatches its kids weighing just 2 kilograms at birth.

Lynx, bobcat, and coyote are the other large predators in the area.

Elk, reintroduced to the hills after having been wiped out originally by 1909 have been subject to sport hunting since 1980 in an effort to keep the herd size down. Other large mammals include white-tailed deer, moose, and mule deer.

Over 200 species of birds pass through or nest in the Cypress Hills, and have been recorded as identified, such as the trumpeter swan and the loon. Other birds are ducks, curlews, hawks, eagles, cranes, owls, magpies, ravens, crows, ruffed grouse, and the Ruby crowned kinglet. Pine martin were released in 1986.



#### **CYPRESS HILLS**

Captain John Palliser headed the first official exploratory and scientific group to enter the Cypress Hills. On July 28, 1859 he wrote, in his journal, "They are covered with timber, much of which is very valuable for building purposes. The soil is rich, and the supply of water abundant. These hills are a perfect oasis in the desert we have travelled."

Two major types of vegetation occur on the Cypress Hills plateau. At the higher elevations, along stream valleys and on the more northerly exposed slopes, there are forests of lodgepole pine, white spruce, aspen poplar, and balsam poplar. In addition, wild black currant, common wild rose, wolf willow, Canadian buffaloberry, low bush cranberry, wild gooseberry, saskatoon-berry, wild strawberry, pincherry, and chokecherry can be found. Most of the Cypress Hills plateau is covered with grassland which is far more luxuriant on the Alberta side of the hills as well as more productive than the surrounding rolling plains.

Early historic records left by traders, explorers, and missionaries describe the abundance of game in the northern plains. Plains bison were the most common ungulate on the Shortgrass Plains prior to Euroamerican settlement. All but a few were slaughtered by 1880.



In the Cypress Hills area the last buffalo was killed on the Irvine flats by Robert McCutcheon in the fall of 1882.

Also now extinct is the Big Plains grizzly and the Great Plains wolf. The last grizzly bear in the Cypress Hills was sighted in the early 1890's.

In 1962, wild turkeys were introduced into the Cypress Hills.

#### **FORGOTTEN CORNER - Comrey, Catchem, Hooper-Pendland, Onefour, Wild Horse**

This semi-arid region hosts a number of native grasses including: bluegrama grass, blue joint, June grass, needle grass, and a few shorter stemmed wheat grasses. There are also flats of sage brush and hillsides covered with prickly pear and pincushion cactus. There are Russian thistles, and where there is water there are willows, poplars, and chokecherry.

Richardson's ground squirrels, coyotes, skunks, jack rabbits, porcupines, rattlesnakes, badgers, and raccoons are predominant.

Sandstone rocks beside the Milk River play host to rattlesnakes, bull snakes, hog snakes, scorpions, and sand lizards.

Horned larks, sparrow hawks, king birds, night hawks, cliff swallows, robins, black-birds, magpies, snipes, kildeer, and meadowlarks are all seen and heard in the summer and English sparrows and magpies remain throughout the winter.

The sage grouse is unique to the southeastern corner of Alberta and is the largest of all the plains fowl.

#### **IRVINE**

There are three dominating feature of the southeast corner of the province: its bareness, the rolling contour, and its vastness.

#### **Bowell, Bowmanton, Box Springs, Chappice Lake, Finn's Lake, Harvest Vale, Lake Valley, Pearsonville, Vale**

The terrain to the east of Chappice Lake is rough and hilly and proved to be good sheep, horse, and cattle country. The land is rocky, salty in spots, and has very few level areas for farming. With its salty water and closed drainage system buffered by groundwater Chappice did not dry up during most droughts.

The Vale area is blessed with all the usual wildlife including mule deer and rattlesnakes. They also grow a good number of the Alberta wild rose and, when moisture permits, crocus is in abundance.

#### **SUFFIELD**

Today antelope, deer, horses, and many other animals roam the Suffield Block. In the spring and summer the prairie is dotted with wild flowers. There are over 120 varieties including: Crocus, Solomon's Seal, Pale Camendre, Virgins Bower, Wild Licorice, Milfoil, Brown Eyed Susan, and Scarlet Mallow.

# Interesting Regional Facts

Each community has its own little bits of history that make it individual. It is these places, people, things, and events that make them unique and make an imprint on time.

## **PRAIRIE CRUCIBLE - Bingville, Atlee, Iddesleigh, Tide Lake, Jenner**

Peter Fidler, a fur trader, with the Hudson's Bay Company was one of the very first white visitors to our area. Through the winter of 1792 – 1793 he lived with the Piegan, learning of their culture and evaluating the possibilities of future trade with them. He founded the Hudson's Bay Co. post, Chesterfield House, and operated it in 1801 – 1802. It was built near the forks, where the Red Deer and South Saskatchewan Rivers meet; not far from where the town of Empress sits.

John Palliser toured the Red Deer River basin on his second trek of the territory in 1859.

George Dawson in 1875, when working with the boundary survey, found and collected the first recorded dinosaur remains in Alberta. In 1880, Joseph Tyrell and Thomas Weston collected remains: Tyrell near Drumheller, and Weston was the first to remove fossils from the area now contained within Dinosaur Provincial Park.

The province of Alberta started with only 9 ferries in 1905 and reached a peak of 61 in 1925. By 1977 there were only 9 ferry scows operating in Alberta, one of these was at Jenner. The ferries at Atlee and Jenner became operational in 1914. They provided transportation across the Red Deer River. The Atlee ferry ceased operation in about 1955 and the Jenner scow operated until 1980 when it was replaced by a bridge. In 1976 the Jenner ferry served 3,779 vehicles from mid-April through late October from 7:00 a.m. to midnight. A scow could handle 4 vehicles at a time.

## **WALSH**

The first Anglican missionary to visit the Cypress Hills was the Reverend Samuel Trivett who visited Fort Walsh in 1883.

The weather is very unpredictable in Walsh which is sometimes called, "the banana belt of the prairies or chinook country."

Any land which was homesteaded before 1905 retained the mineral rights with the title. Most people sold or dropped these rights by not paying the tax on them, not realizing the value of what was under the surface of the ground. About 4% of the land in Alberta still has mineral rights held by private individuals or companies. After 1905 the mineral rights were retained by the Federal Government until agreements were reached with the provinces at a much later date and then were transferred to provincial control.

The CPR was incorporated on February 15, 1881; building of the rail line from east of Maple Creek started April 18, 1883; arriving at Walsh May 15, 1883, and on to Medicine Hat on May 31, 1883.

In 1972, the Provincial Government opened an Information Centre at Walsh. The centre was in the design of a teepee and shake covered. Walsh was by far the busiest Tourist Centre in Alberta and another teepee was brought in and joined to

## Interesting Regional Facts

the one already in place. This building accommodated visitors for 10 years. In 1986, construction on a new Information Centre began and it was operational by the 1987 season. As of 1997, an average of 36,400 visitors would stop at the Information Centre every season.

### **SCHULER**

The Schuler Water Co-op has been taking care of the water system which supplies the town with pure spring water since November, 1967. The very first water rates were \$5.00 per month. A new pump house was built in 1995.

The Gas and Oil business began on March 1, 1948 under the name "White Rose," in 1966 this name was changed to "Shell of Canada Limited." The natural gas industry has done much to supplement the income of the farmers and ranchers in the area and as of 1998 approximately 30% of the residents of Schuler rely on the gas field for their living.

In 1962 a group of investors formed a company called United Research and Development, which bought land and drilled five gas wells in the Schuler area. Due to the low pressure of the gas wells compression equipment had to be installed; and by January 1963 their plant was ready for production.

In 1963 North Canadian Oils started drilling gas wells in the Hilda, Schuler, and Saskatchewan area. In 1964 they built their first gas plant which they called Hilda-Schuler Plant and it had two 6-cylinder White engines in it.

The production of natural gas has been an additional source of income for farmers and ranchers in the area who receive compensation from the oil companies by signing surface leases. These leases give the companies access to their wells and facilities. As of 1998 compensation could range from \$500 - \$2000 per year.

As of 1998 some of the oil companies that had producing wells or facilities in the Schuler area were: Alberta Energy Company, Petro Canada, Gas Can Resources, Norcen Energy, West Castle, Crestar Energy, Nova, Imperial Oil Resources, Wascana Energy Inc., City of Medicine Hat, and Fletcher-Challenge.

### **CYPRESS HILLS**

The Forty-Mile Gas Co-op was incorporated in October 1973, as set forth in the Conservative Government's "Rural Gas Program." Starting with about 350 members it grew to approximately 880 members by 1991 and boasted itself as the largest Co-op in the Province of Alberta. In 1991 it was 4,778 square miles in area with a total of 1,200 miles of pipe in the ground.

The first coal mine in the Elkwater area was opened by "Happy" Jack Hart in 1907. This mine, on the north shore of the lake, provided the area with coal for some years.

In 1951, the area of the Cypress Hills within the Alberta boundary was declared a Provincial Park.

As of 1991 there were only 9 full-time residences within Evergreen. One of them was that of the Elkwater Hutterian Bretheren.

## Interesting Regional Facts

Some of the German prisoners of war who earned credits as model prisoners during WWII at the concentration camp, built on the same location as Stampede park in Medicine Hat, were allowed to be employed on district farms and ranches.

In the Thelma area, in 1918, a diphtheria epidemic broke out. Pine boxes were built in which the dead were buried. The survivors were fed homemade

### **PLAINS TRAINS**

The Coleridge Rifle Association was organized on April 15, 1908. 30 men signed up at the first meeting. The club was very active for several years and competed in many shoots throughout the province; silver spoons were given as prizes and gold spoons to the top contenders.

A United Farmers of Alberta (UFA) organization was founded in Pashley in March of 1915. One of the organization's concerns was the desired removal or adjustment of dams from the Ross Creek, so that fish could move more freely from the river to Elkwater Lake during flood time, as the fish appeared to be vanishing from both the creek and the lake.

Dunmore had passenger train service since 1886 and on January 15, 1990 the last Via train passed through.

### **FORGOTTEN CORNER - Comrey, Catchem, Hooper-Pendland, Onefour, Wild Horse**

When tractors first made their appearance in Comrey there was no fuel delivery service. As crude oil from Montana was inexpensive some of the settlers decided to refine their own gasoline. This was against the law because of tax evasion and had to be done quietly and out of sight. A refinery was constructed in a coulee on the edge of the community and refining took place at night to keep curious onlookers from investigating the smoke. The refined fuel worked best in John Deere and Case tractors.

The first real road from Wild Horse through Onefour, Comrey, Manyberries, and on to Medicine Hat was the Black and White Trail. All the work was done with horses and it took about 2 years to complete.

On Labour Day in 1950 the opening of Highway #48 or the 'Monalta' linked Wild Horse with Elkwater Lake, the TransCanada, and Medicine Hat. Oiling of this road was completed in approximately 1976.

### **HILDA**

Alberta Government Telephones came to Hilda in 1919 when Long-Distance Line No. 204 was built northeast from Medicine Hat. The 55 mile line had toll offices at Bowmanton, Waddington, Vale, Roseglen, Schuler, and Hilda. Equipment was installed in the post office on November 30, 1919, and consisted of a single Northern Electric 1317-G magneto set (with crank), mounted on the wall. In 1924 a phone booth was installed in the post office at the new town site.



The CPR came to the Hilda district in 1923 and the town was moved to the location of the railroad.

The Hilda Hotel has been part of Hilda's landscape since 1928 and is the only hotel in Canada which carries a clause where no other hotel may be opened in a radius to the Saskatchewan border, to Medicine Hat, to the south side of the South Saskatchewan River. It was a 100 year lease made when the hotel was built and is good until 2025. The hotel also has the distinction of being the oldest running hotel never to have its license revoked.

Imperial Oil Limited at Hilda was opened in 1924. The tanks and building were removed from the Esso site in 1998.

In the late 1950's the first natural gas transmission facilities, put in place by the Alberta Gas Trunk Line company, were installed in the Hilda district to support a growing production of sweet natural gas in the area.

North Canadian Oils Ltd. moved into the Hilda district in the spring of 1963.

#### **IRVINE**

The village of Irvine began to materialize in 1876 and became the northern terminus of the 'Bull Trail.' It was first known as 20 Mile Post, coming by that name because it was a trading post at the end of the Bull Trail, 20 miles from Medicine Hat, and about 1/2 way between there and Fort Walsh. It began as a shipping point for lumber from sawmills in the Cypress Hills. The original lumber yard started operations before 1887. The NWMP established themselves in 1883 and the CPR laid out the village plan in 1903.

On August 19, 1958 scientists of the National Museum of Ottawa were digging up bones near Irvine. The skeleton of a Chasmosaurus was recovered. The small dinosaur was, in life, about 15 feet long, 5 feet high, and weighed about 3,000 pounds. It had a turtle-like beak and an armoured shield around its shoulders. The hills immediately south of Irvine, known as 'the bad lands,' would contain more of these artifacts.

#### **Bowell, Bowmanton, Box Springs, Chappice Lake, Finn's Lake, Harvest Vale, Lake Valley, Pearsonville, Vale**

Natural gas was first discovered at Alderson, formerly known as Carlstadt. Alderson was located approximately 35 miles northwest of Medicine Hat. CPR crews, who were digging a water well, discovered the shallow sweet gas. Redcliff and Medicine Hat drilled their own gas wells and have supplied gas for heating and lighting for many years. There were also several ranches and farms that had their own gas wells.

The first Provincial election in Alberta was held November 9, 1905 after Alberta had been a province for only 2 months. Women received the right to vote in Alberta in 1916, while Native Canadians in Alberta were not granted voting rights until 1967.

## Interesting Regional Facts

Many settlers in the Bowell district were originally from eastern Canada, particularly the Owen Sound and Orangeville areas. Other homesteaders were from Europe; namely England, Norway, Ireland, and Lithuania, many by way of the US. After 1941, when the land north of Bowell became the British Block to aid the war effort, many families moved into the Bowell district.

1939 saw a visit to Medicine Hat by the Royal couple. Because of security, a pilot train ran half an hour in advance of the Royal train. The King requested the train stop about 2 miles west of Bowell where the Royal couple wished to go for a walk. When the Royal train did not arrive on schedule for the next checkpoint the RCMP rushed back to Bowell thinking something had happened to the Royal couple.

# Origin of Names

Each community and place in southern Alberta has a reason, event, or person, and story behind its name.

## **PRAIRIE CRUCIBLE - Bingville, Atlee, Iddesleigh, Tide Lake, Jenner**

The canyon, on the eastern rim of what has today come to be Dinosaur Provincial Park, is known as Dead Lodge Canyon. It is named after a great band of wintering Natives who died of smallpox within its sheltered and game rich valleys.

Iddesleigh was named after Stafford Henry Northcote, Earl of Iddesleigh, a distinguished 19th Century British MP.

The community of Bingville was named after the comic strip "Bingville Bugle." It was one of the names in the hat when the draw was made to name the community.

## **WALSH**

Walsh was named after Superintendent James Morrow Walsh of the NWMP. From 1873 – 1883 he held the rank of Inspector and was known for his firmness in dealing with Chief Sitting Bull and his followers; he was also the first Commissioner of the Yukon territory. Walsh retired in 1898.

## **SCHULER**

Norman Banks (Tim) Schuler came to the Schuler district in the spring of 1910, settled on a homestead and began farming. In the fall he was given the post office and named it Schuler.

## **CYPRESS HILLS**

Graburn was named after Constable M. Graburn who in November 1879 left Fort Walsh and rode west to pick up some gear left at a horse camp. Constable Graburn was found shot to death the next day. A Native Canadian named Starchild was later tried in Fort MacLeod but acquitted on a charge of murder.

French-Canadian Explorers mistakenly thought the lodgepole pine of the area were the "cypres" or jackpine of eastern Canada and named the area Montagne de Cypres. English translation gave us the "Cypress Mountains" and eventually the "Cypress Hills."

The Cypress Hills, called on occasion "the hills that shouldn't be," were known to the Blackfoot as "Katewius Netumoo," the Pine Hills. "Sweet Pine Hills," "Whispering Pine Hills," and the "Thunder Breeding Hills," are some of the native names for this area.

The name Eagle Butte originated from the sightings of eagles sitting on rocks jutting out of the hills commonly called buttes. On November 3, 1955 the Geographic Board of Canada approved the Eagle Butte name as a locality which was initially begun as a NWMP Outpost in 1894.

## Origin of Names

The name Elkwater originated from a Blackfoot term “ponokiokwe” referring to the many species of deer congregating at the lake. Elkwater became a townsite in 1951.

The name Evergreen was given to the first school located in township nine, range two, west of the fourth meridian. The school opened just after the turn of the century and closed during the 1940's.

A plaque on the Bull Trail explains that the heavy ruts showing on the prairie were made by bull teams hauling freight from Fort Benton to points north of the Hills. The plaque reads: “Before the Canadian Pacific Railway reached southern Alberta in 1883 goods coming into this area were brought by bull teams from Fort Benton in Montana, the end of navigation on the Missouri river. These teams usually consisted of about 9 pairs of bulls, drawing 2 or 3 wagons with loads of 6 or 7 tons, covering 8 or 10 miles in a day . . . if conditions were good!”

One theory by James F. Sanderson, a Metis rancher and businessman, suggests that Ross Creek was formerly known as Bull Head Creek, the name being changed in 1882 because a man named Ross used to winter there every year. Roderick Ross was a Metis hunter born at the Red River settlement in 1839.

The Tothill district was initially called Gros Ventre, a French-Canadian name given to a group of Native Canadians that inhabited an extensive area along the north side of the Cypress Hills, west to Fort Macleod, south to the Milk River, and to the north along the South Saskatchewan River. The Gros Ventre creek, leading north-west out of a flat bottom land is on the west end of the Cypress Hills. It was an early avenue of travel to the accessible water of the South Saskatchewan River. The Native Canadians of the area used it to travel to the river bottom, where the city of Medicine Hat now sits. The Gros Ventre area is home to some of the more famous ranching headquarters of the larger ranching operations of the era – one of them being the “Cresswell and Day” cattle drive. It is rumored that 1600 head of Texas Longhorn cattle were trailed north from the Texas panhandle into Canada by a contingent of cowboys and chuck wagons. They crossed the “Milk River,” northeast of the Sweetgrass Hills in less than 36 months to supply beef for the opening of the Canadian West and the coming of the railroads and mining towns. It is said that when the drive came around the west end of the Cypress Hills the men, being tired, felt they had gone far enough, and allowed the cattle to spread out and permanent camp was set up. Ample grass and water for the well-being of the livestock had been accomplished but the harsh Canadian winter took its toll, with deep snow and severe blizzards, and within two years the herd was wiped out. This area was later named “Tothill” after Alfred Tothill, postmaster of the Gros Ventre district.

### **PLAINS TRAINS**

Bellcote (station) was named for Belle Cortell, the wife of the Assistant General Superintendent, British Columbia District CPR. Prior to 1914 it was known as Anstead.

The Black and White Road was named for the black and white markers to mark the trail from Medicine Hat to Manyberries.

Buffalo Lake is 42 km south of Medicine Hat and was likely named for the large herds of bison that were once found in the area; also, based on the large numbers of bones found, it is likely that this was once a favourite hunting ground of the Plains Indians.

Bullshead (butte, hill, locality, and creek) – the Blackfoot called this feature in-e-oto-ka which literally translates as “buffalo head.”

Cavan Lake, which is 18 km southeast of Medicine Hat, was named after Henry Cavan; a long time resident, pioneer, and rancher who was also partly responsible for the organization of the Ross Creek Irrigation District which formed Cavan Lake.

Dauntless, a CPR station and village, was named by Canadian Cement Company in 1913.

Dunmore was named for the 7th Earl of Dunmore, Charles A. Murray, who visited the west in 1883. The Earl was a major shareholder in the Canadian Agricultural Coal and Colonization Company. The post office here was known as Coleridge prior to 1957.

Eagle Butte Road is named for its proximity to a long-abandoned nesting ground for eagles located on top of a prominent butte.

Fitzgerald was named for Edward Fitzgerald, a part-time Purchasing Agent for the CPR.

Gros Ventre Creek flows northeast into Ross Creek. It was named to commemorate an attempted Atsina raid, in 1868, on a band of Blackfoot encamped along this creek. The Atsina thought they were attacking a small band, but the Blackfoot encampment was much larger than anticipated. As a result, the Atsina were chased into the Cypress Hills.

Little Plume was named after a chief of the South Piegan, (Tom) Little Plume who was a friend of the ‘white man.’

Macson, a locality 3 km southeast of Medicine Hat, received its name from the combination of the names MacArthur and Jamieson, who were Superintendents for the CPR.

Norton, post office, was named after the first postmaster, Mr. H.A. Norton. It was previously named Gros Ventre.

Pashley (station) was the maiden name of the wife of David McNicoll, then, the General Manager of the CPR; who later became 1<sup>st</sup> vice-president.

Tothill Road was named after Alfred Tothill, the first postmaster of this locality.

Wisdom was named for a town in southwestern Montana. Three rivers converge to form the Jefferson River; Lewis and Clark named these: Wisdom, Philanthropy, and Philosophy; after what they deemed to be President Jefferson’s cardinal



virtues. They were however, renamed by trappers and prospectors: The Big Hole, The Beaverhead, and The Ruby.

Woolchester (post office) was an area known for its sheep ranching.

Larkhall (CPR Station) was named after Larkhall, Lanarkshire, Scotland.

### **FORGOTTEN CORNER - Comrey, Catchem, Hooper-Pendland, Onefour, Wild Horse**

The Milk River comes out of Montana between Whiskey Gap and Del Bonita and returns into Montana west of Wild Horse. The water in the river is quite muddy most of the year and that is why it is called the Milk River.

The area in southeastern Alberta known as Comrey was named after 6 men of the first settlers there:

C – Columbus Larson, who came from Columbus, North Dakota to Alberta.

O – Ole Roen, who came from Norway to Columbus, North Dakota to Alberta.

M – Mons Roen, who came from Norway to Columbus, North Dakota to Alberta.

R – Sam Rolfson, who came to Alberta from Duluth, Minnesota.

E – John J. Evenson, who came from St. Paul, Minnesota to Red Deer, then to 2-6.

Y – Edward Yeager, who also came from the US.

How the Ketchum name came about is undocumented, however, with the formation of the school district the spelling was changed to Catchem.

The Hooper district probably got its name from Sydney Hooper. He and his nephew, Walter Huckvale located on Manyberries Creek around 1887. Their ranch became known as the Fiddle Back Ranch.

Billie Pendland came into Canada as a rough rider for Palmer Lewis. It is quite probable that the district was named after him.

Because of its geographic location Onefour was simply named Onefour. The 'one' stands for Township 1 and the 'four' stands for Range 4.

Wild Horse got its name from Wild Horse Lake which was named by the Native groups in the area because of the bands of wild horses that frequented the area.

### **HILDA**

Stan Koch operated the post office naming it after his daughter Hilda.

### **IRVINE**

The Pointy Hill or the Kaiser Hill got its name because it looks like an ice cream cone turned upside down, very large at the bottom and tapered to the top. It is about a quarter mile outside of Irvine. The hill is about 200 feet high, and anyone going to the top will find it is about 20 feet in diameter, with a 2 – 3 foot depression that makes it look as though it may have been a small volcano at some time. The entire hill is covered with rocks and cacti. It was given the name 'Kaiser Hill' during WW I when Kaiser Wilhelm was burned in effigy on the top of this hill.

Spy Hill is about 400 yards south of Irvine. This hill is about 250 feet high, with the top being about 100 feet wide and 400 – 500 feet long and very flat. Legend has it, before there were settlers, the Cree used this hill as a lookout point as they could see for miles around.

Irvine is named after Colonel A.G. Irvine who joined the NWMP and was appointed a Superintendent on November 7, 1875 and Assistant Commissioner on January 1, 1876. Colonel Irvine became Commissioner on November 1, 1880. In April 1886 he retired and became the Warden of Manitoba Penitentiary on October 13, 1892; he was also awarded the Imperial Service Order in 1903.

Josephsburg was named after the town in Austria from which the first settlers came.

**Bowell, Bowmanton, Box Springs, Chappice Lake, Finn's Lake, Harvest Vale, Lake Valley, Pearsonville, Vale**

During the construction of the CPR, Bowell was designated as Flag Stop #2; this became Bowell, named after Sir MacKenzie Bowell, Prime Minister of Canada from 1894 – 1896.

Box Springs, a popular stopping place for travelers in the area because of its shallow spring, was named when a freighter inserted a wooden box into a water hole, after enlarging it, to keep it open.

Sams Lake was named after Sam McKay, a sheep herder who herded sheep in the Chappice Lake area.

Chappice Lake was named after a Native Canadian who looked after the James Sanderson horse herd. These horses ranged the open area from Chappice to Many Island Lakes during the winter months.

It is stated, that Finn's Lake was named after a gentleman by the name of Finn who brought cattle up from Montana to supply the grading camps with beef; he also opened the first butcher shop in Medicine Hat.

**SUFFIELD**

In 1909 the Southern Alberta Land Company decided to lay out a town site at Suffield, selling off subdivision lots to raise additional capital to bring irrigation to the area. Suffield was named after Charles Harbond, 5th Baron Suffield, and one of the main financiers of the CPR. The CPR had reached Suffield in June 1883.

New Holland was settled in 1910 by a group of young adults from Nijkerdal, Holland.

Ralston was named after Colonel the Honourable J.L. Ralston who had been Minister of Defence when the Suffield station project was initiated.