

# HISTORICAL SOCIETY

of Medicine Hat and District Newsletter

Jim Marshall & Archaeology Society



Visit to Blackfoot Crossing, 1990

## President's Message

*Medicine Hat and District Historical Society*

Greetings All;

**Next Meeting:**

**March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

**@7pm, Monarch Theatre**

Your Board of Directors met at 7:00 PM on Tuesday, February 24, 2026 at St. John's Church to discuss and deal with the business of our organization. The Meeting was a productive one and we handled a number of important issues. I am always amazed at how much a group of people, dedicated to a cause or issue, can get done when they are all focused on it.

We continue to be in a solid financial position which should strengthen as we have been granted a casino for Thursday and Friday, September 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. As always, we will need several volunteers to help out. If you are interested, please contact Past President Judy Morris. Our completed provincial and federal returns have been filed with the appropriate agencies so we continue as a legal entity.

We also discussed a number of other issues including funding for two proposals made to us, working with other groups in the community, our Membership which stands at ninety-four, the printing and distribution of this Newsletter, and our upcoming Annual General Meeting. We also spent time discussing our next program, which promises to be novel and interesting, and more information on which can be found in the Program Report. We spent quite a bit of time discussing an invitation which we received from the City of Medicine Hat for a Cultural Forum.

The City has developed an Arts Heritage and Entertainment Plan which is a vision for a vibrant, connected and collaborative cultural community. They propose to hold a forum with six unique sessions which will blend artists, cultural leaders, organizations and community stakeholders. It will be an opportunity to spark collaboration, inspire fresh ideas and strengthen cultural programs across Medicine Hat. Your Board directed me to represent our organization and I have registered. Several other Board Members had also been invited as representatives of other organizations, so your Historical Society will be well represented.

The Cultural Forum will be held at the Esplanade on Monday, March 23 from 9:00 AM to 4:30 PM. Registration will open for the public on Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup>. Please register and make every effort to attend so that we can insure our history continues to be a critical part of our community's future.

Sincerely,

*Bruce Shepard*

Historical Society President

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# Historical Society Upcoming Program

*Medicine Hat in his Mind's Eye: The Memories of Jim Marshall*

R.B Shepard

Those of you who attended our last General Meeting at the Esplanade will recall when Jim Marshall stood up toward the end of the evening and recalled being at an event at the airport which Jenni had outlined in the last Newsletter. Jim was captivating. I was thinking about how we might have Jim do a Program for us when our Vice President, Malcolm Sissons, came to me with the same thought!

We approached Jim, he agreed, and on Thursday, March 19<sup>th</sup> you will be captivated by one of our community's legends as he recalls and explains how growing up in Medicine Hat shaped his life and art. He will be interviewed by Brian Konrad, host of the Bring Back the Porch podcast which focuses upon local voices and lived experience.



Please join your fellow Members, and bring a friend or two, for *Medicine Hat in his Mind's Eye: The Memories of Jim Marshall* on Thursday, March 19, 2026 at The Monarch Theatre.

Doors open at 6:30 PM / Program begins at 7:00 PM  
No Admission Fee although Memberships will be available at the door for \$10.00

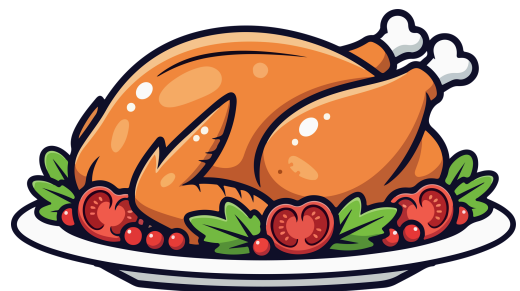
(left) Jim Marshall, Salesman, Medicine Hat Brick and Tile. Archives Image 0989.0172, by Stan Weiler, ca. 1980

## Upcoming AGM & Dinner

*Join us for the AGM and meal*

We hope you can join us for our Annual General Meeting on May 21<sup>st</sup> at 6pm, at the Esplanade. Doors open at 5pm, with dinner at 6pm and the AGM to begin at 7pm. Dinner this year will be catered by the MT Nest Cafe, and will be Turkey Dinner with all the fixings, including stuffing, gravy and mashed potatoes, and of course, dessert!

*by Lynne Rance*



The cost for dinner will be \$30 per person. You can purchase tickets for the AGM dinner at our upcoming March meeting. The deadline to purchase your tickets will be **May 5<sup>th</sup>**, so please connect with us to get your seat.

Our AGM is an important part of our Society's continued success. We hope to see you there!

# A Change in Character

Chasing a “Dour Lanky Scot”!

by J. Barrientos

It isn't often that I am stumped by a question coming through the Archives, but I recently received one that was a real head-scratcher! A researcher requested information on a Presbyterian Minister by the name of Reverend James Hector MacWhinnie, who was in Medicine Hat around 1916. The basis of the question came from reading a book called *The Wagon Led*, by R.D. Symons.

In the book, Symons references a “dour lanky Scot” Reverend MacWhinnie, and describes him as a “rare and lovable type”. The book goes on to note a disagreement between a Mrs. Gow, and a Mrs. Manser. Of course, these are two well known family names in the area, so everything thus far had been logical. Later, the disagreement comes to a head with Reverend MacWhinnie coming to visit Mrs. Gow who had not gone to church the past Sunday.

The book reads: “Finally, the minister pushed back his chair, slowly and deliberately took a pinch of snuff, passed the snuffbox to Mrs. Gow and said: “And now, Mistress Gow, why were ye no to the service the day?”

“I - ker-shoo! - I didnae care to go, thank ye.”

“Didnae care? Losh, woman, ‘tis no a matter o’ carin’! If ye were no ill, what ailed ye that ye wouldna go to the hoose o’ God?”

Mrs. Gow sat very straight and looked the minister in the eye. “I’m a God-fearing woman, sir, and I ken me duty, I *wad* gang to the hoose o’ God, sir - but I’ll no gang to the hoose o’ Manser!” (from page 143, *The Wagon Led*, by R.D. Symons.)

Quite a fun read, let me tell you! But it begged the question, how was it that we had information on the Gow family, the Manzer family, but nothing on such a character as MacWhinnie? I checked through the databases, and found that Reverend James Morrow was the current Presbyterian Minister during that time. Relaying this information to the researcher, he replied “Ah, that solves it then. In an earlier book, *Many Trails* by R.D. Symons, he writes: “The stories are as true as he can write them- that is, the only falsifications are such as are necessary to conceal real names and real places; but in no way is essential truth tampered with.”

Thusly, I would say that it is likely that Rev. James Hector MacWhinnie is actually Rev. James William Morrow!” Mystery solved, from a book written back in 1973.



Rev. J. Morrow, Archives Image 0009.0008

It certainly caused a chuckle in the archives for me: and a whole new thought about the often described stoic Reverend Morrow, who was perhaps a little more *colourful* than first suspected!

## Norm's Nonsense - Hilda, AB

*A Tough Winter, Warm Memories*

*by Norm Emann*

With such an exceptionally mild winter this year, I'm reminded of how different winters were years ago in the Hilda area. Of course, roads were not of the type we have now. These days we have better vehicles and snow removal equipment. Also, snow was much deeper before those foolish Liberals brought in the metric system!

In March of 1951 someone neglected to close the door and a horrendous blizzard roared through the Hilda area closing all roads. The joy and anticipation of missing school was short lived as arrangements were promptly made to billet homeless farm children in town. They would be well fed with a roof over their heads for several weeks by caring people but returned home on weekends.

Sundays after lunch my dad or Philip Fischer (and possibly Harold Kienzle) would hitch their horses to a sleigh and head for town picking up students along the way. On Friday afternoon when classes were completed one of the fathers would be waiting outside the school to take us home for the weekend. As children with boundless energy, we often ran behind the sleigh for miles to stay warm. Had we been asked to walk home from Hilda we would have flatly refused.

For us farm kids our time in Hilda for an entire week was like a winter holiday. We were able to spend more time with our town friends. Winter activities such as skating, sledding and other pursuits were now available to us. Plus, we were all well taken care of and class time was incidental.

I, along with Elroy and Ivan Fischer, were chosen to stay with an elderly couple, Mr. and Mrs. Fred Springer, who lived in the south eastern suburbs of Hilda not very far from school. Elroy's parents, Jack and Ida, lived in town but they housed other strays so Elroy was sent to live with his maternal grandmother during that period. The three of us shared one bedroom and warmed one bed as we were just little guys that got along really well.

We were treated like family and Mrs. Lydia Springer (image of her and Fred Springer, at right) prepared lovely meals for us. The house was familiar to me as it was one my uncle Jack Emann had built and lived in prior to that family's move to Medicine Hat. Every morning prior to breakfast Mr. Springer would read to us from the family bible.

Just a few years later Willie Nelson wrote a song called "Family Bible" which he sold to a DJ for a mere \$50. To this day when I hear that song my thoughts go back to the Springers. A wonderful trip down memory lane.



Fred and Lydia Springer, Esplanade Archives image 28008, ca. 1947

# Artist Dale Beaven

*Humour and Commentary on Society through Art*

by J. Barrientos

Art is not meant to always be palatable, but it is supposed to make you *feel* something. With March 8<sup>th</sup> being International Women’s Day, I wanted to feature Dale Beaven, painter and printmaker, who uses humour to send a message about body positivity and social commentary.

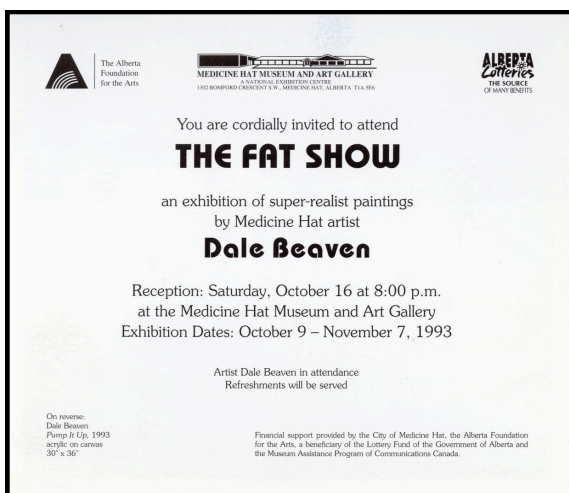
She was born in 1950 and holds a B.A. in Administration from the University of Edmonton, but has no other formal art training. She writes in her biography that she first seriously tried art in the fall of 1987. She began primarily as a printmaker (intaglio) but then moved into acrylic, and she notes that “what appeals to me more than reproducing what is already evident, is putting the ordinary into unconventional setting or conversely, the surreal into reality. My subject matter flashes into my mind visually complete, and my work involves social commentary. The rest is often figurative.” (Beaven, artist biography, April 1995, Medicine Hat Museum & Art Gallery).



“Pump it Up”, 1993. Acrylic on Canvas, Dale Beaven.

When looking at her body of work, I was interested to see that her exhibit at the Esplanade in 1993 was titled “The Fat Show”. I thought it was very interesting and unique for a female artist to showcase different body types, in a time when body shaming was sadly very normal.

Looking further, it appears that Beaven was indeed using the show to further some social commentary, as she writes: “FAT PEOPLE ARE NOT APPRECIATED. In today’s fitness conscious society, the large body is looked on with scorn, sniggered at, or simply not seen. As my interest in people and the human body grew over the past couple of years, I became frustrated with [...] nymph-like models, and found myself staring at bigger people in malls, restaurants, and on the streets. I came to the conclusion that big can be, if not beautiful, intensely interesting and very different, and that fat people are still, inevitably, a large part of our society that are being ignored by the artistic community. My pieces provide an interesting reflection on society, and I hope to make big people more visible.” (Beaven, “The Fat Show”, ca. 1993).



Invitation to “The Fat Show”, October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1993. Courtesy of Esplanade Archives.

Beaven (below) often uses humour in her works, as another large acrylic painting of a prairie setting is titled “B.S. Country”



MH News, Aug 1994

which when asked, the artist pertly responded that it meant, of course, “Big Sky” Country! Humour is often a great way to change the lens of commentary from caustic to lighthearted. Still, an important message held within the artworks that different bodies deserve representation and celebration through art, and throughout history.

# Membership Dues

*Join the Historical Society of Medicine Hat and District*

Membership dues for 2025-2026 are now past due.

Your \$10 membership to the Historical Society of Medicine Hat and District allows you to cast your vote on deciding factors at our meetings, as well as receive 5 editions of our Historical Society Newsletter via email or printed copy. *If you do not remain up to date, this might be the last copy of the Newsletter you receive!* You can pay your \$10 membership dues by cheque by mail to the address below. Please make cheques payable to:

## The Historical Society of Medicine Hat and District

401 1 Street SE  
Medicine Hat, AB  
T1A 8W2

### *In Memoriam*

Marjorie Dawn Dunlop, June 14, 1965-December 17, 2025

We are saddened by the passing of Marjorie Dunlop. Her obituary reads: "Marjorie Dawn Dunlop. Born June 14, 1965. Passed December 17, 2025. Survived by her mother (Ann) and her sister Lori-Jean. Several nieces nephews and many aunts uncles and cousins. Predeceased by her father (Don) and her paternal and maternal grandparents. She will be greatly missed her family and her wonderful circle of very good friends."

Marjorie was a member of the Historical Society and a treasured part of our Medicine Hat community. She will be missed.



Alternatives Funeral Home

## Word of Thanks

The Historical Society of Medicine Hat and District partners with the Esplanade Archives in preserving and promoting our rich heritage. The Archives are a valuable resource for family research and local historical information. To make an appointment at the Archives, please call 403-502-8582, or email Jennifer Barrientos at [jenbar@medicinehat.ca](mailto:jenbar@medicinehat.ca). The Archives are located at 401 1 Street SE, Medicine Hat, AB T1A 8W2, and as always, are free for you to use.

The Historical Society of Medicine Hat and District website: [www.histsocmedhat.ca](http://www.histsocmedhat.ca)

## Board of Directors

- |                      |                    |
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Newsletter Editor      Jenni Barrientos