

# HISTORICAL SOCIETY

of Medicine Hat and District Newsletter

Image Courtesy: Esplanade Archives 0583.7569



## President's Message

Medicine Hat and District Historical Society

Greetings all!

Board members have been meeting with various organizations, in the past several weeks, to determine possible donations from our Casino Funds. The donation(s) will be part of the budget that will be voted on by members at the upcoming AGM on **Wednesday, May 24, 7pm in the Studio Theatre**. Please note the change from our usual Thursday night to that Wednesday, to accommodate room availability.

Also at the AGM, we will be voting on the new Board. At this time, we are gratified to have Bruce Shepard stepping forward as incoming First Vice-President (thank you Bruce!), taking over in 2024 from Judy Morris who will be the incoming President. As well, Nick Martin has thrown his name in to be Treasurer. Thus, we hope that we will be entering the new year with a strong and complete Board!

Bruce Shepard will be presenting information on the AGM's speaker elsewhere in this newsletter. We are delighted to welcome local artist Theresa Eisenbarth as our program speaker.

Sheila Tiegs shared the following schedule of tours by Prairie Sprinter:

- June 17 – “Sip the Newell”: tours of Grain-to-Glass Farm & Distillery and Piston Broke Brewery - Brooks
- July 12 – “Prairie Adventure: Acadia Valley & Meridian Hutterite Colony”
- August 23 – “Prairie Adventure: Acadia Valley & Empress”

These tours are affordably priced, and we encourage members to make their own arrangements with Prairie Sprinter at 403-487-1312. We hope to have group of Historical Society members to make the occasion a sociable one!

Again, we hope to see you at the AGM on May 24 with our terrific speaker, Theresa Eisenbarth.

Sincerely,

*Tom Hamp*

Interim/Acting President

## Next Meeting:

**Wednesday**, May 24 @ 7pm  
Esplanade Studio Theatre

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# Programmes

*Stories in Art: Our Shared Environment*

*by R.B. Shepard*

We members of the Historical Society recognize that our community's past is a precious resource. We give money, and especially our time, to try to keep elements of our past so that it is available for learning. We recognize that knowledge of what has happened previously can be seen as critical to understanding what is happening today and why.

History is one way to study the past, but there are others. Archaeology is one, as are Anthropology, Art History, and branches of Sociology, Philosophy, Literature, and other scholarly disciplines. Combining all of them leads to a multi-disciplinary perspective.

History is usually derived from research in the documentary collections housed in archives. Over the past several decades new resources such as photographs, and recorded interviews with people who lived through events, have been added to the mix of what can be studied. More recently works of art, called memory paintings, have been gaining attention as another source for understanding our past.



Previously dismissed as forms of folk art, more recent research has revealed that they can be remarkably accurate representations of places in time. Apparently, some can even rival photographs in their accuracy. Scholars are being urged to consider them forms of documentation from which understanding can be derived.

Medicine Hat is fortunate in having an artist in our community who has done this type of painting. Theresa Eisenbarth grew up in Medicine Hat and currently lives in the City. She is a well-known artist who has used her talents to create several series of paintings documenting her memories of times and places in Medicine Hat. She will be sharing her stories and her approach in her art with members of the Historical Society at our AGM on Wednesday, May 24 at 7:00 PM in the appropriately named Studio Theatre.

We hope to see you there.

Image Courtesy of Theresa Eisenbarth - Eisenbarth Art Studio

# An Amusing History

*From Goofy Golf to Chicken Villa*

*By J. Barrientos*

The start of summer always brings with it feelings of excitement. There are so many fun and engaging events during the warm months in our beautiful city, and many take to the tees as golf season gets in full swing.

Further to that, I had an interesting request at the Archives that sent me down a bit of a rabbit (golf?) hole. This one in particular had an interesting subject line - "mini golf". The researcher explained that they used to love playing mini golf during the summer months of their youth in Medicine Hat, but couldn't remember the name of the place. They added helpfully, "it's a mini golf course with a goofy name". Interested, I attempted to find references of mini golf courses in Medicine Hat in the 1960s. Coming up empty handed, I decided on a whim to type the word "goofy" into our database. And lo and behold, I came up with a hit. A donated set of images from CHAT TV, advertising "Goofy Golf".

Apparently that "goofy name" was actually, *quite literally*, "Goofy Golf". The images from CHAT TV included the image below, about "Riverview Amusement Park: Next to Chicken Villa". This most definitely peaked my interest, as of course I had never heard of Medicine Hat having an amusement park! From my research I found that Riverview Amusement Park was located on 3 Street NW in Riverside, next to the TransCanada Highway.

Riverview Amusement Park's grand opening was on Saturday, May 19th, 1962 - almost exactly 61 years ago. The Medicine Hat News reported they had "Go Kart races, which are America's newest Family sport; trampoline centre, a batting cage, and Goofy Golf."





*The Goofy Golf Course, with the TransCanada Highway Bridge in the background. ca. 1962*

As well, Riverview Amusement Park hosted "open air dancing" two nights a week, with free admission, where you could dance and twist to the music of "The Renegades." The park also had their own eatery called the "Riverview Hamburger Stand", and was also the site of the CableVision Wearhouse (CableVision being a part of the Monarch TV Corporation).

The 1962 Henderson Directories list Leroy and Alvin Semrau as the owners of the site. What did send me for a bit of a loop was that advertisement stating that the amusement park was "next to chicken villa". Flipping through the directory books, it noted that Chicken Villa had "fried chicken, buckets, boxes, barrels!" but that it was located at "8 Street SW"; which is on the wrong side of the highway as 3 Street NW.

Through quite a bit of digging, I came to the conclusion that Riverview Amusement Park and Chicken Villa were only next to each other for a very short amount of time in from 1961-1962. Chicken Villa was on the site of the former Glass House. Chicken Villa's grand opening in the riverside location was December 2, 1961 - and it was owned and operated by Joe McElgunn. Less than a year later, by 1962, Chicken Villa has moved to another location on 8 Street SW, which is the site of the current Italian Restaurant, Zeffirelli's.

I am not entirely certain at what point Riverview Amusement Park closed. I did find a note in the 1975 Medicine Hat News that there was a \$25 reward "for return of a stolen go-kart motor"; which probably was a sign of disuse of the area. After which, there are no more references to Riverview Amusement Park, and I presume it closed sometime in the mid- to late-1970s. Currently, that site would be on, or very near to what is now River Ridge Seniors Village on 3 Street NW near Brier Park Road NW.

Certainly an interesting piece of our local history that was previously unknown to me. I hope reminiscing about it brought you as much *amusement* as it did to me!

# Prize Winning Excitement

*Mail-In Contests and puzzles*

*by Jenni Barrientos*

The classic call of any young child in the midst of summer: "I'm bored!" It begs the question - what did people do before television, screens, and the internet? While of course there were the timeless games played outdoors, one of the more interesting pastimes for the young and old alike was the excitement of contests.

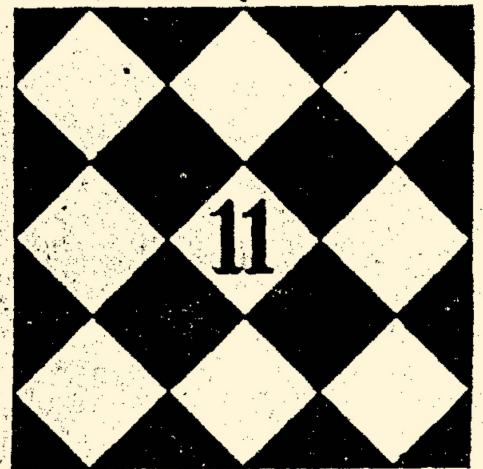


While today most contests are won (and lost!) online, the excitement of a contest used to be advertised extensively in the Medicine Hat News. The idea was to write in your answer in hopes of claiming a prize. Contests, quizzes and puzzles from around the world were advertised in the MH News and local interest was often peaked at the thought of winning it big. Before lotteries on TV, there was the printed contest.

While sometimes loosely disguised as an advertising campaign, contests took Medicine Hat by storm, especially between 1910-1925. Between these years, there were over 200 references of contests and prizes to be won in the Medicine Hat News! Some were international and others were local. One such contest ran over the span of two weeks in 1913, by the Alberta Piano & Organ Co., located in the Empress Theatre. The contest promised nine prizes to be won, including a 2nd prize being a lady's diamond solid gold ring. First prize, of course, was a \$500 voucher towards the purchase of a new piano! To win, you had to solve the 9 square puzzle, seen to the right.

Interestingly, there were never any winners who were mentioned in the paper after the contest was concluded. This could be for many reasons, as at the time, contests were not ruled by legislation or laws and often concluded without ever showing a winner.

Certainly, prizes and winning contests could be a fun pastime. Who doesn't love a good puzzle. Whether through luck or skill, we hope you have a prize-winning summer!



Take any number from 7 to 15 inclusive. Do not use any number more than twice. Place one number in each of the eight squares so that when they are added perpendicularly or horizontally, the total makes 33. For the neatest correct answers, in order of merit, we will give, absolutely free the prizes here listed. All prize winners will be notified by mail and all prizes must be called for within 15 days from closing of contest. It is not necessary to use this paper. Only one solution from a contestant will be considered and only one member of a family can enter. In case of ties, identical prizes will be awarded tying contestants.

# Membership Dues

*Join the Historical Society of Medicine Hat and District*

Membership dues for 2022-2023 are now very past due.

Membership dues for 2023-2024 are now being accepted.

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

## This Day in History

*May 11, 1923*

Citizens were invited to the Medicine Hat Hospital to celebrate National Hospital Day, 1923. Between the hours of 2pm - 4pm, tea was to be served on the lawn. The date occurs on the birthday of the immortal Florence Nightengale, and citizens were offered to "get to know" their hospital at the event. Image of the Medicine Hat Hospital in 1925, pictured to the right. (Esplanade Archives 0064.0018)



## 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 Jenni Barrientos at [jenuatr@medicinehat.ca](mailto:jenuatr@medicinehat.ca). The Archives are located at 401 1 Sttreet 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)

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