

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

of Medicine Hat and District Newsletter

JC Tourist Centre, Bomford Cres. ca. 1956

Esplanade Archives 0672.0140



President's Message

Medicine Hat and District Historical Society

Next Meeting:

Thursday, May 22nd @ 7pm
[Esplanade Studio Theatre](#)

Your Board of Directors met during the evening of Tuesday, April 21 at the historic St. John's Church. We had a very full Agenda and there were several items which required considerable attention. The discussion was thorough, polite, as well as useful, and any Members wishing to gain experience in how community affairs are conducted would do well to consider joining us.

We will have upcoming vacancies on the Board as several long serving Members step down. Having helped us get to one hundred and twenty-two Members, Lynne Rance has decided to retire after many years of service. We are very grateful for her careful recording of our Members, their addresses and contact information because you are truly the foundation of the organization and Lynne made certain the foundation was in good shape.

Laurel Schlaht has been on the Board for many years and has taken on a variety of roles. She told us that she had served six different Presidents over the years; itself a major accomplishment. She has taken on a new role as a Grandmother and we thank her for her service and wish her the best in a job she will love.

Jenni Barrientos has been the Secretary and Newsletter Editor for several years. Jenni will continue as a Society Member, and has offered to keep editing the Newsletter unless someone new steps forward, and we are thankful for that and the service already given. Helping raise two active youngsters, along with active involvement in other community organizations and a full time career means Jenni will be stepping down from the Board at the Annual General Meeting.

Our AGM will be held Wednesday, May 22nd in the Studio Theatre at the Esplanade. A turkey dinner with all of the fixings, catered by MT Nest, for \$30 per person will begin at 5:30 PM. Our Meeting, including the election of new Board Members, will begin at 6:30 PM. Any Members wishing to run for a seat are encouraged to contact our Past President, Judy Morris, prior to the Meeting. The evening will be capped by a presentation by our Vice President, Malcolm Sissons, who will be speaking on a gem of our community: the Ewart-Duggan House.

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All the Best,

Bruce Shepard

Historical Society President

Programs Report

Medicine Hat Tourism: Near, Here and Afar

by R.B. Shepard

Medicine Hat has a rich and varied past. History is the method we use to uncover, confirm and validate that past. We use historical methods to research our past because we recognize that it has value being the foundation of our community, province and country.

Other people recognize its value too, but that ours can be different from theirs. That difference usually interests them though and many come to visit us to learn about it. Reflecting on my nearly thirty years in the museum profession, I can honestly say that the most interesting conversations I had were with visitors who had many, often penetrating, questions about who we were, how our community was established as well as how it grew to its current form.

Those people were tourists, of course, but they come from around the world and they spend a great deal of money. According to UNESCO, culture and heritage are the fastest growing part of international tourism making up forty percent of the 1.48 trillion dollars (Canadian) spent on tourism worldwide in 2024. That amounts to 592 billion dollars (Canadian).

Tourism is one of Canada's largest and fastest growing industries and Alberta is one of the top destinations in the country. In 2024 some 38 million visitors came to our province, contributing \$14.4 billion to the economy, \$1.9 billion to municipal, provincial and federal taxes and creating 86,000 jobs. Not surprisingly, attractions in the Rocky Mountains led the list of attractions for tourists, but two of the top ten were the Royal Tyrell Museum in Drumheller and Heritage Park in Calgary.

Medicine Hat already attracts tourists, but that number is growing and could soon take off. We are on the Trans-Canada Highway; we have Medalta and the Historic Clay District as well as the Esplanade. We have many new hotels and motels as well as many good restaurants. What are needed are stories and our Society has a role by researching, learning and telling them. Our Programming is where we learn the new stories, as well as many of the traditional ones, so that we can be good, knowledgeable hosts to our many tourist/visitors.

Rick Filanti (left) with an award from the Alberta Conference of Tourism, 1993. Filanti was a visionary, philanthropist and entrepreneur who helped establish the iconic Saamis Tepee at its current site in 1991.



Esplanade Archives

1095.0003

Norm's Nonsense

Pivoting to TV: Lights, Camera... Static?

by Norm Emann

Recently a new television was purchased at our house. The screen is larger than any TV we've ever had and it comes with so many options. It even senses when I come near it and gives me a temperature reading along with the time, the stock market trends and other information that I can't understand. They call it a Smart TV. I'm now watching a television that is smarter than I am. Perhaps that has always been the case.

My initial exposure to television was one night in the mid fifties as I walked the streets of Drumheller with my parents. While visiting my aunt and uncle in Delia we drove to Drumheller on a Saturday night. A closed furniture store had placed a running TV in the window and I was mesmerized by what I saw. My parents eventually dragged me back to the car. Otherwise, I'd have stayed there until midnight watching a program without sound.

A year or two later while visiting relatives near Olds with my uncle Ben I was again exposed to a television. My aunt and uncle had purchased one and I was glued to it alone after everyone else had gone to bed and until the Olds station shut down.

In the fall of 1957 CHAT TV opened its doors in Medicine Hat and a transmitting tower was installed in Pivot just south of Hilda. A local mechanic and businessman, Ephraim Haas, had the foresight to bring in televisions for sale. Not only did he sell them but he installed them for his customers. Antennas on houses were required and Ephraim climbed houses to secure them. Plus, he ensured that the antenna was turned in the proper direction towards Pivot to receive the best signal possible.



There was only one TV channel but everyone was content with that. All shows were a delight to watch. The most popular shows back then included the Ed Sullivan Show, Bonanza, All Star Wrestling, The Plouffe Family, Hockey Night in Canada, Wayne and Shuster, Country Hoedown and faith healer Oral Roberts.

My most favourite of all was the 1957 World Series between the New York Yankees and the Milwaukee Braves. I was absolutely thrilled to have Mickey Mantle and Warren Spahn in our living room. The image was poor and irregular. This naive farm boy believed for years that it was actually snowing in New York only to find out much later that it was simply... poor reception!

What *is* in a Name?

A Lost Committee and a Found Mystery

by J Barrientos

One of the most common questions we get in the Archives Reading Room is: “Why’d they name it *that*?” From newly minted Hatters wondering why their new home is called “Medicine Hat”, to those late in the evening conversations around a dinner table asking how to pronounce Gleichen, we get all sorts of puzzling name-related inquiries. Some of them are interesting, and already well-researched, and some come with the dreaded adage of: “more research is necessary”. (That’s just archives-talk for... “I dunno”.)

Many of the names around the area have a sense of mystery around them. Take Seven Persons Creek, or the hamlet of Seven Persons, for example. There are at least three different versions that explain the name, each having a unique set of qualities. Lillian Ost, author of the book “*Seven Persons: One Hundred Sixty Acres and a Dream*”, discusses how a construction crew laying railway line in the area in 1897, came across seven graves, and paid homage to this with the name of “Seven Persons” for the surrounding area. Local Metis businessman and pioneer, James Sanderson in his “*Indian Tales of the Canadian Prairies*”, writes that a Blackfoot war party led by Yellow Calf Shirt discovered seven mysterious, undecayed bodies by a creek, believed they were punished by the Great Spirit, and the creek was so named as a grim reminder. Well-known Albertan Historian Hugh Dempsey recounts a similar, but distinct story, about a Blackfoot and Cree battle in the area which left seven Cree dead. When the fighting was over, the creek was named “lihkisika-tapee” or Seven Persons, after the deceased warriors.

As you can understand, what seems like a simple question now comes with a rather convoluted answer. There are some books such as Alan Rayburn’s “*Naming Canada*” that attempt to shed light on the phenomenon of the stories of place names, but even so, the entry for “Medicine Hat” spans a number of pages, since how our own little city ended up with such an interesting name is quite the debate. Was it a serpent in the river, demanding a sacrifice? Or, was it a merman, promising an end to a war? Maybe just a hill shaped formation? These many different versions of names are not just a relic of the past, but also happen in the modern era.

While researching the name of an avenue near Ross Glen, I came across quite the eye-catching headline: “Ald. Gibson Uncovers Secret” (MH News, Jan. 18, 1977). During a council meeting, Ald. Gibson was concerned about the use of flower names for roads, and instead wanted to prioritize historic prominent oldtimers be given the recognition instead. When asked who approved the flowery names, the chair says: “I don’t know.” A follow up from then-Mayor Ted Grimm states: “Well, where is this mysterious [naming] committee?”



Seven Persons CPR Station, ca. 1915
Esplanade Archives, 0451.0031



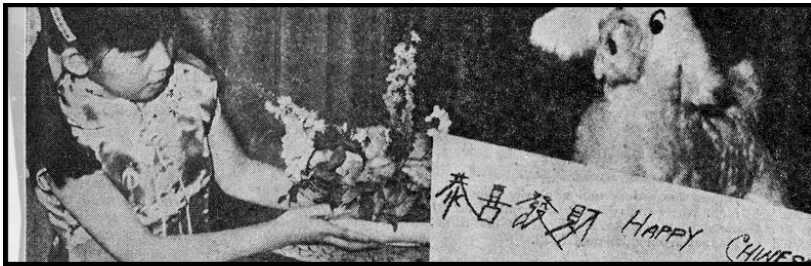
Lennie Chow and Joe Kue Hong Chow
Esplanade Archives, 0764.0003

Different members of the Chow Family. The Chows owned many local restaurants including: Shasta Restaurant, Canada Cafe (later called China Wonderland), All Seasons Restaurant, Ming Tree, and the Pink Lantern.



(L-R) Kim Choy Chu, Joe Hong Chow, Gar Chong Chow, Shui Chow
Esplanade Archives 0764.0006

Chow Lung, (also known as "Slim") was a prominent local businessman in the 1950s, and the proprietor of the New Park Dairy. In 1955, he celebrated his 45th year of being a citizen of Canada, where an article noted he helped raise over \$100,000 for the war efforts in the Second World War.



Connie Chow
Esplanade Archives 0764.0007

After the Naming Committee debacle in 1977, Ald. Gibson is now formally added to the new 'mysterious' naming committee, but unfortunately, they only meet one time on record in the City Council Minutes, in October of 1977. After that, the naming committee, and what was discussed - or named - appears to continue to be a mystery, even well into the 1990s. An article in the 1980s sums it up well, about the city's street-naming practice: "Everyone says its a crazy way of doing it, but no one ever comes up with a better suggestion." (MH News, Aug 14, 1981). Perhaps that's why we have Ross Glen Crescent skirted by Rossland Way, followed by Rossland Street, headed to Rossmere Close, which may or may not intersect with Rosshaven Avenue. Whew.

There have been some concerted efforts over the years to make a listing of the who's and why's of placenames locally, but the task seems hindered by the fact that there may not be one singular answer to the question. Take the avenue I was looking into: Chow Avenue. Without a bylaw, or Council Minutes, or special report to reference, it is extremely difficult to determine which, if any, member of the Chow family the name could be paying homage to. Therefore, in this case, the scholarly, well-refined and highly technical answer is: "more research is necessary" or: "I dunno." (sorry!)

Historical Society AGM

Join us for dinner, a program and the Annual General Meeting

We hope you can join us for our Annual General Meeting on May 21st 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!



If you would like a ticket to the dinner, the cost is \$30 per person. Please call Past President Judy Morris at 403-529-9231 or 403-952-7796 **before May 5th to R.S.V.P for dinner.** We hope to see you there, and look forward to a wonderful program by Malcolm Sissons, on the historic Ewart-Duggan House.

Display Case at the Esplanade

While you visit the Esplanade, either at our AGM or any time, please feel free to take the time to view our updated Historical Society Display Case, located in the lobby, to the right of the doors.

The display case is presented by the Ghost Squadron Military Museum, and features artefacts owned by Wes Krause. There's a wonderful selection of historic military items, including a history of the local No. 34 Service Flying Training School (S.F.T.S). A thoughtfully curated display, one not to be missed. Enjoy!



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 jenbar@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 is currently under construction, stay tuned! More details to share soon.

Board of Directors

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|----------------------|--------------------|
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