

HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Historical Society of Medicine Hat and District Newsletter



President's Message

Medicine Hat and District Historical Society

Next Meeting:

September 28, 2021
7pm - 9pm @ the Esplanade

It is the sincere hope that our members have remained healthy and active over the past several months. It has been a very difficult time for many of us and the Historical Society has not escaped the effects of this long-term hiatus. However, we are here, we are healthy and ready to move forward.

Your executive will be discussing plans to re-start the Society with regular scheduled general meetings. As some of you may know, we held an Online Annual General Meeting recently that was reasonably well attended after the second attempt. In order to conduct business, we are required to have a quorum of our members and the first attempt at the online meeting the quorum was not met. The election of officers was not as expected, and thus, we are in need of a First Vice President and one more board member.

Our next meeting is hosted at The Esplanade, as our previous agreement with the Veiner Centre is in limbo due to the Veiner Center now being administered by an outside company. Therefore, it is virtually guaranteed that we will no longer get a venue at no cost, whether it be the Esplanade, Veiner Center or Library. Thus, we will have to consider a cost recovery measure in order to ensure we are using our limited reserves to hold meetings. I will stress at this time that we are expected to conduct and close our meeting in the allotted scheduled time frame (7pm-9pm), to not incur additional costs from The Esplanade.

The living history project we are funding has been put on hold due to Covid, though will shortly be starting. Another potential project is being researched that would have a lasting impact on our community. It is directly related to the Municipal Airport and will be reported on in more detail as the project progresses.

We will be holding a General Meeting on September 28, 7:00pm to 9:00pm. As a reminder, Membership Dues for 2022 will be accepted, preferably by cheque.

Sincerely,
Wes Krause

Acting President, Historical Society

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CBC Burger Baron Film's connection to M.H

The Good Ol'Days of Drive Thrus, Drive Ins and Diners

By J. Barrientos

I was recently contacted by a local Albertan filmmaker who was working on a project about the chain of restaurants called Burger Barons. I had never heard of them, but did see that Medicine Hat had its very own location, which was situated at the edge of the TransCanada Highway.

Though difficult to pin down the exact years, I believe that the local Burger Baron location operated from 1959 to 1968.

In his documentary, writer, director and producer Omar Mouallem, discusses the fast food "royalty" of the Burger Baron name, how it's connected to Lebanese diaspora, and the nuanced small-town love for nostalgia such as the Burger Baron's famous (infamous?) mushroom burger.



Image Courtesy of Esplanade Archives, 1070.0288

It was wonderful to work with Mouallem, and supply archival images that will be featured in the documentary. I also learned that Medicine Hat's Burger Baron location was no stranger to controversy. Even building the location caused quite a stir, due to the proximity to the roadway.

Fraught with land debates, council roadblocks, robberies and traffic concerns, the local Burger Baron restaurant did not stand the test of time. In 1963, homeowners in the area complained at the multitude of garbage waste in the ditches around the location. The quick, convenient and disposable nature of "fast food" was becoming an issue. Yet, patrons loved the price and location - many would stop along the highway and hop out of their cars to dash over to the Burger Baron,

while enjoying a fifty cent hamburger, hopping back into their cars, and continuing the drive.

The documentary film, called *The Last Baron*, is scheduled for viewing on CBC Gem on September 17th. Keep an eye out for our own Medicine Hat Burger Baron story, and/or local images.



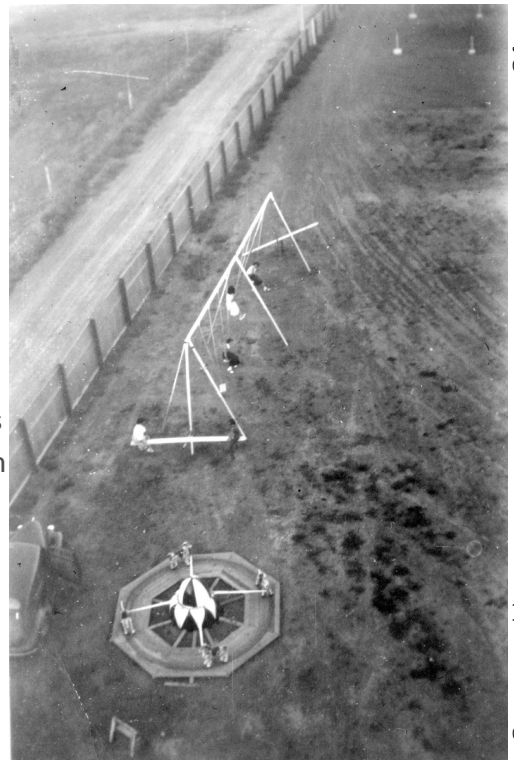
Under the Stars to View the Stars

Memories of the local 'Hat Drive In Theatre

By J. Barrientos

On warm summer nights, one of the best things to do in Medicine Hat for young people and families, was to go to the 'Hat Drive In. I recently was delighted to be able to see some images of the 'Hat Drive In that I had never seen before. These images show a wonderful piece of history, of fun, entertainment and family life in mid-century Medicine Hat.

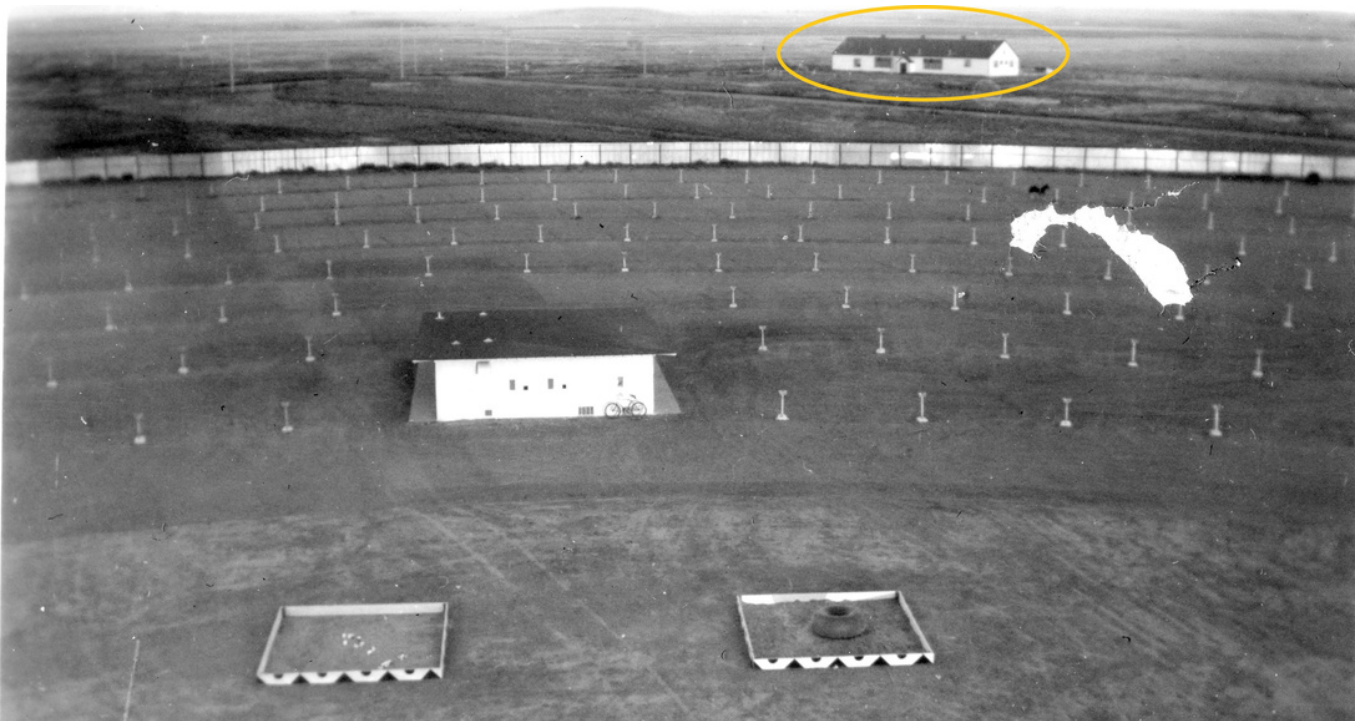
The Drive In was located up near what is currently the Stampede Grounds. At the time of operation, the land was bare and underutilized, and was leased from the City at an attempt to recoup some monies for the land. The Drive In changed the entire landscape, adding many different amenities to the space. There was a playground area for children (right), pony rides, concession, and in the image below, you can see the many speakers next to the raised or ramped parking spots used to view the large screen.



Playground Area of the Hat Drive In

Supplied Image

The one mystery is the building, circled in yellow in the image below. It sits beyond the fence of the 'Hat Drive In, and we are a bit stumped by what the building could be, considering the lack of development of the area at the time. Do you know? If so, we would love to hear from you!



Supplied Photograph

Image of the Grounds of the 'Hat Drive In

History of Velveeta Cheese

Love it or Hate It, the Long History of Processed Cheese

by Wes Krause

No matter how much your tastes have evolved, Velveeta probably has a special place in your list of guilty pleasures. It might be one of the most unnatural colors you'll see in the supermarket, and it might be of a completely questionable texture, but there's no denying that magic happens when you melt it.

Velveeta wasn't so much discovered as it was invented, and even stranger is the fact that it's actually the second cheese invented by Swiss immigrant Emil Frey who emigrated to the US with his father, a farmer and cheese maker. Emil worked for the Monroe Cheese Company in New York being tasked with creating a cheese that could be used in lieu of an imported cheese called Bismarck. His first cheese was the soft, spreadable, and amazing Liederkrantz, and it was so popular the factory was shipping out more than a ton of cheese a day just to keep up with demand. That was in 1889, and it wasn't until 1918 that he discovered his second famous cheese.

Vintage Velveeta recipes are just bizarre, which owes much to the marketing of Kraft Foods. The ingenuity of families brought out even more interesting recipes that were perfect for the

versatile Food Product. The common Grilled Cheese Sandwich had been a staple for decades. However, creativity takes a step forward with Hawaiian-inspired party foods, incorporating peanut butter pineapple, topped with a maraschino cherry, and you had the makings of a party platter that was sure to delight!



Velveeta was good for breakfast, too, and a Velveeta jelly omelet might have been the perfect way to start your day off right. There are also offerings like the Velveeta strata, which was basically a casserole made from a bread layer, a Velveeta layer, another bread layer, then a slather of eggs and milk... also to be served with jelly. There were Velveeta pizzas, and a holiday diner were treated to pearl onions melted in Velveeta cheese, which apparently, tastes exactly as good as it sounds.

Polarizing opinions aside, Velveeta is here to stay.

Archives Image FL00678

[ca.1962]

Chop Suey on the Prairies

Chinese Food and Restaurants of Medicine Hat

by J. Barrientos

Some text from Royal Alberta Museum & Chinese Canadian Pioneer Museum Foundation

There are more Chinese Restaurants in North America than there are fast food outlets combined. They range in size and grandeur from upscale banquet halls serving more than 500 people, to family-run, hole-in-the-wall cafés where the parents cook and serve, while the children do homework or clean vegetables in the back. Chinese restaurants have become such a part of our landscape that it is hard to imagine a time when they were considered exotic. All across the prairies, Chinese restaurants can be found in almost every town and hamlet. While the families that have run these restaurants may have changed over the years, the restaurants remain and have become indispensable centres of small town life.

The first Chinese restaurant in Medicine Hat was the N.W. Lee Restaurant, which opened in 1900. In total, from 1900 - present day, there have been 49 different Chinese restaurants in Medicine Hat. Including well-known icons such as the City Café, which operated from 1914-1986, and the Rex Café which operated from 1917-1969. These establishments helped many Chinese families get their start in Canada, despite difficulties of diaspora and racist sentiments--especially during the era of the Chinese Exclusion Act (1923-1947).

Though not enough space to go into great detail, more information is available at the Archives, including a detailed list, images and research about Chinese Restaurants, and Chinese-Canadian families in Medicine Hat.

Chow Family, owners of the Canada Café



Image 0764.0026



Interior of the All Seasons Restaurant

Image 0811.0489

Membership Dues

Join the Historical Society of Medicine Hat and District

Membership dues for 2022 are now due. Any members who paid for 2021 will have their memberships extended to 2022. Your 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 Smoke Signals Newsletter via email or printed copy. You can pay your membership dues by cheque at our upcoming meeting on September 28th, from 7pm - 9pm at the Esplanade, or 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

Allan Jensen

1941-2020

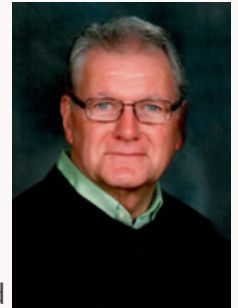
Allan was a longtime member of the Historical Society, as well as a wonderful artist, community member and teacher. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him, and his quick wit and humour.



Wayne Craven

1941-2021

Wayne was a past president of the Historical society, as well as a lover of community theatre, and local politician. He leaves behind to cherish his memory, many friends and family members who miss him dearly.



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 jenuatr@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

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