

The Central Alberta Historical Society Newsletter



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Fall 2005

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Golden Furrow Award and the Bower family.



Mayor Morris Flewwelling, and George Campbell with Ted Bower accepting the Golden Furrow Award on behalf of the Bower family

On August 20, 2005, the Sunnybrook Farm Museum and Interpretive Centre honoured the Bower family with the first Golden Furrow Award, celebrating both the tenth anniversary of the museum, and one of Central Alberta's pioneering agricultural families. The Bower family owned and farmed land covering much of south Red Deer, including what is now the Sunnybrook Farm Museum. In 1987, Mr. and Mrs. Norman Bower donated the farm to the Red Deer and District Museum Society with the hope that it would help foster local appreciation of Alberta's agricultural heritage.

Ted Bower accepted the award on behalf of the family, wrapping his appreciation around a descriptive overview of the Bower family's involvement in the agricultural history of Central Alberta, a story that encapsulated the experiences of many of the settlers and community builders of this area.

Ted's reflections covered the arrival of the first Bower family in 1899-1900, briefly touching upon the hardships they encountered during the

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News and Events Annual meeting and Highlights of the Past Year

The tenth annual meeting of CAHS was held in the volunteer gallery of the Red Deer and District Museum on September 15. President Bob Lampard presented a summarized account of the year's board and committee activities. These have grown incrementally over the ten year period to 5000 volunteer hours in the past year.

Publications

A significant portion of these hours are spent by the board members who work in the joint publication committee of the Central Alberta Museums Network and CAHS. The group meets every month. Terms of reference for this committee are in progress to set operation guidelines and parent body organizations responsibilities. Since its mandate is to publish work of particular interest to our common region of the province the new name of this joint committee is Parkland Heritage Publications. The first publication was Bill Baergen's book on the *Ku Klux Klan in Alberta*. The first printing of 1000 copies has been sold out. Many of these were used in teacher workshops on the book conducted by Darren Lund. The second publication was *West of the Blindman* written by Fred Schutz and edited by David Jones and Bill Baergen. It was followed by followed by Ray Heard's *Prisoner of War Diary*. Both of these have sold more than half of their printings. The last completed publication was *Aspenland II. Aspenland I* (1998) was published by Central Alberta Museums Network, the Provincial Museum and Red Deer and District Museum. Along with the local museum publications of *Inventive Spirit* and *Exploring Central Alberta*, these three have been added to the inventory of Parkland Heritage Publications.

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Golden Furrow

difficult first years, and chronicling their contributions to farming in a rapidly changing era that saw the transition from horse drawn machinery to total mechanization.

The farm grew and prospered as James Bower ('Grandad') responded to advances in mechanization, in 1907 replacing his draught team with the first International gasoline tractor sold in Western Canada. 'Grandad' then designed a brush cutter to increase the productivity of this new purchase, enabling him to clear more land and contribute to the value of land that would eventually be sold for development.

'Grandad' Bower was an active member of the United Farmers of Alberta. On one occasion he had the opportunity to present the UFA's ideas on marketing reform directly to then Prime Minister Sir Wilfred Laurier. His zest for agricultural improvement was reflected in his family of enthusiastic farmers who themselves contributed to the rich heritage of Alberta. Norman Bower was, like his father, besotted with new machinery, investing in one of the first Nobel ploughs that cultivated without disturbing the soil surface or stubble, and thus conserving moisture. Family members supported the Red Deer Exhibition even, as Ted recalled, once mortgaging some land in order to keep the exhibition afloat.

Ted enlivened and personalized his chronicle with anecdotes involving other members of the family, making the farm museum seem not just a centre for the history of agricultural advancement, but a warm and very real part of the past and present of a growing community. Ted described his cheerful and neighborly 'Grandma', Catherine Bower, singing while she churned, and making huge harvest dinners.

In a forward looking manner typical of the Bower family, she placed a high value on education and insisted that each of her children receive at least some post-secondary education. She would appreciate the museum's focus on providing educational programs for young people.

Golden Furrow

Large areas of south Red Deer are the legacy of Bower vision and determination. James and Catherine Bower and their children together represent the history of progressive farming in Central Alberta, having ploughed many furrows and sown golden seed. Histories such as that described by Ted Bower frame agricultural artifacts in a context of lives lived, 'Grandad' and 'Grandma' become vibrantly alive in the history of Sunnybrook Farm Museum, and the Golden Furrow Award is given meaning based on the past and grounded in the present. □

Submitted by Sheila Bannerman

News and Events

The next book soon to be released is Vernon Wishart's, *A Journey into Roots*. This is an important book that explores the generations of his family leading back to their British lines that united with First Nations and Metis wives and continues to Vern's generation who grew up unaware of their ethnic inheritance. The committee is financially limited to one title at a time, but three others are under consideration and Bill Baergen has found other publishing means for his new title, *Pioneering with a Piece of Chalk: The One-room Country Schools in Alberta*. □

Early School Markers

In recognition of the importance of their first schools, local individuals and associations in a number of Alberta school divisions, have placed markers at the sites of their one room schools. Along with early churches these school were an example of sharing costs for needed institutions that were beyond the resources of single families. Ponoka and district retired teacher association through the leadership of Laura Werzba is nearing completion of marking their sites. Large gate-like wrought iron structures that give the name, number and years of operation are placed on the property lines to mark where schools once stood.

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Bill's book will be a good starting point for history preservers in other jurisdictions. Schools in the Red Deer area with the exceptions of those marked by families, await this effort to link present generations with the past. □

Central Alberta's Historica

Annual Student's History Event

Social Studies Council of Alberta, Red Deer and District Museum, Red Deer Centre, Central Alberta Historical Society, Historica Fairs and Alberta Centennial, these the entities all collaborate to enable students to delve into history and create their own presentation to the public. Board members. Rod Trentham has worked on organizing this project since it began. Marion Hives provides accounting services and Shirley Dye works with the volunteer judges recruitment and assistance. Historica 2005 was coordinated by Joel Carlos. Many CAHS members and of the board act as some of the 65 adjudicators of the student projects at Red Deer Centre. This is a regional fair and smaller centres have their own fair to determine who will exhibit in Red Deer. Thirteen schools in the area between Coronation and Eckville and Pigeon Lake to Didsbury participated this year. A total of 550 students worked on 408 projects. 166 young historians brought 115 exhibits to Red Deer. Of the entries that achieve the excellence category two are randomly selected to participate in the national Historica. Haley Smith of Olds and Red Deer entrants Mariah Stollings and Coralyn Froese were accompanied by Bruce Stollings to Saskatoon for the Canadian Historica. □

Historic Red Deer Week

The historic Red Deer Week 2005 was the third annual first week in May event. The coordinating committee was led by CAHS board members: Don Hepburn, who chaired the committee, Faye Hughes was the recorder and the accounts were handled by Marian Hives. Rod Trentham was also part of the committee and the week's first event was Historica, May 6 and 7. Also part of this working group were former mayor, Bob MacGhee, Alison Weir the 2004 coordinator and Lorna Johnson, Red Deer and District Museum director.

Historic Week

The Heritage Preservation Committee annual awards were May 9 at the Red Deer County Centre. This body is an arm of the Normandeau Culture and Natural History Society, made up of both city and county members. This year's awards went to: Raven church a 1924 log structure still being used in a western division of the county, the Hanna house which was moved from the county to the Sunnybrook Farm Museum and Interpretative centre within the city and the Parson's house restored and in use by the Lee and Short legal firm in the city's downtown.

Over all the recent Historic Red Deer Week had increased support from local businesses, media and participation of other historic minded organizations. Coordinator Sherry Krill was very effective in spite of her late March hiring. Plans for 2006 include setting up a planning committee and engaging a coordinator this fall. □

Michener Fountain Restoration

Restoring and returning the Michener fountain to a prominent city location is a long term CAHS project. At one time the fountain was the centre piece of City Hall Park. It's new location is part of a to be completed historic portion of a park in the old railway right of way. President Bob Lampard informed the meeting that a large Alberta Centennial grant is to be given this project, bringing this joint endeavour with the City of Red Deer much closer to completion. □

David Thompson Bicentennial

Board member Pat MacDonald from Rocky Mountain House brought copies of a summer, Western Producer article written by journalist Karen Morrison. The National Historic Site is a few miles west of town of Rocky Mountain House This last stop on the fur trade river system is also an important site of Map Maker, David Thompson explorations. . The David Thompson bicentennial is an upcoming, five year, cross border event It promises to be significant and will coincide with CAHS hosting of the Historical Society of Alberta annual General Meeting in 2008. □

News and Events

Board Election

The AGM elected the following executive for 2005-06: President: Dr. Don Hepburn, Past President: Dr Robert Lampard, Vice- President: Janet Walter, Secretary: Dr. Lu Pining, Treasurer: Marion Hives, Membership: Faye Hughes, Programme Director Shirley Dye, Editor: Janet Walter, Directors: Pat MacDonald, : Rod Trentham, Ron Williams, Dr. Jim Martens, Judy Larmour, Marguerite Watson, and Dr. Bill Baergen. After a very successful term as Historical Society of Alberta President and ten years as a Vice President of the CAHS board, Don Hepburn brings valuable experience and knowledge to his role as Chair. □

Supper Bus Tour Event

At the conclusion of the AGM program coordinator Shirley Dye led off to the waiting bus for the first event of the new season; a supper bus tour to Ponoka. Guided tours of the J. J. Collett Natural Area, The Alberta Hospital grounds and Fort Ostell to view their exhibits, supper and a Ponoka history presentation was the planned program. Rainy conditions eliminated the natural area stop but at the Fort Ostell Museum we were joined by Barbara Greshner. Barbara is the chair of their Museum Society and very knowledgeable about the town's history and its people. She told the story of the buildings we drove passed interwoven with historic data of Ponoka since its incorporation in 1904.

After the town tour we drove up a hill 3 miles east of the town to the grounds of the Alberta Hospital where about 300 people are given residential treatment for brain injuries, acute psychiatric care and dementia. At one time 1,700 patients were hospitalized here.

Marilyn Hoffman, instructor in Psychiatric Nursing interpreted the hospital's history while we viewed the heritage building built in 1911 and the newer buildings used now.

Known first as the Provincial Insane Asylum, the first patients were 300 who were moved from Brandon Manitoba. They traveled by train, restrained in straight jackets and walked from the station to the new institution. The Asylum quickly became overcrowded and remained so for many years. Gradually more buildings were built and the name was changed

Bus Tour

to the Provincial Mental Hospital-Ponoka in the 50s. The present name is Alberta Hospital Ponoka. When we returned to the Fort Ostell Museum Barb Greshner showed their artefacts of the hospital going back to the time when drugs were not available and straight jackets were used.

Following a good meal Ponoka councillor Marnie Wilkins spoke briefly on behalf of the town and recounted that the majority of early settlers were American immigrants, quite a number from eastern Canada while those from Europe were largely from Wales, Scandinavia and Germany. Ponoka still has an active Welsh Society who lent Fort Ostelle many artifacts for an Alberta Centennial display. David Gill using photo slides of the J. J. Collett Natural Area more that made up for the rained out stop there. We were shown the flora along the trails and told about their curriculum designed grade six tours. David Gill is a retired classroom teacher who contributes his time to the nearby natural treasure and provided the following summary of his presentation. □

J J COLLETT NATURAL AREA a brief history

The land known as the JJ Collett Natural Area was once the property of the CPR. Long before Jack Collett purchased the land from Professor Miller in 1951, the area designated as the Natural Area, the Collett family was tied to the area by a rich and colorful history. Jack Collett's father, Joe, was an officer in the North West Mounted Police. In 1913 he was posted at Fort McLeod. Horse theft amongst the various Indian tribes was an annual occurrence. The Cree would steal horses from the Crow tribe and then the Crow would steal horses from the Cree near Hobbema. Joe Collett would ride from Fort McLeod to the Morningside area to recover horse stolen by the Cree Indians. Joe Collett had a very good relationship with the Indians and learned much from them. There existed a great mutual trust and understanding

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Collett

The Cree, upon seeing him approach would say, "Hi Joe have you come for the horses?" The rails from the corrals in the north end where he penned the horses are still evident in the Natural area though the shifting sands cover many of them. Joe Collett retired from the NWMP after thirty- four years of service. He resided at Pigeon Lake for a few years and then moved to Lacombe where he served as Police Chief for twelve years. While at Lacombe, Joe and his son Jack would visit the area and Joe relived his experiences as a Mountie while he and Jack walked the old wagon trail. Chinese laborers working on the Canadian Pacific Railway used the area as a campsite. At one point in time there was a sawmill on the property. Today decaying piles of spruce slabs and sawdust help remind us of the past.

After purchasing the land in 1951, Jack Collett ranched the land until 1974. He had up to 120 head of cattle on the land and lived on a 5-acre parcel in the southeast corner of the section. Working full time as a manger for North Western Utilities and ranching proved to be too much and Jack decided the ranching would have to go. What to do with the land? His son, John Joseph, developed a love for the area and all of its beauty. As early as age 9, he would camp out for the entire weekend with only his dog or a brave friend. John Collett located all of the trails on the present site and did a flora and fauna study. John Joseph Collett graduated as a Wildlife Technician in 1976. He died in a forestry accident at the age of nineteen. It was then that Jack Collett decided to sell the property, which we know as the JJ Collett Natural Area. He turned down many lucrative offers from realtors and developers. Jack Collett communicated with Bill Morgan, Alberta Wildlife Foundation, regarding the development of the area. In 1976, Jack Collett, with the help of Jim Ashbaugh and Hal Nelson pooled there resources and formed the J.J. Collett Foundation.

Mr. Callaghan owned a funeral home in Red Deer. He and Jack Collett were good friends. One day he asked Jack if he could cut some trees from the JJ Collett area, only two or three.

Collett.

Jack went out one day to see what the racket was all about on his property. Callaghan was out there with a 3-ton truck and a crew of men loading seedlings on to the truck. Mr. Callaghan also owned Alto-rest cemetery in Red Deer and all 300 seedlings were planted at Alto-rest. Today, John Joseph Collett lies at rest in the Alto-rest cemetery surrounded by the trees he loved as a youth. □

Membership Benefits You and Your Local Chapter

A paid membership in the Central Alberta Historical Society gives you our local Chapter newsletter and the Provincial Historical Society newsletter, History Now. For an additional subscription fee, you may choose to receive the quarterly issue of the magazine, Alberta History. Paid members also receive a discount on scheduled events i.e. September bus Tour, the Christmas dinner meeting and the May four day tour.

Membership fees:	
Individual membership fee	\$15.00
Alberta History subscription	\$25.00
Combined fee	\$35.00
Family membership fee	\$25.00
Alberta History subscription	\$25.00
Combined fee	\$45.00

Your local Chapter benefits from your membership as \$10 out of each \$15 membership fee is returned to the Chapter with \$5 remaining with the provincial society. The provincial Historical Society receives an annual grant from the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation. A portion of this grant is sent to the local Chapter, on per member basis. The more members in our Chapter, the higher the grant return. Check your newsletter mailing label, the number to the right of your postal code is tells you when your membership is due. To renew contact me at the next meeting. Encourage your friends and colleagues to join. □

Faye Hughes
Membership Director

Book Review

Alberta Premiers of the Twentieth Century

Edited by Bradford J. Rennie, Published by Canadian Plains Research Centre, University of Regina, 2004

The twelve old boys who have looked down on the Albertans that governed for the last hundred years: were they far sighted? Were they egalitarian? Did they practice the art of the possible for good governance or for the best possibility of keeping their governance? Brad Rennie has put together a book of biographies by research authors with a keen interest in their topic.

Readers who hoped to get new insight into the lives of these men, especially the earlier premiers may be disappointed. The piece on John Brownlee, perhaps the most enigmatic of the lot, is written by his already published biographer, Franklin L. Foster.

Many questions about this premier remain. Why did Albertans and in particular the farmer M.L.A.s who believed in democratic equity transfer their power to this very autocratic down-east lawyer?

In total the book is a great read for those interested in the historic settings of the past century. Cartoons and photo help to illustrate the tenor of the times. Snips of quotes throughout the collection add good insight into the thinking of these premiers.

In his introduction Brad Rennie outlines some of the unique qualities of Alberta politics and those elected as leaders. He cites that the non-partisan qualities of the electorate may come from the large portion of American settlers who had no allegiance to Canadian political parties or to the national government in Ottawa. The most successful premiers have used a non-partisan rhetoric and may have set the unusual non-partisan political culture of our province. □

Please Notice

The yellow brochure distributed in the summer has some wrong meeting dates: Please make notes of the correct dates: Thursday October 20

Thursday November 17

Monday December 05

Thursday January 19 2006

Thursday February

Thursday March 17

Thursday April 21

Thursday May 19

The yellow brochure has been replaced with a green one with correct dates and is available at the museum

Coming Events

Programs:

Thursday October 20,

End of an Era of Caring, Faith and Education.

Sister Harriet Hermary will tell us about the history of **The Daughters of Wisdom's** contribution to the development of Central Alberta. The Convent was built in 1908 and at it's peak had about 100 boarding and day students. Having a group of educated women in our midst affected many things in this area. Sisters worked in our hospitals as well as our schools.

Thursday November 17

Escape From Sumatra is the story of a Canadian soldier from Regina. Joan Bamford Fletcher is the only woman to command 70 Japanese soldiers. She used them to blast a path to safety for Dutch imprisoned on Sumatra Six weeks and 21 convoys later, Joan had moved 2000 men, women and children through jungles, mountains, and Indonesians in rebellion. For her bravery, the Japanese presented her with a 300 year old Samurai sword. The honour had never been given to a woman before, seldom given to any foreign men. Her achievement was also recognized by the British.

This is a video presentation.

Monday, December 05

A Homestead Christmas. at the Golden Circle.

This will be an interactive dinner with some of the guests hosting a table in a farm kitchen of 1905. The food served was all available to homesteaders in 1905 and was preserved in methods available to them. Each ticket holder is asked to bring a decoration that could have been available to a homesteader and hang it on our tree.

Guest speaker **Nancy Millar** speak on the **Challenges of Keeping a Family Feed in 1905.**

Musical entertainment will be from the same era.

Tickets will be available at Red Deer and District museum by November 2nd, members \$20, non-members \$22.50.

The dinner will be restricted to 60 guests so get your ticket early.

For information, call Shirley Dye: 403-346-5218 □