

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

September 17

Pioneer Lodge, Red Deer

4324 - 46A Ave.

AGM - 6pm

Business of 2013-14. Election of board members

Dinner - 6:45 pm

Roast goose, with apples, prunes, red

Activity 8 p.m.

What do you know about a goose?

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Visit our website

www.albertahistory.org Link - CAHS

President's Message

Bill Mackay

Our last issue of Aspen Country for this year! I guess I am thinking program year and financial year which are the two things that have occupied the Board for the last few months.

Our financial affairs have been reorganized. We have a new treasurer, Paul Pettypiece. Paul has experience as a treasurer. He resides in Springbrook so he also represents another community. As you will know Springbrook is a former military air training base and now home to Red Deer Regional Airport. We have also engaged Valerie Marina to keep our financial records so that we can collapse our bank accounts to two from six. Having Valerie keep our records provides consistency over time and between treasurers. It also does not require that the treasurer be accomplished with financial software.

Elsewhere in this issue of Aspen Country you will see the full slate of programs we have lined up for next year and the two events, the AGM in September and the Christmas party. The programs will take place in the Museum and Art Gallery, the AGM will be in the Pioneer Lodge and the Christmas party, as usual, in the Golden Circle. I want to thank Faye Hughes and Shirley Dye for doing a great job organizing both the programs and the events. All our 'ducks are in a row' for next year.

I wish everyone a wonderful summer. See you at the AGM in September.

2014 CAHS Fall Programs

September 17: AGM & Dinner

More information available soon

October 15: Women's History Month

Women's History Month - "The Lost Women"

November 19 Red Deer Public Library 1914-2014

Michael Dawe

December 03: Christmas Party

More information in the September Aspen Country

May Program: Rodeo in Central Alberta. Jack Daines



Jack Daines

Photo by Robert Lampard

Jack Daines told us he started his career as a rodeo competitor at age 8, when he slipped into a rodeo without telling his parents, and he has been at it ever since. He started announcing in his early 20s while still a competitor. At 25, already a Canadian novice champion, he decided to start his own professional rodeo right at his ranch, north of Innisfail. The Daines Rodeo has grown into one of the premiere stops on the Canadian pro circuit. In his career, Daines said he had broken almost all the bones in his body. The Daines Rodeo recently celebrated its 50 anniversary.

Jack noted that the Ponoka Stampede is the best rodeo in Canada and Benalto, though small is great because of the friendly people involved with it.

Bob Robinson, a long time friend of Daines came with him and talked about his career in rodeo. A National Finals Champion, a Canadian Saddle Bronc Riding Champion, a college grad, a successful businessman, a Canadian Pro Rodeo Hall of Fame inductee, named a Pioneer of Rodeo by the Calgary Stampede and just for fun, with a handful of old age pensioner's cheque in his bank, Bob and his team roping pard', Brain Spady, rode into the Camrose Pro Rodeo—and won in 5.8 seconds.

That was how Bob Robinson was described in the magazine "Canadian Cowboy Country" where was featured in the April/May issue as a Living Legend. Bob is 83 years old.

Bob told us about his long career with Canadian rodeo.



Bob Robinson on *Try Me*;
Wenatchee, Washington. 1957

Jack Daines described this photo as the best he has seen, depicting perfect form; how a cowboy should be positioned on a bucking bronc.

Photo from Canadian Cowboy Country , page 31

2014 - Rodeos in Central Alberta

Rocky Mtn. House: June 6 - 8

Daines Ranch, Innisfail: June 12 -15

Sundre: June 20 - 22

Ponoka: June 24 -July 1

Benalto: July 4 - 6.

Sylvan Lake - A Postcard Perspective by Robert Lampard M.D. and Brian Inglis M.D.

This book owes its origins to the shared interest in Deltiology (postcard collecting) of Brian Inglis and Robert Lampard. Their two collections of Sylvan Lake postcards, when combined with the generously shared collections of Colleen Dunnigan, Fred Freschette and Jack McCuaig, led to the realization that along with cataloguing the post cards of Sylvan Lake, there was potential for a unique history of Sylvan Lake as seen through its postcards. The 2013 Sylvan Lake Centennial crystalized the idea and prompted the completion of the book.



Piers. Circa 1928. Postmarked July 1930

The W1 pier is being enjoyed by many on a sunny day. The beach reaches close to the end of the boat house which is on piles in the water. The lady with the umbrella standing on the beached canoe is in a tipsy position. A second canoe is being returned, but won't fit under the pier. In the lake is a new metal slide, the old wooden slide and diving board

Centennial Street . circa 1822-23

Jamieson's Hardware is followed down the west side of Centennial Street by the British American Oil Company, Duffield's Butchery, one unidentified store, Ralston's Drugs, Heenan Brothers Grocery Store, A Barber Shop and the junction with 50A Street.

On the right side is the first (1919) Imperial Bank building,. The ratio of horse drawn wagons to cars is 3:2, a reflection of the prosperity of the times

The central telephone system was expanded to Sylvan Lake in 1911. The single pole next to the telephone pole is probably a power pole from Jamieson's Delco Power generation system. In 1920 it served the Presbyterian Church, the Municipal Offices and the Imperial Bank. Power was extended to Sylvan Lake Hotel in 1925. None of the buildings in the Centennial Street photo appear to have survived.



Sylvan Lake—Postcard Perspective is 120 pages of history in pictures postcards from the first half of the 20 century.

The book can be purchased by phoning
Robert Lampard @ 403-347-1286 Brian Inglis @ 403-347-1286

Evarts - Benalto History Intertwined

We can't look at Benalto history without considering the history of Evarts. The two are intricately woven together. Before there was a "Benalto", Evarts was a going concern. We are told in the Red Deer News for February 26, 1907, that Evarts, an incorporated village, had a population of about 280. Evarts had a creamery, direct telephone communication, a fully licensed hotel and boarding house, an implement warehouse, two general stores, a livery stable, drugstore, a school house, blacksmith shop and three churches that met in the school, and hoped in the near future to have a Presbyterian church building and a bank. They also had 3 sawmills in full swing nearby. It is no wonder that Evarts residents were upset when the train went through Benalto rather than Evarts.

Evarts seemed to be a village where people met both to enjoy community fun times and exchange ideas. In 1908 Evarts is called a thriving village. People from both Red Deer and Sylvan Lake came out for Evarts Harvest picnic which included a brass band from Sylvan Lake, food was prepared by the Parker House, races, ball games. (Evarts beat Red Deer 9 - 1), speeches, and a dance. On other occasions ball games, foot races, horse races and bucking contests were held.

As a community Evarts is the place to hold discussions as is stated in the headlines of the Red Deer News "Mr. O'Brian, the Socialist Orator, meets Dr. Clark tonight, a lively time is expected (Oct. 7, 1908). On one occasion, Mr. John Moore appeared before the Red Deer Board of Trade asking for someone to go with him to a meeting in Evarts regarding a two year extension to the charter for the Alberta Central Railway. Earlier that fall, Mr. Moore, who was running for re-election in the Alberta Parliament, had been jeered and laughed at, at a meeting in Evarts. The author of the article, Oct. 14, 1908, said "Mr. Moore had lost his prestige, he talked of Mr. Moore living in a luxurious home in the east and coming west feeling that he can fool these horny handed sons of toil with his wild cat schemes." It seemed that Evarts held enough clout to hold up the extension of the charter by the strength of their disapproval. The UFA political party held debates in Evarts on a fairly regular basis, debating topics of interest at that time.

Why did Benalto get the train and not Evarts? The original plan was to have the train go from Red Deer to Sylvan Lake, Sylvan Lake to Evarts and Evarts West. I have tried to find out, but so far the only answer that I have come up with is that when the CPR bought out the Alberta Central Railway contract in December of 1912, taking over on January 1, 1913, the CPR soon made adjustments in both the quality and the route of the track. Whatever the reason, Benalto grew and by 1916 Evarts was declaring bankruptcy.

Benalto officially became a village on June 4, 1914, but the actual celebration of this event did not happen until June 27, 1916; weather was too bad on June 21 which was the planned date for the celebration. There were races, sports, handsome cash prizes and a Social hop in the evening.

Rocky Mountaineer Aug. 4, 1914, an ad for a special excursion from Rocky Mountain House to Red Deer over the ACR on Thursday August 20th. The first regular train over ACR was the next Monday the 10th. The station is being built this week

Mr. Simpson, who had had a store in Evarts moved his business to Benalto and built a new store which was ready for business Benalto by August of 1916. Mr. Simpson sold out to a Mr. McRae from Maple Creek according to the Red Deer News of January 16, 1918.

Benalto was joined to Hespero by telephone and then to Eckville which was already joined to Leslieville between January and March of 1917. They were waiting for the Western General which would join Benalto to Red Deer.

It would seem that the first station agent at Benalto was Mr. Freed from Camrose who began as agent on July 1, 1920. Mr. A. Norton became the agent in August of 1921.

Red Deer News Reports on Benalto in the 1920s.

Feb. 25, 1920 Cream shipping Station, Campbell & Griffen property purchase by Mr. Kopsala of Eckville reported in paper. April 14, 1920 going good supply of cream. July 14, 1920 Mr. J Truet – agent.

Feb 25, 1920 Mr. Karkainen bought a warehouse on Railway St from Mr. McRae who had purchased it from Mr. J.S. Simpson.

July 26, 1924 Mr. Fong Sing applied for a restaurant license.

Aug 9, 1922 Mr. Hooker, former manager of Imperial Bank in Benalto is now in Moose Jaw as an accountant.

Sept 17, 1921 there was a hostile meeting, the Municipal District of Golden West didn't want to give a "petitioner" a license for a pool room in Benalto because the "petitioner" had been convicted, they understood, for an infraction of the Liquor Act.

Oct. 19, 1921 Mr. A Karkainen is reopening his pool hall on the 15th after extensive alterations and repairs.

Oct. 15, 1921 Mr. Ted Bardwell manager of Wilson Lumber Yards was busy selling lumber to farmers to build granaries.

Benalto Celebrates in 1916

Benalto, a new village, was mapped out by the CPR before the train actually arrived in Benalto. The streets were named by the Scottish "engineer" with street names: Loman, Nevis, Ledi Corachan, all of which are mountains in Southwest Scotland. Of course, there was Main Street and Railway Avenue. Mr. Jack Simpson had moved his business from Evarts to Benalto where he built a new building to house his merchandise. Mr. Simpson's store was on

the corner of Main Street and Railway Avenue. On July 6, 1916, a Celebration was planned to commemorate the official opening of the village of Benalto. A day of races, ball games, bucking horse events was planned, but because of the weather, the entire day was postponed until July 14th. However, word did not get out that the dance was also cancelled. This is how the event appeared in the *Red Deer News* dated July 19, 1916.

"The weather turning out fine during the latter part of the day a large company assembled in the evening thinking that the dance was on. There didn't seem to be any of the committee interested enough to come and tell the people what had been done and as the musicians also had arrived a messenger was sent to Evarts in order to acquaint Mr. Simpson with the situation.

"Mr. Simpson pluckily got up from a sick bed and, after sending back the messenger with instructions to go ahead with the dance, followed about an hour later with his rig full of good things to eat and drink. Dancing proceeded with great vigor to the strains of the violin, the other instrumentalists having got tired of waiting and gone home.

"An excellent supper was served at one o'clock, during which Mr. Isaacson, after expressing in glowing terms the courtesy which he had received in all his dealings with Mr. Simpson, called on Mr. Simpson's late partner to congratulate their host on his new enterprise."

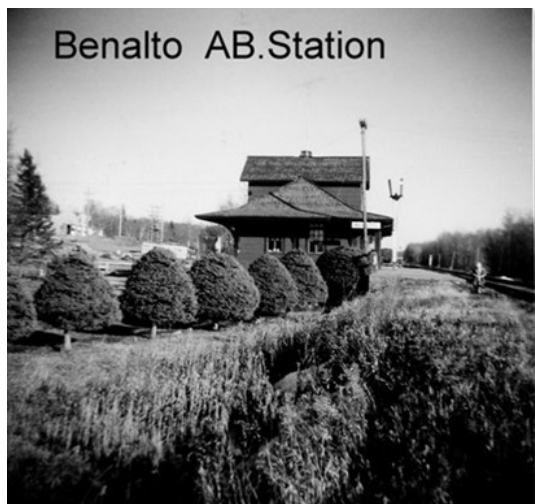
Mr. Simpson was praised by those who had done business with him in the past as well as those in attendance. He thanked everyone for coming.

"Dancing was continued until almost breakfast time and what at one time seemed to a dismal failure turned out a huge success."

The Benalto Train Station

CP Rail archives “show that a temporary station was erected in 1914 and was subsequently replaced in 1928.”

According to the CPR records, a temporary 29 x 48 foot 1 story store house was built in 1912 at a cost of \$400. A Crawshaw tank holding 20,000 gallons, a 10x20 foot pump house, and a 10 x 36 foot temporary station were built in 1914 at a total cost of \$1950. The first station agent was Mr. Freed of Camrose as reported in the *Red Deer News* of July 14, 1920. He was to start on July 1 because an agent was urgently needed for the heavy freight and traffic business that was transacted there. The August 10, 1921, *Red Deer News* states that Mr. A. Norton was the new station agent, which meant that for 7 years until the station was erected in 1928, he worked from the temporary station and his family lived in other houses. (Mr. Norton’s granddaughter, Betty Nielson) still lives in Benalto).



If the Benalto station followed the same process as Rocky Mountain House, the station arrived in a package and was erected on the site, much like the Eaton’s catalogue houses of that time period. The last station agent for Benalto was Hugh Varty who took these pictures of the station in 1962.

The station sat empty for a time before it was purchased by Jack Donald in 1971 and moved it to his acreage along the Red Deer River.

According to the *Rocky Mountaineer* of Aug. 4, 1914, there would be a special excursion from Rocky Mountain House to Red Deer over the Alberta Central Railway on Thursday August 20th. The first regular train over the Alberta Central Railway would be next Monday the 10th. It is also reported that the station is being built this week.



Train stations could not run without the help of the section men. The section foreman pictured is Mr. Ed Johnson who lived in a house just West of the train station between the tracks and the road. If you walk along the old track bed, you will see the overgrown carraganas which were by the house. Mr. Johnson was the section foreman. In October of 1921 the *Red Deer News* reported that he was the father of a baby daughter. Mr. Johnson’s great -granddaughter still lives in Benalto. There were many families who came to Benalto to fill the post of section foreman.

Johnson family
c. 1937



There are many stories about the train and train station. One lady told me that she and some of the boys in her age group would hear the train coming, make a dash for the culvert which ran under the rail bed so they could hear the clack, clacking of the train echoing in the tunnel as the train went over them along the tracks.

Another fellow told me about picking up the mail from the station and carrying it up to Mr. Wilkes at the Post Office for the grand sum of either 5 cents/bag or candy.

Samuel McKee

Samuel McKee must have been a go-getter. After arriving in Red Deer in the spring of 1901, by 1907, he was on town council and for a short time in 1910 he was elected Mayor. He didn't serve very long, because he moved to the farm North and East of Benalto. Here again, within a few years, he was the President of the Benalto Agricultural Society.



My memories are of a large entry with dark wood floor to ceiling, a kitchen straight ahead, imposing stairs to the second floor on the left and pocket doors cutting off the living room from view if they were closed. I have learned that the house was called Willow Lodge and often was a stopping place for people traveling through. Samuel McKee and his sons Ormiston (Orme), Paul, Elmer and Emerson cleared the land in order to farm the land.

Samuel McKee was both a farmer and a builder. He, along with his wife Sarah and two sons, left the family farm in Ontario after the sudden death of his brother, Will, 1 with whom he had been farming. His first stop coming west was in Brandon, MB, but he found the winters too cold to continue construction all winter; therefore he continued West to Red Deer where his brother John had lived for a time, looking for warmer weather. He arrived in Red Deer where he was able to keep working year round. He was able to work in construction as soon as he arrived building an animal hospital for Dr. Elder. He formed a partnership with Alec Cruikshank. Some of the buildings he worked on were the Dr. Leonard Gaetz Memorial Church, the Red Deer Advocate Building, at least two church rectories, rebuilding after the fire of 1907 the Red Deer Fire station and "city" hall. In one contract that was cited in the Red Deer News, he got the contract in the spring of the year and was able to hand over the keys to the building in the fall of the same year.

When Samuel McKee moved from Red Deer, he bought a section of land in the Kuusamo district, where he built a house close to the middle of the SW corner of the section. This house was large and imposing at least to a 5 or 6 year old girl who visited the house with her parents while Samuel's son Emerson and wife Della lived there.

Samuel McKee became the first President of the Benalto Agricultural Society and remained in that position until the Annual meeting December 10, 1923, when the Red Deer News states that pressure was put on him to let his name stand again but he refused. He remained on the Board of Directors for many years. In the early days of the Benalto Fair, the McKee name appears as a winner in the Shorthorn cattle and Berkshire hogs as well as occasionally in a horse category. Daughter Ethel's name also appears in the ladies' items, especially in artistic categories. Samuel's son Orme said that "his father gave much time to planning and erecting the Society's buildings."

Roads seemed to be another interest of Samuel McKee both in Red Deer and in the Benalto area. In Red Deer he explained to council in their annual meeting, how he had fixed a road by graveling it and strengthening the corner where two streets met. There are at least two mentions of his appearing with two other men from Benalto before the meeting of Municipal District of Golden West asking for road improvements or simply a road.

Continued on page 9 See Samuel McKee

Samuel McKee

Active in his community, he was also active in, and took leadership in, his church: first in a Baptist Church in Red Deer, then the Presbyterian Church in Evarts and later as one of the founding members of the Benalto Baptist Church in 1928. In Evarts he was the Chairman of the Board in 1919 when Rev. McKechnie was ordained. Evidently he also preached because it was reported in the "Sylvan Lake News" in *The Red Deer News* on June 17, 1925, that "Mr. S. McKee of Benalto has preached two able sermons the two Sundays in local Presbyterian Churches while Mr. McKechnie is in the East."

Mr. S. McKee and his wife Sarah were two of the 20 founding members of the Benalto Baptist Church. Again he took a position of leadership.

Samuel McKee was born on July 11, 1856 in a country house near Guelph, Ontario. He married Sarah M. Lane on March 23, 1892. In later years she was not well and they tried a short break in British Columbia for her health, but it did not help. She passed away January 16, 1930. Samuel McKee died June 18, 1937. Both Samuel and Sarah are buried in the Benalto Cemetery.

Submitted by Eleanor Snook



Benalto Elevators

Grandstand



Rodeo Grounds

Eleanor Snook

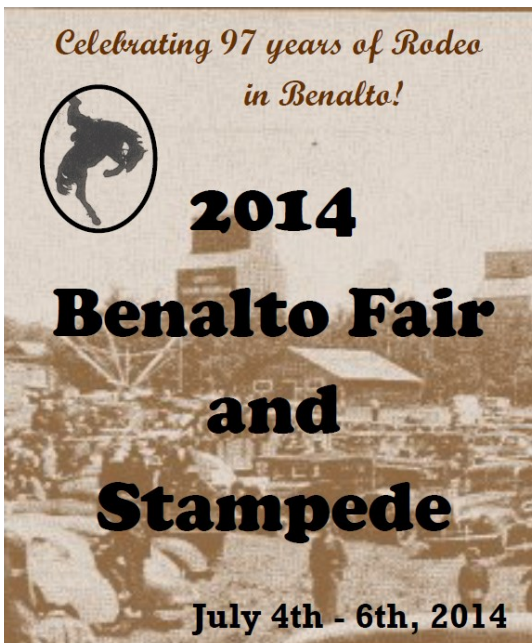
Eleanor Snook researched and wrote all the articles about Benalto in this issue of *Aspen Country*. Eleanor's father came from Nebraska to Alberta in 1918 with his parents and grandfather. Eleanor's father bought a farm in the Kuusamo district where Eleanor went to school in grades 1- 6. For grades 7-11 she went to Benalto, in 1956 graduated from the Prairie High School in Three Hills before going to University of Calgary. She married Dick Snook after her first year. Seventeen years and three kids later, she went back to U of C and completed her B.Ed. Eleanor and her husband both taught at several schools in and around Central Alberta. Eleanor retired in 1997 and in 2005 taught English as a second language at Lithuania Christian College in Lithuania.

Eleanor got interested in history after researching her family history. Her aunt Bessie saved all the letters she had received from aunts, uncles and cousins in Nebraska. She also had Aunt Bessie's diaries to read. Her enjoyment in that research sparked her interest in the history of the area where she spent her childhood

Eleanor's First Train Ride

My first experience with the Benalto train station was a field trip organized by Mrs. Laura Holsworth who taught at Kuusamo. Our parents drove us to Benalto where we purchased our tickets from Benalto to Kootuk just South of Eckville. There was time before the train arrived; so we visited The Benalto General store where we were shown how people were able to charge groceries on a tab – interesting information for a ten year old girl. We boarded the train in Benalto, after seeing how the station worked – the mail drop off and pick up, the telegraph, the freight cart. Although this was not my first train ride, it is the first one that I remember. The noise of the train on the track and the whistle at the crossings, the swaying as we traveled through country we hadn't seen from vehicles are some of my impressions of that trip. While we were on the train, our parent drivers drove to Kootuk ready to pick us up and take us home again.

What To Do In Benalto In 2014



Benalto Centennial & School Reunion June 6,7 & 8.

Friday June 6: Reunion get together

Saturday June 7: 8 –10am Breakfast

10:30-12 Program Time Capsule, dignitaries, guests

12-1:30 Lunch

All day: Vintage Car Show & Shine, Horse Drawn Wagons & Tours, Cake Cutting,

5 -7 pm Dinner (tickets required)

8 - 9 Stage program

9:30 - 12:00 Dance

Darkness - Fireworks

Sunday June 8 8-10am Breakfast

10:30 Memorial Service @ grandstand

2:30 – Lunch

1:30 Dog Agility Show

General Inquiries: Karen @ 403-746-3775